

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Vayeitzei



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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## Torah Wellsprings - Vayeitzei

### From Hashem

Forty years ago, there was a snowstorm in Yerushalayim on Purim, and a poor man couldn't get around to collect *matanos l'evyonim*. He was distraught and complained, "Why did it have to snow today?"

Reb Nota Zenwirth zt'l told him, "I have proof that it had to snow today."

"What's your proof?"

"My proof is that it snowed today. It must be that this is what was meant to be."

Once, it rained in Yerushalayim, and the people in the beis medresh were upset because they didn't have rain gear with them. Reb Nota Zenwirth zt'l told them, "This rain is also according to the Raavad's view, and also like the Rambam."

The people in the beis medresh were talmidei chachamim, and this unusual sentence spiked their curiosity. How was the rain like the Raavad and like the Rambam?

Reb Nota explained, "Whenever the Rambam and the Raavad argue, they ultimately disagree about Hashem's will. The Rambam proclaims that this is Hashem's will, and the Raavad shouts back, 'No, this is Hashem's will.' However, since it is raining today, both the Rambam and the Raavad would agree that this is Hashem's will."

The *parashah* begins with the words ויצא ויעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה, "And Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan." In the *haftarah*, Yaakov's leaving Eretz Yisrael and his travels to Charan (a city in Aram) are discussed once again, but with much more intensity, as it states ויברח יעקב שדה ארם, "And Yaakov escaped to Aram..." The Sfas Emes raises a question on this contradiction. Did Yaakov travel amicably, as implied by ויצא... וילך, or did he run like a fugitive, as indicated by ויברח?

The Sfas Emes answers that the *haftarah* is stating Yaakov's *deeds* while the *parashah* discusses Yaakov's *thoughts* and *feelings*. In his actions, he ran to save his life. His mother, Rivkah, told him (Bereishis 27:43) ועתה בני שמע ועתה בני אהי חרנה בקלי וברח לך אל לבן אחי חרנה, "And now, my son, hearken to my voice, and arise, flee to my brother Lavan, to Haran." He had to run, but that was as far as his actions were concerned. In his feelings, Yaakov was totally calm. He didn't have any worries at all. In his heart, it was ויצא... וילך, like someone taking a stroll to Charan.

Why was Yaakov so calm? The answer is found in the word ויצא. The Megaleh Amukos teaches that ויצא is *roshei teivos* for וירא יעקב צורת ויצא, "Yaakov saw the letter *alef*." א represents the Alufo shel Olam, the Master of the World. He remembered that everything is directed by Hashem, the Master of the World, so he wasn't afraid.

We must know that everything is from Hashem; the good experiences and the difficult ones. Wherever one goes, and whatever happens, one should always keep in mind וירא יעקב צורת א, that everything is from Hashem.

Once, a simple tailor invited the Avnei Nezer *zy'a* to the bris of his firstborn child, born after fifteen years of waiting, and the Avnei Nezer was planning to attend. His *gabbai* asked him, "The Rebbe usually doesn't go to a bris that's far away. Why does the Rebbe want to go to this one?"

The Avnei Nezer replied, "This father made a *kiddush Hashem*, therefore I want to participate in this bris."

"What *kiddush Hashem* did he make?"

"The father told me that he was barren for fifteen years, and Hashem performed a miracle, and he had a son. That was the first time I heard someone say Hashem made the miracle. Generally, I hear people say that the

Gerer Rebbe, the Kotzker Rebbe, or the Radzaminer Rebbe performed the miracle. But this father knows that it was Hashem Who did it. That is a *kiddush Hashem*, and I want to participate in this bris."

This story reminds us that all the good we have comes from Hashem. It wasn't by "the power of my hand," and it wasn't my wisdom, and it wasn't tens of other explanations; it's all from Hashem. The miracles that tzaddikim perform are also from Hashem, the results of their tefillos to Him.

Likewise, we must remember that the hardships we endure are from Hashem, and we believe that they are all certainly for our good.<sup>1</sup>

The Nitra Rav, Reb Michoel Ber Weissmandl *zt'l*, saved many people in the Holocaust. He could have saved thousands more, but evil people in America selfishly and cruelly prevented him. Devastated, Reb Michoel Ber poured out his broken heart to Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitz *zy'a*. The Rebbe replied, "And who did all of that?" The Rebbe was reminding him that this too was from Hashem.

Reb Michoel Ber said that this statement changed his entire outlook. Everything is from Hashem. The cruel people who prevented him from saving thousands of Yidden were certainly punished because they had free will, but the results couldn't have been changed. Everything that occurs is Hashem's will.

