

# THE BITACHON READER



*A Priority-1 Publication*

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THE  
BITACHON  
READER

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**Rabbi Shaya Cohen**  
**Far Rockaway, NY**  
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# ELIMINATE STRESS & ASSURE SUCCESS

*A Guide for Developing Bitachon – Trust in G-d*

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# CHAPTER 1

## **A Formula for Bitachon**

**W**e live in difficult and trying times. For many people life can seem overwhelmingly stressful when faced with problems, whether they are financial, family or health related. If we discovered the existence of a formula for peace of mind, control of stress and resolution of our difficulties, we would certainly embrace it wholeheartedly.

Well, such a formula does exist. It has been the lifeline of our people throughout our long and difficult history - BITACHON IN HASHEM - trust in G-d. Our faith has been the key to our ability as a people to persevere through millennia of hardship and a major factor in our physical and spiritual survival through the ages. From the Crusades and the Cossacks to the Holocaust, our people have suffered numerous calamities yet have retained their faith.

Yet many people are confused or unaware of the most basic tenets and practices of Bitachon. What is

Bitachon? How do I acquire that state of being? What can it do for me?

This text will attempt to answer these questions and provide an overview of the concept of Bitachon in a clear and easily understandable manner.

## EMUNAH & BITACHON

*There is no concept of a "leap of faith" in Judaism.*

Any accurate definition of Bitachon must be preceded with the concept of Emunah – belief in Hashem.

Klal Yisrael is a very fortunate nation. The principles of our religion were transmitted to us in a way that provides knowledge rather than blind faith. There is no concept of a “leap of faith” in Judaism. We don’t just believe, we know. The millions of eye witnesses that stood at Mount Sinai and heard the Creator speaking to Moshe and speaking directly to them, provided firsthand testimony to the truth of Torah and Moshe’s teachings. This testimony was passed on to their children in a written document recording the firsthand eyewitness testimony of millions of Jewish people. That document – our Torah - was accurately transmitted

from generation to generation until today.

All of our basic concepts of Emunah (Faith) are taught in our Torah and they form the basis upon which Bitachon is built. As our Rishonim have taught us, "כל הבטח מאמין" – "everyone who has Bitachon must [first] have Emunah."

*Everyone  
who has  
Bitachon  
must [first]  
have  
Emunah.*

The Torah teaches us the basic maxims which are the foundation of Emunah: There is a Creator who is intimately involved in everything that happens in our world. He is all-knowing and all powerful with no limitations whatsoever. He created our world only to bestow kindness. Infinite kindness and mercy are among His attributes with which He conducts His world.

We know of His special loving relationship with the Jewish people and that He listens and accepts our prayers. We are also taught in the Torah that when we place our trust in Hashem, He will not disappoint us.

These concepts form the basis for our Bitachon. In fact, the full belief and knowledge of the immutable truths of these concepts would be enough to assure our Bitachon, if not for one possibility: maybe we don't

*"Not  
everyone  
who  
believes  
has trust,  
because  
maybe sin  
has caused  
[that he is  
not  
deserving  
of  
Hashem's  
kindness]"*

deserve the kindness that we are requesting and hoping for. As the Rishonim said,

“לא כל המאמין בוטח, שמא גרם החטא” “Not everyone who believes (Emunah) has trust (Bitachon), because maybe sin has caused [him to not be deserving of Hashem’s kindness].” This possibility can prevent a person from being sure of the fulfillment of his heart’s desires.

**W**here is the dividing line between Emunah and Bitachon? The truth is there is no real line of demarcation; rather Emunah and Bitachon can be viewed as part of a continuum.<sup>1</sup> **Emunah is the intellectual knowledge of Hashem and his ways, Bitachon is the emotional internalization of that knowledge.** The recognition and *internalization* of His power, kindness and mercy induces a state of tranquility and peace of mind, and generates a level of trust in Hashem. The level of trust may vary based on the individual, but all feelings of trust can be applied toward the fulfillment of a person’s requests and desires.

Bitachon can be arranged in five levels of emotion, as follows:

- 1) No Coincidence (אין מקרה לפניו)

“Emunah is the intellectual knowledge of Hashem and his ways, Bitachon is the emotional internalization of that knowledge.”

- 2) Hope (קיווי)
- 3) Seeking (ביקוש)
- 4) Total Trust (בטחון)
- 5) Total Acceptance (חסד ומשפט אשירה)

The first level is the internalization of the concept of אין מקרה לפנינו, there is **No Coincidence** in the world... nothing is accidental.<sup>2</sup> When this realization penetrates to the emotional level rather than only the intellectual level it can induce a state of peace of mind and diminish stress and worry. It does not necessarily bring with it the feeling that Hashem will surely grant our requests and hearts' desires.

Both the realization and the emotional tranquility that ensue are a great merit to help in achieving our desires..”

The second level can be referred to as **קיווי, Hope**.<sup>3</sup>

This refers to a person who is not feeling entirely sure that his prayers will be answered or desires fulfilled, but he remains hopeful and without despair. This level certainly brings with it peace of mind and ultimate fulfillment of one's desires<sup>4</sup>.

It carries an assurance of the answer to one's prayers

The third level can be referred to as **ביקוש, Seeking Hashem's help**.<sup>5</sup> Tefillah is included in this level, as well as other efforts of coming closer to Hashem, for

the purpose of achieving the fulfillment of one's desires. This arouses a great closeness to Hashem, more peace of mind, and can inspire greater confidence that Hashem will fulfill our desires.

The fourth level, **Total Trust**, is extremely high and difficult to achieve. It is a real and totally sincere feeling of complete trust and confidence in Hashem's kindness, to the extent that one feels 100% confident that his requests will be answered in the affirmative (בטוח בהשגת משאלותיו)<sup>6</sup>.

While the first three levels are obligatory upon every מאמין (believer)<sup>7</sup>, the difficulty in achieving this fourth level makes it beyond the pale of obligation for most people.<sup>8</sup> It does seem, however, from many sources, that this level is possible for us albeit with much effort. Even if we are unable to reach this level of Bitachon to the same degree as the giants of our past, we can achieve it on our own more limited level.

On the fifth and highest of levels of Bitachon, **Total Acceptance**, one has such an intense trust in Hashem's kindness that to him the outcome is irrelevant. To him "apparent good" or "apparent bad" are both the same

because he so completely trusts Hashem's ultimate kindness.<sup>9</sup> This level is beyond what most people can achieve and handle and is more in the reach of exceptional personalities such as דוד המלך who said, חסד ומשפט אשירה - *kindness and judgment I will praise*, which Chazal explained to mean, על חסד אשירה ועל משפט אשירה - *on Hashem's kindness I will praise Him and on His judgment I will also praise Him*.<sup>10</sup>

All of the levels of Bitachon have enormous powers to bring מנוחת הנפש - calm and tranquility, and to reduce and remove stress. Any amount of Bitachon also serves as a great merit to achieve the desires of one's heart. (With the possible exception of the highest level where the desires of the ba'al bitachon's heart are whatever Hashem provides, and therefore there is no need for a special merit to achieve those desires.) It seems, however, that higher levels of Bitachon and a greater depth of feeling make a difference in the degree of tranquility a person will achieve and the amount of merit he will earn towards achieving his goals.

All levels of Bitachon bring tranquility, reduce stress and serve as a great merit to achieve our desires.

Bitachon is clearly a desirable sensitivity to develop; it serves as a transformer of stress to tranquility, and problems to solutions. The question is... **how can we acquire this “state of Bitachon”?**

The following are quotes from various early sources

(Rishonim) to help clarify the essence and the benefits of Bitachon. The פסוק in ישעיה, פרק י' says:

“...but will rely on Hashem, the Holy One of Israel, in truth” and the Radak comments

“But it is proper to rely on Hashem, because He only requests that one rely on Him in truth (truly rely on Him) and He will save him from all of his troubles.”

כד הקמה לרבינו בחיי, ערך במחון writes that the concept of Bitachon is that one’s heart is strong in his trust of Hashem “as if Hashem had promised him (the result)”.

The Sefer Haikarim - רב יוסף אלבו (מאמר רביעי פמ"ט) writes

“The hope for something that a person has Bitachon for, his hope should be as sure that it will come just as he hopes that the light of day will come in the morning.” רב אלבו also expounded on the פסוק:

חזקו ויאמץ לבבכם כל המיחלים לד' - *Strengthen and fortify your hearts, all those who are hoping to Hashem.* He explained

The man who fears and puts his trust in Hashem will be saved from all trouble.

“One who places his hope (יְהוּל) in Hashem, Blessed is He, since his heart is reliant and counting on Hashem, in truth, that He will fulfill his request, because of that he will find additional strength and become stronger.”

The Rabbeinu Bechai (עַה"ת פ' עֵקֶב י"א, כ"ה) writes, “Even if it [trouble] was appropriate to come upon him.”

These comments give insight into the nature of Bitachon but don't tell us how to acquire Bitachon. How does one inspire in his heart true feelings of trust in Hashem? How does one parlay the knowledge that “there are no accidents” to an emotional peace of mind despite his doubts whether things will turn out the way he wants? How does one master the ability never to give up hope, no matter how dismal the situation may seem? How does one transform the intellectual knowledge of Hashem's kindness, mercy, love and total power and involvement, to an emotional state of being and a feeling of confidence in these attributes of Hashem, despite his possible lack of worthiness of Hashem's kindness?

The first step is a deepening of the focus on the basic knowledge of Emunah, as outlined above. The clearer

and deeper the intellectual realization of Hashem's powers, involvement and kindness, the more powerful the realization is to penetrate to the emotional level.

In his *ספר המספיק לעובדי ד'*, Rav Avraham, the son of the

Rambam, infers that this intellectual-emotional process is precisely what Avraham Avinu experienced. The *פסוק*

says, *והאמין בד' ויחשבה לו לצדקה*, "*He believed in Hashem and it was considered a great merit for him.*" Hashem spoke

directly to Avraham, so why is he given so much credit for believing in the fulfillment of Hashem's promise?

The answer seems to be that Hashem's promise was intellectually clear to him, but to be emotionally confident and tranquil about it took great effort and therefore he is credited with a great Mitzva.

We can and must push our intellectual realizations into our emotions to be able to feel confident in Hashem.

This is the first step to achieving Bitachon. (The process of turning intellectual knowledge into feeling is the essence of Mussar development, and is detailed in Chapter Two.)

The next step is to deepen our realization and understanding of the *חסד ד'* (Hashem's kindness) and

The purpose of creation was for the Creator to bestow kindness.

His השגחה פרטית (Divine Providence, the intimate involvement with every detail of our lives). His kindness is expressed and available to us in infinite ways. Our creation itself provides us the opportunity to earn Hashem's kindness through developing our character and refining our Midos. If our character is patterned after that of our Creator, we can truly appreciate His kindness and enjoy its benefits more, knowing that we earned and deserve the kindness that we receive. The Mitzvos provide a great opportunity for this type of character development.

