

**Vayechi –Goren Haatad, Reminder of Hashem’s shield over us In the Tzaddik’s Merit.
[Insights from Rashi, Rabbeinu Bachaya and Kli Yakar]
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh**

In Bereishis 50:10 we read that the burial entourage for Yaakov Avinu came to a place on the eastern side of the Yarden River called Goren Haatad. In Goren Haatad, they made eulogies and demonstrated a great display of grief over Yaakov’s demise. The mourning was clearly intense enough to attract the attention of the local inhabitants of the land. Moreover the area was named Avel Mitzrayim over this event. What exactly happened here and why was this place or event so significant.

Rashi explains that over here there was a *goren*, threshing floor surrounded by *atda*, thorns. He then brings the Midrash that all of the inhabitants of the land wanted to make war with Yaakov’s sons. However, when they saw Yosef’s crown on Yaakov’s coffin, the local kings placed their crowns on the coffin as well.

Rabbeinu Bachaya also translates *atad* as thorns. Rabbeinu Bachaya also states that *hesped* is only one form of eulogy. [See Rabbeinu Bachaya on these verse for all nine.] By stating that the mourning was very heavy, the Torah is indicating that all nine forms of eulogy were used. Rabbeinu Bachaya then explains that eulogies are meant to be a memory of the good deeds of the deceased and this is the essence of eulogies at funerals till this day.

The Kli Yakar also explains that Goren Haatad was a threshing floor surrounded by thorns. The Kli Yakar then asks, what is the significance of the fact that the threshing floor was surrounded by thorns? Furthermore, it seems from the simple reading of the Chumash that the place Goren Haatad caused the mourning. Why should this be the case?

The Kli yakar explains that it was in Yaakov’s merit that the remaining five of the seven years of famine in Mitzrayim were suspended. Actually, there is a discussion as to whether or not the famine was completed after Yaakov’s demise or not. The Kli Yakar brings the Tosefta in Sotah 10:3 that it did return after Yaakov Avinu passed away. The people in Mitzrayim were well aware of the fact that it was in Yaakov’s merit the famine stopped. When they saw the threshing-floor surrounded by thorns, they realized that it was the merit of the tzaddik allowed them to go into this threshing floor and have sufficient provisions. Now that Yaakov was gone, his protective shadow was gone as well. Furthermore, Mitzrayim saw Am Yisroel as *kotzim*, thorns, as the Torah states in Shemos 1:12 *Vayakutzu*, they became disgusted which has the same root as *kotz*, thorn which are the letters *tzadi* and *beh*. As evil as Mitzrayim was, they understood the concept of a tzaddik protecting them. The sight of Goren Haatad was a clear reminder of all of these ideas so they made a greater display of mourning in this place and the very place took on a special significance.

We see from this entire episode another instance of a tzaddik’s protection over all those around him. Hashem sustains and protects the world in merit of the tzaddikim. Rashi in the

beginning of Parshas Vayetzee alludes to this point in regard to Yaakov Avinu and in Rus in regard to Rus and Naomi. In both cases the verse stresses that the righteous person left. Why is there a need to stress the leaving and not simply state where he/she went? Rashi answers that when a tzaddik is in the city, he is the shine and splendor all of these traits disappear at the departure. It was true in the beginning of Yaakov's life before he was well-known as well as afterwards when he raised his twelve sons, was a well-known name and life of *tzidkus*, righteousness behind him.