Yaakov Avinu worked loyally for seven years to marry Rachel, but Lavan cheated him and brought Leah to the chuppah. Yaakov was upset and told Lavan (29:25) *מה זאת עשית לי הלוא ברחל עבדתיך עמך ולמה רמיתני*, "What is this that you have done to me? Did I not work with you for Rachel? Why did you deceive me?"

The Yid HaKadosh of Peshischa *zy'a* says that Yaakov Avinu erred when he complained to Lavan. Everything is from Hashem, also that he married Leah. Lavan had arranged it, but it was destined to be, so why should he be angry with Lavan?

This doesn't exonerate Lavan in any way. He was certainly punished for his deceitfulness, but we must know that everything that happens is from Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

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1. A family moved into a new home, bordering a large forest. On the day they arrived, the father warned his young son, "Be very careful not to enter the forest alone. There are bears, lions, and other wild animals in this forest. You might also get lost and won't be able to find your way out. Therefore, never go there without an adult."

Once, when the child thought his father wasn't watching, he snuck into the forest. The father quickly pulled on a lion costume and followed his son into the woods. When the child saw a "lion" following him, he screamed, "Father! Mother! Somebody! Please help me! A lion! A lion!" The father got closer to the child, emitted a vicious roar, and bit him. The father did this to scare the child so he wouldn't venture into the forest alone again. The child ran home, terrified and crying.

The child cried to his father, "You won't believe what happened. I went into the forest – I know I wasn't supposed to... but I went there, and a lion chased me and bit me! I called for you, but you didn't come. Where were you?"

The father replied, "I was the lion." Similarly, we must know that everything is from Hashem and certainly for our good.

2. Someone was rambling about politics to a group of people. "The president is a fool... Do you know what he did...?"

A wise man in the group responded, "It states (Mishlei 21:1), *לב מלך ביד ה'*, 'A king's heart is in Hashem's hands.' Monarchs can't do anything on their own."

### Feeling the Tzaar of Others

When a person is going through a hard time, he should be happy with the yesurim and believe it is all for the good. However, when one hears about other people's problems, it is wrong to think, "It's for your good; I'm so happy it happened."

One must train himself to feel the other person's problem as if it were his own and be distressed about it.

Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l (Imrei Shefer) says that this is the reason Moshe told Aharon's family that they shouldn't mourn the death of their brother and son, Nadav and Avihu, on the day the Mishkan was established, but the rest of Klal Yisrael had to mourn for them. As it states (Vayikra 10:6) ויאמר משה אל אהרן ולאעזר ולאיתמר בנו ראשיכם אל תפרעו ובגדיכם לא תפרמו ... ואחיכם כל בית ישראל יבכו את השרפה אשר שרף ה', "Moshe said to Aharon, and to Eleazar and to Isamar his sons, "Do not leave your heads unshorn, and do not rend your garments... But your brothers, the entire

house of Yisrael, shall bewail the conflagration that Hashem has burned." The nation should cry and mourn. It wasn't their misfortune; therefore, it was incumbent on them to feel the pain, not say, "It's bashert, so I don't care." You can say that about your own tzaros but not regarding other people's tzaros.

Rebbe Moshe, son of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l, was very ill as a child. Everyone in the house was crying and begging Hashem that he should recover from his illness. As they were davening, a neighbor came in and said that his son was also very ill and they should daven for him as well. The family did as he requested.

Their tefillos for Rebbe Moshe were answered. The boy began to show signs of improvement, and there was a lot of joy in the Rebbe's home. The Rebbe (Rebbe Dovid of Lelov) rebuked his family. "You heard a few moments ago that a neighbor's son is very sick. How can you be happy when someone else is in tzaar?"

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The man replied, "Yes, I know that *pasuk*, but I'm speaking *without* that *pasuk*. Put the *pasuk* aside, and recognize the truth, the president is a fool... and this minister is cruel..."

The wise man tried again, this time with a parable, "Someone prepared a delicious cholent, but then someone came along and threw in an entire package of salt, making the cholent inedible. He tasted a drop of the cholent and said, 'The truth is that this cholent is very tasty. Put aside the salty problem for a moment, and recognize that it is delicious...' This is what you are telling me, 'Forget the *pasuk* and focus on the facts.' But the fact is that the cholent isn't good anymore, and the fact is that the hearts of kings are in Hashem's hands, and everything that happens is according to Hashem's will."

Another story is about a certain *chevrah kadisha* whose members had a custom to make a *l'chayim* after each *levayah*. The families of the *niftarim* (deceased) were often upset. "We're crying, and they're enjoying liquor and hard drinks."

Some of those bereaved families complained to the rav of the city. The rav summoned the *chevrah kadisha* and asked them to explain their strange custom.

