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Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde  
Director

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ב"ה



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# Ayin Hara

## What is an Ayin Hara?

Some think of it as an evil omen, a spell of sorts that has the power to bring misfortune upon a person. Others think of it as a type of poison that the eye directs at things that it sees, casting them in an evil light. Yet others see it as a silent wish and prayer to Hashem to pass judgment on a person or situation to judge them more strictly.

While an Ayin Hara has been understood to mean some of these things (as we will learn), it should not be dismissed as a matter of superstition.

In classic Torah sources, the message of an Ayin Hara can serve as an important component of a person's personal growth, both in training oneself to view others in a good light, as well as to be modest and discreet with one's own good fortune to avoid being looked upon with an evil eye.

## The Best and Worst of Human Traits

Some Sages considered adopting a “good eye” to be the most worthy of human aspirations, and the “evil eye” to be the number one trait that should be avoided at all costs.

*Pirkei Avos 2:10*

אמר להם: צאו וראו איזוהי דרך ישרה שידבק בה האדם. רבי אליעזר אומר עין טובה...אמר להם צאו וראו איזוהי דרך רעה שיתרחק ממנה האדם. רבי אליעזר אומר עין רעה...

*[Rabbi Yochanan] said to [his students]: Go and see which is the best trait for a person to acquire.*

*Said Rabbi Eliezer: A good eye.... He said to them: Go and see which is the worst trait, the one that a person should most distance himself from. Said Rabbi Eliezer: An evil eye (Ayin Ra'ah).*

This indicates that a good and evil eye are not just supernatural phenomena that cause harm or blessing, but an attitude that we bring to the things that we see (something we person can avoid or aspire to).

### **Cause of Insanity**

Rabbi Yehoshua teaches that an Ayin Hara can drive a person insane:

*Pirkei Avos 2:11*

רבי יהושע אומר: עין הרע, ויצר הרע, ושנאת הבריות, מוציאין את האדם מן העולם.

*Rabbi Yehoshua would say: An evil eye, the evil inclination, and the hatred of one's fellows, drive a person from the world.*

When a person is jealous of others (which is the cause of an Ayin Hara), filled with desire (Yetzer Hara) and hatred, they are driven to insanity, because instead of appreciating what they have, they feel empty and are left wanting.

On the other hand, a person with a good eye who is satisfied with what he has and is benevolent to others will be happy and filled with gratitude for the portion in life that Hashem has granted him.

## In Halachah

Yiddishkeit's interest in Ayin Hara is not limited to the realm of personal development; there are rulings in Shulchan Aruch in effect today that were instituted in order to avoid scenarios in which people might cast an evil eye and bring harm upon others.

## Calling Two Brothers To the Torah

Immediate family members do not get called up to the Torah in succession:

*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 141:6*

יכולים לקרות ב' אחים זה אחר זה והבן אחר האב, ואין מניחים אל  
בשביל עין הרע;

*Two brothers may be called to the Torah one after the other, and a son after his father, however, practically we do not allow it because of an Ayin Hara.*

Because very few members of the community are afforded the privilege of being given an aliyah to the Torah each time the Torah is read, if we were to honor two immediate family members in succession, it may arouse the jealousy of the congregation and lead them to cast an Ayin Hara.

## Publicizing a Pregnancy

Many avoid announcing a pregnancy (beyond close family) until the fifth month to avoid people casting an Ayin Hara.

We are told that Sarah Imeinu cast an Ayin Hara upon her maidservant Hagar during an early stage of Hagar's

pregnancy, causing her to miscarry.

*Rashi, Bereishis 16:5*

הכניסה עין הרע בעיבורה של הגר והפילה עוברת, הוא שהמלאך  
אומר להגר הנך הרה, והלא כבר הרתה והוא מבשר לה שתהר, אלא  
מלמד שהפילה הריון הראשון:

*[Sarah] cast an Ayin Hara on Hagar's pregnancy, and she miscarried. That is why the malach said to Hagar, "Behold, you will conceive." But was she not already pregnant? Yet he announces to her that she will conceive? Rather this teaches that she miscarried her first pregnancy.*

There is also a custom to hang a *Shir Hamaalos* above the doorway of the room of the mother and baby during and following childbirth as a protection from Ayin Hara.

