

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Vayeitzei*



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vayeitzei

## The Parnassah Trap

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 3:16) say, מצודה פרוסה על כל, "A trap is spread out before all people."<sup>1</sup> The Baal Shem Tov zt'l explains that the trap is the pursuit of *parnassah*. The Maor Einayim (Vaeschanan) clarifies that just as bate is used to catch animals, the quest of *parnassah* captures many people into a trap and distances them from Hashem.

The trap comes in many forms, and we will discuss some of them.

One aspect of the trap is stealing. As the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 165.) states, רובם בגזל ומיעטם, "Most people sin with theft..."

The Mesilas Yesharaim (11) explains, "Although most people don't actually steal, nevertheless, most people experience the 'taste of theft' in their business." People are *moreh heter*; they think they are permitted to cut corners, etc., and they don't realize that these leniencies might fall under the umbrella of *geneivah*.

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 8.) state that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to *resha'im*, "It isn't merely that you steal, but you also obligate Me to return the stolen item to its rightful owner." As it states (*Derech Eretz Zuta* 3), אם נטלת את שאיני, שלך את שלך יטלו ממך, "If you take what isn't yours, yours will be taken away from you."

The Chofetz Chaim (*Shaar HaTevunah* 11) explains, "Whoever steals is a *rasha* and a fool because his theft won't grant him more than what was decreed for him on Rosh Hashanah." Therefore, whatever he gained from the theft will be taken away from him and returned to its 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, עשרת מניים, "He changed my salary tens of times." But Lavan didn't gain from it. Everything Lavan 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 *malachim* do that? It seems like theft! Hashem explained to Yaakov, כי ראיתי את כל אשר לבן עושה לך, "I saw everything Lavan did to you." He stole from you; therefore, I have to return it all to you.

Lavan tricked Yaakov Avinu many times. After working seven years for Rachel, Lavan gave him Leah and made him work another seven years for Rachel. Rashi (29:30) writes, "Yaakov worked the second set of years honestly as he did before, although he was tricked into them." He didn't fall into the trap of *parnassah*. His honesty in business was impeccable.

Towards the end of the *parashah* (31:38-41), Yaakov expressed that he worked honestly for Lavan for twenty years. If a sheep was stolen or killed by wild animals, Yaakov would repay him with his own money. He guarded over the sheep in the heat of the day and the cold at night, with little sleep.

And Hashem repaid his honesty, for Yaakov became very wealthy.

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1. The Bas Ayin (*Bamidbar* ד"ה וידבר) explains that פרוסה "spread out" can also be translated as half a loaf of bread (as in אכילת פרס) So, מצודה פרוסה means there is a trap of bread, of *parnassah*, before everyone.

## Stealing Time for Torah

There is one form of stealing that is beneficial.

We are obligated to be קובע עיתים לתורה, to set aside times for Torah study. One translation of קובע is to steal (see *Rosh Hashanah* 26:). The Kotzker Rebbe *zt'l* said that one should steal time from his busy schedule to study Torah.

Because the pursuit for *parnassah* is a מצודה פרוסה, a trap that catches people and one dominant aspect of this trap is when the obligation of earning a living doesn't leave people with time for Torah and tefillah.

The Bas Ayin (*Bamidbar* ד"ה וידבר) writes, "The pursuit for *parnassah* is a trap. People become completely immersed in their work, and they don't have time or clarity of mind for *avodas Hashem*. But when one contemplates that Hashem sustains the entire world with His kindness and believes that even if he isn't wise, Hashem will give him *parnassah*, he will find time for Torah and mitzvos." He will not feel that he needs to devote every free moment of his time towards earning a living because he knows that it is Hashem Who supports him. Therefore, he will find time for Torah.

The Meor Einayim (*Va'eschanan*) writes, "If a person wouldn't run after his *parnassah*, the *parnassah* would run after him because before someone is formed in the womb, Hashem decrees whether he will be poor or wealthy (according to Hashem's wisdom of each individual's needs). Everything is decreed (other than whether he will be a tzaddik or a *rasha*, as that is up to each person's free choice). It is decreed which utensils he will have, his clothing, his money. Whatever was decreed will occur. He won't get more or less. The *parnassah* that is destined for him will run after him..." And therefore, a person can allow himself time

for *avodas Hashem*, and it won't detract from his *parnassah*.

## Hishtadlus

Our obligation to do *hishtadlus* for *parnassah* creates yet another trap, as it causes people to think *parnassah* comes from their *hishtadlus* and not from Hashem.

Reb Asher Weiss Shlita told the following story:

There is a *yungerman* who lives in Manchester with his large family. He devotes his life to learning Torah. Sometimes, opportunities for *parnassah* come up, but he does not consider them. All he wants to do is learn Torah and not be involved with *parnassah*. His neighbors and friends wonder how he manages to survive, and indeed, he does go through hard times, but Hashem always helps him in the end.