They answered, "We hear so much *kefirah* (heresy) while we perform our mitzvah. Some people say that the doctors caused the death, others blame the family for not taking better care. But it's all false because the person died when it was destined for him to die. We feel we must take some *mashkeh* and proclaim שהכל נהיה בדברו, 'everything happened by His word,' to remember that everything happens through Hashem's plan."

The rav was pleased, "But why must you drink alcoholic beverages?" You can make a *shehakol* over any other drink?"

They smiled, "If we merit to perceive this truth, don't we deserve a drop of whiskey and a *lechayim*?"

Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorke was in the home (of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov) when this occurred, and he would say that this is the meaning of the Gemara (Megillah 28.) "People asked Reb Zeira, 'Why did you merit a long life?' He said, 'I was never happy when my friend had a downfall.' This Gemara is difficult to understand. Is that a merit for which one will live long? To be happy that your fellow man has problems is simply cruel and disgusting.

Reb Zeira meant that even when there were other reasons to be happy in his life, something good happened to him; he didn't allow himself to be happy when he knew that his friend was going through a hard time.

When Sarah gave birth to Yitzchak, there was a lot of joy and happiness in the world. Rashi (Bereishis 21:6) writes, "Many barren women were able to bear children together with her, many ill were healed on that day... and there was a lot of joy in the world."

Why was this miracle necessary? Why did many people receive their salvation when Yitzchak was born? It is because Avraham and Sarah had perfect middos, and they wouldn't be able to rejoice in the miracle that happened to them when they knew that there were people who were suffering in the world. Therefore, at this time, Hashem brought a lot of laughter and joy to the world so that Avraham and Sarah could also rejoice.

The Yalkut Shimoni (Mishlei ch.14, תתק"י) says that Moshe sent Yisro back home, and he didn't permit him to stay for Matan Torah because Yisro hadn't participated in the pain and the hard work in Mitzrayim. אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא בני היו משועבדים במיט ולבנים במצרים ויתרו היה יושב בתוך ביתו בהשקט ובא לשמוח עם בני לפיכך וישלח "Hakodosh Baruch Hu said, 'My children were enslaved, working with tar and bricks in Mitzrayim, and Yisro was comfortable in his house. And now he wants to come and to rejoice with My children?' Therefore, Moshe sent his father-in-law home."

Reb Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi zt'l (דבריו הן, his lessons are for his holy memory) asked that also the ערב רב (the Egyptians that Moshe converted before yetzias Mitzrayim) didn't work hard in Mitzrayim. Why were they permitted to receive the Torah?

Reb Boruch Mordechai answered that the problem wasn't that Yisro didn't work as a slave in Mitzrayim. The problem was that he didn't feel the pain of others. Whoever doesn't participate in the tzaar of others doesn't deserve to rejoice together with them.

We will now prove that we must feel the pain of every Yid, and even of those who are still distant from the ways of Yiddishkeit and who haven't yet found the path of Torah.

Rashi (Bereishis 6:7) says that when Noach was in the teivah, he had to live with tzaar because the world was in tzaar. The people of his generation were resha'im, nevertheless, Noach had to experience their pain. Certainly, we must feel the tzaar of another Yid, no matter what level they are at. We shouldn't say, "He isn't my type of Yid. I don't have to care about his tzaros." When a Yid is in tzaar, we must participate. Our hearts must be with them.

Indeed, it was the ways of tzaddikim to participate in the tzaar of others. We will give just a few examples:

Reb Mordechai Shulman zt'l, rosh yeshiva Slabodka, said that when he was a bachur, he slept in the Chofetz Chaim's home, and the Chofetz Chaim would sleep without a pillow! This was during World War One, and the Chofetz Chaim explained, "When Yidden are sleeping in bunkers, I can't sleep on a pillow" (Meir Einei Yisrael vol.1, p.90).

During World War Two, the Kopishnitzer Rebbe zt'l wouldn't eat meat on a weekday, although doctors told him that he should eat meat for his health. The Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitz zt'l wrote him that he should be cautious with his health and follow the doctors' diet. The Kopishnitzer Rebbe replied, "I also consider it important to listen

to the doctors' counsel, but I made a kabbalah and a decision that I won't eat meat on a weekday until Hashem will look down from heaven and have compassion on His nation. I tremble with fear when I think about the great tzaros and devastation that our brothers of Bnei Yisrael are suffering. The hairs on my head stand up in fright..."

Reb Shneur Kotler zt'l studied in Yerushalayim as a bachur, and before returning to America for his chasunah, he went to his grandfather, Reb Issar Zalman Meltzer zt'l, to receive his brachos. Reb Issar Zalman benched him, and then Reb Issar Zalman walked him outdoors to the stairs of his house. He walked down two stairs with Reb Shneur, and Reb Shneur walked down the rest of the stairs himself. Someone asked Reb Issar Zalman why he doesn't go down all the steps with his grandson. He replied, "The stairs I didn't go down are for the thousands of young men who couldn't get married." He was referring to the thousands who were killed al kiddush Hashem before they could get married and build a family. He didn't want to forget the tzaar of so many others, even during the joyous time of his grandson's marriage.