### **Choson and Kallah**

A Choson and Kallah are prone to an Ayin Hara in the days before the Chasunah. This is why some have a custom for the Choson and Kallah not to go out in public without a shomer (an escort) for protection.

This is also why a kallah wears a veil to cover her face during the chupah, so as to avoid Ayin Hara of onlookers.

We also do not perform one recite one set of brochos (birkas ha'irusin and sheva brochos) to cover for multiple chassanim and kalos at the same time to avoid Ayin Hara.

## Tashlich

On Rosh Hashanah, we visit a body of water, preferably with fish, and recite tashlich (certain pesukim corresponding to Hashem's 13 middos harachamim), because fish remain inconspicuous under water, an Ayin Hara has no power over them (as we will see later on). One of the primary reasons for Tashlich is to daven that, like fish, we should be spared from Ayin Hara.

*Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch 583:7*

ונוהגים לילך אל הנהר שיש בו דגים חיים לסימן שלא תשלוט בנו עין הרע

*We are accustomed to go to a river that has live fish as an omen that no Ayin Hara should influence us.*

## In Our Daily Tefilos

In the daily morning brochos we ask to be spared from Ayin Hara:

*Morning Brochos*

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי, שתצילני היום ובכל יום...מעין הרע

*May it be Your will, Hashem, the G-d of my fathers, that you protect me on this day and every day... from Ayin Hara.*

## Good Looks

When Yaakov's sons first traveled to Mitzrayim to purchase

food during the seven-year famine, Yaakov told them to beware of an Ayin Hara upon entering Mitzrayim, knowing that they were strong and handsome young boys who would have people turning their heads. They therefore entered the capital city through separate gates so as to remain non-conspicuous.

*Bereishis Rabbah 91*

אמר יעקב לבניו אתם גבורים אתם נאים אל תכנסו בשער אחד ואל תעמדו במקום אחד שלא תשלוט בכם עין הרע

*Yaakov told his sons: "You are handsome. Do not enter through one gate and do not congregate in one place so no Ayin Hara will have influence over you."*

### **Seeing Another's Success**

The following Halachah (originally from the Gemarah) is a precautionary measure against casting an Ayin Hara upon the yield of another's farm or upon anything that represents a colleague's success:

*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 183:6*

אסור לעמוד על שדה חבירו להסתכל בה בשעה שהיא עומדת בקמותיה, שלא יזיקנה בעין הרע. ומכל שכן שאסור להסתכל בחבירו, בענין שיש לחוש שזיקו בעין הרע.

*It is forbidden to stand and look at a colleague's field of standing grain, lest one damage it with an Ayin Hara. Surely, it is forbidden to gaze on a person in a manner that might arouse the influence of an Ayin Hara.*

Nowadays, this would apply to paying excessive attention to someone's success, be it their business, property, possessions, or in any other area that may lead to casting an Ayin Hara.

The Gemarah says it is forbidden to stand and look at a colleagues success. What source is there in the Torah for such a prohibition?

Like many issues in Torah, this is subject to a machlokes of rishonim:

### **Ayin Hara = A Matter of Piety**

According to the Rambam, the prohibition against standing in a colleagues field is not from the Torah at all. In fact, the term "osur" ("forbidden") is only used loosely, referring to an issue that is merely a matter of chassidus (piety).

*Shut HaRambam 395*

הא דאמרינן שלא יראה אדם בקמת חברו משום עינא בישא, אלו דברי חסידות הם שלא יעיין בו בעין הרע

*That which the Sages said that one should not look at a colleague's field of standing grain because of an Ayin Hara, these are words of piety that he should not look at it with an evil eye.*

### **Do Not Covet**

While the Rambam maintains that refraining from entering into situations in which one may be tempted to cast an Ayin Hara is only a stringency, there are opinions that maintain this prohibition in fact has a source in the Torah.