Shortly after his thirteenth child was born, he was subpoenaed to court. It had something to do with a person called John P. Clabari. He wrote a letter to the court stating that he doesn't know this person, and it must be a mistake. The court replied that it was about an inheritance, and he must come to court.

He thought it would be a waste of time, but in court, he discovered that John P. Clabari died without children, and he bequeathed a half-million pounds to the largest family in Manchester. With thirteen children, his was the largest family in Manchester, and he received the money.

One might claim that this *yungerman's* approach was extreme, as most *gedolim* advise to do *hishtadlus*. *Hishtadlus* creates a vessel for the *parnassah* that Hashem wants to give us. Nevertheless, this story is a reminder that the true source of *parnassah* is Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Reb Ben Tzion Felman Shlita took a loan from a *gmach* to help him marry off one of his children, but soon after he left the *gmach*, someone ambushed him and stole all the money.

It states (:11), ויקח מאבני המקום וישם מראשתיו, וישכב במקום ההוא " [Yaakov] took from the stones of the place, he put them around his head, and 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. One said, 'The tzaddik should place his head on me.' Another said, 'The tzaddik should put his head on me.' Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately consolidated them into one stone, as it states (28:18), ויקח את האבן, אשר שם מראשתיו. "He took the stone...".

The Maharam Shik *zt'l* explains that אבנים, stones, represent אבני יסוד, foundations. Because there are two foundations: *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*. The stones were arguing with each other: The foundation of *hishtadlus* claimed that *it* is the means to earn *parnassah*, and the foundation of *bitachon* claimed that *it* is the means for *parnassah*.

What is the truth?

Hashem took the smaller stones and forged them into one big rock. This means Hashem took the two foundations of *hishtadlus* and *bitachon*, and He showed them that they function in unison. We do *hishtadlus* because (a) it is everyone's obligation to do *hishtadlus*, (b) Hashem wants us to make *hishtadlus* to create a test, an illusion that *parnassah* comes from people's work, (c) Hashem sends us bounty through the vessel

of *hishtadlus*. *Hishtadlus* is the channel, but not the origin of *parnassah*.

So *hishtadlus* is necessary, but simultaneously we must know that *parnassah* comes directly from Hashem.

This week's *parashah* has many examples of *hishtadlus*. Yaakov Avinu's working to marry his wives and afterward for his *parnassah* (see 30:30) are examples of *hishtadlus*.

Additionally, this week's *parashah* discusses the דודאים, which the *Seforno* explains were *mesugal* for bearing children. Rachel asked Leah for the *dudaim*, as she hoped that they would help her bear children.

Furthermore, Rachel gave Yaakov her maidservant, Bilhah, hoping that in the merit of this *chesed* and *hishtadlus*, she too, would bear children (see *Rashi* 30:3).

The Torah tells us about their *hishtadlus* because Hashem desires it. As 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."

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Since then, he stopped taking loans.

Reb Moskovitz Shlita asked him, "But what about *hishtadlus*?"

Reb Ben Tzion replied, "Hashem can help without *hishtadlus*, but Hashem commanded us to make *hishtadlus*. However, I see that my *hishtadlus* doesn't help. So, I may as well rely on *emunah* and *bitachon*, alone, and Hashem will help me."

Reb Ben Tzion supported his approach from the Yerushalmi (*Terumos* 8:3) that relates that Reb Yanai was afraid of snakes, so he placed the four legs of his bed into buckets of water. Once he awoke and there was a snake in his bed. Somehow, the snake found a way to by-pass the water. From then on, he decided not to use buckets of water anymore, and he will trust in Hashem.

However, what happened to our obligation of *hishtadlus*? It must be that he saw that his *hishtadlus* wasn't helping, so he can go directly to having *bitachon* in Hashem.

## Turn Your Eyes to Hashem

Hashem told Yaakov (28:14), והיה זרעך כעפר, הארץ ופרצת ימה וקדמה צפונה ונגבה "Your children will be [many] as the dust of the earth, and you will expand greatly westward, eastward, northward, and southward."

The Kli Yaakov explains that והיה זרעך כעפר הארץ means the Jewish nation will descend to the lowest levels, כעפר הארץ, down to the earth. Life will become unbearable for them, *r'l*. And then they will turn their eyes to Hashem, and Hashem will raise them to the highest levels, ופרצת ימה וקדמה. They will have wealth and success. Because Hashem's salvation comes when we turn our eyes to Hashem, and generally, people turn their eyes to Hashem when they feel that they ran out of options with which to save themselves.

We quote the Kli Yakar:

"The Midrash (Midrash *Tehillim* 44:2) says, 'Salvation comes to the Jewish nation when they are at the very lowest level, at the nadir. As it states (*Tehillim* 44:26), כי שחה לעפר נפשינו,

when we fall to the earth, קומה עזרתה לנו, that is when Hashem saves us. And the explanation is that as long as people aren't at the lowest level, they think they can save themselves from their troubles with the power of their *hishtadlus*. But when they see that all *hishtadlus* won't help them, they place their trust in Hashem, and they call out to Him. Hashem listens and immediately raises them to the highest levels. Naturally, it isn't understood how they could rise so high and so suddenly."

