

You shall count them according to their legions – you and Aharon. (1:3)

Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen, working together with the tribal leaders, to take a census of all males over the age of twenty. *Rashi* and *Ramban* offer reasons for making the census at this point. One of the reasons offered by *Ramban* is particularly striking. Each member of the nation had an inherent right to benefit from the personal attention of Moshe and Aharon. What is a better opportunity for such interaction than a census in which each Jew would come before these two leaders and, after telling them his name, be counted as an individual of personal worth. Furthermore, as *Sforno* comments, to present one's name to these Torah giants was a unique honor. A person's name was Divinely inspired to indicate his personal virtues. Imagine an individual telling Moshe and Aharon his name and looking at their countenance as they think about the virtues which his name implies. Certainly, after hearing the name, these two leaders would issue their blessing and pray for the individual. What an unparalleled experience this must have been.

From time immemorial, Jews have presented themselves before a *tzaddik*, righteous person, a *Torah* leader steeped in Torah and virtue, to petition the blessing of these holy individuals. We believe that the *tzaddik* serves as a conduit for Hashem's blessing. To believe in a *tzaddik's* power to the exclusion of Hashem is not only ludicrous – it is false. A non-practicing Jew once came to a *tzaddik* to petition his blessing. He prefaced his request with the following introduction of himself: "I have heard great things about you. I have heard that you are a miracle worker, and I am in need of a miracle. As for my background, I went through the Holocaust. I neither pray to G-d, nor do I believe in Him. Nonetheless, I still believe in the power of *tzaddikim*. My father was a *Bobover chasid*, and he always went to the *Rebbe* for a blessing. This has remained with me throughout my life."

The *Rebbe* replied that a *tzaddik* (understandably) has no power of his own. He is merely an extension of Hashem in this mortal world, for the purpose of helping people. He does so by tapping into Hashem's powers. One who does not believe in G-d (*chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid) cannot possibly believe in a *tzaddik*.

One thing is for certain: a person who has achieved *tzaddik* status is on a level far beyond that of the average person. He sees farther and deeper; thus, he is able to make decisions and render advice far beyond that of the average person. The following vignette quoted by *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, is but one example of the uncanny ability of a *tzaddik*.

Horav Chaim Brim, zl, served as a member of the faculty of *Yeshivas Slabodka*. Prior to that, he had been very close with the saintly *Chazon Ish, zl*. *Rav* Chaim maintained the unique custom never to leave *Yerushalayim*. The *Chazon Ish*, who lived in *Bnei Brak*, heard of *Rav* Chaim's brilliant mind and his extraordinary erudition; thus, he wanted to speak with him in learning. Aware

that *Rav Chaim* would not under normal circumstances leave Yerushalayim, the *Chazon Ish* “suggested” to *Rav Chaim* that a trip to the sea shore would be greatly beneficial to his health. *Rav Chaim* understood that to make a trip to the sea without paying a visit to the *Chazon Ish* was unthinkable. This was the beginning of a strong Torah relationship between these two *gedolim*.

Rav Chaim Brim related that a Jew by the name of *Rav Klapholz* lived in Meah Shearim. He was a holy Jew who studied Torah every waking minute of the day. In fact, rumor had it that he did not remove his shoes the entire week. Whatever sleep he had was over his *Gemorah*. *Rav Klapholz* once met *Rav Chaim Brim* and asked if he could come with him to meet the *Chazon Ish*. He required his blessing for an undertaking that he was considering.

Traveling from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak was indeed a journey – half-a-day by bus. *Rav Chaim* related that, despite the hardship of travel, to accompany a holy Jew of *Rav Klapholz*’s stature was well worth it. Alas, when they came to the home of the *Chazon Ish*, they were informed that the *Chazon Ish* was too weak to accept visitors. They decided to remain in Bnei Brak until the sage was up to receiving visitors. They went to the *shul* where the *Chazon Ish* would usually *daven*, and they began to do what they did best – learn Torah. A few hours later, the *gabbai*, secretary, to the *Chazon Ish* notified them that the *Chazon Ish* was coming to *daven Minchah*. The *gabbai* told *Rav Klapholz*, “Your window of opportunity to speak to the *Chazon Ish* is when he washes his hands prior to *Minchah*.”

“Why are you here?” the *Chazon Ish* asked *Rav Klapholz*. “I have a question to ask of the *Rebbe*,” he replied. “What is your question?” the *Chazon Ish* asked. “I have a daughter who has reached marriageable age, and I have no money whatsoever to marry her off. Perhaps I should go to America to raise money?” he asked. “Whose idea is this?” the *Chazon Ish* asked. “It is my idea,” *Rav Klapholz* replied. “If that is the case, go and have *hatzlacha*, be successful.”

Rav Klapholz prepared for his journey. He had very little to pack. After purchasing a “bare-bones” ticket to New York, he left for the airport, where he met *Rav Menachem Porush*, one of Yerushalayim’s most distinguished and prolific citizens. *Rav Porush* asked, “Where are you going?” “I am going to America for the purpose of raising money to marry off my daughter,” *Rav Klapholz* replied. *Rav Porush* was brutally honest when he said, “You are not cut out for such a mission. You would achieve more by just sitting in Meah Shearim learning Torah.” “But the *Chazon Ish* said to me, ‘Go and be successful!’” “Well, if the *Chazon Ish* blessed your journey, then go!” *Rav Porush* rejoined.

Rav Klapholz landed in New York and immediately proceeded to Williamsburg, where he sat himself in a *shul* to learn (apparently, he thought that people would line up at his seat in *shul* and bring him money). The *Satmar Rav, zl*, lived in Williamsburg, and, for health purposes, he would walk daily on a route that took him past the *shul* where *Rav Klapholz* was learning. *Rav Klapholz* had a *halachic* query which he figured he would present to the *Satmar Rav*. He did and was pleased with the explanation. He now realized that the saintly *Rebbe* walked by the *shul* as part of

a daily routine. He decided that he would walk alongside the *Rebbe* and pepper him with his *halachic* questions. After two weeks of adhering to this arrangement, the *Satmar Rav* asked *Rav Klapholz*, "What is a Jew from Yerushalayim doing in America?" "I came to raise money." (Imagine how he was raising money. He still adhered to the notion that all he had to do was go to New York, and the money would just rain down from Heaven.)

"If this is the case," the *Satmar Rav* said, "I will call a meeting of my close *baalei batim*, laymen, and raise the money for you." When the *Rebbe* asks, the *baalei batim* give. There was now sufficient money to marry off this daughter and the next one (coming up). The *Rebbe* told *Rav Klapholz*, "You should know that I very often make appeals for *hachnosas kallah*, wedding arrangements. I have never had such extraordinary success!"

Rav Chaim Brim was not surprised, since the *Chazon Ish* had blessed the endeavor. When a *tzaddik* issues his blessing, it makes all of the difference. There is, however, a postscript to this story. Prior to leaving for America, *Rav Klapholz* went to receive the blessing of the *Tchebiner Rav, zl, Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld*, with whom he was very close. The *Tchebiner's* parting words were: "When you arrive in America – do nothing – just go to the *Bais hamedrash* and learn. Nothing more. Just learn."

We now have a glimmer of the power of a *tzaddik*.