

And he became frightened and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the Abode of G-d, and this is the gate of the Heaven!” (28:17)

It was the 28th day of *Sivan* 1930; the crowd gathered to partake in the *chanukas ha'bayis*, dedication, of *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*. While it was not the first *yeshivah* in Poland, it was the most innovative. This was truly an auspicious occasion. The **Gerrer Rebbe, zl**, the *Imrei Emes*, was given the honor of addressing the assemblage. He quoted the above *pasuk*, asking why a redundancy of the word *zeh*, this, occurs: *zeh Bais Elokim v'zeh Shaar ha'Shomayim*; “This is the Abode of G-d; this is the gate of the Heavens.” He cited the **Baal Shem Tov, zl**, who explained this *pasuk* based on a statement of *Chazal* in the *Talmud Shabbos* 31b. *Chaval al d'les lei darta v'tara l'darta avid*, “Woe (what a waste it is) for he who does not have a courtyard, yet makes a gate for his courtyard.” *Rashi* explains that the Torah is the gateway through which one enters to avail himself of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. Therefore, it is incumbent that fear of Heaven should precede the study of Torah. *Yaakov Avinu* studied Torah for fourteen years (after leaving home). Now, he has arrived at this holy site (*Har HaMoriah*), where he was privy to a Divine vision, experiencing the dream of the ladder with Hashem sitting on top. The Patriarch said, “This place is the Abode of G-d. The other *zeh*, place, the *yeshivah* of Shem and Ever where I studied Torah for fourteen years, was merely the gateway to prepare me for *yiraas Shomayim*.”

The *Rebbe* continued, “The *yeshivah* is an impressive edifice. *Yehi ratzon*, may it be the will of the Creator, that it should be both: the gate to the courtyard; and the courtyard. The students who toil in Torah should, likewise, be engendered with *yiraas Shomayim*.”