The Brisker Rav *zt'l* would say that he doesn't understand how the wealthy have *parnassah*. He understands how the poor have *parnassah*. They realize that they can't manage on their own, so they place their trust in Hashem. But the wealthy have a lot of money, and they think they can manage on their own. Even when they daven, they don't feel they need to ask for *parnassah*. So how do they have *parnassah*?" The Brisker Rav said that he doesn't have an answer to this question.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Two competing farmers, from two different farms, were about to harvest their wheat, and sell the grain for Pesach matzos. One of them came to the *gadol* (of about 300-350 years ago) Reb Yaakov Bardugo, and said, "*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.

But 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 cautious with *gebroks*, he wasn't able to use those matzos. Similarly, whoever bought his wheat didn't enjoy them.

Reb Yaakov Bardugo summoned the farmer who was having this bad *mazal* and asked him if he knows why this is happening, because it wasn't natural that whoever buys his grains shouldn't be able to use them on Pesach.

The farmer said that he knows the reason, and he was ready to admit his error. It rained on his wheat kernels before he sold them. He dried them and didn't tell anybody what happened. Hashem protected the Jewish community and whoever purchased flour 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.

However, the Rebbe of Sokolov *zt'l* answered it according to the Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:13) "Whoever has a hundred wants two hundred." So, the wealthy also feel that they lack, and they turn their eyes to Hashem to help them.<sup>4</sup>

In *Megilas Esther* (2:7) it states that Esther was beautiful, והנערה יפת תואר וטובת מראה. The Rokeach says that the first letters of יפה תואר spell יתום, an orphan.

The explanation is that orphans turn their eyes to Hashem. And in that merit, Hashem helped Esther all the time. As it states (*Shemos* 22:21), כל אלמנה ויתום לא תענון, "Don't cause distress to a widow or an orphan." The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains, "The widow and orphan are weak; no one helps them. Therefore, they don't trust in human beings, only in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And therefore, the *pasuk* says, they are protected more than anyone else." As it states (*Shemos* 22:22), כי אם יצעק יצעק אלי שמוע אשמע צעקתו, "If he shouts to me, I will listen to his shouts."

As we discussed above, a person must make *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*. But the primary *hishtadlus* is *tefillah* and to trust in Hashem. Because when one turns to Hashem, Hashem helps.

Yaakov Avinu requested (29:20-21), אם יהיה אלקים עמדי ושמרני... ושבתו בשלום אל בית אבי, that Hashem should be with him, guard him and return him in peace to his father's home, and

Hashem promised him that it would be so. But there is one thing that Yaakov asked for, and Hashem didn't guarantee that this request would be fulfilled. Yaakov requested ונתן לי לחם לאכל, that he should always have bread to eat, and Hashem didn't promise him. The Midrash (*Tanchuma* ויצא ג') explains, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, 'If I promise him *parnassah*, when will he come to ask something from me?' Hashem wanted Yaakov to feel totally dependent on Hashem, but if he knew that he will always have food, protection, etc., he will not feel the need to attach himself to Hashem.

Lavan said to Yaakov (30:28-31), נקבה שכרך, עלי ואתנה... ויאמר יקב לא תתן לי מאומה, "State your wages, and I will pay it"... Yaakov replied, "Don't give me anything..." He went on to request that all the speckled, spotted, and blotched sheep that will be born should belong to him.

The benefit of a fixed wage is that it is a secure income. The advantage of an unfixed salary, one that depends on many variables, is that there is potential to become wealthy from it. But, on the other hand, he may not earn anything at all.

The primary benefit of an unfixed salary is that it forces the person to place his trust in Hashem.

Yaakov preferred a non-fixed income because he wanted to place his trust in

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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 if I had received the rav's *brachah*."

Reb Yaakov Bardugo 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..." (Reb Yosef Adhan *zt'l* [who lived 250 years ago] writes this story in his *sefer Shufrei d'Yosef* [p.437]. It happened to his grandfather, Reb Yaakov Bardugo *zt'l*.)

**4.** How does a dreidel spin? It has no leg to stand on! The answer is that someone spins it from above. It doesn't stand by its own strength, only by the strength of the person who spins it. Similarly, we can't manage on our own. Everything we have and do comes from Hashem who gives us strength from Above.

When the dreidel is spinning, no one can read the letters. But when the dreidel falls you can see נגה ש, which stand for נס גדול היה שם, "A great miracle happened there." Similarly, people are very busy; they don't recognize the miracles Hashem performs for them. But if you stop, breathe, and concentrate for a moment, you will be able to recognize all the miracles that Hashem performs for you.

Hashem alone. As the Radak explains, "Yaakov responded, 'Don't pay me a fixed wage. I want my *parnassah* to be, דרך מקרה, as if by chance, through Hashem's kindness as He prepares it for me." And because he placed his trust in Hashem, he experienced immense success.