R' Yaakov ben Chananel Skili (14th Century), a close disciple of the Rashba, is one such opinion:

*Toras Haminchah, Mishpatim 25*

בלא תחמוד תלוי כל היזק שיבוא לאדם מחברו על ידי ראיית העין

*Every damage that a person brings upon his colleague by way of seeing with the eye is a derivative of “Lo Sachmod” (“Do not covet”).*

Jealousy is what inspires an Ayin Hara. When people are jealous of each other, they cannot stand the other's success to the extent that it is not beneath them to wish harm upon their fellow. Coveting a neighbor's belongings is an issur deoraisah and is counted as the tenth of the aseres hadibros.

### **Severity of an Ayin Hara**

What the above halachos indicate, is that in Yiddishkeit, Ayin Hara is seen as a very real phenomenon, and Chazal took it very seriously. In fact, they said:

*Midrash Tanchuma, Miketz 8*

אין קשה מעין הרע

*There is nothing more severe than Ayin Hara*

And they recommended that we take it seriously too:

*Bava Basra 118a*

איבעי ליה לאיניש לאיזדהורי מעינא בישא

*People should be vigilant to protect themselves from*

## *Ayin Hara*

### **The 99%**

So damaging is an Ayin Hara, that they saw it as the greatest cause of death, greater even than heart disease and age!

*Talmud, Bava Metzia 107b*

תשעין ותשעה בעין רעה ואחד בדרך ארץ

*Ninety-nine percent of people die because of an Ayin Hara, and only one of natural causes.*

How is it possible that 99% of deaths are caused by an Ayin Hara? Today's coroners find all sorts of reasons to explain why people died, least of which is an Ayin Hara. What might the Talmud mean when it says that 99% of deaths are caused by an Ayin Hara?

Moreover, where is the Divine justice in 99% of people losing their lives because someone else cast an evil eye upon them? What wrongdoing did they do to deserve death?

### **The Students of Rabbi Akiva**

Between Pesach and Lag Ba'omer, we mourn the passing of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died in a plague.

The reason the Gemara gives for their deaths is “for not showing respect for one another.”

While certainly a matter of importance, not showing respect is by all means not an offense punishable of death. Why is it given as the reason for their deaths?

The Rebbe explains that the expression the Gemara uses “they died in one time-period” indicates that the cause of their deaths was an Ayin Hara (based on the fact that the Gemara uses similar expressions elsewhere when it refers to an Ayin Hara).

An Ayin Hara therefore caused that they should be judged more severely for not showing respect to one another.

### **How it Works**

How does this work?

Hashem governs the world through two mediums: 1) *Midas hachesed* - the attribute of kindness and 2) *Midas hadin* - the attribute of judgment.

Most of the time we are blessed with Hashem’s kindness and there is more goodness in our lives than we are deserving of.

However, an Ayin Hara is able to arouse the attribute of judgment which causes us to be judged and our fate determined strictly by what we deserve instead of by Hashem’s kindness.

Perhaps this is also the meaning of the Gemara’s statement that 99% die from an Ayin Hara, i.e., that 99% of deaths are brought about by Divine judgment as a result of an Ayin Hara (no matter what the cause of death).

This also explains how Hashem can allow one person to bring harm upon another by way of an Ayin Hara. The other person is not the cause of the harm, he is only able to petition for a heavenly evaluation of the person’s deeds to determine whether they are worthy of blessing, or Rachmana litzlan the opposite.

This is why a person should always see his fate as hanging in the balance and do whatever good he can to become deserving of Hashem's salvation.

*Rambam, Laws of Teshuvah 3:4*

צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה, כאילו חצייו זכאי וחצייו חייב; וכן כל העולם, חצייו זכאי וחצייו חייב: חטא חטא אחד-- הרי הכריע עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף חובה, וגרם להם השחתה; עשה מצוה אחת-- הרי הכריע את עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף זכות, וגרם להן תשועה והצלה

*Throughout the entire year, a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and brings destruction upon himself.*

*[On the other hand,] if he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others.*

There's another explanation for why we don't see 99% of people dying from an Ayin Hara:

It is possible that nowadays it is no longer the case the 99% of people die because of an Ayin Hara. Just as people no longer die prematurely on account of *kareis* (Divine excommunication). The reason for this (as explained in *Iggeres Hateshuvah*) is because in *golus* our physical state is no longer reflective of our spiritual state as it was in the days

when the beis hamikdash stood, so a spiritual deficiency no longer results in physical death (at least not in the way it did in the times of the beis hamikdash).

