

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Vayeitzei



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The Trap of Parnassah

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 3:16) say, מצודה פרוסה על כל ההיים, "A trap is spread out before all people." The Mishnah, however, doesn't reveal to us what the trap is¹.

The Baal Shem Tov said that the trap is the pursuit for *parnassah*. It can be described in various ways.

The first is that people don't know how much time they should be investing to earn a living. They know that they have a *chiyuv hishtadlus* and that, of course, there are significant expenses that they have to cover. This being the case, they think they need to spend all of their days working, and there is no time left for Torah and Tefillah.

Their grave error lies in the feeling that they are in this alone. They fail to internalize the reality that Hashem gives us *parnassah*, and His abilities are endless. He can provide us with *parnassah* when we work less, too.

The Bas Ayin (*Bamidbar* ד"ה וידבר) writes this lesson in the name of the Baal Shem Tov. The Mishnah states, מצודה פרוסה על כל ההיים פרוסה can be translated as bread. (as in כדי אכילת פרם) מצודה פרוסה means there is a trap of bread, of *parnassah*, which is before everyone.

The Bas Ayin writes, "The pursuit for *parnassah* is a trap. People become immersed

in their work, and they don't leave place in their hearts for *avodas Hashem*. But when one contemplates Hashem's *chesed* and recognizes that He sustains the entire world with His kindness, and therefore he believes and trusts that He will give us *parnassah* even if we aren't so wise, then he can have a heart open for Torah and mitzvos. And then when he studies Torah, Hashem will shine onto him a holy light... and he will rise from level to level..."²

As we wrote, the pursuit for *parnassah* sets up other traps for us. One of them is to believe that even after we do *hishtadlus*, *parnassah* comes from Hashem. This is a great challenge because it seems like we earn our *parnassah* due to the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arm. We must know that after all of that, *parnassah* is from Hashem.

It states (:11), ויקח מאבני המקום וישם מראשתיו וישכב, "Yaakov] took from the stones of the place, he placed them around his head, and he slept in that place."

Rashi writes, "He laid the stones in a semi-circle around his head because he was afraid of the wild animals. The stones began arguing with each other. One said, 'The tzaddik should put his head on me.' Another said, 'The tzaddik should put his head on me.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately

1. The Rambam and Rav Avodyah Bartenura explain that it refers to the trap of *yesurim* and death. These are realities that no one can escape.

2. This week's *parashah* discusses the דודאים, which the Seforno explains was *mesugal* for bearing children. Rachel asked Leah for the *dudaim*, because she hoped that this will help her bear children. Rachel made another *hishtadlus* for children. She gave Yaakov her maidservant, Bilhah, hoping that in this merit she would bear children (see Rashi 30:3). The Seforno (30:16) writes, "The *pasuk* tells us that Hashem desired the *hishtadlus* of the *imahos* - bringing the *tzaros* (maidservants) into their homes and the *dudaim* - and therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu listened to their *tefillos*. Because it is proper for a tzaddik to do the natural *hishtadlus* that are in his ability to attain his needs and to daven. As Chazal say, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the prayers of tzaddikim."

made them into one stone, as it states (28:18), "ויקה את האבן אשר שם מראשתי".

The Maharam Shik *zt'l* explains that Yaakov wasn't afraid of the wild animals because he trusted that Hashem would protect him. But one is obligated to do *hishtadlus*, so he put the stones around his head. אבנים, stones, also represent יסוד, foundations. There are two foundations in which everyone must take part: *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*. The rocks began arguing with each other. This means the foundation of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon* were bickering since inherently they contradict one another. *Hishtadlus* implies that everything depends on my deeds, while *bitachon* says everything is in Hashem's hands. So what's the truth?

Rashi writes that Hashem took the stones and forged them into one stone. This means Hashem took the two foundations of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*, and He showed them that they function in unison. We do *hishtadlus*, but simultaneously we know that *parnassah* comes from Hashem.³

There's yet another trap in the pursuit for *parnassah*, and that is theft. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 165.) states, רובם בגזל ומיעטם בעריות וכולם באבק, "Most people sin with theft..."

The Mesilas Yesharaim (11) explains, "Although most people don't steal straight out...nevertheless, most people taste the taste of theft in their business..." People are *moreh heter*; they think they are permitted to cut corners, etc. They don't realize that these leniencies may fall under the umbrella of theft. We must be cautious and steer clear from that trap, too.

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shaar HaTevunah* 11) writes, "Whoever steals is a fool and a *rasha* because his theft won't cause him to earn more than what was decreed for him on

Rosh Hashanah... As it states (*Derech Eretz Zuta* 3), אם נמלת את שאינו שלך את שלך יטלו ממך, "If you take what isn't yours, yours will be taken away from you."...Similarly, Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 8.) state that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to *resha'im*, "It isn't only that you steal, but you also obligate Me to return the stolen item to the rightful owner." Because it is impossible to take what isn't yours, and if you do, Hashem will make sure that it will be returned to the rightful owner.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that this happened to Lavan. He stole from Yaakov many times, as it states (31:7), והחליף את משכרתי, "He changed my payment tens of times." And everything he stole was returned to Yaakov as it states (31:11-12), וראה כל העתודים, העולים על הצאן עקודים נקודים וברדים. Yaakov Avinu saw in his dream *malachim* carrying away Lavan's sheep and bringing them into Yaakov's territory.

How could the *malachim* do that? It seems like theft! A *malach* explained to Yaakov, כי ראיתי את כל אשר לבן עושה לך, "I saw everything Lavan did to you." He stole from you, and now it is being returned to you.