We say in the *Hagaddah*, לבן בקש לעקור את, "Lavan wanted to uproot Yaakov Avinu" from Hashem. He tried to give Yaakov a set salary, and then Yaakov would feel that his *parnassah* comes from Lavan and not from Hashem. Yaakov didn't want that. He wanted a *parnassah* that will cause him to turn his eyes to Hashem to help him constantly.<sup>5</sup>

### Hashem's Hashgachah

The Bas Ayin (*Vayigash* על זה הדרך) writes, "It is known that all *dinim* (troubles) in the world come because people aren't conscious that Hashem watches over everything."

Therefore, let us take a moment to think: "Hashem sees me right now. He sees what I am doing." This thought took just a second, but it means a lot. It removes the *dinim* from the world. Therefore, one should think about this often, as it states, שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד, always remember Hashem; always remember that Hashem sees you. This awareness removes *dinim*, troubles from you and from the world.

The Bas Ayin elaborates, "If a yid knows and believes that all his movements and feelings are seen by Hashem, for He sees everything that happens in the world, all *dinim* will vanish. Furthermore thereby, he draws bounty and blessings from the source of kindness. He won't be lacking anything at

all. As it states, תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך, he will be complete and lack nothing, when he believes that everything he does is אלקיך עם ה', under Hashem's surveillance. With this focus, Hashem will bestow only good upon him, and he won't lack anything. Similarly, it states, כי עם ה' החסד והרבה עמו פדות, The translation is, כי עם ה', when you believe that Hashem sees everything, this draws down החסד, Hashem's kindness, והרבה עמו פדות, and Hashem's bounty and blessings for all of Klal Yisrael..."

The Imrei Chaim (*Devarim* 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 surely try to harm me..."

His solution was, וידר יעקב נדר לאמר אם יהיה, "Yaakov vowed, 'If Hashem will be with me.' Yaakov Avinu vowed that he will never forget that אלקים עמדי, "Hashem is with me." Hashem sees me, and he is watching over me. And when one has this *emunah*, he has nothing to fear.

### Bas Ayin

One of the great chassidic Rebbes who lived in Eretz Yisrael was Reb Avraham Dov Auerbach ben Reb Dovid *zt'l* of Avritz, known as the Bas Ayin. As his *yahrtzeit* approaches (the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev), let us learn about this great tzaddik.

The wisest of all men, Shlomo HaMelech, teaches (*Mishlei* 25:27), אכול דבש הרבה לא טוב, וחקר, כבודם כבוד, "Eating a lot of honey isn't good, but searching for the honor of the righteous

5. In Eretz Yisrael, a paystub is called a *tlush* (תלוש משכרה). Another translation of תלוש is detached. This is because when a person receives a set wage, and he relies on it, he detaches himself from feeling dependent on Hashem.

Obviously, we aren't recommending that people shouldn't take a job that pays a fixed wage, rather we are encouraging people to remember that no matter what type of *parnassah* you have, turn your eyes to Hashem, for Hashem is the one who provides sustenance.

is honorable." The Meiri explains that this *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 to how much you can discuss their greatness. The more, the better, because when people hear tzaddikim's praises, they follow in their ways.

### His Ways

The Bas Ayin arrived at the Chaifa port in Eretz Yisrael on Rosh Chodesh Elul. He wasn't sure where he wanted to live, but he planned to go to Yerushalayim.

The residents of Tzfas invited this great Rebbe to be with them, and he accepted the invitation. Still, he informed them that after Simchas Torah, he would be continuing to Yerushalayim.

But then he changed his mind. The reason for his change of heart was the exchange between a woman and her son.

On Hoshanah Rabba the Bas Ayin heard a woman tell her son, "Yerachmiel! Bring down the carpets from the roof. Tomorrow Yidden will *bentch Geshem*, their *tefillos* will certainly be answered, and it will rain strongly. All the carpets will get wet."

After overhearing this conversation, the Bas Ayin was decided to remain in Tzefas. He said he wants to be among Yidden who believe in *tefillah* with such certainty.

The Bas Ayin hardly ever attended *levayos* in Tzfas, but one time, a *levayah* passed his home, and he went out and walked with the *niftar* until the burial.

Everyone wondered why he did so. The *niftar* seemed to be a fine, regular Yid, but no one knew anything outstanding about him.

The mystery was soon resolved.

In those days, the *niftar* was put into the Arizal's mikvah before the burial. When the *niftar* was brought to the mikvah, the *chevrah kadisha* noticed that his legs were all black.

They asked the *almanah* about that, and this is the story she told:

When he was younger, he was working as merchant in *chutz le'aretz*, and was faced with many difficult tests. At one point, he was about to marry a non-Jewish woman. It was at the wedding hall that his heart was filled with fear of Heaven. To the astonishment of all the assembled guests, this young man jumped into a barrel full of burning coals meant to heat up the big room. The non-Jews at the wedding concluded that the groom was insane. They shouted at him and threw him out of the hall. This is how he saved himself from the *aveirah*. And since then, his feet have been black from the burns.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Someone once brought his son to Rebbe Yissachar of Belz *zt'l* and complained that his son desires to marry a non-Jewish girl.