## Hidden Blessings

In order to get a better understanding of how an Ayin Hara works, let us look at what is arguably the best way to avoid an Ayin Hara—namely, staying under the radar:

*Midrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa 31*

הלוחות ראשונות על שנתנו בפומבי לפיכך שלטה בהם עין הרע  
ונשתברו

*The first set of luchos were given publicly, they were therefore affected by an Ayin Hara and were broken.*

*Taanis 8b*

אין הברכה מצויה...אלא בדבר הסמוי מן העין

*Blessing is only found...on something that is hidden from sight.*

The Gemara advises to keep things private and hidden as a recipe for blessing. The Gemara learns this from the following posuk:

*Devarim 28:8*

יְצוּ ה' אֱתֶיךָ, אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה, בְּאִסְמִיךָ.

*Hashem will order the blessing to be with you*

*Ba'asomecha (in your granaries).*

Granaries are not open for all to see, they are considered a discrete place. Moreover, the word “*ba'asomecha*” —“in your granaries” is related to the word “*samui*”—hidden. The Gemara understands from this posuk that Hashem’s blessings are found on things that are hidden from sight.

For this reason, we avoid counting people in order not to arouse an Ayin Hara, because by counting you reveal that which is hidden (before something is counted its sum—and therefore its measure of success—is not known):

*Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 156:15*

אסור למנות את ישראל אפילו אינו מתכוין רק להטיל גורל על איזה סכום ומספר ואפילו לדבר מצוה אלא מוציאים אצבעותיהם ומונים האצבעות.

*It is forbidden to count Yidden, even if his only intention is to determine an amount or number, even for the sake of performing a mitzvah, instead, they should extend their fingers and the fingers are counted.*

This is why Hashem instructed Moshe to count the Yidden by instructing them to donate a machatzis hashekel to the mishkan:

*Abrabanel, Nachlas Avos 2:11*

חשב הקב"ה לנגף הנופל במנין מפאת העין הרע. ולכן צוה שיעשו אותה צדקה כדי שבזכותה ינצלו בדרך השגחה מאותו הזק.

*Hashem was concerned about a plague that can result from counting due to an Ayin Hara. He therefore instructed that they give [the coin] as tzedakah in order that in its merit they will be saved from harm.*

In the Zohar it is written that all blessing comes from a discrete source:

*Zohar, Parshas Noach 64b*

סתים הוא אתר דכל ברכאן נפקי מתמן

*The hidden realm is the place where all blessings emanate from.*

Perhaps the reason why the Zohar associates blessing with privacy is because Elokus—the source of all blessing—is hidden in this world. It is therefore necessary to maintain privacy in order to remain connected to the source of blessing. Thus, the effect of an Ayin Hara is only possible when one removes themselves from this place of privacy that is connected with blessing.

This concept of the good eye being associated with connectedness to Hashem, and an Ayin Hara, with separateness, is expressed in the explanation for how one blesses and harms by way of a good or evil eye:

*Sefer Chareidim 66:90*

בראותו חבירו בטוב עין הוא יברך וישפיע טוב לחברו וגם יבורך, ולהיפך להיפך בר מינה, דכתיב (משלי כב,ט), "טוב עין הוא יבורך, וקרי יברך."

*When one sees another with a good eye, he bestows blessing and draws good upon his friend and he too is blessed. And the opposite is true as well. As it is stated (Mishlei 22:9), “one with a good eye should be blessed” and it can be read “shall bless.”*

The word “*yevorach*” (which means “is blessed”) can be read “*yevarech*,” (which means “shall bless”). The posuk would then mean that with a simple look at another person, you have the ability to bless them. Unfortunately, this doesn't only work for blessing, but for the opposite of blessing as well.