"Pasture in *Emunah*"

It states (*Tehillim* 37:3), בטח בה' ועשה טוב, "Trust in Hashem and do good." We are told to do good, but what is good? The answer lies in the final words of this *pasuk*, ורעה אמונה, "pasture in *emunah*," which means to focus on *emunah*.

We will now focus on some lessons in *emunah*, according to the Bas Ayin's *zt'l* teachings.⁴

Chazal (*Avos* 6:12) say, כל מה שברא הקב"ה בעולמו, לא בראו אלא לכבודו, "Everything Hakadosh Baruch Hu created in His world was created for His honor." The Bas Ayin (*Noach* אלה) (ד"ה

3. Even our ability to do *hishtadlus* is dependent on Hashem, because if it weren't for His strength, we couldn't do *hishtadlus*, either.

4. The Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit* is this Shabbos, the 12th of Kislev.

explains that these words portray an attitude and a train of thought. With everything one sees or experiences, one should ask himself, "How can I use this to increase Hashem's honor. It was created for Hashem's honor; what can I do to bring out its ultimate purpose?"

We offer a few other examples so that the lesson will be understood:

When a person gets his paycheck, he should ask himself, "This was given to me to increase Hashem's honor (because everything is for Hashem's honor). What can I do with this paycheck to increase Hashem's honor?" His answer might be that he will give one-tenth to tzedakah. That is one way to honor Hashem with the paycheck. He can also buy food for his family to be healthy to serve Hashem, or perhaps he will honor Hashem by praising Him for giving him the money. But he should certainly stop to think, "I got this money for Hashem's honor. What can I do with it to increase Hashem's honor?"

This is a thought that one should think about several times a day. Let's say you are served a meal. Ask yourself, "How can Hashem's honor be increased with this?" Your answer might be by the *brachos*, or that it will give you the strength to serve Hashem.

The *resha'im* who lived in Noach's time were passionately pursuing the foolishness of this world. Noach thought, "If they are so passionately involved in foolishness, certainly I should serve Hashem with passion." This is the Bas Ayin's example of finding Hashem's honor everywhere in the world. Everything was created for Hashem's honor, and with some thought, we can find a way to serve Hashem and bring Him honor.⁵

We will bring another lesson in *emunah* from the holy *sefer Bas Ayin*. The idea is perhaps simple and well known; however, the trick is to be aware of it constantly. The Bas Ayin says that you must believe that Hashem is watching you, seeing each and every one of your moves. The Bas Ayin (*Vayigash* ד"ה או יאמר על זה הדרך) writes, "It is known that all *dinim* (troubles) that are in the world are because people aren't conscious that Hashem is watching over everything..."

Therefore, let us take a moment to think: "Hashem sees me right now. He sees what I'm doing." This thought took just a second, but it means a lot. It removes the *dinim* from the world. One should think this before he davens. "Hashem sees me. He is listening to me." And this is the thought one should have as often as possible. As it states שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, always remember Hashem; and always remember that Hashem sees you. One of the wonderful benefits of this focus is that it removes *dinim*, from you and the world.

The Bas Ayin elaborates, "If a yid will know and believe that...all his movements and feelings are seen by Hashem, for He sees everything that happens in the world... then all *dinim* will vanish, and he will draw bounty and blessings from the source of kindness. He won't be lacking anything at all. As it states, תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, this means when a person believes that all his actions are, עם ה' אלקיך, under Hashem's surveillance, then he will be תמים, complete, because Hashem will bestow only good onto him. He won't lack anything. Similarly, it states, כי עם ה' החסד והרחבה עמו פדות, this means when one believes that everything he does is, כי עם ה', with Hashem, under His watchful eyes, this draws down החסד, Hashem's kindness...

5. The Bas Ayin says that this is hinted to at the end of *parashas Bereishis*, כי רבה רעת האדם... ונח מצא חן בעיני ה', "People were acting very bad...and Noach found favor in Hashem's eyes." This means that Noach saw people's bad ways, and from their passion he learned how to serve Hashem passionately.

והרבה עמו פדות, and this draws down much bounty and *brachah* for all of Klal Yisrael...⁶

Im Yirtzeh Hashem

Reb Yosef Adhan *zt'l* (who lived 250 years ago) writes the following story in his *sefer Shufrei d'Yosef* (p.437). It happened to his grandfather, Reb Yaakov Birdogo *zt'l*:

Two farmers were getting ready to harvest their wheat crop. It was before Pesach. They were both planning to sell the grains kosher l'Pesach so that people could make matzos from them. One of the farmers said to Reb Yaakov Birdogo, "*Im yirtzeh Hashem*, I am about to harvest the grains. I want your *brachos* that it should be a success..." Reb Yaakov blessed him.

The other farmer also came to Reb Yaakov. He said, "I'm about to harvest the grains, and I want your *brachos* for success," but Reb Yaakov didn't bless him.

Since he didn't receive the rav's *brachah*, he didn't want to harvest the crop. He figured, "The crop wasn't blessed. It will only bring me heartache." But his family urged him to harvest the crop, regardless, and he did so.

Unfortunately, there was no blessing in the crop. Whoever bought his grains didn't enjoy them. One person bought the wheat kernels, and it rained on them and rendered them unfit for Pesach. For another, it rained when they were baking matzos. As people of this city were careful with *gebros*, he wasn't able to use those matzos. Similarly, whoever bought his wheat didn't enjoy it.

Reb Yaakov Birdogo summoned the farmer and asked him if he knew why this

was happening. It wasn't natural that whoever bought his grains ended up not using them for Pesach.