The Rebbe said to the *bachur*, "I understand that I can't convince you not to marry that girl, but I have two requests: Wear a *talis kattan* to the wedding and your father should be there, too."

The *bachur* was very happy with the Rebbe's instructions. His father wasn't planning on coming to the wedding, and now, with a minor sacrifice of wearing *tzitzis*, his father would be with him.

At the wedding, there was a lot of drinking. The *chasan* became hot, and he opened his shirt. People saw his *tzitzis* and they shouted, "He's still a Jew. He tricked the bride. She thinks he isn't practicing Judaism anymore."

They were ready to lynch him, but his father was there, and the father managed to save his son and escape from the hall. (Rebbe Yissachar Dov requested that the father be there, so he could save his son from the mob.)

The Bas Ayin said that he witnessed a column of fire going before this man's coffin; therefore, he joined the *levayah*. The Gemara (*Kesubos* 17.) says that this honor is given to only one or two people in each generation. The *niftar* merited the distinction because of that outstanding deed of *mesirus nefesh*.

When the Bas Ayin lived in Avritz, he would meet with the *shaliach* who came periodically to *chutz le'aretz* to collect money for the Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael. This *shaliach* would speak to the Bas Ayin about the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, the holiness that is experienced there, the *mekomos hakedoshim*, and he would say, "What can I tell you? The stones of Eretz Yisrael are like diamonds."

These conversations made an impression on the Bas Ayin and inspired him to move to Eretz Yisrael.

One day, in Tzfas, he met this *shaliach* again, and the Bas Ayin told him, "I sought the diamonds, but I didn't find them."

The *shaliach* replied, "Someone with pure eyes can see them."

The Bas Ayin took these words to heart. He very much wanted to experience the holiness of Eretz Yisrael as much as possible, so he secluded himself in a room for several days, and he didn't let anyone in. He served Hashem there until he reached the level of recognizing that even the stones of Eretz Yisrael are diamonds. He came out and made a *seudah* for his chasidim to celebrate that achievement.

At this time, he wrote a letter to Rebbe Mordechai Chernobyler, "For the first three years that I was in Eretz Yisrael, I didn't feel anything, and I regretted that I came here. These were the three years of *ערלה* (when one doesn't eat the fruit, and one doesn't appreciate the *kedushah*). But today, in *kedushah* of *כתר* I felt the holiness. And now I regret that I didn't come here earlier."

## Anavah - Humility

When the Bas Ayin left Auvritz to travel to Eretz Yisrael, many of his chassidim traveled along with him a long distance until they reached the port in Odessa, Ukraine. The Rebbe was already on the ship, and his devoted chassidim 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. Just like Hashem is compassionate, you shall be compassionate...' and if you emulate Hashem's ways, it is as if you are connected to Hashem. Similarly, if you will emulate the *middos* that I trained myself in since my youth, we will be united. Even from a distance, we will be connected, as though 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 tell a lie, and to be distant from *gaavah*. If you also take on yourselves these three attributes, we will be united, even from a distance."

Indeed, these three subjects - caution in speech, truth, and humility - are primary themes in the 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 go to his grave, one must lower himself.

The Bas Ayin elaborates on the many benefits that are earned from humility.

For example:

We wonder, how did the wicked Bilaam merit to see a *malach*?

The Bas Ayin (*Balak* ועתה נבוא ד"ה) explains that it is because moments before, he had a debate with his donkey, which was very embarrassing for him (see *Sanhedrin* 105:). The

embarrassment caused him to be humble, and thus he was able to see a *malach*.<sup>7</sup>

lowering oneself, with humility, brings about miracles.

Halachah says that the Chanukah menorah should be placed below ten *tefachim*. The Bas Ayin explains that to light the candles, one must lower himself, and

### **Hilulah**

The *Zohar* calls a *yahrtzeit* a "*yoma dehilula*" which can be translated as "a wedding day."

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7. Sometimes, a person can be davening with a lot of *kavanah*, and he feels that he is singing together with the *malachim* in heaven, and then someone comes by and insults him. He can't daven anymore. All the *malachim* he imagined a moment before suddenly disappeared from his view. But as the Bas Ayin is telling us, specifically now, after he was insulted, he can see the *malachim*.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* would bring *yeshuos* when he was *tovel* in the mikvah. Once, there was a wealthy person from *chutz le'aretz* in the mikvah room when Rebbe Shlomke was in the water. This wealthy person didn't know Rebbe Shlomke, but he saw the Rebbe's clothing next to his, and it upset him (because Rebbe Shlomke's clothing were old and far from being beautiful). This wealthy guest threw the clothes away, and shouted some unkind words.

Rebbe Shlomke had to look around the mikvah to pick up his clothing. Afterwards, Rebbe Shlomke said to his *gabai*, "Today, I earned more *yeshuos* from my embarrassment and disgrace than from the immersion in the mikvah."