One of the best ways to develop an appreciation of Hashem's kindness is to focus on becoming a kindly and giving person. The more these positive traits are part of one's personality, the deeper an understanding can be reached of Hashem's kindness. Knowing and appreciating the extent of Hashem's kindness is an essential ingredient in inspiring ourselves to feel Bitachon.

Hashem's  
Chessed can  
often be  
perceived in  
His השגחה  
פרטית

The Ramban<sup>11</sup> explains that the blatant miracles we witnessed in Egypt and in the desert enabled us to recognize the hidden miracles that are always present in

our daily existence. When we focus on these miracles, both the constant and the occasional, we deepen our realization of Hashem's involvement in every aspect of our lives and the depths of His kindness and mercy. This can be an important stepping stone to the development of real Bitachon.

### **The Vilna Gaon's Advice**

The Vilna Gaon<sup>12</sup> suggests a method to utilize Hashem's Chesed and Rachamim (mercy) to develop and expand true Bitachon. We recite every Shabbos in נשמת:

עד הנה עזרונו רחמך ולא עזבונו חסדך, ואל תמשינו ד' אלוקינו לנצח -  
“Until now Your mercy has helped us, and Your kindness has not forsaken us. Do not abandon us, Hashem our G-d forever.” The Gaon explains, “[U]ntil now that which You did to help us was only because of Your mercy and that which You did not forsake us was only because of Your kindness; therefore we are confident (Bitachon) that You will never forsake us, because if what You did until now was because we deserved it, then maybe now and in the future we will not deserve it. However, if that which You did for us is Chesed and Rachamim, Your kindness and mercy are constant and eternal and therefore we can be sure that they will

*continue unchanged forever.”*

This is clearly not intended as an intellectual argument because the idea of *שמא נרם החטא* - “*maybe we don’t deserve it and therefore Hashem will not do something for us*” applies. We could think to ourselves, maybe in the past we were at least deserving enough to receive His kindness and mercy; whereas now we are not even at that level. Therefore, the Gaon’s explanation must be a vehicle for us to affect our emotions. We can employ the Vilna Gaon’s advice by focusing on specific, personal instances where Hashem delivered our desires, despite the fact that we were undeserving. This process penetrates our emotions and inspires a Bitachon in Hashem for our future successes.

### **A State of Total Desperation**

An opportunity to inspire Bitachon can be found in the state of total desperation. The worst of times can really be the best of times. A situation where we feel absolutely nowhere to turn, with no one to help us or even care, can catapult a person into a state of recognition that the only alternative is trusting in

Hashem.

In Tehillim 142, Dovid HaMelech is on the run for his life, hiding in a cave to escape Shaul's attempts to destroy him. He says to Hashem, "look to the right and see, no one even recognizes me ... no one seeks to save my life." "I cried out to You, Hashem, I said, You are my source of refuge..." The **וְרָדַק** adds one word, **לְפִיכֵךְ**, therefore, I cried out to You.

Even though Dovid HaMelech's life was at stake, Had he still felt that someone cared or sought out his welfare, he could not have cried out and trusted Hashem. Total desperation pushes a person to a new state of heartfelt prayer and trust in Hashem to save him from his troubles.

The Rabeinu Yonah in Brachos<sup>13</sup> explains the **פְּסוּק** in **מִשְׁלֵי** **בִּירְאַת ד' מְבַטֵּחַ עוֹן**: *"In the fear of Hashem lies the strength of Bitachon."* Typically, fearing Hashem due to the possibility we have sinned undermines Bitachon, because a person is afraid that his sins will make him undeserving of the good that he awaits (**שָׂמָא גְרָם הַחַטָּא**). Here we see to rely on Hashem.

Rabbeinu Yonah offers us another method to develop

and strengthen our Bitachon through our Fear of Hashem. When we bow down during Shmoneh Esrei while saying ברוך אתה - You are the source of all Bracha - we can inspire our fear of Hashem by thinking, “As I stand in front of the source of all blessing, I am afraid my inappropriate deeds will not allow me to access the blessings.” And when we lift ourselves up and say Hashem’s name, we should contemplate “Hashem does this kindness of straightening the bent, as well as all of His Chesed.” These thoughts will inspire our trust in Hashem because He is the source of all Bracha and there is nowhere else to turn. Similarly the רמב"ם<sup>14</sup> writes: “מברה ממך אליך - Fleeing from You to You.” When a person feels so overwhelmed with fear of Hashem and, there is no place to run or hide, only to run into the embrace of Hashem Himself. This is like a small child who runs from their parent when they have done something wrong...only to run right into their parent’s waiting arms for a loving embrace.

### **For Your Goodness, Hashem**

Chazal<sup>15</sup> offer another emotional approach to

overcome the fear of שמה גרם החטא. Dovid HaMelech says in 'תהלים כה':

הטאות נעורי ופשעי אל תזכר...למען טובך ד'  
"Do not remember the sins of my youth...because of Your goodness, Hashem."

The Medrash explains this posuk through a parable: a king instructs his assistant to invite all of the professionals in the kingdom to a gala banquet. The assistant responds, telling the king that the banquet hall is so large that if he only invites the professionals, the hall will appear empty; therefore he must also invite all the laborers.

The moral is that we are like the laborers and the banquet refers to the goodness Hashem bestows on us. We ask, "Hashem, please bestow your goodness upon us, not because we are deserving, but because otherwise your "banquet" will appear empty." We are asking Hashem to overlook our sins, not for our sake, but for the sake of accomplishing His master plan to bestow kindness upon us.

Utilizing this concept assists us in bypassing שמה גרם החטא. When we recognize that Hashem truly desires to bestow chesed upon us and that even if we

don't deserve it He will grant it to us for His own sake, we can rest assured that He will fulfill our desires.

### **The Hope-Based Approach**

On a more intellectual plane, another way to achieve Bitachon can be based on the level of קיווי, Hope. This is a level of Bitachon in which a person is not sure that his requests and desires will be fulfilled but he never stops hoping and never despairs.<sup>16</sup> Early commentators ascribe the following characteristics to this form of Bitachon: “צִיפִיָּה, חֲבוּיָה, יְהוּלָה, קִיּוּיָה”<sup>17</sup> - *awaiting, expectation, anticipation, and hope.*” Many sources surmise that this form of Bitachon also carries with it the assurance that the one who hopes and never gives up, will achieve the desires of his heart.<sup>18</sup>

The knowledge that “ישועת ד' כהרף עין” - *The salvation of Hashem comes in the blink of an eye,*” together with the awareness that Hashem always acts with kindness and nothing can prevent His will from being carried out, *add up to a strong inspiration to never give up hope.*

Holding on to hope without ever despairing has the zechus to bring the fulfillment of our desires. If we

maintain our hope, we can be sure our desires will be fulfilled and need not be concerned about שמא גרם ההטא. Thus we have a more “rational” way for us to become sure that Hashem will grant our desires - if we refuse to give up hope, we will have the merit to be answered.

### Seeking Hashem

Another method to develop Bitachon is found in the פסוק, “*And those that know Your name will trust in You, because You have not forsaken those that seek You out.*” The ספר המספיק לעבדי ד’ , authored by Rav Avraham, the son of the Rambam, says that “דורשך” - “those that seek You”, refers to a level of Bitachon slightly higher than Hope. According to this understanding, the פסוק is teaching us a formula to achieve Bitachon. A person qualifies for the category of “knowing the name of Hashem”, by truly understanding and internalizing that His essence is kindness, justice and charity, as the Navi writes in (ירמיו' ט' כב'-כג):

- אל יתהלל חכם בחכמתו ... כי אני ה' עשה חסד משפט וצדקה.

“*Let not the wise man glorify himself with his wisdom ... for I*

*am Hashem who does kindness, justice and righteousness.”*

When this understanding is combined with having seen, and knowing, that Hashem does not forsake those who seek Him out, it allows us to rise to the level of Bitachon where we feel assured that Hashem will satisfy our desires and respond to our prayers.

### **Even the Wicked...**

An additional suggestion is to reflect upon the words of Chazal on the פסוק: “רבים מכאובים לרשע והבוטח בד’ חסד יסבבנו” - *Great are the pains of a wicked person and the one who trusts Hashem will be surrounded by kindness.”*

When we find ourselves lacking full Bitachon because of the fear that we may be unworthy, we should remember and review repeatedly that *even a רשע who has Bitachon, Hashem helps him*. This focus can strengthen our Bitachon significantly. If even a wicked person who has Bitachon will receive Hashem’s kindness, then even if we do not deserve it, we can still merit His kindness through Bitachon. The fear of sin interfering with the delivery of our desires will be allayed and our Bitachon is strengthened.

## People Want to Trust

The **חובות הלבבות** in the beginning of **שער הבטחון** gives us another way to reach real Bitachon and confidence that Hashem will deliver the desires of our hearts. He indicates that human beings have a natural propensity to trust someone or something and if we don't trust in Hashem, we will certainly put our trust in someone or something else. Therefore, if we focus on the concept of **אין עוד מלבדו**, *“there is nothing with any power other than Hashem,”* we will eliminate any trust in anything else and automatically experience Bitachon in Hashem.<sup>19</sup>

In **תהילים ק"ל** the **פסוקים** indicate that putting our hope (**יהול**) in Hashem's infinite kindness will cause Hashem to redeem us from all of our sins. The **פסוק** says:

*“Put your hope, Israel, in Hashem ... and He will redeem Israel from all its sins.”* This formula can provide relief from our fear that our unworthiness will interfere with our desired results. A person's responsibility is to elevate that reliance to a certainty that He will grant us our hearts' desires.

## נשמת כל חי

There is another concept which fortifies our Bitachon. Rav Yehuda HaChasid,<sup>20</sup> says that if a person has a צרה, he should accept upon himself that when the problem is resolved he will recite with happiness נשמת with a minyan. He writes that “many were saved through this mechanism.”

The commitment to the reciting of נשמת with a מנין is an affirmation that not only do I rely on Hashem when I have a problem, but I declare in a minyan that, and I will affirm that everything comes from Him.

This is meaningful because although we tend to turn to Hashem at a time of need, we may try to belittle Hashem’s involvement after the fact, so as not to be so beholden to Him. A commitment to recite נשמת strengthens our trust and reliance even before the fact, because of the statement that we are committed to thank Hashem and appreciate Him after the trouble is resolved.

## **Reinforcing is Reinvigorating**

The feelings which constitute Bitachon must be

reinforced regularly to be effective and genuine. The continual review of these concepts will serve to reinvigorate our Bitachon and enable our continued growth.

Our Bitachon can be enhanced three times a day when we recite מודים in שמונה עשרה. We express our appreciation to Hashem that He is ד', אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו לעולם ועד, “*Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our fathers forever.*”

The concept of אלקינו, our G-d, refers to Hashem as our Judge and the Controller of all. One could question how is Hashem the Judge of our fathers...they have already left the world and been judged? It would seem that when we lack the merit to achieve the desires of our hearts. Understanding this provides us with a new sense of confidence in our ability to receive kindness from Hashem, even beyond what we deserve.