How do you bless someone by looking benevolently upon them? The Maggid of Mezrich explains that it has to do with seeing things as they are before Hashem (in the case of a good eye), or as they stand separate from Elokus (in the case of an Ayin Hara):

*Ohr HaTorah, Maggid of Mezritch p. 192*

ומי שהוא טוב עי"ן...כשהוא מסתכל בדבר מביא ברכה באותו דבר לפי שהוא יודע שהדבר ההוא כאין נגדו יתברך דהיינו שהוא באמת אפם ואי"ן בלתי אלקותו ית' השרוי בתוכו...וכן להיפך ה"ו מי שהוא רע עי"ן כשהוא מסתכל על הדבר אומר מה נאה דבר זה ועושה אותו הדבר לדבר בפני עצמו...נפרד אותו הדבר מהשורש ומחיות אלקות שבו

*When a person who has a good eye makes an observation, he invites blessing into whatever he observes because he knows that it is considered as naught before Hashem, i.e., that it is truly nothing without the Elokus that rests within it.... The same*

*is true in the opposite scenario, when one who has an evil eye makes an observation, he says “how beautiful this thing is!” turning it into an entity of its own and separating it from the Divine source and vitality within it.*

The power of an Ayin Hara is not (only) in that it sees evil in everything, but that it sees and considers everything as existing independently of its Divine source.

Seeing things as they are connected to Hashem brings blessing, whereas seeing them as being separate from Hashem can bring about the opposite of blessing, Rachmanah Litzlan.

### **Like Fish**

This can be further understood from the brocho Yaakov gave to Yoseph’s two sons, Menasheh and Ephraim. He blessed them to “multiply like fish” (Bereishis 48:16). The Gemaras understands this to mean the following:

*Berachos 20a*

וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ מה דגים שבים מים מכסין עליהם ואין עין הרע שולטת בהם - אף זרעו של יוסף אין עין הרע שולטת בהם.

*“They will multiply like fish in the land” (Bereishis 48:16)—just as the water conceals fish and an Ayin Hara does not influence them, similarly, an Ayin Hara cannot influence the descendants of Yoseph.*

The Rebbe explains the relevance in the analogy of fish:

מים זיינען דער מקור החיות פון דגים, ביז אז דאס איז זייער אמת'ע מציאות (וואס דערפאר האלט רשב"ג אז "כל שהוא מבריית המים איז ניט חוצץ בפני המים") דאס הייסט אז דגים האבן אין זיך א תנואה פון "ביטול" צו מקור חיותם (און דערפאר איז ביי זיי פאראן דער ענין פון ריבוי למעלה מהרגיל).

ועד"ז איז אין עבודת האדם כדי צו מעורר זיין ביי זיך דעם אמת'ן העכסטן אופן פון גמילות חסדים חסד בלי הגבלה (וואס איז פארבונדן מיט "חסדו של הקב"ה")—פאדערט זיך די עבודה צו פועל זיין ביי זיך דעם ביטול צו דעם אויבערשטן.

*Water is the source of a fish's life source, to the extent that it is its true identity (this is why Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel maintains that "anything that was created in water does not constitute a chatzitzah to get in the way of water") i.e., that fish possess a notion of being "nullified" to the source of their vitality (this is why they have the advantage of being extraordinarily multitudinous).*

*Similarly, with regard to one's service of Hashem, in order to arouse within oneself the truly highest measure of benevolence—a kindness without borders (which is associated with "Hashem's kindness")—it requires one to become nullified to Hashem's will.*

Two goldfish were in a bowl, one turned to the other and exclaimed: "Prove to me that water exists!"

The lesson is self-understood. Fish don't need an explanation for the existence of water, they sense the presence of water day in and day out.

Us land creatures aren't as fortunate to be so constantly reminded of our life-source—and by analogy, Elokus—is invisible to us.

For this reason, sea creatures cannot be influenced by an Ayin Hara, because they are constantly aware of their life-source.