The farmer answered that he knew the reason. It rained on his wheat kernels before he sold them. He dried them, and he didn't tell people what happened. Hashem protected the Jewish community, so they should have kosher matzos on Pesach. Therefore whoever purchased from him didn't end up eating from his crop.

The rav told the farmer that he must return the money to whoever bought from him.

The farmer said to the rav, "Why didn't the rav bless me, as you blessed the other farmer? Perhaps all of this wouldn't have happened had I received the rav's *brachah*."

Reb Yaakov Birdogo replied, "The other farmer said *im yirtzeh Hashem*. He mentioned Hashem's name, Who is the source for all blessings; therefore, I blessed him, and he was successful. But you didn't mention Hashem's name, and here are your results..."

The Otzer HaMidrashim tells the following story (it is also written by the Chida in *Kitzur Chadrei Beten*):

Someone was walking to the market to buy oxen. Eliyahu Hanavi took on a merchant's appearance, and he asked the merchant, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to buy oxen."

Eliyahu said, "Say *im yirtzeh Hashem*."

The merchant replied, "Why should I? If I didn't have money, I would say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. But I have money. I can buy the oxen if I want to."

6. The Imrei Chaim (*Devarim* ו"ה ואת יהושע) says in the name of the rebbe of Kosov *zt'l* (and it is also written in *Mishkanos Yaakov* written by Reb Yaakov ben Na'im, printed in תפ"א) that when Yaakov was traveling to Lavan's house, a place of thieves and *resha'im*, he thought to himself, "How will I survive there? The *resha'im* will certainly try to harm me..." He told himself, אלקים עמדי, "Hashem is with me. And since Hashem is with me, I have nothing to fear." וידר יעקב נדר לאמר אם יהיה אלקים עמדי. He vowed that he will always remember that Hashem is with him. With his trust in Hashem, he wasn't afraid to go to Lavan's home.

Eliyahu replied, "If you speak that way, you won't succeed."

The man walked on towards the marketplace but didn't realize that his wallet fell out of his pocket. Eliyahu took his wallet and put it on a stone in the forest, where people don't pass.

In the marketplace, the merchant spent quite a lot of time choosing the right oxen he wanted to buy and haggling until he finally agreed on a price. But when he was ready to pay, he realized that he lost his wallet. All that toil was for nothing. He returned home.

Sometime later, he was going to the marketplace again. Eliyahu Hanavi was waiting for him on the road once again. This time, Eliyahu looked like an old man. "Where are you going?" Eliyahu asked him.

"To the market to buy oxen."

"Say *im yirtzeh Hashem*."

The merchant didn't want to. He didn't think it was necessary.

Eliyahu caused the merchant to fall asleep. Then, Eliyahu took away his wallet, and he placed it in the forest, next to the other one. When the man awoke, he realized that his wallet was lost, and he returned home.

The merchant contemplated what happened to him because it wasn't natural to lose a wallet twice. He understood that this was his punishment for not saying the words *im yirtzeh Hashem*.

He set out to the marketplace a third time. Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to him, this time in the attire of a poor boy seeking work. "Where are you going?" Eliyahu asked.

He replied, "*Im yirtzeh Hashem*, I'm going to the market to buy oxen." Eliyahu blessed him with *brachah v'hatzlachah*. Eliyahu added, "If you need to hire someone to bring the oxen home, please hire me."

The man replied, "If Hashem helps me, and I buy the oxen, I will hire you."

Hashem granted him success. He found robust oxen for sale at a low price, and he hired the lad to help bring them home. As they were walking, the oxen suddenly ran into the forest. The merchant ran after them. The oxen stopped next to the stone where his two wallets lay. The merchant praised Hashem.

He and the lad brought the oxen to the merchant's house, and then the lad suddenly disappeared. That's when the merchant knew for sure that this was Eliyahu HaNavi.

One Thursday, a chassid said to the Toras Chaim of Kosov *zt'l*, "I'm leaving Kosov now, and for Shabbos, I will be in Zablitov."

The Rebbe replied, "Do you think you will be in Zablitov for Shabbos?"

There were many delays on the road, and he wasn't able to reach Zablitov. He was in Kosov for Shabbos.

He said to the Rebbe, "If the Rebbe knew that I wouldn't make it to Zablitov for Shabbos, why didn't you tell me?"

The Rebbe replied, "I'm not a *navi*. I didn't know that you won't make it to Zablitov. But it states in this week's *parashah* (28:20), וידר יעקב נדר לאמר אם יהיה אלקים עמדי. What was Yaakov's *neder*? He promised, לאמר, that he will always say אם יהיה אלקים עמדי, '*im yirtzeh Hashem*.' Because a person can't do anything without Hashem's help. You told me that you are going to Zablitov, and you didn't say *im yirtzeh Hashem*. That's why I suspected you wouldn't succeed in getting there for Shabbos."

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt'l* repeated the following story, which he heard from Reb Issar Zalman Melzer *zt'l*. In the year ה'תרפ"ה the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told the Jewish community in Radin that he will be leaving for Eretz Yisrael. When he finished speaking, one of the *baaleibatim* asked him, "Why didn't you say that you are traveling 'אם ירצה ה'?"

That Motzei Shabbos, the Chofetz Chaim's Rebbeztzin became ill, and they couldn't embark on their trip to Eretz Yisrael.

The Shlah HaKadosh (בהעלתך דרך חיים תוכחה) על פי ה' (מוסר י"ב) writes, "It states (*Bamidbar* 9:18), 'אם ירצה ה' יחנו... This is a mussar lesson. Whatever you do, say 'אם ירצה ה' or 'בעזרת ה'. For example, when traveling, say, 'I am traveling בעזרת ה'. I plan to arrive at such-and-such place 'אם ירצה ה'.' When he comes at that place, he should praise Hashem and say, 'בעזרת ה' I arrived here, and I plan to travel further 'בעזרת ה', אם ירצה ה'.' When one does so, Hashem's name is always on his lips –in the planning stage and also when he does his deeds."