We continue in מודים with צור היינו - *Hashem is the Rock of our lives*. The Vilna Gaon says the meaning of the צור חסיו בו (האזינו): פסוק, “The rock in which we have taken refuge.” Just like a rock provides refuge to anyone who takes refuge under it, with no invitation or conditions,

all anyone has to do is take refuge in Hashem, to trust in Hashem. This too makes it easier to trust even for one who may be less than deserving.

At the end of מוֹדִים there is a powerful insight, which explains the basis for which כלל ישראל has always maintained its hope, קיינו לך, in Hashem. The Tefillah says:

*“The Good One whose mercy doesn’t end and the Merciful One whose kindness doesn’t end, from time immemorial we put our hope in You.”* of שמא גרם החטא.

The שער הבטחון in חובות הלבבות writes that when we say פסוקים which express Bitachon, if we focus on the reality that Hashem knows whether or not we are truly feeling the Bitachon or just mouthing the words, that realization will, in fact, deepen the true feeling of Bitachon in Hashem as we recite the words which claim that we have Bitachon.

## **The Real Recipe for Growth**

Reading this information is only the beginning of the process of developing Bitachon. The following chapter

is an overview of the Torah system for the development and improvement of a trait of character such as Bitachon, as taught by the Torah giant Rav Yisroel Salanter, זצוק"ל. To work on the development of any trait, one must first understand this system in general and then apply it to the specific issue at hand.

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<sup>1</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון על פסוק והאמין ב'ד' ויחשבה לו לצדקה

<sup>2</sup> ספר אמונה בטחון – חזון איש

<sup>3</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>4</sup> תהילים ל"ג למיחלים להסדו עי' רד"ק שם

<sup>5</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>6</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>7</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>8</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>9</sup> ספר המספיק – בענין הבטחון

<sup>10</sup> ברכות ס'

<sup>11</sup> רמב"ן סוף פ' בא

<sup>12</sup> פ' הגר"א משלי כה', טו'

<sup>13</sup> ר"י ברכות דף ו: על הרי"ף

<sup>14</sup> רמב"ם פ' המשניות ראש השנה פרק ד' משנה ז'

<sup>15</sup> ילקוט שמעוני תהילים כ"ה

<sup>16</sup> ספר המספיק

<sup>17</sup> ספר המספיק

<sup>18</sup> מאירי ברכות דף ס'

תהילים לג' – נפשינו חכתה לד'

הנה עין ד' אל .... למיחלים להסדו

כאשר יחלנו לך

<sup>19</sup> נפש החיים שער ג' יב' – גמ' חולין ז'

<sup>20</sup> כף החיים

## CHAPTER 2

### Self development in the teachings of Rav Yisroel Salanter, זצוק"ל

#### *An Overview*

#### I. Development and Improvement of a Character Trait

To develop or improve any character trait, a person must have a realistic goal of what is the desired trait and level of improvement, what is realistic for himself at this point, understand himself and how the self interacts with the right and wrong way of acting and feeling, according to the Divine plan, the Torah.

#### II. Understanding of Self, Realistic Goals and Right From Wrong

When understanding of self is based on Torah insight, it carries real clout and authority for man to accept. חכמת המוסר is the body of wisdom from Torah, which allows man to understand himself and right from wrong and the way one's "self" interacts with right and wrong. Clear insights into Chazal give us this חכמה,

together with special ספרים which have extracted and explained these insights.

The clarity and accurateness developed with these insights help to see these complex issues as they truly are to be understood. This clarity of insight and graphic portrayal of its meaning also begin to actually effect the human and begin the early stages of working with oneself and impacting one's character.

The Chazal reveal to us the full complexity of the human mind and heart and the dynamics of the interaction between the two of them. They also reveal the dynamics of each trait of character and how to best deal with each.

Besides defining the nature of man, they clearly define the parameters and limitations of each trait of character and human action, thought and emotion according to the Torah's definition of right and wrong, without which we could never truly determine right from wrong due to all of our personal blinding factors.

Chazal also open up for us the full gamut of understanding of נגיעות, blinders, that fool man into thinking that he is right when it is not necessarily so.

### III. Working With Self

When the above חכמות can be seen as clearly from Sinai, from Hashem, with no element of conjecture, it is extremely potent in the process of changing one's character.

With this חכמה in hand and as we constantly grow in this חכמה we begin the process of working on and with ourselves to improve. This entire system is known as לימוד המוסר - the study of Mussar. The study of Mussar can be divided into three major parts:

1. חכמת המוסר - the חכמה (wisdom) of knowing oneself and the insights into right and wrong.
2. לימוד המוסר בהתפעלות כולל השבון הנפש - the study of Mussar with fervor / ecstasy including taking stock of one's spiritual self.
3. הינוך המוסר - the actual exercise and performance of the traits and actions under development.
  - a. חכמת המוסר - as outlined above. This חכמה requires constant delving into the endless

wisdom of Chazal and their insights into right and wrong and the psychology of the human.

- b. **לימוד המוסר בהתפעלות** - reciting statements and insights of Chazal and **ספרי מוסר**, clearly articulating the words with fervor, excitement, and a tune, focusing clearly on the picture of what they are really saying, and using singing of the words to arouse involvement and focus, and to eventually penetrate even so far as the subconscious. This can be enhanced by repetition again and again to help the message to penetrate, again and again clearly thinking and painting graphic pictures in the mind. Also taking personal stock (**חשבון הנפש**) of oneself. Where should I be going? What should I be doing? Followed by: Where am I really going? and, What am I really doing? and working on it.

**חינוך המוסר** - Performance of the acts and traits – actions reinforce and deepen the commitments and realizations of the Mussar process. Actually, performing the desired acts

deepen the lessons and implant the traits into the נפש of the person.

In the name of Rav Yisroel Salanter, as told by his student Rav Naftali Amesterdam:

בשם ר' ישראל מר' נפתלי אמסטרדם: מוסר  
היא להוציא מן המושכל אל המוחש את  
הדברים בפה כדי שיכנסו הוציא את הדברים  
ללב.

**“Mussar is articulating the words with the mouth in order that they enter the heart, to take the words and concepts from thought and understanding and turn them into feelings.”**



# CHAPTER 3

## Developing the מדה of Bitachon

The first step in developing the מדה of Bitachon is to study intellectually everything possible about it found in Torah sources. This

*Note: There are some very helpful audio presentations available at [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org).*

includes, but is by no means limited to the previous chapters of this work and the additional readings entitled “A Patient’s Guide to Bitachon”, “Bitachon in Business” and “Ten Ways to Bitachon”.

These sources and concepts should be reviewed and analyzed in depth to maximize one’s understanding of what Bitachon is, what are its benefits and what are the intellectual and psychological issues involved in the process of its acquisition. Included in this study should be the obstacles that stand in the way of developing Bitachon and how to circumvent them.

Although, as Rav Yisroel Salanter, זצוק"ל, taught, the study of Torah sources in depth can be very powerful and helpful in internalizing emotionally a trait of character or any other improvement, Mussar provides an additional method to internalize emotionally a Torah concept. The idea, as the Baalei Mussar used to say, is to bridge the longest gap in the world, the distance between the mind and the heart. That is to say, to take intellectual knowledge and emotionalize it, to penetrate the heart and have the ultimate impact on the total person.

Rav Yisroel's system to emotionalize a concept involves repetition of the words of Chazal or any Torah source again and again. It also advocates repeating the words over and over with a tune that can evoke emotion and enable the words to reverberate again and again in the person's memory, sort of being haunted by the tune.

Rav Yisroel's idea of picturing the concepts is similar to what today is known as guided imagery. Imagining and picturing one's self accomplishing a goal has a direct effect on bringing about the

accomplishment. Another aspect of the Mussar approach is to perform actions which also have an effect on one's inner self and one's emotions.

We find that even though the Mitzva of remembering Shabbos every day of the week should have been fulfilled by saving any special food found during the week for Shabbos, Hillel did not do so but rather ate it during the week to strengthen his Bitachon that Hashem will send him another or even better one for Shabbos.

One can find many opportunities to act in ways that demonstrate or strengthen Bitachon and they can have a very powerful effect. There is, however, a danger in this process that requires some special attention. Although there exists a concept of having Bitachon and not doing anything to bring about the desired results, it seems from many sources<sup>xxi</sup> that most people are not on that level and are required to put in effort, known as **השתדלות**. We should not attempt Bitachon without effort, **השתדלות**. Even though results do not come from our efforts, rather directly from Hashem, Bitachon without effort is

improper for most people in most circumstances. However, we should not overdo the effort, but rather do enough to make the results possible by natural means, so as not to have to rely on miracles.<sup>1</sup>

The act of strengthening Bitachon can be achieved through the holding back on the excessive השתדלות, effort, and thus helping to develop a real measure of Bitachon.

It must also be kept in mind that real Bitachon is not just a statement of trust; it's a feeling of confidence and peace of mind that Hashem will take care of everything. One who professes Bitachon, but is anxious or worried, does not really feel the true Bitachon.

This also explains why often people who claim to have Bitachon don't seem to get the results they desire. It is very easy to fool oneself that he has Bitachon, but in reality it is very superficial at best, if not just untrue at worst.

True Bitachon is not a one-time achievement; it is a lifelong endeavor. It goes up and down according to the challenges of life and one's spiritual state at any

moment. The benefits, however, are infinite in the peace of mind and tranquility it provides as well as the results and benefits it assures.

May we all be privileged to engage in this pursuit for the entirety of our lives and may we realize the answers to our prayers and the desires of our hearts and a life of supreme tranquility and peace of mind in the closeness to our Creator that is the result of Bitachon in Hashem's kindness.

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<sup>1</sup> אבן ישראל דרוש ג'  
גמ' ברכות לו.



## TEN WAYS TO STRENGTHEN OUR BITACHON IN HASHEM ONE HUNDRED TIMES EACH DAY

*The פסוק says: הַכּוֹטֵף בְּד' חַסֵּד יִסּוּבֵכֶנּוּ. One who trusts Hashem will be surrounded with kindness.*

*The truth is that anyone who believes in Hashem and His powers, הַשְּׂגָחָה פְּרִטִית and kindness, should automatically be trusting Him to fulfill one's desires. The only reason this may not follow is that maybe the person feels that he is undeserving.*

*The דַּיּוּזָק derived from the בְּרִכּוֹת can help us emotionally to overcome this fear and emotionally rely on and trust Hashem to fulfill our desires.*

Recite 100 בְּרִכּוֹת a day and think of their meaning.