Hashem doesn't expect us to sleep without a pillow, stop eating meat, or abstain from joining in family *simchos*. But we must feel the tzaar of Bnei Yisrael. Chalilah that we should be callous when the blood of Bnei Yisrael is spilling like water. Chalilah, if we don't participate in the feelings of anguish and fear that is the portion of so many families today. There are also many families

that have left their homes to live in safer areas. They live in galus, without knowing when, and if ever, they will return to their homes. It would be very insensitive to live a completely comfortable life, with the only change being that we listen to the news more often than before.

What should a person do if he doesn't feel the pain and agony of others? The Chazon Ish zt'l advises that he should daven for them and try to help them. Doing so will eventually cause them to genuinely care about the plight of others.

We quote the Chazon Ish's letter (Igros vol.1, 123): "You aren't feeling other people's tzaar. The counsel is that you should try to help your fellow man going through hard times and daven for him. Even if the words of tefillah aren't from your heart. And this is even if the person in tzaar is a simple and ordinary person."<sup>3</sup>

### Lessons from the Sun

It states in Tehillim (19:2) השמים מספרים כבוד א-ל ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע, "The heavens recite Hashem's glory, and the sky tells of the work of His hands." When one looks up at heaven, one sees the sun, moon, stars, and the vastness of creation, recognizing Hashem's greatness and splendor.

The chapter uses the sun's light as an analogy to the great light of the Torah. As it states (19:8-9) תורת ה' תמימה... מאירת עינים, "Hashem's Torah is perfect...enlightening the eyes." Rashi writes, "The Torah illuminates

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3. The Brisker Rav would speak about the importance of saying Tehillim. He said, "In the future when we discover what we could have accomplished with Tehillim, every person will rip the hair out of his head that he didn't recite more Tehillim.

Year תש"ח, there was a bitter war in Yerushalayim. One day, there was a break in the war, and the Brisker Rav zt'l went outside to get some fresh air, and he met up with the gaon and tzaddik, Reb Zev Eidelman. Reb Eidelman said, "Yesterday was an especially difficult day in the war. There were so many bombs..."

The Brisker Rav replied, "It is true that yesterday was a hard day, but because it was so hard, everyone davened. Today, things have calmed down, and people are returning to their daily routines, and therefore, I say today we need even more rachamim."

like the sun, as it states מאירת עינים, 'enlightening the eyes.'"

So, the sun reminds us of Hashem's endless greatness, and the sun reminds us of the bright light that's in the Torah. There are other essential lessons that one can learn from the sun.

One is that after the sun sets, it rises again. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l says that this reminds us that hard times will be followed by good times. The Chofetz Chaim bases his lesson on the following Gemara (Avodah Zarah 8.):

"The day Adam HaRishon was created, he saw the sun set and said, 'Oy! Because of my sin the world will become dark and return to be תהו ובהו, nothingness. This is my death sentence that was decreed on me.' He sat [in a fast], and he cried all night long, and Chavah cried opposite him. When the morning came, he said, 'It is the way of the world (מנהגו של עולם הוא), and he sacrificed an ox [as a korban todah]."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l repeated this Gemara during the chaotic times and

upheavals caused by World War One. He expressed that the next night, when Adam saw the sun set, he wasn't afraid. He knew that this was the way of the world. The sun sets, and then rises again. The Chofetz Chaim explained that people shouldn't lose hope due to the turmoil of the times. There have been hard times for Klal Yisrael in the past, but the sun shone for them in the end, and good times followed.<sup>4</sup>

This lesson is very applicable to our times. Some people worry, "What will be the future of Bnei Yisrael?" We are encouraged by the knowledge that there were dark times in our past, but in the end, the sun shone, and it became good for Bnei Yisrael.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Toras Moshe, Chayei Sarah ד"ה ויגוע) discusses another message that we can learn from the sun. The sun teaches us that one only appreciates light and goodness when preceded by darkness. The Zohar (Tazria 47:) states, "If it weren't for darkness, one wouldn't appreciate the good of light." The same applies to the good of wealth or health and all other good aspects of life. One only appreciates them when he knows of the opposite.

