

Good Shabbos Everyone. This story takes place on a sheirut (shared taxi) ride in Eretz Yisroel a few years after the passing of the Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (1878-1953). Two religious people in the back of the cab were talking to each other, and one of them sighed, "Bnei Brak is not the same since the Chazon Ish passed away." "Yes," agreed his friend, "our generation needs great ones like him."

Listening attentively from his seat in the front was the cab driver, Natan, a non-observant Sefardi. He was dressed much differently from his Orthodox passengers in the back. He wore no kippah and sported an open khaki shirt, over a pair of Bermuda shorts, unlike his bearded riders who were dressed in black suits and hats.

Natan turned to the fellow sitting on his right. "Did you hear what the men in the back say? That the Chazon Ish is gone. They are wrong, they don't know what they're talking about!" Surprised that the obviously irreligious cab driver would even know who the Chazon Ish was, the man being addressed retorted, "Well, maybe you haven't heard, but the Chazon Ish passed away a few years ago."

"Well, then you are wrong too," said Natan emphatically. "The Chazon Ish is still around and I can prove it."

By now, all ears were listening to the cantankerous cab driver, and once he had their attention he offered to prove he was right. They all agreed to listen, and the cabbie began his story; My daughter was having difficult labor. She had been rushed to the hospital in Tel Aviv and the doctors had been with her for hours. But the baby just would not come. She was in agony and the doctors who seemed helpless told me that there was nothing they could do.

As they discussed her situation, an old nurse, who saw my predicament, came over to me and said, "Why don't you go to the Chazon Ish?" "The who?" I asked. "What is the Chazon Ish?" "He is a great rabbi," the nurse said, "and he helps people." At my wit's end, I asked her, "But where does he live?" She told me, "Just get to Bnei Brak and once you get there any child in the street will be able to direct you."

I got into my cab and raced to Bnei Brak. In no time I was at the Chazon Ish's house. It was late at night, but he answered my knock himself. In a quiet and friendly manner he asked how he could help me. I told him of my daughter's pain and how the doctors could not help her. He looked at me, smiled and said, "Go back to the hospital. The child was just born." He shook my hand and wished me mazel tov.

My heart leaped with joy, but I could not believe him. I dashed back to the hospital and when I got there, sure enough, the child had already been born — exactly as he had said!" In the sheirut (shared taxi) all that listened to Natan's tale were spellbound — but Natan was not finished. He went on with the second part of his story:

Two years later, my daughter was again expecting a child. Once again she had a difficult labor and once again the doctors could do nothing to speed up the birth of the child. I remembered what had happened the last time and so, this time, I didn't wait for the old nurse. I got into my cab, rushed to Bnei Brak and went to the Chazon Ish. I came to the corner where I thought he lived and just to be sure I asked a passerby, "Is this the home of the Chazon Ish?" The man looked at me as if I had come from outer space. "What's the matter with you? Don't you know that the Chazon Ish passed away a year ago." My heart fell. I felt as if it were the end of the world for me. It was as if I had lost my best friend. I began pleading to this total stranger. "I came here to speak to him; it's an emergency. To whom do I go now?"

"People go to his kever (gravesite) and pray there [so that the Chazon Ish will act as a heavenly advocate for the mother]," he told me. "Where is he buried?" I queried. The man pointed me in the direction of the cemetery. I ran there at breakneck speed and jumped over a fence to get to some people who might be able to tell me where he was buried. They pointed to a grave that was covered with stones and pebbles.

When I saw his name on the stone, I fell on the grave, prostrating myself over it and began crying uncontrollably. I lay on the stones begging the Chazon Ish to pray for my daughter. "Rebbi," I said, "You saved my daughter once before, please pray for her again." I was there a short time, and I suddenly saw his face with that same smile and could hear his voice saying to me, "Mazel tov, the child has been born," and that I should go back to the hospital. Startled, I got up, ran to my cab and rushed back to the hospital. When I got there, they told me that my second grandchild had indeed been born. Then the cabbie turned to his companion in the front seat and said, "And these people in the back say the Chazon Ish is gone!" (p. 194 "The Maggid Speaks" Reb Paysach Krohn.)

We should all search out the grave sites of the holy righteous Rabbis who have lived throughout the generations. There we can pray to the soul of the deceased Tzadik or Tzadekes, that he or she should intervene on our behalf. This concept is hinted to in our portion this week, Parshas Vayishlach.

The Torah tells us this week of Rochel Emainu's (our patriarch) demise. The verse states: "Yakov set up a monument over her grave; it is the monument of Rochel's grave until today." (Bereishis 35:20). The Torah's choice of words in this verse, namely the words "until today" is quite interesting. We know that the Torah is written to have meaning for every generation. Thus, "until today" seems to suggest eternity, because whenever we read the verse, it refers to the present.

One might think that the grave has little connection with the deceased. Because, a year after death, the soul leaves the body forever. However, it is taught that the soul still retains some connection with the physical shell. That shell – the body - had housed the spiritual essence of the person for its tour of duty on this earth. It is for this reason that we go to the cemetery, which is euphemistically referred to as the "Bais HaChaim" the "house of the living." Because at the cemetery we can connect with the spiritual essence of the person, which is eternal.

In the case of the righteous Tzadikim, we can go to their graves to ask them to intervene and advocate Upstairs, on our behalf. Therefore, we can perhaps understand the abovementioned verse to be hinting to the staying power of the Righteous even after their death. "Yakov set up a monument over her grave; it is the monument of Rochel's grave until today." That means to say that the Torah here is hinting to the fact that Rochel's grave is still a place where prayers can be answered. Hashem should help that all of our prayers be answered. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."