Even a small degree of shame atones a lot and removes from the person a lot of *dinim*. When one steals an ox and is caught, sometimes he must pay five times the value of the ox. But if he steals a sheep, he doesn't pay more than four times the amount. What's the difference?

The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 79:) explains, "This reveals to us the importance of a person's honor."

Rashi explains that to steal the sheep he had to carry it on his shoulders." He disgraced himself, and therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu reduced the amount he must pay."

How embarrassing is it to carry a sheep over the shoulder? In those days, you could see someone doing that almost every day. Yet, that minor shame is enough to lessen the thief's punishment. Certainly, when one endures a greater form of shame, it will atone all his sins.

There's a special tzedakah organization in Eretz Yisrael that helps the poor with generous donations. However, some people are never satisfied. As much as you give them, they feel they should be given much more.

One person was complaining that his father needs financial help, and the tzedakah organization hardly helped him. The manager of the tzedakah replied, "Why do you say so? I'll show you how much we gave your father this year." And he showed him that his father received five thousand dollars.

The man replied, "Five thousand isn't enough to help my father. You collect money for your tzedakah, you earn thousands, and you keep it all for yourself."

The manager realized that no matter what he will say, it won't help. He will just receive more disgrace, shouts, and accusations, so he remained silent.

Later that day, the tzedakah manager spoke with two wealthy people and asked them to donate money for the tzedakah. It was a long time since he last spoke with them. One pledged \$2,000 each month, the other pledged \$1,800 each month.

The manager calculated: he will be receiving \$45,600 each year for the organization.

The manager said, "I wish someone else will humiliate me as this man humiliated me this morning, because then the *tzedakah* fund will receive another \$50,000!"

What is the connection between a wedding and a *yahrtzeit*? The Rema MiPano explains that at a wedding, people only speak about the wedding. If someone begins a speech on any other subject, people will silence him and say, "It is all very interesting, but this isn't the time or place to discuss those matters. At a wedding, we only speak about the *chasunah*." A *yahrtzeit* is similar. The yeshivos in heaven only discuss the *divrei Torah* of the tzaddik whose *yahrtzeit* is on that day.

Therefore, it is an excellent custom to study the *divrei Torah* of a tzaddik on the day of his *yahrtzeit*, for that is the Torah discussion taking place in heaven at that time.<sup>8</sup>

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zy'a* gave another explanation of why a tzaddik's *yahrtzeit* is compared to a wedding. It is customary for people to give presents to the *chasan* and *kallah* on their wedding day. The *yahrtzeit* is called a *chasunah* to imply that Hashem gives gifts to the tzaddik on that day. The main desire of a tzaddik is to bestow kindness onto Yidden. Therefore, on a *yahrtzeit*, Hashem grants tzaddikim the ability to *mashpia* good for klal Yisrael.

Tzaddikim are greater after their demise (*Chulin* 7). Thus, tzaddikim who brought salvations to people during their lifetime can certainly do so after their passing, as they are now on a greater level. However, being that they are in heaven and people are on earth, that prevents them from bestowing the good they want to give. But on the tzaddik's *yahrtzeit*, his *neshamah* returns to the grave. Now the tzaddik is in heaven and also on earth, and he can grant salvation and *brachos* to people on that day.

## Wonders and Miracles

There was a harsh decree on the Jewish nation and Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* told his student Reb Mendel Riminover *zt'l* that when he (Rebbe Elimelech) goes to heaven, he will not rest until the decree is abolished.

But Rebbe Elimelech was *niftar*, and the evil decree was still threatening.

Rebbe Elimelech came to Rebbe Mendel Riminover in a dream and explained, "Here in heaven, I see that everything is for the good, so why should I work to annul the decree?"

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* says that this awareness prevents tzaddikim in heaven from praying for the Jewish nation. From their perspective, in heaven everything is good, so why should they pray to change matters?

But on the *yahrtzeit*, a part of the tzaddik's *neshamah* comes down to the grave. He is back in this world, and he sees the hardships people have as we perceive them. This inspires the tzaddik to pray. The root of his *neshamah* is before Hashem's throne. He davens from that high place and annuls the harsh decrees.

Let us, therefore, discuss some of the Bas Ayin's deeds of kindness and even the miracles he performed in his lifetime, as these are a symbol of the miracles he continues to perform for all Yidden, especially on his *yahrtzeit*.

## Deeds of Kindness

As is well known, a tragic earthquake rocked Tzefas and Teveria on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Teves, 5597/1836. The houses in Tzfas were built on a slope, one next to the other, and when the earthquake erupted, the weak foundations collapsed, and the homes rolled

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8. The Meor Einayim (*Shabbos*) teaches that when one studies the *sefarim* of a tzaddik, it is considered as though he is at his gravesite.

down the mountain, one house falling on the next.