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4. We can learn several other lessons from Adam HaRishon's story. One is that his fright was unfounded. He thought that the sun setting meant the world was coming to an end, but it wasn't true. It was a mistaken panic. And yet, when he discovered that the sun's setting is part of the daily cycle of the world, he brought a korban todah to thank Hashem for his salvation. We learn from this that we should thank Hashem when we are saved from something we feared and even when the fear wasn't a reality. Yidden in Eretz Yisrael, and actually, in the entire world, are living in difficult times, and sometimes the fears are products of the imagination. Nevertheless, when we discover that there was nothing to fear, we should praise Hashem.

The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 11) says, "The light of creation shone for thirty-six hours. Twelve hours of erev Shabbos, twelve hours of Shabbos night, and twelve hours of Shabbos day, and when the sun set on motzei Shabbos, it became dark. Adam HaRishon was afraid, as it states (Tehillim 139:11) ואמר אך חשך ישופני וליילה אור בעדני 'I said, "Darkness will darken me, and the night will be as light about me."

So, Hashem provided him with two stones. He banged them together, and a spark and fire came out. When he saw the fire, he rejoiced and formulated the brachah of בורה מאורי האש.

From this addition to the story, we learn that even during times of darkness, praise Hashem for the moments of joy. A spark of light in the middle of the night is a reason to praise Hashem.

Another lesson is that Adam, at this time, felt bad because of his sin. He took two stones, and fire came forth. This teaches us that even when you feel low and upset with yourself because of your faults and mistakes, be aware that a holy fire of kedushah can yet emerge from your deeds. There is no reason to despair.

The Chasam Sofer elaborates:

Iyov's wife told Iyov that he should 'bless'<sup>5</sup> Hashem due to the yesurim he suffered. Iyov replied (Iyov 2:10) גם את הטוב נקבל מאת האלקים ואת הרע לא נקבל, "Shall we also accept the good from Hashem, and not accept the bad?" The Chasam Sofer explains that Iyov explained to his wife that the yesurim are for his benefit because afterwards when the yesurim leave, he will properly appreciate the good. The Chasam Sofer explains, "A person who was wealthy his entire life will not recognize the goodness of wealth. Only a poor person who became wealthy can know the preciousness of being wealthy..."

This is an encouraging idea to think of when going through hard times. It is precisely because of these difficulties that we will adequately appreciate the salvation when it comes.

The Gemara (Bava Basra 16:) states, "A precious stone hung from Avraham Avinu's neck. When an ill person saw it, he was healed immediately. After Avraham Avinu's petirah, Hashem placed the stone in the sun." The Chasam Sofer explains this Gemara metaphorically. Avraham appreciated his wealth and good health because he had once been poor and ill. When ill or poor people

saw Avraham, their hearts filled with hope. They understood that their future could turn around, and then they would truly appreciate the wealth and health they would receive.

When Avraham was niftar, they didn't have a live person to teach them this lesson, but the lesson was seen in the sun. The sun taught them that the only way to appreciate light is through the darkness that preceded it.

The next lesson is based on a Midrash from this week's parashah:

It states (28:11) ויפגע במקום וילך שם כי בא השמש, "[Yaakov] arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set."

The Midrash states, "Yaakov wanted to travel on, but the entire world became like a wall preventing him from traveling. כי בא השמש, Chazal say כי בא means כיבה (extinguish). Hashem had the sun set before its time." Rashi writes that the sun set early so that Yaakov would sleep there.

A wall prevented him from traveling on, and the world became dark. These factors seem to represent great troubles for Yaakov Avinu. Indeed, in his dream, he was shown the four *galuyos*, the four future exiles (see footnote).<sup>6</sup> But there was a positive aspect to

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5. She meant that he should say the opposite of a blessing (a curse ch"v).

6. The Ramban quotes a midrash that the malachim climbing the **ladder** were the heads of the nations who would, in the future, afflict the Yidden in the four exiles. The Torah says (28:13) והנה ה' נצב עליו, "Behold Hashem was standing over him." Hashem stood there to protect Yaakov.

Shach al HaTorah says that the first letters of ה' נצב עליו, spell עני, poor (because הו"ה is ה, which begins with the letter yud). It spells עני, poor, to tell us that if you are poor or are suffering in some other way, Hashem stands over you to help you.

Yaakov Avinu saw a ladder in his dream. It was set on the ground, and its head reached the heaven. The Baal HaTurim (28:12) writes, "This hints that when one is thrown to the ground for a moment, he will reach the heavens." So, one shouldn't feel bad when he goes through a period of hardship because tremendous growth will come from it.

There was an astrologer who claimed he knew how to read the stars. The king trusted him and believed his predictions. But someone slandered the astrologer to the king, claiming that he makes things up and doesn't really know anything at all. The king, convinced he was a fraud, ordered one of his strong soldiers to kill the astrologer. The king instructed the soldier, "When I give my signal, shoot him."