And as we are learning, saying 'אם ירצה ה', is a *segulah* for success.⁷

In *parashas Toldos*, Yaakov dressed up like Eisav so he could receive his father's *brachos*. He was extremely cautious with his charade because he was afraid that if his father discovered Yaakov, he would receive a curse instead of a blessing (see *Bereishis* 27:12). Yet, when Yitzchak asked him how he brought the meal so quickly, he replied (27:20), 'כי הקרה ה' אלקיך לפני', "Hashem your G-d prepared it for

me." Rashi writes, "Yitzchak thought, 'It isn't Eisav's way to say Hashem's name. But he is saying that Hashem prepared it for him.'"

Yaakov knew that Eisav never mentioned Hashem's name. Why did he risk saying Hashem's name, which almost disclosed that he was Yaakov?

The answer is, *tzaddikim* never refrain from saying Hashem's name. Hashem's name is always on their lips, and that is the root of their success.

Tefillah

All of the *avos* and *imahos* invested significant efforts in *Tefillah*.

When Naftali was born, Rachel said (30:8), 'נפתולי אלקים נפתלתי עם אחותי גם יכלתי ותקרא שמו נפתולי'. Rashi writes that *נפתולי* comes from the word *פתיל*, string. How does one make a string? He spins the strands of wool or flax several times until it becomes a string. Rachel said, 'נפתלתי אלקים נפתלתי', "I prayed many times to Hashem, like a string that goes around and around many times. עם אחותי, I prayed that I should be like my sister who has children. and Hashem answered my *tefillos*."

7. In this week's *parashah*, Yaakov told Lavan that he wants to work for seven years for seven years for *רחל בתך הקטנה*, "Rachel, your younger daughter" (29:18).

Rashi asks, 'כל הסימנים הללו למה', "Why did Yaakov give all these signs?" Wouldn't it be sufficient to say, "I will work to marry Rachel"? Why did he have to add "your daughter" and why did he need to say "your younger daughter"?

Rashi answers, "Yaakov knew that Lavan was a *רמאי*, swindler. So Yaakov said, 'I will work to marry Rachel. Perhaps you will try to give me a different Rachel from the marketplace, therefore I clarify, *בתך*, I want to marry Rachel your daughter. Perhaps you will change Leah's name and you will begin calling her Rachel. Therefore, I clarify and I express that I want to marry *רחל בתך הקטנה*, Rachel, your younger daughter.' But after all that, it didn't help. Lavan tricked him anyway."

The phrase, *רחל בתך הקטנה* has become a phrase people use when they want to express something very clearly, so that there should be no misunderstandings. For example, when people draw up a business contract, they express all the details – *רחל בתך הקטנה*.

The question is, why we use this saying, if it didn't work out in the end. Yaakov Avinu expressed himself explicitly and cautiously, but then Lavan broke the contract.

Perhaps we want to remind ourselves that even after all our *hishtadlus*, nevertheless, if Hashem wills it otherwise, it will be as Hashem decrees. Yaakov cautiously expressed his intentions very clearly, but that isn't enough, if Hashem has other plans.

Rashi also quotes Onkelus's explanation that נפתלי is from the word תפילה.

Rashi also includes Menachem's explanation, that נפתולי means to connect, because she prayed to connect and to be similar to her sister who has children.

According to all three explanations, the pasuk is referring to Rachel's many tefillos. Rachel davened many tefillos, and Hashem granted her children.⁸

Leah also invested in Tefillah, and her tefillos were answered. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 123.) states, "People were saying, 'Rivkah has two sons (יעקב ועשו), and Lavan has two daughters (רחל ולאה). The older one will marry the older one, and the younger one will marry the younger one.'"

The Midrash (תנחומא הקדום ויצא י"ב) says that these four children (יעקב עשו לאה רחל) were all born at the same time. The parents sent letters to each other to engage their children in marriage. When they were young children, Eisav was engaged to marry Leah, and Yaakov was engaged to marry Rachel.

So, according to this Midrash, Leah was engaged to marry Eisav. Leah knew about this *shidduch*, and therefore she was very distressed.

And then, Yaakov came to Lavan's home, and he said clearly, רחל בתך הקטנה, that he wants to marry Rachel. Now Leah's fears increased because it seemed inevitable that she would end up marrying Eisav.

But Leah didn't lose hope. She continued davening. She prayed so much, it affected

her eyes, as it states, עיני לאה רכות. Her tefillos paid off because Lavan gave her to Yaakov. As the Midrash (ibid.) concludes, "Tefillah is powerful; it annulled the *gezeirah*. [Leah was destined for Eisav, and Tefillah annulled it.] Furthermore, [we see the power of Tefillah because] Leah married Yaakov first, before her sister Rachel."

Yaakov Avinu also invested in Tefillah. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* וישלח קל"ג) writes, "Whoever can count the amount of *nisuchim* (water, wine, and oil) Yaakov Avinu poured in Beis El (see *Bereishis* 35:14), he knows how much water there is in the sea of Teveria." The holy *sefarim* explain that this is hinting at the number of Yaakov Avinu's tears. He cried so much as he poured his heart out before Hashem.

Also, in Lavan's house, Yaakov was always immersed in tefillos. The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 74:11) says, "When Yaakov was in Lavan's house, he spent the nights saying *Tehillim*." According to one opinion, he said the fifteen שיר המעלות; according to another view, he said the entire *Tehillim*.

