

## The sons of Yaakov were twelve... the sons of Rachel were Yosef and Binyamin... these are the sons of Yaakov who were born to him in Paddan Aram. (35:23,24,26)

The *Rishonim*, early commentators, question the location of Binyamin's birth. The Torah states that he was born in Paddan Aram, when, in fact, he was born outside of Bais Lechem (Bethlehem) on the road to Efras. This is where Rachel *Imeinu* died and was buried. It was clearly not Paddan Aram. *Ibn Ezra* explains that the majority of Yaakov Avinu's sons (eleven) were born in Paddan Aram. *Chizkuni* offers a novel response to this question, which offers us a powerful insight into the concept of *tefillah*, prayer. Indeed, Binyamin was not born in Paddan Aram, but the precursors for his birth, the catalysts which served as the basis for his birth, were the prayers and supplications offered by Rachel in Paddan Aram. Thus, since the prayers that brought about his birth herald back to Paddan Aram, it is considered as if his actual birth took place in that place... not in Bais Lechem. The place where *Tefillah* is articulated is what generates the miraculous response; thus, it is considered to be the place where the response actually occurred.

This grants us a powerful understanding of *tefillah* and a deeper appreciation for its efficacy. *Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl*, offers the following source for this idea. The *Talmud Berachos 54a* teaches, "One who sees a place where the Jewish People had once experienced a Heavenly-ordained miracle, should recite – *Baruch she'asah nissim la'avoseinu b'makom hazeh*, "Blessed is He Who made miracles for our forefathers in this place. The *Talmud* adds: He who sees the stone upon which Moshe *Rabbeinu* sat during the war of Amalek. (That was the place that Moshe sat on a stone and raised his arms heavenward.) This is problematic, since Yehoshua fought Amalek outside of the protective barrier of the *Ananei Hakovod*, Pillars of Cloud. Moshe, however, was sitting on a hill – a place that was not within the cloud's demographic. In other words, *Klal Yisrael's* triumph over Amalek, which should have been the place where they *davened*, was not where they had recited the blessing of *ha'makom ha'zeh*.

We derive from the above that the *makom ha'neis* is not necessarily where we think it is. We have no question, however, that the *neis*, miracle, reverts back to where the person rendered his prayers to Hashem. Thus, if *bachurim*, *yeshivah* students, are studying Torah in a place not frequented by those who are fighting to protect them – and they win – it is all because of the power of the prayers rendered by those who stayed home.

There is a well-known story that occurred concerning the *Brisker Rav, zl*, during the battle of 1948. The Zionists were winning – driving out the Arabs. He said, "Make no mistake; we are not winning because of the Zionists. Their "idea" of success was fighting and overpowering the enemy. Their soldier brandished a sword and bow and arrow. The "other" Jewish soldier studied Torah and fervently recited *Sefer Tehillim!* The *Rav* added that the war of 1948, like all ensuing wars, was not won on the battlefield. "The battle is fought in the *bais hamedrash*. The success of the young men in the study halls will determine the course of the war."