1. בְּרוּךְ - Hashem is the eternal, endless source of all blessing
2. אַתָּה - We are speaking directly, face to face, in familiar form to Hashem
3. Hashem – the name of Hashem has two meanings: אֲדוֹן הַכֹּל - Master and Controller of all, and בַּעַל הַרְחָמִים - The Merciful One
4. אֲדוֹן הַכֹּל - The more we realize that Hashem is Master and Total Controller of everything, that which seemed impossible seems easier to achieve. We are, therefore, less concerned that we are not worthy of such a change since it seems more

natural. We don't feel that we need such a great miracle.

5. בעל הרחמים - Realizing the infinite רחמים of Hashem can give us the inspiration to feel that Hashem will have רחמים on us and grant us our desires, despite our not deserving them.
6. אלקינו - Refers to Hashem as the Master and Judge. The Master who controls everything is forever judging us. This would seem to make בטחון more difficult. However, Hashem is forever tempering His judgment with mercy. Otherwise, He would not judge us again until next Rosh Hashana.
7. The fact that the Master of all is also judging us indicates His kindness. He wants to do חסד to us, however, the greatest חסד happens when we earn it and therefore can more appreciate it.
8. The ultimate בעל חסד who wants to maximize His kindness to us is אלקינו - our Controller and Judge – He is ours. All of His control and judging is only for our benefit.
9. מלך העולם - The King of the entire universe has nothing more important to do than take care of each and every one of us and all of our needs.
10. The variety of pleasures and benefits for which we make 100 ברכות everyday indicate the total concern that Hashem has for each and every one of us and all of our needs, pleasures and benefits.

*Focusing on these meanings again and again can make putting our trust in Hashem easier and more of a real possibility every day.*

## TEN WAYS TO A LIFE OF HAPPINESS

1. Learn the definition of happiness before you pursue it.
2. Understand the difference between happiness and pleasure. Happiness is a lasting feeling from within. Pleasure is a fleeting thrill from the outside.
3. Remember that our Rabbis tell us that wine rejoices the heart leading to improved “sechel”, only when it is taken in moderation (תהלים קד,טו ברד"ק).
4. When one is not careful about drinking too much, rather than bringing simcha, it ruins simcha (תהלים קד,טו מנחת שי). Lessening some inhibition allows the mind to soar, removing inhibition reduces the humanity of a person.
5. Recognize that the highest form of happiness is “osher”, which means validation. True happiness is a feeling of validity, self-worth and feeling good about oneself.
6. Constantly review the fact that our purpose in this world was revealed to us by the Creator at Sinai and He gave us a manual for life, the Torah. Living up to our purpose inspires the greatest sense of validation / happiness. Not

having a purpose is the worst feeling – no validity or self-worth.

7. Don't become dependent on pleasures. Pleasure makes us feel bad about ourselves. Why must we have constant outside sources of pleasure to feel temporarily OK? That thought grossly invalidates us.
8. Give - Giving extra Matanos L'evyonim (gifts for the poor on Purim) brings more simcha than more drinking because it brings with it a feeling of "emulation of Hashem". Hashem rejoices the hearts of the downtrodden and so do I. This is the ultimate validation (רמב"ם הלכות פורים).
9. Love - Giving love uplifts one's spirits more than receiving love (רמב"ן פ' חיי שרה כד-טז).
10. Strengthen the relationship with Hashem. The ultimate joy, happiness and pleasure are in the feeling of closeness to Hashem (מסילת ישרים פרק א). It is also the ultimate sense of personal validation. Torah study, Tefillah, Bitachon and recognition of Hashem's intimate involvement in our lives all strengthen our relationship with Him.

## TEN WAYS TO COPE WITH A NATURAL DISASTER

1. Never forget that Hashem loves every member of Klal Yisrael; He chose His people, Israel, with love.
2. Always remember that there is no such thing as an accident; Hashem orchestrates everything that happens.
3. Always know and remind yourself that everything that the “Merciful One” does is for the good (ברכות ט:)
4. Review the idea stated in the Rambam, that often something which seems good turns out to be not so and often we see that things that seem bad bring about results which are unbelievably good  
(רמב"ם פי' המשניות ברכות פ' ט, מ"ה)
5. Review the idea that sometimes in order to grant us great blessing that we do not have the merit to deserve, Hashem brings upon us painful suffering which evokes Divine mercy on us and He is then able to grant us the infinite blessing that we could not have been privileged to receive by merit alone (תוס' רי"ד)

6. The monetary value of losses is included in Hashem's decree on Rosh Hashana. The personal, emotional and sentimental pain should be viewed as Hashem's way of entitling us to His kindness and mercy to achieve infinite blessings which we would not have been able to achieve without the pain and suffering.
7. Chazal tell us that when we suffer beyond what we deserve, the pains are "יִסּוּרִים שֶׁל אֶהְבֵּה", "pains of love". Because He loves us Hashem wants us to reach higher levels of connection to Him and to attain more reward than we could have before this suffering (גמ' ברכות ה.).
8. Seeing and hearing of all the miracles that happened to spare people should be used to appreciate Hashem's Hashgacha Pratis (Divine supervision and intimate involvement in every aspect of our existence) and that appreciation of His loving, kind and merciful Hashgacha should help us to realize that our own personal suffering is certainly a product of His love for us and will certainly lead to great blessings.
9. We must strengthen our Bitachon (trust) in Hashem's kindness and mercy that He will surely help us to heal, to persevere and to

come out of this traumatic suffering even better off than before. The Navi tells us that when we feel the intensity of Hashem's mercy, even the intense suffering of the past seems as if it were only a mere moment.

(רד"ק ישעיה נד,ו) (See Bitachon Builder, Bitachon in Business, A Patient's Guide, etc. at Priority-1's website [www.priority-1.org](http://www.priority-1.org).)

10. The Seforno on Tehillim Perek 92 offers us an approach to deal with any questions about the fairness of what happens in this world. He says that the tireless, endless efforts of the righteous and their amazing good deeds tell us that Hashem's ways are completely just and fair. This seems very difficult to understand. Obviously the question of His fairness is not a question of logic. We can't possibly understand the logic of His ways. The question of His fairness is an expression of the emotional pain of our suffering. It seems that seeing the extent of the goodness of righteous people soothes pain emotionally and restores not only our faith in man's goodness but in Hashem's goodness and fairness as well.

*Please note: the real benefit from this presentation can best be achieved by a thoughtful and focused review of these 10 concepts over and over, again and again.*

## TEN THOUGHTS TO HELP STRENGTHEN YOUR BITACHON

- 1 Hashem is in complete control of everything that happens to me - even things that seem insignificant to me.
- 2 Nothing in my life can change for better or worse unless Hashem wants it.
- 3 Hashem is the only source of goodness and blessing and the only One who can affect my livelihood.
- 4 I know I must do my *Hishtadlus*, but regardless of my efforts, only Hashem can make me successful.
- 5 Hashem has been good and compassionate to me constantly, even though I may not have deserved it.
- 6 I know that Hashem will help me now just like He has always helped me in the past.
- 7 Hashem is always capable of helping me even when I think that my situation is too difficult or impossible to change.
- 8 I am completely confident that I can surrender my fate to Hashem and He will care for me.
- 9 Hashem orchestrates my life's situations during difficult times just as He does during good times - it is always for my benefit.
- 10 I know that Hashem is like the most loving Father - He cares about me, He is concerned about me and my family and He is involved in every detail of our lives.

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# ESSAYS

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# WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

In the Holy Language of the Bible, the root of a word describes the essence of the concept. The root of “Osher,” an advanced form of happiness, is “Asher,” which means valid, to validate. Happiness is a state of being, where a person feels validated, good about himself and worthy.

One of the reasons that happiness is so difficult to find in our society today, undoubtedly has to do with the phenomenon that since Darwin, most people believe that they are the result of accidents rather than creation. Creation bespeaks purpose; evolution bespeaks accident. If we are here by accident, then our lives have no purpose. Who, without true purpose, can feel validated?

In his best selling book, “Man’s Search for Meaning”, the world famous psychiatrist, Viktor E. Frankl, presents compelling evidence that the underlying cause of the majority of mental health problems is man’s feeling a lack of meaning and purpose in his life.

Depression is so commonplace in our society today. The relationship between lacking purpose and depression is very obvious. If man chooses his own purpose without any information as to his true purpose, he still feels that much is missing. Only a creator can know the real purpose of his creation. If we could have guidance from our Creator as to the

true purpose for which He created us, we would feel truly validated and happy.

Judaism claims such a revelation from our Creator, and this offers the possibility of true purpose and lasting happiness.

# WHAT HAPPENED AT SINAI?

*By Rabbi Shaya Cohen*

There are only five religions that make the claim that the Creator appeared to millions of eyewitnesses and revealed His purpose in Creation. They are: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Bahai. Interestingly, they all claim that this event took place only with the Jews at Sinai.

Judaism is therefore the only religion that claims that the Creator and Almighty Master of the Universe revealed Himself publicly at Sinai to them, to the entire Jewish people, and gave them His Divine directives. This claim is substantiated through a combination of factors, which indicate, beyond any reasonable doubt, the truth of the claim.

The key words in this process are testimony and evidence. Our Torah includes in itself a system for recognizing and transmitting the testimony of the original generation of eyewitnesses to the revelation at Sinai, down to this very day. An understanding of this system, provides a very credible basis for the truth of Torah from Sinai

The second word, evidence, refers to the fact that the Torah, both the written and the oral

Torah, is full of information that no-one other than the Creator and Ruler of the Universe could have known at the time the document was written. The Torah is also replete with indications of the Creator's control of the world.

Both of these concepts are unique amongst the religions of the world, only to be found in Judaism. Even though the other major religions came after Judaism and copied so much from it, no religion ever dared to claim eyewitness testimony to a public event of revelation by G-d, in front of millions of live witnesses. This can only be understood by the realization that this claim is extremely difficult to fabricate and if, in fact, it did not happen, then it will not be accepted or believed.

In fact, the major religions, in a desire and need to base their religion on more than the claim of one person to a private revelation, also acknowledge that the only public revelation was by the Creator to the Jews at Sinai. They then go on to claim, however that G-d changed His mind about Torah and the Jewish people.

This claim, of course, is very tenuous, because G-d Himself, commanded in the Torah, that no prophet, even with the performance of amazing miracles, could be believed to change the Torah or lead us astray.

The other major religions do not fare better when it comes to evidence for the truth of Torah. Most of

their pronouncements refer to future events in the world-to-come or very vague statements, not very testable in this world. The Torah, however, is full of very specific information and prophecy of future events in this world that no one can deny.

This information is so compelling that the Talmud states, in “Chullin”, that this type of information, that no human could have known at the time, serves as an answer to anyone who would question whether or not the Torah is from G-d.

To properly convey the dual concepts of testimony to the events of Sinai and evidence for the Divine truth of Torah requires a detailed, sophisticated analysis of a wide range of material, which is beyond the scope of this work.

For the purpose of this work, some highlights of the basic concepts are presented here with the advice to the reader to do further research and be exposed to further information in this area.