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

The Bas Ayin was in his *beis medresh* davening Minchah when the earthquake struck, and the walls began to shake. Some people wanted to rush out of the *beis medresh*, but the Bas Ayin instructed everyone to gather around him. Most of the dome roof collapsed, the four walls fell, but around the Bas Ayin the roof remained intact, and miraculously, they were all saved.

During the earthquake, the Bas Ayin threw himself to the ground and davened.<sup>9</sup>

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

The Bas Ayin and his *chassidim* (and other survivors of the earthquake) sought to save whoever they could from beneath the rubble. It was raining and cold, but people were buried in the wreckage and needed help, and there were *niftarim* who needed to be extricated and brought to burial.

Then the question was, where to go? Most of the homes were destroyed, and rebuilding them would cost a lot of money. Many *rabbanim* thought it was time to leave Tzfas and move to Yerushalayim, and most of the Prushim community did so.

However, the Bas Ayin toiled and succeeded in re-establishing the Jewish community in Tzfas. He sent people to *chutz le'aretz* to collect money. The city of Tzfas was rebuilt, this time on top of the mountain instead of on the slope, with space between each home.

So, the Bas Ayin saved and helped many people in his lifetime.

He did so once again at his *petirah*. The year was 5601, and a plague raged the city of Tzefas from the beginning of that year. 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 with him secret, profound lessons that he heard from his teachers. However, Reb Shmuel Heller's family feared to allow Reb Shmuel to visit the Bas Ayin, who was ill with the contagious plague.

Reb Shmuel Heller always regretted that he lost this opportunity.

Before the Bas Ayin's passing, he said, "I'm the last victim of this plague. After me, no one will die." And that is what happened.

One year before Pesach, the *gaba'im* wanted to paint the *beis medresh*. The Bas Ayin asked them to wait. He explained that before Pesach, the husbands need a place to escape. Because, often, *erev Pesach*, the homes are topsy-turvy and there is friction at home. Where will the husbands go to if his *beis medresh* is locked due to renovations?"

The Bas Ayin would feel the pain of his fellow man.

He writes (*Chukas* ד"ה א"י זאת חקת), "I heard from the Bardichover Rav *zt'l*, who said in

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

The following words were engraved on a plaque in the *beis medresh*, "How holy is this place! The *beis medresh* of Reb Avraham Dov the Rebbe of Auvritz *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.

the name of the Magid of Mezritch that a גזירה שווה, *gezeirah shavah*, means that when your fellow man is suffering from some matter you should feel his pain exactly as he feels it." גזירה, the *gezeiros* and hardships of your fellow man, שווה, you should feel them equally.

"The primary *gemilus chasadim*, kindness you can do for your fellow man is to feel his pain as though it were your own. This is alluded to in the word, אהה , because - א"ה אהה means you should feel you are the אהה, brother, דל"ת of the poor."

The rav of Tzfas, Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l*, served as the city's doctor for his *parnassah*. But to be a doctor, he had to study medical books written in foreign languages (not in *lashon hakodesh*). Once, during Shacharis, he saw the goyishe letters (of his medical books) before his eyes. He realized that being a doctor was disturbing his *avodas Hashem*, so he decided he wouldn't serve in that position anymore.

Sometime later, a person took ill and came to Reb Shmuel Heller. Reb Shmuel informed him that he was no longer a doctor. So the sick person went to the Bas Ayin, complaining that he didn't have anyone to go to because Reb Shmuel Heller didn't want to treat him anymore.

The Bas Ayin summoned Reb Shmuel Heller and put his hand over Reb Shmuel's forehead. From then on, Reb Shmuel didn't see the goyishe letters, and he once again served as the doctor of Tzfas.

These stories are examples of the Bas Ayin's desire to help others and to bring salvation to others. He certainly continues doing so now from heaven and his holy grave, especially on his *yahrtzeit*.

## The Seudas Hilulah

Some years ago, there lived a Slonimer chassid in Tzfas by the name of Reb Shlomo Gross *z'l*. He sold kerosene for his *parnassah*, but barely earned a living, and there was hardly any food in his home.

On the night of the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*, Reb Shlomo davened at the Bas Ayin's grave, and that night, the Bas Ayin came to him in a dream and said, "I appreciate that you davened at my grave,<sup>10</sup> but why didn't you make a *seudah* for me?"

Reb Shlomo Gross gathered ten people in the morning, and they made a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. He couldn't afford to make the *seudah* on his own, 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 very large sum of money. He donated a portion of it to the Slonimer Yeshiva and requested that the yeshivah use the funds annually to make a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin.

Reb Shlomo Gross stipulated some conditions for the *seudah*. There should be a white tablecloth, *divrei Torah*, and stories of the Bas Ayin, resembling the *seudah* he made on the day of his salvation.

This tradition continues to this day in the Slonimer Yeshivos, and it is still funded by the money Reb Shlomo Gross won on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*.

Many people make a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin (or at least, cake and 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 at home, and for a long time, they couldn't find a *shidduch* for her.

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10. The *Zohar* states that *tzaddikim* have pleasure when people daven on their graves.

