

However, Luz was the city's name originally. (28:19)

A man goes through life – and then he passes to the next world – the real world, the world of Truth. What is left of all the years that he spent on this world? Nothing but memories: no money; no material assets; no distinction – only memories. In order to perpetuate themselves, people build monuments, erect buildings, make tributes to their achievements. Why? So that they will be remembered. We are so fickle. Everything is for one purpose: so that the next generation will not forget us. No one wants to be forgotten, but are we prepared to lead a life that will engender positive memories, so that we will impart to our children and all future generations an enduring legacy of value? The barometer is quite simple: unless one lives a life worth remembering, he will be slowly forgotten, relegated to mausoleums of antiquity.

This is how it has been throughout time. People leave mementos. Wealthy people build cities, villas, skyscrapers with their names emblazoned on them, as if this will ensure their eternal perpetuation. Others erect monuments; some even place their picture on their headstones. There was one city, however, the town of Luz, where this was not necessary. Why? Because no one ever died in Luz. They lived on and on. Apparently, the *Malach Ha'Maves*, Angel of Death, had no permit to enter Luz.

Horav Sholom Yosef Elyashiv, zl, has a deeper understanding concerning the renaming of Luz to *Bais Kail* (Beth El). During the tenure of our Patriarch, Yaakov *Avinu*, the goal of the average mindset was: How does one “establish” himself in the idyllic city of Luz? Imagine living in a city in which no one dies! It would be – utopia! The quality of life in such a city must be outstanding. One would think that the real estate agents and power brokers of that era would have converged on Luz from all four points/directions in the world. Who would not want to set up shop in Luz? Real estate must have been at a premium. Who would not give up his life's savings to be freed from the clutches of the Angel of Death?

By the way, whatever happened to Luz? There is no *zeicher*, remembrance, of it. It is gone; it disappeared, as if it had never existed. Does it make sense that such an extraordinary city should become extinct as if it had never existed? *Rav Elyashiv* explains that Yaakov changed all of that. He visited Luz and called out, “He who wants to memorialize himself, to see to it that he perpetuates himself, should be cognizant of one vital fact: Every moment that he dedicates to Torah study will remain in his behalf forever. It will be an everlasting remembrance.” Torah is Hashem's Divine manuscript, His blueprint for life. Yaakov “changed” the name of Luz to *Bais Kail*. He told the people that if they truly want everlasting life, then it can only be in the “House of G-d,” within the four cubits of *halachah*. To think that Luz will save a person from the Angel of Death is ludicrous. When a person's time is up, the *Malach HaMaves* will find some way to “convince” the person to leave Luz. The angel might not be able to enter, but when one's time is up, the angel will find a way to perform his “ritual.”

Nothing – absolutely nothing – can perpetuate a person's life like his connection with Torah. *Bais*

Kail, the House of G-d, is the place where we can aspire to achieve eternity. This is a powerful lesson to all of those who seek an avenue to perpetuate their existence on this world. Buildings, monuments, enclaves will not do it. A building devoted to Torah study is not your common piece of real estate. It is a House of G-d! It is a true tribute to one's life, to one's values.

Eternity does not have to be about money. Torah study is one's *Bais Kail*, whether it is full time, part time, or even an hour a week. Time devoted to spiritual endeavors is everlasting. Every moment that one spends studying Torah, he accrues eternal merit. Our *Tanaaim*, *Amoraim*, *Rishonim*, *Achronim*, *Poskim*, *Rabbanim* and *Roshei Yeshivah* are as alive and vibrant today as when they walked the halls of the *bais hamedrash*. Luz is a figment of one's imagination. One cannot escape death. True life is only in *Bais Kail*.