Hashem told Lavan that he mustn't speak with Yaakov, משוב ועד רע, good or bad. Hashem prevented Lavan from harming Yaakov. But why didn't Hashem tell Lavan that he shouldn't even pursue Yaakov? The *Gesher HaChaim* (vol.1 p.315) explains that Yaakov understood from this that Hashem desires his tefillos. As the Midrash states, "When Lavan caught up with Yaakov, Yaakov was saying *Tehillim*."⁹

8. It states (30:22), ויזכור אלקים את רחל וישמע אליה אלקים, "Hashem remembered Rachel and Hashem listened to her tefillos." The *Or HaChaim* writes, "The pasuk is saying that although Hashem remembered Rachel's good deeds, she still needed tefillah. As it states, וישמע אליה אלקים." With tefillah, Hashem gave her children.

9. The Alter of Navordok *zt'l* told the following story. (He said that it happened to "a yeshiva bachur," but it is understood that he was referring to himself. The Alter of Navordik is the yeshiva bachur of this story.)

A yeshiva bachur needed to go home to perform the mitzvah *kibud av ve'eim*, but how can he go home without money? This bachur was working on his bitachon. He studied the Chovas HaLevavos and other sefarim that discuss bitachon, so he decided that he would trust in Hashem. He thought to himself, "Hashem supplies me with all my needs. He will certainly help me return home, so I can perform *kibud av ve'eim*."

It says in the passuk, ויפגע במקום, and Chazal explain that this means Yaakov davened, and he established *tefillas Maariv*. Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* said the translation of פגע

in Yiddish is a *nudnick*, someone who asks you again and again and doesn't take no for an answer. When he wants something, he keeps on asking. This describes how a yid

He went to the train station – a three day walk from his yeshiva. But walking doesn't cost money. That was his *hishtadlus*, and he put his trust in Hashem that somehow he would get home.

He arrived at the train station three hours before the train was scheduled to depart. He sat down on a bench, took out his Gemara, and studied diligently, as though he was sitting in his yeshiva. He wasn't worried, because he trusted with all his heart that Hashem will help him.

A yid arrived at the train station and he was happy to see a *bachur* learning Gemara with *hasmadah*. He asked him whether they can sit together on the train, so they can speak in *divrei Torah*.

The *yeshiva bachur* replied, "I would like to. The problem is I don't have a ticket."

"So why don't you buy one?"

"I don't have money for a ticket."

The man asked, incredulously, "Why did you come here if you don't have a plan how to get on the train?"

"I don't have a plan, but Hashem does. I trust in Him."

The man laughed and said, "A ticket is bought with money, not with *bitachon*."

The *bachur* refused to lose his *bitachon* in Hashem, so he ignored the discouraging words he heard. He went back to his Gemara.

The conductor blew the whistle – a sign that the train is about to depart. People hustled on board. The *bachur* remained, studying his Gemara, still trusting that Hashem will help.

The conductor blew his whistle a second time. Soon the train will move away. Just then, another yid arrived at the train station in a hurry. He saw the *bachur* sitting on the side, and he asked him, "Why aren't you boarding the train. It is going to leave any moment. I'll buy you a ticket." He bought two tickets, one for himself and one for the *bachur*, and they boarded the train just when the third whistle was blown, and the train left the station.

The train was packed, but the *bachur* found an empty place next to the person who laughed at him previously. "What happened? How did you manage to get on the train?"

The *bachur* told him that he got his salvation at the last moment. He added, "It is as the Midrash (*Shochar Tov, Tehillim 31*) states, כל הבוטח בשמי אני מצילו, 'Whoever trusts in Me, I will save him.'"

The man scowled, "Fool! You yourself said that you got on the train just when the train started to move. What would have happened if the man who helped you came to the train station a second later? You would miss the train! I told you that this isn't the way. You can't travel with *bitachon* alone."

This man didn't realize that if anyone was a fool, it was him. He had just witnessed the power of *bitachon*, yet, he still didn't realize that one should rely on Hashem.

Reb Shalom Shwardron repeated this story and tied it in to this week's parashah. Lavan told Yaakov (31:29), יש לאל ידי לעשות עמכם רע ואלקי אביכם אמש אמר אלי לאמר השמר לך, "I have the ability to harm you. But the G-d of your fathers told me yesterday that I must be cautious..." Even after Hashem's warning, Lavan thought he has the ability to harm Yaakov. Lavan was saying, "I had the dream, I heard Hashem's warning, so I can't harm you. But if I didn't have the dream, or if I had the dream a night later, I would be able to harm you." Even after Lavan saw that Hashem saved Yaakov, he didn't admit that he doesn't have strength to do anything on his own.

should daven. He should request again and again until his *tefillos* are answered. As the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said to his daughter, "The Ribono Shel Olam is a father who likes it when we *נודיעט איהם*, we beg, and we ask again and again."

It states (28:16), *ויקין יעקב משנתו ויאמר*, the final letters spell *צבור*. This tells us that a person's *tefillos* are heard when he davens with a minyan (Baal HaTurim). The Megaleh Amukos adds that *צבור* is *gematriya* 298 (רהמים). Because when one davens with a minyan its rouses Hashem's *rachmanus*, which enables his *tefillos* to be answered. The *pasuk* states, *ויקין יעקב משנתו ויאמר* *אכן יש ה' במקום הזה*, when one davens with a minyan, Hashem's presence is there. *ואנכי*, but when one davens by himself, *לא ידעתי*, it doesn't have the same strength.