The soldier stood to the side and listened as the king spoke to the astrologer. The king said, "You claim to

all of this. The Midrash says, "It is like when a king's friend comes to visit the king. The king says, 'Turn off the lights. I want to speak to him in privacy.' Similarly, Hashem turned off the lights to speak with Yaakov privately."

We discover that when there are difficult, dark times for Bnei Yisrael, it is a time of love; it isn't a time of distance. Hashem is calling us; He wants to speak to us privately.

In review, the sun teaches us (1) to recognize Hashem's greatness – the vastness and wonders of His creation, (2) the illumination that's in the Torah, (3) that even when hardships arrive, good times will come, (4) good is only recognized when it is preceded by the darkness, (5) even when hard times come, it is a time of love. Hashem tells the Jewish nation, "I want to speak with you privately." Hashem wants us to be close to Him, not distant.

### Bas Ayin

On Shabbos, the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, is the yahrtzeit of Rebbe Avraham Dov Auerbach zt'l, the Bas Ayin. The wisest of all men, Shlomo HaMelech, teaches (*Mishlei* 25:27), אכל דבש הרבה לא טוב, וחקר כבודם כבוד honey isn't good, but searching out the honor of the righteous is honorable." The Meiri explains that honey is sweet, but too much will make you sick. When it comes to praising tzaddikim, though, there is no limit to how much you can discuss. The more you praise tzaddikim, the better because when

people hear the praises of tzaddikim, they aspire to follow in their ways.

### His Ways

Towards the end of the Bas Ayin's life, he moved from Avritz, Ukraine, to Eretz Yisrael. He arrived at the Chaifa port in Eretz Yisrael on Rosh Chodesh Elul and planned to leave for Yerushalayim immediately. However, the people of Tzefas wanted him to be with them, and the Bas Ayin agreed to stay with them until after Simchas Torah. 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*, and their *tefillos* will certainly be answered, and it will rain strongly. All the carpets will get wet."

It was this conversation that persuaded the Bas Ayin to remain in Tzefas, and he didn't move to Yerushalayim. He said he wanted to be among Yidden who believed in the power of *tefillah* with such certainty.

The Bas Ayin hardly ever attended *levayos* in Tzefas, but once, a *levayah* passed his home, and he walked with the *niftar* until the burial.

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

The mystery was soon resolved.

In those days, the *niftar* was put into the Arizal's mikvah before the burial. When the

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know everything, so let me ask you, how are things going with you now?"

"Matters aren't good." He sensed there was a problem.

"And when do you think you will die?" the king asked.

"That I don't know, but I do know that I will die three days before the king dies."

The king became frightened. Instead of signaling the soldier to kill him, the king appointed that same soldier to protect the astrologer and become his personal bodyguard.

The astrologer realized that the situation he thought was a problem worked to his benefit because he now received royal protection. The moral of the story is that when we think we have issues, it's very likely that the problems are the solution, and we will soon see how everything is for our good.

*niftar* was brought to the mikvah, the *chevrah kadisha* noticed that the surface of his legs was black, and they asked the *almanah* about it because they needed to know how to prepare him for the burial, and this is the story she told:

When he was younger, working as a merchant in *chutz le'aretz*, he endured many difficult tests, and it came about that he was about to marry a non-Jewish woman. A barrel of hot coal was placed in the center of the wedding hall to heat the cold hall. During the wedding celebrations, his heart filled with fear of heaven, and he jumped into the burning coals.

The non-Jews at the wedding saw this and concluded that the groom was insane. They shouted at him and threw him out of the hall. "That is how he saved himself from the *aveirah*; since then, he is black from the burns."<sup>7</sup>

The Bas Ayin said that he saw a column of fire in front of this man's coffin, so he joined the *levayah*. The Gemara (*Kesubos* 17.) says that this honor (that fire goes before the *niftar*) is given to only one or two people in each generation. That means he is so holy that no one has the right to come too close to him. He merited it because of this *mesirus nefesh*.

When the Bas Ayin lived in Avritz, a meshulach from Eretz Yisrael would annually come to Avritz to collect money, and the Bas Ayin would always ask him

about how life was in Eretz Yisrael. Once, the meshulach said, "What can I tell you? Even the stones of Eretz Yisrael are like diamonds!"

This statement inspired the Bas Ayin to move to Eretz Yisrael.

One day, he met the meshulach in Tzefas, and the meshulach asked the Bas Ayin, "Isn't it as I told you? Isn't Eretz Yisrael wonderful?"

The Bas Ayin replied, "It definitely is. Everything you said is true. However, I don't see the stones of Eretz Yisrael resembling diamonds."

The meshulach, a tzaddik, replied, "Those who have pure eyes see it".