On the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*, the *gadol* sent some of his students to Tzefas to daven at the Bas Ayin's *kever* and make a *seudah* for the poor people of Tzefas in honor of the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*. Two weeks later, his divorced daughter was engaged.

The following happened in תשע"ז in Eretz Yisrael.

The tax department audited someone and discovered that he was claiming his personal expenses as business expenses. For example, his business needed one car, but he filed on the tax return that both his cars were purchased for the business.

As the investigation progressed, more evidence of tax evasion surfaced. He remembered the *segulah* of making a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. He promised that if everything turned out well, he would make a *seudas hilulah* on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*.

Immediately after making this *kabbalah*, the agents stopped the investigation and said, "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 couldn't fall asleep at night, and he went to a doctor to get sleeping pills. But the doctor told him to take an EKG.

When the doctor saw the results, he asked, "When was the last time you visited your cardiologist?"

"About a half year ago. Why? Is something wrong?"

"Something is terribly wrong. Make an appointment as soon as possible."

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

The doctor said, "There is no time to wait. I will arrange the appointment for you..."

After a few clicks on the computer, he said, "You have an appointment for tomorrow morning."

The cardiologist examined him and saw that one of his primary arteries was almost entirely blocked. The doctor wanted to do the surgery that very day, but the man pleaded that there was something urgent that he must take care of. He explained, "My bank manager told me that if I don't deposit a large sum of money today, my 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 said, "O.K., you can take care of the bank today. But tonight, at midnight, stop eating, and tomorrow we will do the procedure."

The *yungerman* immediately called a friend and asked him to lend him a large sum of money. He told him about his financial emergency, as well as his financial situation.

He added, "I did so many *segulos* for wealth, but it seems that none of them worked."

His friend 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 likely saved your life. Perhaps the *segulos* you performed are helping you in other ways, instead of *parnassah*."

The point was accepted.

His friend 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 surgery tomorrow."

The *yungerman* replied, "You just reminded me: This morning, in 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 borrow from one person 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 today?' Now it seems that he was speaking with *ruach hakodesh*. Perhaps my life was saved because of that *seudah*..."

That night, he made a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. The meal ended before midnight when he began his fast.

The surgery was successful.

The sister of a forty-year-old *bachur* was in Tzfas, תשע"ח, davening by the Bas Ayin's *kever* at the *yahrtzeit*. She made a *kabbalah* that if her older brother becomes a *chasan*, she and her family will conduct a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin.

It took just thirty days, and on the 22nd of Teves, her forty-year-old brother became a *chasan*! The following year, on the 12th of Kislev, they made a large celebration in honor of the *yahrtzeit*, as she promised.

### Children

The Bas Ayin never had children; therefore, people consider his *kever mesugal* for davening to bear children.

A couple was childless for many years, and after many medical tests, doctors told them that it was impossible for them 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, they had a son.

There was a childless couple who couldn't daven at the Bas Ayin's *kever* because the husband was a *kohen*. So, they went to the Bas Ayin's beis medresh and davened there.

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

How do we know this story? Because this *yungerman* lives in Yerushalayim, and one Shabbos he was visiting his father-in-law in Bnei Brak, this time together with his newborn baby, and on Shabbos, he was searching for a Bas Ayin. The beis medresh he looked in didn't have one. He met with Reb Yeshayah Tishler Shlita and asked him where he could find a *Bas Ayin*. Reb Yeshayah told him, "I have one at home. Come with me, and I will lend you a *Bas Ayin*."

While they were walking, Reb Yeshayah asked him why he wants specifically Bas Ayin.

The *yungerman* told Reb Yeshayah his story and the salvation that he experienced.

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

As he was going from store to store, he met with Reb Motel Rothman Shlita. The *yungerman* expressed his financial hardships to Reb Motel, and the latest one, that his washing machine broke, and he can't afford to buy a brand-new appliance.

Reb Mottel tried to convince him that he shouldn't 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 on his grave. Let's go there, and *be'ezras Hashem* you will have a *yeshuah*."

They traveled together. Throughout the trip, this *yungerman* had one thought in mind: washing machines. He was considering whether he should buy a new machine or a used one, and if he buys a new machine, he agonized over where he would get the money and which size and brand to buy.

Finally, they arrived at the *tzion*, and each person davened that Hashem grant them salvations in the merit of the holy tzaddik, the Bas Ayin.

Then they went to Meron (a short drive away) and davened at Reb Shimon bar Yochai's kever. Now it was 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.

As they left the supermarket, the *yungerman's* cell phone rang. A while back, he had given tzedakah for a Chinese auction.

Now they called to tell him that he had just won a brand-new washing machine!

Reb Mottel Rothman says that he also had a *yeshuah* on that day - but he had a far greater *yeshuah*. He davened for more important matters than for a new washing machine. When the gates of heaven are open, and we have the opportunity to ask for whatever we want, we should be wise and ask for big things.

You can ask for the small things too but don't limit yourselves. There's no limit to how much Hashem can give us.