The sea represents a state of envelopment in which the creatures that live therein engage with it all day, every day. In the language of Chassidus, they are constantly batul (“nullified”) to the water—the source of their vitality.

This also explains why the act of casting an Ayin Hara is being jealous of that which does not belong to you.

Why do people covet that which they do not have?

In the ideal scenario, we should trust in Hashem that he will provide us with all of our needs to fulfill the mission that we were sent into this world to achieve (and we are in fact given everything we need to fulfill that mission).

If there is something that we are not given, it is a sign that it is not something we need to utilize to fulfill our mission. People only covet that which does not belong to them when they lose sight of their mission in life and their eyes start to wander to that which others have.

If, like fish, we remain mission-focused, continually feeling Hashem's presence in our lives, then we are considered like the sons of Yoseph, who, like fish, were given the blessing of being immune to an Ayin Hara.

## The Color Blue

This is why the Zohar prescribes the color blue as a remedy to save a person from the harm of an Ayin Hara.

*Zohar Vol. 3 163b*

אית לון עינא בישא לאסתכלא וכד מסתכלין זמין לעינייהו גוון תכלא  
ולא יכלא עינייהו לשלטאה

*[Certain beings] have the capacity to cast an Ayin Hara. When they look your way, prepare before your eyes the color blue and their eyes will have no influence over you.*

Why the color blue? The Gemara explains the significance of blue regarding the blue string on tzitzis:

*Sotah 17a*

היה ר"מ אומר מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין מפני שהתכלת  
דומה לים וים דומה לרקיע ורקיע דומה לכסא הכבוד

*Rabbi Meir would say: Why is the color blue different to all other colors? Because blue is similar to the color of the sea, and the color of the sea is similar to the color of the sky, which is similar to Hashem's Kisei Hakavod (Throne of Glory).*

The Gemara explains that this is why we are instructed to wear a blue string on our tzitzis. The function of tzitzis is to be a continual reminder of Hashem's presence in our lives and a reminder to perform *mitzvos*. When one sees the color blue, one is reminded of the heavens and remembers to be a good Jew and fulfill their mission in this world by performing

*mitzvos*. By staying mission-focused, one avoids (both casting and being a recipient of) an Ayin Hara.

## Alternative Explanations

There are various different explanations provided for how an Ayin Hara operates. Some sources explain an Ayin Hara in terms of a physical phenomenon:

*Sefer Hamaamarim 5672 pg. 546*

מצינו בראי" שפועל בגשמיות וכמו הכניסה בה עין הרע כו' וכמו נתן עיניו בו שע"י הראי" לקח את הטוב שבו כו' וכמ"ש במ"א, וכמו ראיית המעוברת שפועל בהולד.

*We find that sight can impact the physical, for example: "[Sarah] cast an Ayin Hara upon [Hagar and she miscarried]" (Bereishis Rabbah 45:5) or "[Rav Sheishes] set his eyes on [the heretic and he became a pile of bones]" (Berachos 58a) in which the act of seeing removed the good that was in him, as is explained elsewhere, and similar to the idea that what a pregnant woman sees has an effect on the fetus.*

*Rabbeinu Yonah, Avos 2:11*

[החומד] מכל אשר לרעהו, אויר עולה מן המחשבה ההוא ושורף את הדברים שעויין בהם בעיניו הרע, גם בקרבו ישרף אחר שמתאווה לדברים שאין יכולת מצוי בידו לעשות.