It states (28:17-18), *וזה שער השמים*, and the next words are, *וישכם יעקב בבקר*. The Baal HaTurim writes, "This teaches us that the gates of heaven are open at *alos hashachar*, and this is an opportune time for *tefillah*."

Bas Ayin

Shabbos, the 12th of Kislev, is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Avraham Dov Auerbach ben Reb Dovid *zt'l* of Avritz, also known as the Bas Ayin, one of the great Rebbes who lived two hundred years ago. Towards the end of his life, he moved to Tzefas, where his holy *tzion* is located.

The wisest of all men, Shlomo HaMelech, teaches (*Mishlei* 25:27), *אכול דבש הרבה לא טוב, וחקר כבודם כבוד*. The Meiri explains that the *pasuk* means that although honey is sweet, too much of it will make you sick. But when it comes to praising tzaddikim, there is no limit because when people hear tzaddikim's praises, they will want to emulate their ways.

Especially on the *yahrtzeit* of a tzaddik, it is even more important to discuss the tzaddik's ways and study his *divrei Torah*. As the Rema MiPano *zt'l* (*Kanfei Yonah*) writes, "The secret of a *yahrtzeit* of a tzaddik is that in heaven, all worlds are discussing the good

deeds and the *chiddushei Torah* of this tzaddik..."

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* (מאורן של ישראל, י"ד) writes, "A *yahrtzeit* is called a *hilula*, because just as by a *chasunah* the *kesubah* is read before the *chasan* to remind the *chasan* of his obligations to the *kallah*, similarly, on the *yahrtzeit* of a tzaddik we remind the tzaddik of his obligation to his chassidim."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* explains that a *yahrtzeit* is called a *hilula* (*chasunah*) because just as people give presents to the *chasan* and *kallah* at a *chasunah*, Hashem gives gifts to the tzaddik on his *yahrtzeit*. The tzaddikim desire to bestow kindness to Yidden. Thus, on a *yahrtzeit*, Hashem grants the tzaddik this present; the ability to *mashpia* goodness to klal Yisrael.

The Gemara (*Chulin* 7) says, "Tzaddikim are greater after their demise than during their lifetime." Consequently, those tzaddikim who performed wonders and kindness for the Jewish nation in their lifetime certainly do so after their demise.

Nevertheless, there is something that prevents tzaddikim from bestowing goodness to the world. To explain, we'll tell a story:

There was once an evil decree on Klal Yisrael. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* told his student, Reb Mendel Riminover *zt'l*, that after his *petirah*, he will work in heaven, and he won't rest until the decree is abolished. Rebbe Elimelech was *niftar*, and the threat of the evil decree was still hovering over the Jews.

Rebbe Elimelech came to Rebbe Mendel Riminover in a dream and explained why he wasn't abolishing the harsh decree. He explained, "Here in heaven, I see how everything is for the good, so why should annul the decree?"

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* says that this factor prevents tzaddikim in heaven from praying for the Jewish nation. From

their perspective, in heaven everything is good, so why should they pray for us?

But on the *yahrtzeit* of a tzaddik, a part of his *neshamah* comes down to the grave. He is back in this world and sees the hardships people have. This inspires the tzaddik to pray, and since the root of his *neshamah* is beneath Hashem's throne, he davens from there and has the power to annul the harsh decrees.

Wonders and Miracles

It is known that there was a devastating earthquake in Tzefas year 5597/1836. Almost a thousand people perished under the rubble.

The Bas Ayin was in his *beis medresh* when the earthquake began. He told everyone to come to his side of the room, and as they gathered near the tzaddik the roof over the other half of the *beis medresh* collapsed.¹⁰

At this time, the Bas Ayin threw himself to the ground, and he prayed. Later he explained why he needed to pray on the floor: "I saw the stones were falling sideways, and not downwards. 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."

In תר"א there was a plague in Tzefas. Many people became ill, and many died. The Bas Ayin became ill and remained sick for a few days. Before his demise, he said, "I'm the last victim of this plague. After me, no one will die." And that is what happened. The Bas Ayin agreed to die in the plague so that his death should atone for others, and subsequently, the plague ended.

The Seudas Hilulah

Reb Shlomo Gross z'l was a Slonimer Chassid from Tzefas who sold kerosene for a *parnassah*, but he just barely earned a living, and there was hardly any food in his home. On the night of the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit* he went to the *beis hachaim* and davened at the Bas Ayin's grave. That night he saw the Bas Ayin in his dream. The Bas Ayin said, "I appreciate that you davened at my grave [as the *Zohar* states that tzaddikim have pleasure when people daven on their graves], but why didn't you make a *seudah* for me?"

In the morning Reb Shlomo Gross gathered ten people for a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. After the *seudah*, he bought a lottery ticket and won a large sum of money. He donated a portion of it to the Slonimer Yeshiva and requested that the yeshivah use this money annually to make a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. Reb Shlomo Gross requested that they use white tablecloths for the *seudah*, and he had a few other requests to make this *seudah* unique and inspirational. This tradition continues until today in the Slonimer Yeshivos, still funded by the money Reb Shlomo Gross earned on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*.

The *segulah* of arranging a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin continues until today. Many people make a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin (or at least, a *lechayim* in *beis medresh*), and there are many stories of salvations. Here are a few of them:

One of the *gedolei hador shlita* had a divorced daughter, and for a long time couldn't find a *shidduch* for her. He sent a group of his students to Tzefas to make a *yahrtzeit seudah* for the poor people in Tzefas in honor of the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*. Two weeks later, she was engaged.

The following happened in תשע"ז in Eretz Yisrael.