The unique position of the first generation of actual witnesses to the Divine Revelation at Sinai can be better understood by a simple story. A Chassidic Rebbe passed away and left two sons. They were conflicted about who would be their father’s successor. All of the Chasidim got involved and took sides. One day the younger son walks into the shul and announces that the conflict is resolved. “Father appeared to me in a dream,” he said, “and proclaimed me as his successor.” The other brother

and his supporters responded, “If father truly wanted you to be his successor, he should have appeared to us and told us directly.”

The only religion that claims a revelation in front of an entire nation, millions of witnesses, is Judaism, the others, if they claim revelation, like Islam and Christianity, claim a private revelation to one person with no other witnesses. This story underscores the difference in credibility between the two approaches. Anyone can claim that he had a private revelation; no one can claim a public revelation unless it, in fact, really happened.

The Torah, which describes this public revelation in detail, clearly states that the people of that generation witnessed these events and heard G-d speaking to them and to Moshe. The fact that they all passed this document on to their children is a powerful testimony to these events.

Parents do not lie to their children, millions of parents certainly don't tell the same lie to their children. If a parent tells a child that a certain event took place, then the child knows that his parent honestly believes that the certain event took place. If a parent says, “I saw that event take place” then the child knows that, in fact, it did actually take place.

The Torah was passed from generation to generation, always publicly read and always prohibited from even the slightest change. Not only was the document passed down and preserved, but it was

always read and studied by a nation that performed many observances, generation after generation, based on the text. To date, the text survives, all over the Jewish world without differences in text of any significance, unlike the New Testament, which has hundreds of significant differences in text. This process can be seen in action when a Torah reader makes a mistake in the public Torah reading; the listeners yell out corrections and never let a reading mistake go by. If and when there is a written error or peeling of the letter in the Torah, the Torah is put away, with the “gartle” (belt) on the outside, announcing its inappropriate status and must be fixed within thirty days. This system has preserved the Torah throughout the ages.

The Torah abounds with evidence of its Divine authorship, in the form of information both prophetic and scientific that no author could have known when the Torah was first given over 3300 years ago. Secular historians as well admit that the Torah was given at least approximately 2,250 years ago based upon documented historical evidence of the Torah’s translation into Greek.

The Torah prophesizes the events of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the exile, the return to Israel, and more in intricate detail, leaving no room to question the prophetic ability of its author. The Torah gives us vast amounts of modern scientific information, both in the written and oral Torah, no human could have known without Divine revelation.

That fact that there will never be a species of fish that has scales but does not have fins could not have been known to Moshe Rabbeinu without Divine revelation. Nor could he have known that.

Who could have dared to say that the Western Wall of the Bais Hamikdash will never be destroyed and who could have known that during the 20th Century, our enemies will use poisonous gas against us (See **מלכים** on the "מקטב ישוד צהרים" **פסוק** in **צ"א** (תהלים **צ"א**). Or who could have known, thousands of years ago, that the final determination of whether an embryo is male or female only takes place after the 40<sup>th</sup> day after conception. It goes on and on. This is what the Talmud says in "Chullin", that the scientific information that no one could have known at that time, serves as an answer to anyone who would say that Torah is not from Heaven. Our Rabbis do not say this is how we know the truth of Torah, but rather, an answer to anyone who might question its veracity. We know Torah is Divine, because of the unbroken chain of testimony from generation to generation, with no skipping of a generation. However, if anyone still harbors any doubts, how can he explain the extensive, detailed and accurate information that we find in our Torah that could not have been known to a human author so many years ago?



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# BITACHON IN BUSINESS

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# BITACHON: FAITH AND TRUST IN G-D

**T**he life of a “Baal Bitachon,” one who has total trust and confidence in his Creator, is a life that is coveted by all. It is a life without any fear or worry about the present or future, for the “Baal Bitachon” lives with total peace of mind, knowing that the Almighty is looking after him. What is the “formula” of Bitachon which affords one this rare luxury? In what ways does Bitachon alter one’s lifestyle and outlook on life? Is true Bitachon in Hashem beyond the average person’s reach? Are there any techniques which could aid one in developing his Bitachon?

Rabenu Bachaya explains that Bitachon in Hashem is the realization that He is in total control of everything and that nothing happens by chance. The more the Jew focuses upon this truth, the more profound is its effect. Eventually, his confidence in the Almighty’s powers, coupled with his recognition of His love and kindness for him and the fact that special favors are bestowed upon those who trust Him develops to the extent that he has total trust and faith that Hashem definitely will save him and guide him through all of his problems.

A story is told about Reb Aryeh Levin, zt”l., the famous Tzaddik of Jerusalem.

During World War I, there was a period in which he was in dire need of money. He went to a friend whose practice it

was to lend money in those trying times, but to Reb Aryeh's dismay, the friend refused to grant him the loan. When he came home and told his wife the shattering news, she said that it is obvious that since the man normally lends money to people and there was no logical reason as to why he did not do so this time, that Hashem saw fit that the money should come from elsewhere. Reb Aryeh realized that his wife was right and regained his strength. A short while later, the postman came to their home with a letter from America.

Reb Aryeh had met an individual several years before who knew and admired Reb Aryeh's grandfather, and therefore, left in his will a sum of money to be sent to Reb Aryeh. The realization that the lender's refusal to lend them money could not have happened by chance, for Hashem totally regulates every act and happening that transpires in the world, gave Reb Aryeh and his wife the strength and confidence that Hashem, with his love for each and every Jew, and even more so for those who trust in Him, will definitely help them and bring their sustenance through some other means.

We find in Tehillim a chapter in which Dovid Hamelech is running for his life and is beseeching Hashem to spare him from the impending doom. "Lighten up my eyes lest I will die." He was hiding in a cave and his enemies had him surrounded. He begged the Creator of the Universe to save him. He then concluded his prayer by saying, "I have trust in Your kindness, my heart rejoices in Your saving."

In the midst of the pursuit, in the same breath in which he was praying for his very existence, he was rejoicing in the Simcha of his being saved as if it had already taken place.

Dovid Hamelech, through his Bitachon, was not only confident that the Almighty definitely would save him, but he was further able to reach a state of total Simcha and ecstasy in his being saved even while his life was still seemingly in grave danger.

We find another unique quality in the life of a “Baal Bitachon.”

The Pasuk says, “Cast your burden upon Hashem and He will sustain you.” The implication of this verse is that when one is confronted with a problem, not only can he feel secure that Hashem will help him deal with and overcome it, but he can take that problem and, so to speak, “throw it upon Hashem.” He can relieve himself from the worry and anxiety caused by it by “casting it upon Hashem,” so that he can feel that it has now become Hashem’s burden and not his problem any longer.

We further find the verse, “Behold, I will trust in G-d, my Savior, and will not fear, etc., and I will draw up water from the wells of salvation.”

The Radak explains that the well of water is a parable to illustrate Klal Yisroel’s Bitachon. When one draws water from a well which is connected to all the springs in the world, he does so knowing there is a limitless source. He takes one bucketful and then another and then another.

When a person has Bitachon, not only can he feel that his problem is already solved before the solution comes, not only can he take his worries and “cast them upon Hashem,” but he can feel at the moment of need that there is a well in front of

him, a spring of salvation with the solution of his problems and every problem that ever was and will be, and all that he must do is draw it up, “and I will draw up water from the wells of salvation.”

The attainment of these lofty levels is not restricted to great Rabbis or Talmudical scholars, and in certain situations, we find that their total acquisition can be reached more readily by the simplest person.

There is a famous story told in the name of the Alshich Hakadosh, one of the great Mekubalim (mystics), who was discussing the powers of Bitachon.

He said that if the Jew puts his total trust in Hashem, he can be sure that He will send him his needs and he need not even work for his sustenance. A poor Jewish farmer heard this and proceeded to sell the donkey, with which he worked, went home, and began reciting Tehillim. His family asked him how he was going to support them and he confidently told them what the Alshich had said.

A Gentile who had bought the donkey was traveling on a road and struck upon a treasure of gold. He loaded the gold onto the donkey and as he completed the task, he tripped and fell off the cliff and died. The donkey was frightened and ran back to the home of the Jewish farmer. The family realized that the Alshich was right.

When the students of the Alshich heard of the happening, they asked the Alshich why was it that the simple unlearned Jew’s Bitachon worked so well for him while they, who studied Torah and Mussar for so many years, never had such success?

The Alshich replied that the Jew, who wasn't aware of all the intricate questions involved in the concepts of Bitachon, was able to have a simple and total trust that Hashem will help him, while a learned person who is involved with the intellectual complexities of Bitachon, its specific laws and differences of opinion, sometimes finds it harder to divorce those thoughts from his mind and just simply place his total trust in Hashem.

There is a similar story told about Reb Yisroel Salanter which clearly conveys the message that if one has total Bitachon in Hashem, then he will be granted all of his desires, providing the Bitachon is total, without any trace of insecurity.

Reb Yisroel advised a man to buy a lottery ticket and to have full Bitachon that he will win the full sum, and then he assured him that if he does so, he will definitely win.

The days and weeks passed and the man did not win the money. He went to Reb Yisroel to find out what had happened. Reb Yisroel offered him half of the sum for the lottery ticket and he happily agreed to the deal.

Reb Yisroel then explained to him that his readiness to sell the ticket for less than the full amount was a clear indication that there was obviously some amount of trust lacking, and this lack of total trust was responsible for his not winning.

Reb Yisroel Salanter expounds that by studying the laws of any specific area of observance, the person will enhance his observance of them. Therefore, by studying the Halachos and the words of Chazal, which deal with the concept of Bitachon, he will thereby increase his confidence and trust in Hashem.

The Sefer Hachinuch enlightens us with another very powerful means of enhancing our Bitachon.

The mitzvah of Gid Hanasheh, the prohibition of eating a specific part of the animal, is to remind us of the mortal battle between Yaakov Avinu and the Sar of Esav in which Yaakov was tapped in the thigh. In the course of their engagement, Yaakov was almost totally destroyed and through a miracle was saved. By refraining from eating the Gid Hanasheh, the Jew recalls that miracle.

It seems from the Chinuch that although the Jew has endured so much suffering and his history is full of so much bloodshed, focusing on the miraculous happening that took place thousands of years ago will give Klal Yisroel the faith and confidence that just as Yaakov was saved that one time, Hashem will continue to save us again and again for eternity.

When the Jew experiences even one miracle, and thereby recognizes the Almighty's absolute and total regulation of every event and every aspect of our existence, coupled with recognition of His love for us, it gives him the strength and confidence that just as He has saved us in the past, so will He continue forever.

In light of the concept of Bitachon, the question arises: if one is aware of Hashem's capability to solve all of his problems and that He controls and regulates every occurrence so that nothing can transpire by chance, and He helps those who trust in Him even if they may be undeserving, is it not a lack of Bitachon for one to attempt to help himself?

The Chovos Halevavos says that the average person is

supposed to do Hishtadlus, to make an effort to bring about the desired results, because he has no right to rely upon miracles.