*[When one covets] anything that belongs to a colleague, an energy is transmitted from that*

*thought which takes hold of the things that he looked at with his evil eyes; and it also burns inside of him [i.e., the one who covets], because he desires that which he does not have the ability to carry out.*

## **Eye of the Mind**

The Miteler Rebbe explains that an Ayin Hara is not caused by the physical act of seeing, but by the mental image that it creates:

*Toras Chaim, Bereishit 114:b*

מהו ענין ראייה והסתכלות זאת דא"א לומר שזהו ראייה והסתכלות העין הגשמי דמה יש בכח העין הגשמי לראות לטוב או לרע אחר שאין שכל וטעם בהגשמת העין בראי' גשמית כו' אלא בהכרח צ"ל שזהו בחי' ראי' הרוחנית של השכל שנק' עין השכל

*What is this “seeing”? You cannot say that it is in the vision of the physical eye, for what power does the physical eye have to cause good or evil by way of its vision? This is because there is no intelligence and reason in the physical eye. Rather, this necessarily refers to a spiritual vision of the intellect called “the eye of the mind.”*

## **A Silent Prayer**

Some understand an Ayin Hara to be a prayer that is sent heavenward when one witnesses an injustice. This is how Former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, explains how an Ayin Hara operates.

בעין, אדם רואה ובוחר את מצבו של הזולת. כשאדם במצוקה, המראה מעורר רחמים שיש בהם כעין בקשה ותפילה להיטיב למצב. ואם הרואה שונא את המצטער, יש בראיית הצער בכדי לשמח את הרואה ולעורר רצון להוסיף מכאוב...כשאדם רואה הצלחה של הזולת, אם שונא הוא לו, הראיה מעוררת קנאה ורגשות של תביעה כנגד ההצלחה. רגשות שבלב האדם יש בהם מעין תפילה ורצון לבטל את ההצלחה ולא לראותה.

*With one's eye, a person sees and judges the situation of another. When a person is in distress, the image arouses mercy which includes a type of plea and prayer to improve the situation. If the observer despises the person in distress, his observation of the distress brings him joy and arouses a wish to amplify the distress...when a person sees another's success, if he despises him, the observation arouses feelings of jealousy and claims against the success, the feelings in a person's heart contain within them a type of prayer and wish to be rid of the success and not to see it.*

### **How Does One Protect Against an Ayin Hara?**

As explained earlier, the best way to thwart an Ayin Hara is by being modest, not flaunting one's success, and trying to stay away from the public eye as much as possible.

### **Bli Ayin Hara**

Often, when you hear Jews speaking about their children or their success they will say “bli ayin hara” or “kein ayin hara”

or the shortened version “keina hora” which mean “without an Ayin Hara.” What does this do?

*Chida, Tziporen Shamir 172*

המספר שבה אדם בחכמה או עושר או בנים וכיוצא חייב לברכו שלא  
ישלוט בו עין הרע

*One who speaks the praises of a person's wisdom, wealth, children, and the like, is obligated to bless him that an Ayin Hara should have no power over him.*

Saying “Bli Ayin Hara” serves as a kind of blessing and prayer that no evil eye should harm him. This applies whenever a person brings attention to one's blessings.

### **“Poo, Poo, Poo”**

Additionally, some make spitting sounds “poo, poo, poo” to ward off an Ayin Hara. While it may seem silly, this practice is sourced in Torah.

Midrash Rabbah recounts a story of a woman who would attend Rabbi Meir's Torah classes. Her husband was upset about this practice and warned her that he wouldn't let her into the house until she spat in Rabbi Meir's face. Understandably, she was hesitant to do so and stayed away from her home. Rabbi Meir discovered this and to ease her discomfort acted as if an Ayin Hara has seized him, and requested that she spit at him as a remedy. While the story is cited to emphasize the importance of promoting Shalom Bayis, it serves as one of several sources for the concept of spitting in order to ward off an Ayin Hara.

Some Sefaradim say “*ben poras yosef*” from the posuk in Bereishis where Yaakov blesses Yoseph that he will not be subject to an Ayin Hara.

## Don't Let it Trouble You

A classical, contemporary approach is based on a saying in the Gemarah with regards to omens, that it is best not to worry too much about these things, because if you are not too troubled by it, it will not trouble you.