The Bas Ayin secluded himself in a room for several days and didn't let anyone in. He served Hashem there until he reached the level to recognize that even the stones of Eretz Yisrael are diamonds. He came out and made a *seudah* for his chasidim to celebrate this achievement.

### **Anavah - Humility**

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

The Bas Ayin replied that Chazal tell us that we connect with Hashem when we

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7. Someone brought his son to Rebbe Yissachar of Belz *zt'l* and sadly informed the rebbe that his son decided to marry a non-Jewish girl *r'l*.

The Rebbe told the *bachur*, "I cannot convince you not to marry that girl, but I have two requests: Wear a *talis katan* to the wedding and insist that your father attends the wedding."

The *bachur* was very happy with the Rebbe's counsel. 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 on his special day.

At the wedding, there was lots of drinking. The *chasan* became hot and opened his shirt. People saw his *tzitzis* and shouted, "He's still a Jew. He tricked the bride. She thinks he stopped practicing Judaism."

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

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

Indeed, these three *midos* are primary themes in his holy *sefer Bas Ayin*.<sup>8</sup>

### The Earthquake and Saving Tzefas

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

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

The Bas Ayin was in his *beis medresh* davening Minchah when the earthquake began, and the walls shook. Some people wanted to rush out of the *beis medresh*, but the Bas Ayin instructed everyone to gather around him. Most of the dome roof collapsed, and the four walls fell, but around the Bas Ayin, the ceiling 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 while lying on the ground: "I saw that the stones were falling sideways, not downwards. It was like one wall was throwing stones at the opposite wall. I understood that this meant the *samech mem* (the Satan) was executing this disaster. When this occurs, the only protection is total humility. That's why I fell to the ground."

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

Then, the question was where to go. Most of the homes were destroyed and rebuilding them would be very costly. Many *rabbanim* thought it was time to leave Tzefas and move to Yerushalayim. Most of the *Prushim* communities did so.

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

### Chessed and Salvations

In the year 5601, there was a plague in Tzefas. The Bas Ayin became ill and was sick for a few days. He requested that his student, Reb Shmuel Heller *zt'l*, visit him before his demise, as he wanted to share the secrets and profound lessons he had heard

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

9. Today, visitors to the Bas Ayin's *beis medresh* can notice that the ceiling has two levels. This is a remnant of the earthquake when half of the roof 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 Tzefas, 5597. In his great merit, half of the *beis medresh* remained intact, and the Rebbe and his students survived.

from his teachers. However, Reb Shmuel Heller's family was afraid to allow Reb Shmuel to visit the Bas Ayin because the Bas Ayin was ill with the contagious plague.

Reb Shmuel Heller always regretted that he lost this opportunity.

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

One year before Pesach, the *gaba'im* wanted to paint the beis medresh. The Bas Ayin asked them to hold off until after Pesach. He explained that *erev Pesach*, the homes are topsy-turvy, and there can be friction at times. "Where will the husbands escape if the beis medresh is locked due to renovations?"

He writes (*Chukas* (ד"ה א"י ואת חקת), "I heard from the Berdichever Rav *zt'l*, who said in the name of the Magid of Mezritch that a *גיירה שווה*, *gezeirah shavah*, means that when your fellow man is suffering from something, you should feel his pain exactly as he feels it." *גיירה*, 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 *אחד* because *א"ח - דל"ת* means you should feel you are the *אח*, brother, *דל"ת* of the poor."

The rav of Tzefas, 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. Once, during Shacharis, he saw the goyishe letters (of his medical books) before his eyes. He realized that being a doctor disturbed his *avodas Hashem*, so he stopped pursuing this field.

A man became ill and went to Reb Shmuel Heller. Reb Shmuel told him that he wasn't a doctor anymore. 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 called for Reb Shmuel Heller and put his hand over his forehead. From then on, Reb Shmuel didn't see the goyishe letters, and he once again served as the doctor of Tzefas.

Tzaddikim are greater after their passing (*Chulin* 7). Therefore, the great tzaddikim, who brought salvation to people during their lifetime continue to do so after their passing.

We've read some stories of the Bas Ayin's *chesed*. He surely continues helping the Jewish nation, now from heaven and his holy grave, especially on his *yahrtzeit*.

### The Seudas Hilulah

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

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

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

After the *seudah*, Reb Shlomo bought a lottery ticket and won a huge sum of money.

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

He donated a portion of it to the Slonimer Yeshiva and requested that the yeshivah use the funds to pay for an annual *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin.

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

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

Those who find it difficult to prepare a *seudah* can make a *l'chayim* in the Bas Ayin's honor. There are many stories of salvations. Here are a few of them:

One of the *gedolei hador shlita* had a divorced daughter. For a long time, they couldn't find a *shidduch* for her. On the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*, the *gadol* sent some of his students to Tzefas to daven at the Bas Ayin's *kever* and to make a *seudah* for the poor people of Tzefas. Two weeks later, his daughter was engaged.