Reb Yisroel Salanter explains that even though the Jew is supposed to do Hishtadlus, he must have complete trust in Hashem that He has the capability to solve the problem without any of the person's effort, and He has the love and dedication to do so. He also indicates that whether or not Hashem will help him in this situation does not depend at all upon his efforts but rather, upon whether he puts his trust and confidence in Hashem.

The purpose that the Hishtadlus serves is not to assist in bringing the solution to the problem, but only to fulfill the Halacha that one is not to rely upon miracles. However, it is totally divorced from one's Bitachon and serves no function in the attainment of his goals. Therefore, since the Hishtadlus is only a token effort performed because one is not permitted to rely on a miracle, it would seem that for one to attempt to do more than the amount necessary to fulfill this Halacha, (that is, as defined by Reb Yisroel, the amount that should make it possible by natural means without miracles) would constitute a lack of Bitachon on his part. It would seem logical, too, that one who feels a lack in the totality of his trust in the Almighty, should sooner work to strengthen that Bitachon rather than to pursue additional efforts beyond those needed to fulfill the injunction of, "Do not rely on miracles." The Chofetz Chaim illustrates this concept with a parable:

A story is told of a man who was on a train. The train was going at its average speed, but the man, being in a hurry, was

not satisfied. He jumped out of his seat, ran to the front car, and began pushing the wall of the train to try to make it go faster. We must realize that Hashem is the conductor who controls all events and our pushing will not make things come any faster than He wants them to come.

In Radin, at the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva, the custom was that the Yeshiva boys did not shave their beards.

There was a young man who was having a difficult time finding a wife and people told him that it was because his beard made him look unattractive. He went to the Chofetz Chaim and asked him if he should remove the beard. The Chofetz Chaim replied, "The Talmud says, 'The matching of a man with his proper mate is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea.' If it is so "difficult," so to speak, for Hashem to create a proper match, do you think that your shaving your beard will make it easier?"

It is important to note a concept found in the Nefesh Hachaim from Reb Chaim of Volozhin and in the Sefer Hachinuch:

When a Jew focuses upon the facts that nothing happens by accident and that everything is completely regulated by Hashem, this realization will protect him from any danger or harm.

**Throughout the difficult course of our history, it has been this trust in his Creator that has preserved the Jew and given him the strength to persevere.**

*There can be no greater source of human strength than the knowledge that the Creator Himself, who controls and directs every occurrence, so deeply loves His people and is so committed to kindness and generosity to them. This knowledge, combined with the realization of the special relationship that He has with those who place their trust in Him, has always been and will continue to be the eternal strength of the Jewish people.*



# *Letter to a Friend*

*Dear Friend,*

Before I begin, I want to thank you for an uplifting and unique experience. I returned home energized and inspired, as I hope you did. My family is very grateful to you and for that matter, your family, for the wonderful experience.

The following is a review of some of the thoughts we discussed that are pertinent to the basics of our daily existence. I suggest we review them regularly and I hope we can eventually make them available to others.

The basis of our existence is the realization of the concept “Ein Od Milvado.” There is nothing besides Him – Hashem is the ultimate Controller, Conductor, Facilitator and, of course, Creator and Owner of everything and every occurrence in existence, past, present and future.

I just received an email, which conveys this idea. Allow me to share it with you.

# *From the heavens*

To: You  
Date: Today  
From: G-d – the Boss!  
Subject: Yourself  
Reference: Life!

This is G-d. Today I will be handling ALL of your problems for you. I do not need your help. So, have a nice day. I love you.

*The Almighty*  
G-d

*Everywhere Ave. ∞ Infinity Way*

To internalize this concept, however, and to make it a constant awareness of our conscious minds and a deep-rooted ever-present feeling in our hearts, requires much ongoing effort.

Truth be told, since everything is decided and decreed by Hashem on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, if we were to do absolutely nothing the entire year, this lesson of “there is nothing beside Him” might be very effectively learned. However, such behavior would be inappropriate on many different grounds.

First of all, man would not have all of the opportunities to do good and the tests of his will to stay away from evil, if he did not have to put in all sorts of efforts to achieve his portion.

Secondly, man would undoubtedly pursue many more inappropriate paths and desires if he were not busy just trying to achieve the basics in his life (Perek Gimmel – Chovos Halevavos, Shaar Habitachon).

Besides, Hashem wants us to live in the natural world and not rely on miracles. It could be that when everything comes through obvious miracles, eventually we begin to take things for granted and might even begin forgetting the Source, from where these miracles come. When, however, we have to put in all sorts of efforts and subsequently discover Hashem’s intervention, the ongoing suspense and struggle keep us more focused on Hashem as the ultimate source of all blessing.

It may be that a person can reach such heights of closeness and trust in Hashem, that he can stay safe from this danger just by maintaining the focus on his Bitachon. However, for most of us, we need the Hishtadlus to keep us focused on Him.

By the way, this need to stay focused on Him is one reason why often He takes a long time to answer our prayers, and thereby forces us to keep beseeching and begging Him over and over. The Medrash says that the reason the mothers of our people (Sarah, Rivka, Rochel, and even Leah) were childless for so long is that Hashem craves the prayers of the righteous. Obviously, He doesn't crave the prayers for His sake. He needs nothing. However, He craves their prayers for the uplifting quality and effect that it has on them.

If I were designing the world, I might have thought that instead of Sarah praying until she was 90 years old to have a child, I would grant her the child at, say, 60, and let her say Hallel and thank Hashem for the additional 30 years.

The problem is that our words are far more heartfelt when they are desperate requests rather than words of praise. We say the whole Hallel the first week, then half the next, and after a while we tend to take everything for granted. Not so when the need is still acute.

When He puts off answering our prayers, He forces us to keep sincerely focused on Him, and this brings us closer and closer to Him.

Hashem seems so committed to this concept of our living in the natural world rather than the miraculous, that it seems from Chazal that all that He grants us on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is only based on natural occurrences.

The Gemara in Shabbos 32a advises us not to rely on a miracle, because a miracle might not be forthcoming. Even though our lives and livelihood have been sealed on Yom Kippur, that decision is predicated on natural circumstances. However, Hashem never guaranteed the decisions of Yom Kippur if they have to come about through miracles. Therefore, Chazal tell us not to count on miracles, even for results that were decreed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The danger of forgetting that Hashem is the source of all blessing is so great, that according to the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 430, Bircas Hamazon), the reason that Modim was instituted at the end of Shmoneh Esrei was to address this issue. It seems from the Chinuch that when we recite the various Brachos of Shmoneh Esrei, we become inspired that Hashem is the source of all blessing and begin to be reliant on Him and His kindness and graciousness. We find ourselves in danger of taking Him for granted and even as we rely totally on Him to grant our prayers, we are in danger of forgetting Him as the ultimate source of all blessing. We therefore recite Modim to remind ourselves and refocus on the idea that He, in fact, is the only source of all blessing.

An incident that took place over 25 years ago, also points out this concept. I once gave a Yeshiva bookkeeper a sign for her office, “Yeshuas Hashem K’heref Ayin.” The salvation from Hashem comes in a blink of an eye.

She once asked me, “Why is it that He only blinks at the very last minute?”

I answered that if He would blink a few days before the deadline or payroll, we might not realize that it is only from Him, and not because we are capable or competent. When, however, the salvation comes with a blink of the eye, at the last minute, we recognize clearly that it is only He that does it, and not ourselves or anything else.

Now that Hashem has designed the world to live with natural causes, not to rely on miracles, we must use Hishtadlus, our efforts, to achieve our goal. This, however, creates another problem. How can we protect ourselves from losing focus on the fact that despite all of our many, strenuous, and diligent efforts, it is really only Hashem that accomplishes, and we really cannot achieve anything through our efforts? How do we accept the fulfillment of His will that He wants us to live according to the natural laws, and still keep focused on Him constantly?

It would seem that we need an ongoing approach and constant stimuli to refocus on that reality that only Hashem, and nothing and no one else, has any power over anything in our lives.

The following are some thoughts that can, when reviewed again and again and internalized in both our minds and our hearts, help achieve this desired effect.

We say in Hallel: “Please Hashem, save us; please Hashem, cause us to succeed.” The Seforno explains the phrase, “cause us to succeed,” as referring to being successful in doing the proper efforts. The question is, why doesn’t he rather interpret it to mean that our efforts should be crowned with success? The answer would seem to be that being crowned with success is included in the phrase “save us.” Efforts are not crowned with success, because they do nothing in the first place. Everything is completely and totally done by and from Hashem. We can only ask that we properly perform the Mitzva of Hishtadlus (effort), but we must know that effort has no connection with the result. It is just a Mitzva for us to perform, so as not rely on miracles.

It would be a good idea to recite this request at the end of Shmoneh Esrei daily (before stepping back) with this idea in mind.

The Ralbag says that Yaakov had to make every effort to get his son Yosef not to bury him in Egypt, even to the extent of making him swear to that effect. The reason he had to go so far, says the Ralbag, is so that his efforts should not be considered vain efforts (l’batalah). It seems that the results are not related to the efforts, as the Ralbag does not say that maybe the results won’t happen, only that the efforts may be wasted.

Once again, we see that our efforts are necessary, but unrelated to the results. All results come directly from Hashem.

The Talumd (Niddah 70b) indicates that one who wishes for riches must engage in business as a condition of appropriate effort. However, the riches themselves are a gift from Hashem, not coming directly as a result of one's effort.

Another perspective of this concept can be seen in the Rambam at the beginning of the laws of Chanukah. The Rambam describes the pressure and pain suffered by the Jewish people "until the G-d of our fathers had mercy on them and saved them from the hands of their oppressors and delivered them." He then continues that the Hashmonaim killed the enemy and saved the Jews from its hand.

Who really did the saving, Hashem, or the Hashmonaim? The Rambam seems to contradict himself.

The obvious answer is that from the moment of Hashem's having mercy, they were really saved, the Hashmonaim just went through the motions and played out the script. However, for their efforts and dedication, they are also credited with the results, as if they actually were the ones who saved the Jews from their enemies.

The Mishna Berurah, at the beginning of Hilchos Megillah, brings a Rashi that explains that the Megillah is read at night and repeated by day “as a remembrance of the miracle, because they cried out in their days of trouble day and night.” This seems to indicate that remembering the miracle has to do with their crying out day and night.

It would seem that the miracle is considered happening at the moments of their heartfelt prayers being heard, and the events of Purim are considered the playing out of the Divine decision, rather than the essence of the miracle.

We also find in the Mishna Berurah (Laws of Taanis Esther), that Taanis Esther reminds us that when a Jew fasts and does Teshuva with all of his heart, Hashem sees and listens to him, in his time of need. We see that not only is everything up to Hashem and His mercy, but we all participate in the process by doing Teshuva. When we do so, then He is more ready to pay attention and have mercy on us. Even our Teshuva does not automatically remove an evil decree; we must then beseech Him for mercy as well.