¹⁰ Today, when one visits the Bas Ayin's *beis medresh*, he sees that the ceiling has two levels. This is from the earthquake, when half of the ceiling collapsed.

Tax collectors audited a certain man's business. They found that he has six telephones, although his company only needed two lines. They also saw that the company has two cars, though the business only needed one. It was apparent that he was declaring his own needs as business expenses to avoid paying taxes.

He knew that the punishment for this could be imprisonment.

While the tax collectors were investigating for more evidence of tax evasion, he remembered the *segulah* of making a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. He promised that he would make a *seudas hilulah* on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit* if everything turns out well.

Immediately after making this *kabbalah*, the agents told him, "This time, we will let it pass. But next time we come, make certain we don't find anything like this going on..."

A *yungerman* from Williamsburg went to his doctor because he was having trouble falling asleep. He thought the doctor would prescribe sleeping pills, but the doctor asked him to take an EKG. Immediately after the doctor read the results, he asked him, "When was the last time you were at your cardiologist?"

"A half year ago. Why? Is something wrong?"

"Yes, something is terribly wrong. Make an appointment as soon as possible."

"I'm busy for a few days... I will go to the cardiologist afterward."

The doctor saw that he didn't understand the urgency of his situation, so he said, "I will arrange the appointment for you." A few minutes later, he told him that he has an appointment for the next morning,

The cardiologist examined him and saw that one of his primary arteries was almost entirely blocked. He needed a stent to open the artery passage. The doctor wanted to do the surgery that very day, but the man said, "Please, there is something I have to take

care of first. The manager of my bank told me that if I don't deposit a certain amount of money into the bank today, the account will be closed." While he was explaining his financial emergency to the doctor, his phone rang. It was the bank reminding him to bring the money.

The doctor replied, "O.K., you can take care of the bank. But tonight, at midnight, stop eating. Tomorrow we will do the procedure."

This *yungerman* immediately called up a friend, who was a *baal tzedakah* and a *baal chesed*, and asked him to lend him a large sum of money. He explained that he needed to put the money into the bank...and he told him about his operation.

As they spoke, this poor *yungerman* complained about his poverty. He said, "I've performed so many *segulos* for wealth, and it seems that none of them work."

The *baal tzedakah* replied, "Certainly the *segulos* helped you. Just think about the miracle that just happened to you. You went to the doctor because you weren't sleeping well, and that saved your life. Perhaps the *segulos* you perform are helping you in other areas."

The point was accepted.

The *baal tzedakah* added, "Tonight is the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*. Why don't you light a candle and say some *Tehillim* in his merit, as a *segulah* for a successful operation tomorrow."

The *yungerman* reminded himself of what happened just that day. He said to the *baal tzedakah*, "Just this morning, in the *beis medresh* after *shacharis*, people were speaking about the *segulah* of making a *yahrtzeit seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin, and I mocked it. I said, 'Last year, I made a *seudah* for ten Yidden, and did it help me anything? Throughout the year, I'm borrowing from one to pay off another.' And then, someone in the *beis medresh* told me, 'How do you know the *segulah* didn't work? Perhaps you

weren't destined to live this year, and because you made a *seudah* in the Bas Ayin's merit, you are alive?' Now it seems that he was speaking with *ruach hakodesh*. Perhaps my life was saved because of that *seudah*..."

He quickly arranged for a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. (He was careful to finish his meal before midnight when he began his fast.) The surgery was successful.

Faith in Tefillah

The Bas Ayin arrived in Tzefas on Rosh Chodesh Elul, and he planned to remain in Tzefas until after the *yomim tovim*, and then he would move to Yerushalayim. On Hoshanah Rabba he heard a woman tell her son, "Yerachmiel! Bring down the carpets from the roof. Tomorrow Yidden will *bench Geshem* in the batei knesiyos, and they will daven for rain. Their *tefillos* will certainly be answered, it will rain strongly, and everything will get wet."

When the Bas Ayin heard what this woman said, he decided to remain in Tzefas. He wanted to be among people who believe in *Tefillah* with such certainty.

Miracles at the Bas Ayin's Kever

In Teves of תשע"ה, a woman davened at the Bas Ayin's *kever* and she promised that if her older brother (who was forty years old) becomes a *chasan* within a month, she and her family will make a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. It will be a *seudas hilulah* and a *seudas hoda'ah*, together.

Within thirty days, on the 22nd of Teves, her forty-year-old brother became a *chasan*! On the 12th of Kislev, they had a large celebration on the *yahrtzeit*, as she promised.

When one goes through hard times, and then he experiences a salvation, it is often hard to connect the dots and to know for certain which *segulah* or which prayer brought about the salvation. But sometimes, there are hints to help us determine.

The following story, which I heard from the *baal maaseh*, is an example:

A couple was childless for many years, and after many medical tests, doctors told them that it was impossible for them ever to bear a child.

The husband davened at the Bas Ayin's *kever* on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*. A year later, on the *yahrtzeit*, י"ב כסלו תשע"ט, their son was born.

The Bas Ayin never had children; therefore, people consider his *kever mesugal* for davening for children. There was a childless couple who couldn't daven at the Bas Ayin's *kever* because the husband was a *cohen*. They decided they would go to the Bas Ayin's *beis medresh* and daven there.

He says, "As soon as we began our *tefillos*, our hearts opened and our tears and prayers stormed the heavens. I made a *kabbalah* that if we have a child, we will repeat a *vort* from the Bas Ayin at the Shabbos *seudah* for the first year." Their *tefillos* were answered.