*Igrot Moshe Even Ha'ezer 3, 26*

בענין עין הרע ודאי יש לחוש אבל אין להקפיד הרבה כי בדברים כאלו  
הכלל מאן דלא קפיד לא קפדינן בהדיה

*With regards to an Ayin Hara, one should certainly take it into account, but one shouldn't be overly concerned, because about these kinds of things the rule is: “One who is not troubled by it, will not be troubled by it” (Pesachim 110b).*

## Emotional Insecurity

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935, Chief Rabbi of Israel under British Mandate), explained that in order for an Ayin Hara to take effect, the affected person must be self-conscious and have a low sense of self-worth, i.e., one that is based on the impressions of others:

*Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Ein Ayah Berachos 55*

על ידי מה שהנפשות פועלות זו על זו יש מקום לעין הרעה שתפעול  
לרעה, אמנם לא תפעל כי אם על ידי חלישות הנפש המתפעלת, ותוכן

החלישות בא על ידי מה שלא תמצא את ערך עצמה כראוי, ולא יהיו מרכז פעולותיה כי אם מבט היצוני של העין

*Because souls have the ability to impact one another, it is possible for an Ayin Hara to cause evil. However, this will not work unless the affected soul is weak, and this weakness stems from not having a healthy self-worth, and [as a result] the central focus of its activities are based on the external facade that meets the eye.*

Not basing your self-concept on the impressions of others, is not only important for ones emotional stability, is also a practical way to stay clear of an Ayin Hara.

### **Adopting a Positive Eye**

When the Friediker Rebbe was four years old, his father, the Rebbe Rashab, taught him this valuable lesson:

*Sefer Hasichos 5691 p. 158*

ווען איך בין אלט געווען פיר יאר האב איך גיפרעגט בא דעם טאטן פאר וואס האט דער אויבערשטער ברוך הוא בעשאפן א מענטשן צוויי אויגן און איין מויל, און איין נאז. האט ער מיך גיפרעגט צו ווייס איך אלף בית, ועניתי הן. פרעגט מיך ווידער דער טאטע, צי ווייסטו אז עס איז פאראן א שין און א סין, און וואו איז דער חילוק פון זיי. ועניתי לו, אז א שין איז די פינטעלע פון דער רעכטע זייט און סין איז די פינטעלע פון דער לינקער זייט. האט מיר דער טאטע געזאגט, פאראן זאכן וואס מיא דארף אויף זיי קוקן מיט דער רעכטער אויג, און פאראן זאכן וואס מיא דארף אויף זיי קוקן מיט דער רעכטער אויג. אין א סידור און אויף א אידן דארפמען קוקן מיט דער רעכטער אויג, און

אויף א צוקערקע און א צאצקע מיט דער לינקער אויג. און פון יעמולט  
אן האט זעך איינגעווארצלט די זאך אז אויף א אידן ווער ער זאל ניט  
זיין דארפ מען קוקן בעיזן יפה.

*When I was four years old, I asked my father why Hashem created people with two eyes, one mouth, and one nose? He asked me whether I knew the Aleph Beis. I answered in the affirmative. My father asked me further: "Do you know the difference between a shin and a sin?" I answered that a shin has a dot on the right and a sin has a dot on the left. My father then told me: "There are things that we must look at with the right eye, and there are things that we must look at with the left eye. One must look in a siddur or upon a fellow Jew with the right eye, and at a candy or a toy with the left eye." From then on it became ingrained within me that upon a fellow Jew, no matter who it may be, one must look with a benevolent eye.*

## Take-aways

- » In personal growth, the evil eye is the worst of traits, whereas adopting a good eye is the most noble of aspirations.
- » Several halachos were established as precautionary measures to avoid an Ayin Hara.
- » People often enjoy more good than they deserve. An Ayin Hara works by arousing the attribute of judgment to replace that of kindness causing them to lose that which they don't deserve.
- » Brochah is found in things that are hidden, whereas things that are made public are prone to an Ayin Hara.
- » Publicity arouses an Ayin Hara because it causes things to be seen as they are distinct from their Divine source, thereby severing their flow of Divine blessing.
- » An Ayin Hara is understood in terms of the mind's thoughts having a physical impact on others and on reality.
- » One can avoid an Ayin Hara by staying out of the public eye, taking the precautions mentioned in Halachah, davening that there should be "no ayin hara" when a discussion that may lead to one arises, and by not worrying too much about it.