Just a word about natural causes versus the miraculous: It seems from the Ralbag, when Yitzchak went to the Plishtim, he had to lie that Rivka was his sister, because he would have been relying on a miracle for them not to kill him and take her, had he said she was his wife. Yet it seems from this Ralbag that had Yitzchak not been afraid, he would not have had to lie. It seems that one’s level of fear or confidence literally changes what is considered

natural and what is considered miraculous. Had he not feared, then the Plishtim taking his wife or killing him would not have been the natural, and not lying would not have been considered relying on miracles.

Since all results are directly from Hashem, and the depths of our awareness of this principle and trust in his kindness are the greatest Zechus to bring about positive results, it would seem worthwhile to find additional opportunities to strengthen these realizations, throughout our daily activities.

Two such opportunities can be found in Torah study and Tefillah. When we study Gemara, we are constantly searching for sources in the Written Torah for Halachos that were passed down from Sinai, through the Oral Tradition. Finding these Halachos, hinted at in the written word of Hashem, which was directly dictated to Moshe, connects us and our Halachic observance more directly and definitively to Hashem as the Source, thus strengthening our relationship with Him.

Our prayers are very powerful tools to strengthen our awareness of His total control, supervision, and direct involvement with every aspect of our existence. We constantly recite, “Baruch Atah Hashem.” When we say “Hashem”, we are calling Him by His first name, so to speak. We are referring to Him not in third person, but in second person familiarity. You are the Source of all blessing. His name defines His essence. Rashi (Parshas Va’arah, 6:3) tells us that in addition to Hashem referring

to His status as Master of All and Master of Mercy, He is also referred to as the One who is trustworthy to deliver on His word. When we focus on Hashem as Master of All – merciful and trustworthy to deliver on His word- what more do we need to be inspired to put our trust and reliance in Him?

When we say that He is the one who “opens the eyes of the blind” or “dresses the naked” or “unleashes the bound,” we realize that even though we are not blind, naked, and bound etc., if not for His graciousness, we would, in fact, be so.

We say in Nishmas, “Ad Heinah Azarunu Rachamecha...” The Vilna Gaon explains that when we realize the infinite kindness and mercy of Hashem that He bestows on us undeservedly, we come to rely on Him totally. Because, he continues, if what He has done for us in the past was because we deserved it, then maybe now I no longer deserve it. If however, it was pure underserved kindness and mercy, then Hashem, who never changes His essence, will always continue His kindness and mercy.

In Shmoneh Esrei we invoke the infinite merit of our ancestors. We also invoke the fact that in the name of Hashem, Kel, it refers to His overpowering, so to speak, His anger at our misdeeds in order to have abundant mercy on us. We also say that He is a king who helps, saves, and protects all according to the intensity, confidence, and trust that we feel in Him. It makes no difference, says the Vilna Gaon, whether we put in effort

(helper), do nothing (savior), or put ourselves in positive danger (protector). If we trust in Him, He will respond accordingly.

In Ya'aleh V'yavoh, we invoke our special relationship with Him, as expressed in the Atah Bechartanu, to ask Him to respond to our prayers (Avudraham). See an in-depth treatment of Shmoneh Esrei, as a source of Bitachon in "With All Your Heart – A Guide to More Heartfelt Prayer", published by Proirity-1.

Following is a list of promises from Chazal to remind us that everything is up to Him, of which we can most certainly be assured:

1. They tell us to give Maaser in order to be rich.
2. The Vilna Gaon and others say that this refers to 20% of one's profits, not just 10%.
3. They tell us that we may even test Hashem on this, because it is an absolute promise of performance.
4. It also seems from Chazal that even though this process may not be immediate, there is an immediate promise that if one gives Maaser, he will not be lacking at all.
5. They also tell us that the appropriate format of giving Maaser is directed to those who study and teach Torah.
6. Chazal also assure us that Hashem grants special protection and assistance, kindness and mercy to those who put their absolute trust in Him.
7. That goes to the extent of granting the desire of the person who is fully trusting that Hashem will not disappoint him in the fulfillment of his desire.
8. Reb Yisroel Salanter taught us that the absolute assurance of success in a given endeavor is only

guaranteed to those whose Bitachon is 100% and unswerving.

9. Yet it seems clear that to the degree that one places trust in Hashem, it is to that degree that he increases his assurance of success in that particular endeavor.
10. We are also taught that one who gives Tzedaka on condition of results is considered a Tzaddik Gamur (complete) because his intention is to give Tzedaka under all circumstances, and the condition is just something he would like in return.
11. We are also assured that Tefillah always accomplishes and is never turned away completely. Tefillah, however, must emanate sincerely from the heart, not just the lips.
12. We are also taught the dangers of relying on humans as opposed to Hashem. The consequence being that Hashem turns us over into the hands of the one that we rely on. This is a matter of degrees. To the degree that we rely on someone else, He removes His personal Hashgacha from us and allows us to be taken care of by that person.
13. We are also taught the danger of relying on our own Tefillos, or even those of another adult, because this can lead to the Satan raising the following issue in accusation: "This person is confident in his Tefillah, let us review his actions and see if he is truly deserving or not (most of us could do without such additional scrutiny)."
14. We are also taught the dangers of relying even on Bitachon. There is a fine line between relying on my own Bitachon, (confident state) and relying on Hashem's kindness and mercy, which is what Bitachon is really all about.
15. However, we are assured that when one has Bitachon, he is guaranteed results, despite his personal standing as a righteous or even a wicked person.

16. Chazal tell us that wealth truly depends on Divine mercy and as such, prayer and our efforts are only conditions that we must fulfill in order to receive the Divine blessing.

The above points are based on Chazal, and are therefore absolutely reliable.

I realize that this letter is tedious, but if we have gotten to this point in it, I suggest that we reread it again and again regularly to derive the Chizuk of “Ein Od Milvado” and Bitachon in Hashem.

***With best wishes for continued success, and sincere appreciation,***

*Your Friend*

# COPING WITH STRESS IN BUSINESS

## *PART I*

*Dear Friend,*

It is only a few short hours after our conversation and frankly I am greatly pained by the grave implications of today's meeting. Even if I can assure you, beyond doubt, that this is but another step in the upward growth and expanded success of your business, I must still feel the pain hurting you now. We find by Avraham Avinu, that after his Bris, when Hashem had made it so hot that no one would come by to disturb his rest, Avraham was greatly pained by not having the opportunity to bestow kindness on someone. Hashem then sent the angels, one of whom was coming to tell him of the child he and Sarah would finally have after so many years, dressed as men, so Avraham would be able to bestow kindness upon them. Even though he was going to be told of the fulfillment of his life's desire, Hashem still considered the importance of removing the pain of not being able to bestow kindness.

The fact that I offer you positive and strong words of encouragement should not be interpreted as a lack of empathy, rather as a product of a deep conviction of the truth and efficacy of these thoughts.

The Talmud tells us that even though one who wishes to

acquire wealth must do business, it really depends on Divine mercy; doing business is only a condition to be fulfilled. Understanding this idea alone is a major step in the right direction. We know Hashem is merciful and we know how to approach Him to request His mercy. This does not mean that He will always fulfill our request. Sometimes our desires are not in line with what His infinite wisdom sees as good for us. However, we know the address to turn to for help. The power of Tefillah is enhanced by the sense that we are totally helpless without Him, and have nowhere else to turn – not even to our business acumen, connections, or the good graces of others.

To the degree that we muster the feelings of helplessness and dependence on Him, we increase the likelihood of receiving and witnessing His mercy and kindness. Tefillah, however, with all of its power and benefits, has its limitations. It is sometimes limited by the worthiness of the one who prays. He may not be worthy of the amount of mercy needed to help him. It is also often limited by the ultimate knowledge of the Creator as to what is really good for man. Therefore sometimes His mercy calls for the opposite of fulfilling man's request. In fact, we ask that He should "fulfill the wishes of our heart, for the good" rather than unconditionally.

This is the realization that man should have and this should be the basis of his Tefillah and his approach in facing the difficulties of life. "Everything that Hashem does is for the good," and "everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for man's fear of Heaven."

These concepts should serve to encourage our Tefillah and enhance our ability to cope with the difficulties of life. We can,

to a great extent, influence the course of our business affairs, and we must take advantage of these opportunities.

There is, however, another concept that seems to go even beyond the power of our Tefillah. That is Bitachon – trust in Hashem. The Sefer Hachinuch indicates that there are two aspects to the mitzvah of Tefillah: one, to help man to achieve the desires of his heart, and secondly, to inspire in him a deepened Bitachon in his Creator. When man stands helplessly before his Creator in prayer and recognizes his own inability and Hashem's all-powerful control and he praises, beseeches and thanks Hashem all in one Tefillah experience, he finds himself moving upward from a state of need and hope, to one of anticipation, reliance and eventually absolute trust that Hashem will not let him down.

The question can be asked: How can we have absolute trust that Hashem will not disappoint us in light of the above concept that Tefillah is affected by what is good for us and what we deserves. The answer, seems to be, that Bitachon is not completely logical; sometimes man just has a feeling that Hashem will not let him down due to His knowing how much a given result means to the individual. This feeling can result from deep involvement in Tefillah, but it can then take man beyond the power of Tefillah alone.

We have a tradition passed down from generation to generation from the Gaon of Vilna and even going back further to Sinai, that to the same degree that one puts his trust in Hashem, his reliance will not be disappointed. This concept can be best understood and qualified by two stories from Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, whose Rebbe's Rebbe's Rebbe was the

Gaon of Vilna.

One time, the Rashash, a great scholar of the 1800s questioned the statement of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, the 19th century master of ethics, that even luxuries are granted through Bitachon. Rabbi Salanter said that he would prove it – from that moment he had Bitachon that he would receive a gold watch.

At that time, a ship was caught in a violent storm. The frightened captain vowed that should he survive and dock safely, he would give his gold watch to a rabbi in that port. A few days later, when the captain presented the watch to the shocked Rashash he exclaimed, “This does not belong to me. Give it to Reb Yisroel Salanter. It is his.”

On another occasion, a man in desperate need of 10,000 rubles came to Rabbi Salanter. He told the man he need only buy a lottery ticket and have complete Bitachon that he would win the 10,000 rubles. The man bought the ticket . . . and did not win.

When he complained to Reb Yisroel, he asked the man if he had complete Bitachon that he was going to win. The man said he did. Reb Yisroel then asked the man to sell him this ticket for 5,000 rubles. When he said yes, Reb Yisroel told him that he obviously didn’t have 100% Bitachon, because if he did, he never would have sold it for half.

On the one hand, with absolute Bitachon in the kindness and mercy of Hashem and his loving concern not to disappoint one who places complete trust in Him and awaits confidently His response, one can achieve the desires of his heart, even

for luxuries. On the other hand, however, this trust must be absolute and complete in order to merit the desired results. Any willingness to settle for less indicates some lack in the completeness of this Bitachon.