The following happened in תשע"ז in Eretz Yisrael.

The tax department audited someone and discovered that he claimed personal expenses as business expenditures. As the investigation progressed, more evidence of tax evasion was revealed. He remembered the *segulah* of making a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin, and 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 sure we don't find anything like this."

A *yungerman* from Williamsburg couldn't fall asleep at night and went to a doctor to

obtain 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 half a 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 afterward."

The doctor replied, "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 tomorrow morning."

The cardiologist examined his patient and saw that one of the main arteries was almost entirely blocked. The doctor wanted to perform surgery that very day, but the man pleaded that there was something urgent to take care of. He explained, "My bank manager warned me that my bank account would be closed if I didn't deposit a large sum today." As 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 money. He told him about his financial emergency and his operation.

He added, "I performed so many *segulos* for wealth, and it seems none of them work."

His friend replied, "Certainly, the *segulos* helped you. Just think about the miracle that just happened to you now. You went to the doctor because you weren't sleeping well, which might have saved your life. Perhaps

the *segulos* you perform are helping you in other ways, not specifically for *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 operation tomorrow."

The *yungerman* replied, "You just reminded me that 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? 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.

His surgery was successful.

In the year 5780, the bachurim from the Boyaner yeshiva made a kabbalah that if thirty of their bachurim become chasanim that year, they would make a *seudah* on the *yahrtzeit*.

That year, the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit* was on Shabbos. On Sunday, before the *yahrtzeit*, there were 27 chasanim. Thursday night, the bachurim called me to tell me that the 30<sup>th</sup> bachur was getting engaged that night in Beitar. (They had to make quick arrangements to arrange a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin on Shabbos. I asked them why they chose the number 30, and they themselves didn't know. But this is an example of the miracles that happen in the merit of the Bas Ayin.)

The following year, bachurim from Ahavas Torah, the yeshiva of Reb Tzvi Meir Zilberberg Shlita, made a kabbalah that if twenty-one bachurim become a chasan, they would make a *seudah* on the *yahrtzeit*. Twenty bachurim got engaged, but one of the bachurim left the yeshiva. A few days before the *yahrtzeit*, the 21<sup>st</sup> bachur became a chasan.

### Studying Bas Ayin

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 85:) tells that a blind man went to Reb Chiyah's cave, where Reb Chiyah is buried, and said, "I study your braysos! In this merit, I should have a *refuah* and be able to see again!" Indeed, he had his salvation and was able to see again.

The Ben Ish Chai explains what happened. Chazal tell us that *tzaddikim* in heaven have immense pleasure when people study their *divrei Torah*. Rashi (Bechoros 31:) says that their pleasure is that they feel alive. This is as the Gemara (Yevamos 97.) states, "When you repeat *divrei Torah* of a *talmid chacham*, his lips move in the grave." He feels alive, and that is his immense pleasure.

Chazal tell us that the blind feel like they aren't alive (חיים אינם חיים). This student said to Reb Chiya, "I study your braysos, and I make you feel alive. Please reciprocate and make me feel alive, too. I can't see, and the blind are compared to the dead. Help me so I can see again."

His request was accepted, and he saw again.

We will take this discussion a step further:

Chazal tell us that the poor and the childless are also considered like they are dead. If they study the *divrei Torah* of a *tzaddik*, they give the *tzaddik* life, and they can request, "Just as I gave life to the *tzaddik*, let me also have life. Let me have *parnassah*. Let me bear children."

We don't know exactly how these things work, but our discussion might be the explanation for the following story:

A bachur learned with a man who was married twenty-four years without any children. The bachur made a kabbalah that he would learn a piece of Bas Ayin every single day as a merit that his chavrusah bear a child. The segulah worked. His chavrusah told him that his wife was expecting.

Perhaps the explanation is that by learning the Bas Ayin's divrei Torah, it was like he gave life to the Bas Ayin, so he had a right to request that his chavrusah bear children, so he would also have life, and he shouldn't be among the people who Chazal say, "their life isn't a life."

It was the year 5778, and one of the members of our chaburah had an older daughter at home. She was actually a *very older daughter*, and they couldn't find a shidduch for her. The father made a kabbalah on the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit that he would study Bas Ayin every day. Two weeks later, his daughter became a kallah. The chasunah was two months later, and already before the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit she gave birth to a baby boy and made a bris!

### Tefillos at his Kever

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

A couple was childless for many years, and after many medical tests, the doctors told them that they couldn't 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.

A *yungerman* was walking around the streets of Meah Shearim (where there are many second-hand stores) to see if he could find a store that sells used washing machines.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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