We know this story because this yungerman was once in Bnei Brak, visiting his father-in-law, and he was looking in a *beis medresh* for the *sefer* Bas Ayin. He met Reb Yeshayah Tishler shlita and asked him where he can find a Bas Ayin. Reb Yeshayah told him, "This *beis medresh* doesn't have one. But you can come to my home, and I will lend you a Bas Ayin."

As they were walking to his home, Reb Yeshayah asked, "Do you want specifically a Bas Ayin, or is any other Chassidic *sefer* also good?"

He replied, "I specifically want a Bas Ayin because I repeat a *vort* of the Bas Ayin every Shabbos meal, and now I am visiting my father-in-law, and I don't have the *sefer*..." And he told Reb Yeshayah his story and the salvation that happened to him.

There's a family of *baalei teshuvah* in the Meah She'arim neighborhood of Yerushalayim, without money and financial

support from their families. To their dismay, their washing machine broke.

The head of this family was walking around the streets of Meah Shearim to see if he can find a second-hand store that sells washing machines.

As he was going from store to store, he met up with Reb Motel Rothman shlita. The yungerman expressed his financial hardships to Reb Motel, and the latest one that he needs to buy a second-hand washing machine.

Reb Mottel tried to convince him that he shouldn't buy a second-hand machine because you can never know what problems will suddenly come up, but the yungerman was insistent that he couldn't afford a new one, and his only solution 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 *be'ezras Hashem* you will have a *yeshuah*."

They traveled together.

They came to the *tzion*, and each of them davened for their individual needs. Then they drove off to Miron to daven at Reb Shimon bar Yochai's kever and make a *seudas hilula* in honor of the Bas Ayin. After davening in Miron, they went to a local supermarket to buy food for the *yahrtzeit* celebration. Immediately as they left the supermarket, this *yungerman's* cell phone rang. It was a Chinese auction-tzedakah that he invested in some time back. They called to tell him that he had just won...a new washing machine!

Reb Mottel Rothman says that he also had a *yeshuah* on that day – but he had a far greater *yeshuah*. He had davened for more important matters than a washing machine. Because when the gates of heaven are open, and we can ask for whatever we want, we should be wise to ask for greater things, and not only for a washing machine.

Anavah – Humility

When the Bas Ayin was standing on the boat, at the port in Odesa, Ukraine, ready to travel to Eretz Yisrael, his devoted chassidim from Avritz were with him on the ship. They wanted to spend another few moments with their great Rebbe before he left them. They asked him, "What can we do to maintain our connection with you?"

The Bas Ayin replied, "Hashem obligates us, *ובו תדבק*, to be attached to Hashem. Chazal ask, 'How is it possible for a human being to be attached to Hashem? Rather, we should attach ourselves to Hashem's attributes. As Hashem is compassionate, so shall you be compassionate...' and it will be like you are attached to Hashem. This source teaches us that one becomes attached to another when one emulates their good *middos*. Therefore, if you will emulate the *middos* that I trained myself in since my youth, we will be united. Even from afar, our connection will be like we are standing face to face. I have three primary *middos* that I trained myself to be cautious in since my youth. They are to be careful never to speak *lashon hara*, never to speak untruth, and to be distant from gaavah. If you take up these three attributes, we will be united, from wherever we may be."

Indeed, one of the primary themes of the *sefer Bas Ayin* is humility.

The Bas Ayin is buried in a cave in the old cemetery of Tzfas. To come to his *kever*, one needs to bend low. Tzaddikim said that this exemplifies the Bas Ayin's humility. Even to go to his grave, one must lower himself.

Similarly, the Bas Ayin teaches that the Gemara says the Chanukah menorah should be placed below ten *tefachim*. This is because one must lower himself humbly, and then he can earn miracles.

Ahavas Yisrael

Before Pesach, the *gaba'im* thought it was an ideal time to paint the beis medresh. The

Bas Ayin told them that they shouldn't do so. He explained, "During these days of *erev Pesach*, it often happens that due to the stress, cleaning, etc., there are some disputes in the home... Husbands need a place to escape, where they can avoid the anger... If the beis medresh will be locked for renovations, where will they go?"

Indeed, there are very great lessons of *ahavas Yisrael* in the holy *sefer Bas Ayin*. For example, the Bas Ayin writes (*Chukas ד"ה א"י וזאת הקת*), "The primary *gemilus chasadim* is when you feel your fellow man's pain as though it were your own. *אה רל"ה* spells *אהר*, that you should consider yourself as a brother of the poor. I heard from the Bardichover Rav *zt'l* who repeated in the name of the Magid of Mezritch that one of the *י"ג מדות שהתורה נדרשת בהן* is *גזירה שווה*. A *gezeirah shavah* means that when your fellow man is suffering from some matter, you should feel the pain together with your fellow man, exactly as he feels it." *גזירה*, the *gezeiros* and

hardships of your fellow man, *שווה*, should be felt by you equally.

In the days of the Bas Ayin, the rav of Tzfas was Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l*. For his *parnassah*, Reb Shmuel Heller served as a doctor. But to be a doctor, he had to study medical books written in other languages (not in *lashon hakodesh*). Once, during *shacharis*, he saw goyishe letters (as of his medical books) before his eyes. He realized that being a doctor was disturbing his *avodas Hashem*, so he decided that he wouldn't serve in this position anymore. Once someone became ill, and he went to Reb Shmuel Heller. Reb Shmuel told him that he isn't a doctor anymore. The sick person went to the Bas Ayin, and told him what happened. The Bas Ayin called for Reb Shmuel Heller, and he put his hand over his forehead, and from then on, Reb Shmuel didn't have these disruptive thoughts, and once again, he served as the doctor of Tzfas.