A question could be asked. Even assuming that Bitachon is an emotional state based on the feeling that Hashem in His great power and infinite kindness won't let me down, how does it fit with the possibility that achieving my desired results may be more than I deserve or worse yet, may not be for my good?

We must say that Hashem will even reward one with more than he deserves and make it even work for his good, rather than disappoint the man who places his total trust and reliance on Him. Achieving this state is no simple accomplishment and it is very tempting to fool oneself into believing that he has this 100% Bitachon. We should, however, strive to achieve this state in order to merit our desires and to realize that to the degree that we have real Bitachon, He will respond to us with the fulfillment of the yearnings of our hearts. We can influence the outcome to the degree of our Bitachon.

The Vilna Gaon, offers us a piece of advice on how to achieve this state of mind and heart. When we focus on the kindness and mercy that Hashem has bestowed upon us in the past and recognize that we were not truly deserving of His gifts, rather we received them only due to His kindness and mercy, then we can begin to rely on His kindness once again. If Hashem had only helped us in the past when we deserved it, then who knows if we still deserve it today? However, when

we realize that all of His gifts of the past were pure kindness and mercy – and we know that His kindness is endless – we can be confident that He will help us again now.

We all know of the great miracles that Hashem has performed and continues to perform for those who put their complete trust in Him. Let's focus on them again and again and work on our hearts to feel more and more of His kindness. When we concentrate on this and our Tefillah, we can develop a total reliance on Him, with that ultimate feeling that He will never disappoint those who turn their desperate eyes in complete trust toward Him.

Please read and reread this letter and may we be privileged to see the fulfillment of our Tefillos and of that level of trust that we put in Hashem.

**Sincerely,**

*Your Friend*

**P.S.** I neglected to mention that reaching the above-mentioned level of Bitachon is obviously not an obligation for every Jew, but it is a level which can work wonders if one reaches it. However, there is an obligation, in difficult situations that seem very dangerous or serious, for one to be sure that for Hashem it is equally possible and easy for Him to solve the problem for the good, as it is not to work it out for the good. This realization is obligatory and helps to soothe our fears. As impossible as it seems to us, to Him it's simple.

## PART II

*Dear Friend,*

As I begin my flight home, my mind wanders back a few years to another flight home, when I wrote to you as well.

Then everything looked so dismal, problems seemed almost insurmountable. I tried to strengthen your Bitachon and focus your optimism. I don't even remember the details, but your business has made amazing progress since then. Now here we are again, problem after problem compounded by more serious problems, wondering how many more problems and crises can be handled?

Well, I don't really know the answer, but I can't help but remember that so many times before we pondered the same question and made it through it all.

The Vilna Gaon writes that when a person is faced with a crisis he should review the past and realize that everything that Hashem has done for him in the past was only due to His kindness and mercy and therefore He will certainly continue to act the same way with him now. If what He did for him in the past was because he deserved such treatment, then maybe now he doesn't deserve to be helped. If however, it was not due to his deserving, rather due to Hashem's kindness and mercy, then he can rely on that again, because Hashem's kindness and mercy are constant and remain forever. We recognize that we are not truly worthy of Hashem's kindness, otherwise we wouldn't worry about anything.

This, the Gaon says, is the means to inspire Bitachon - confidence in Hashem's kindness that everything will work out fine.

This fits well with the Gaon's concept of Bitachon: that if one has complete trust that Hashem will help him, then it will surely happen. Realizing all of His previous kindness and mercy helps us to feel confident again and thereby influence the resolution of our crisis based on the merit of our Bitachon in Him.

This formula for Bitachon would do well under normal conditions or circumstances similar to the previous crises. However, when the problems, trouble and crises get so out of proportion by comparison, it becomes more difficult to find that sense of confidence in their future resolution.

To help foster great Bitachon in Hashem's kindness and mercy in these extreme situations, it would help to consider the following: First of all, for Him small problems and seemingly insurmountable ones are all the same. Secondly, His kindness and mercy and His intimate involvement in every aspect of our lives are always active. The only problem is that we worry about being undeserving. Allow me to address this issue.

Since our purpose in this life is to rise to ever-greater levels of human perfection and closeness to Hashem, it follows that we must be exposed to serious tests. The tests are of two types: one which takes a person who may be less than fully deserving and through the test, uplifts him to a higher level to become deserving. The other, dealing with a person who is already very deserving, leading him to even higher levels.

When we see a situation that seems so unlikely to happen naturally, we can assume that it represents a serious test to

bring us to higher levels and through the passing of this test to become truly deserving.

This being the case, the more unnatural the set of circumstances and crises, the more obvious it becomes that this is an opportunity to rise to new heights and to become deserving of success and blessing never previously achievable.

Even though there is a natural tendency to interpret the situation in the negative, the truth is that the result depends on one's score on the test. A positive outlook, with a strengthening of one's Bitachon, will bring him through the test and establish him on a level where he can really deserve the desired results.

I know it is easy to advise others, but I've been there once or twice.

Please recognize the message. It's so unreal, it can only be a special test, for special people, to uplift them higher and higher and make them even more deserving.

May you be privileged to soar higher and higher from these tests and feel that ultimate sense of true Bitachon in Hashem, and in the merit of the test results and the ensuing Bitachon, may you see the speedy resolution of all of your difficulties and be blessed with the Divine kindness and mercy that bring every measure of success in all of your endeavors.

**Sincerely,**

*Your Friend*



# SPECIAL EDITION – BITACHON

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**T**he only way to reach true happiness is by having bitachon, faith and trust, in Hashem. The *Chovos HaLevavos* explains the reason for this.

We may think that the happiest person in the world would be someone with a profession so lucrative, or a skill so in demand, that he can make as much money as he needs, whenever he desires. The *Chovos HaLevavos* (in his introduction to *Sha'ar HaBitachon*) shows us seven reasons why even this person would be lacking in security and happiness, and only one who trusts in Hashem can be truly content:

» One who trusts in Hashem knows that He provides for us anywhere and in any situation. (For example, even in the barren wilderness, Hashem had ravens bring food to *Eliyahu HaNavi* who was hiding from King Achav). On the other hand, one who relies on his own skills will be stymied when he lacks the proper equipment or supplies to ply his trade.

» If we feel that our professions bring us our sustenance, we may be forced to take jobs that are hazardous, or to work unduly long hours. One who has Bitachon knows that everything that happens to him is for the best, and that his livelihood will come easily and safely. King Dovid was stranded in the dry, desolate desert as he compared himself to a lamb whose faith in his shepherd is

unshakable (*Tehilim 23*). Just as the lamb knows that the compassionate shepherd will lead him to a green pasture and a cool, quiet brook. Dovid knew that Hashem, in His mercy, would provide for him, even in a forbidding desert.

» Any professional is afraid of the competition. If his trade secrets are revealed and his monopoly broken, he may not be able to make a living. One who trusts in Hashem does not fear anyone, as Dovid said, “I trust in Hashem, I will not fear - what can man do to me?” (*Tehilim 56:12*)

» Someone devoted to his business is constantly assailed with problems and decisions that keep him tossing and turning at night: “If I keep a bigger inventory it can be stolen, it may spoil or I might not be able to sell it. If I keep a smaller inventory we might not have enough stock on hand when demand for our products rise.” With Bitachon in Hashem, we know that Hashem will give us what we need, when we need it, wherever we may be.

» Even if a person is successful at amassing a vast amount of wealth, it cannot protect him from sicknesses and situations that deny him the chance to enjoy his prosperity. One with Bitachon is protected from any calamity; anything painful that happens to him is only an atonement for a sin, or to give him more reward in the world-to-come.

» Even a massive fortune may be worthless if food is not available (in times of famine or war, for example). If we trust in Hashem we will never lack anything, just as a fetus in the mother’s womb or a chick in its egg is constantly

provided with all its needs.

» Someone who devotes his entire life to amassing a fortune will not reap dividends after his death, while someone who spends his days growing spiritually and striving for greater heights in Bitachon is guaranteed a high rate of return for his investment both in this world and in the world-to-come.

Would you like to have a powerful device that you can use to help you really enjoy life, be more successful financially and socially, and assist you in developing your *Ruchnius* and Yiras Shomayim?

## Trust Hashem

Seven qualities that Hashem has that ensures our trust in Him:

1. Hashem loves you.
2. Hashem is with you wherever you happen to be, and He is ready to help you.
3. Hashem is stronger and smarter than everyone in the world (and can find solutions to problems that seem impossible to solve).
4. Hashem knows what is best for you, even better than you know yourself.
5. Just as Hashem has helped you many times in the past, He will help you again now.
6. Nobody can do anything to help or harm you other than Hashem, who has total control over everything.
7. Hashem wants and seeks to do Chessed, more than the most wonderful, kindhearted and generous person you can imagine.

If you could picture a person with these seven qualities, you would feel quite secure being with him, and all your worries and concerns would melt away. In reality, the greatest person cannot be perfect in even one of these qualities, but Hashem is perfect in all of them.

**אין עוד מלבדו!**

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Based on Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar Habitachon.*

# TEN WAYS TO BE FINANCIALLY SUCCESSFUL

*Based on the directives of Chazal*

1. *Chazal* tell us to give *Maaser* in order to be rich. Rav Chaim of Volozhin said in the name of his Rebbe the Vilna Gaon: Anyone who guards the giving of *Maaser* (10%) is assured that he will not suffer any damage at all ... and if only all of Klal Yisrael would give *Maaser* (10%) the *Passuk* that says “There will not be a poor person in your midst” will be fulfilled. *Chazal* also tell us that we may even test Hashem on this, because it is an absolute promise of performance. It also seems from *Chazal* that even though this process may not be immediate, there is an immediate promise that if one gives *Maaser*, he will not be lacking at all.
2. *Chazal* also tell us that the appropriate format of giving *Maaser* is dedicating the funds to those who study and teach Torah.
3. *Chazal* assure us that Hashem grants special protection and assistance, kindness and mercy to those who put their absolute trust in Him. That goes to the extent of granting the desire of the person who is fully trusting that Hashem will not disappoint him in the fulfillment of his desire.
4. Reb Yisroel Salanter taught us that the absolute assurance of success in a given endeavor is only guaranteed to those whose Bitachon is total and unswerving. Yet it seems clear that to the degree that one places trust in Hashem, it is to that degree that he increases his assurance of success in that particular endeavor.
5. We are taught that one who gives *Tzedaka* on condition of results is considered a *Tzaddik Gamur* (completely righteous) because his intention is to give *Tzedaka* under all circumstances, and the condition is just something he would like in return.
6. We are assured that *Tefillah* always accomplishes and is never turned away completely. Also one who prays for a

friend with a similar need to his, the one who prays will be answered first. *Tefillah*, however, must emanate sincerely from the heart, not just the lips.

7. We are taught the dangers of relying on humans as opposed to Hashem. The consequence being that Hashem turns us over into the hands of the one that we rely on. This is a matter of degrees. To the degree that we rely on someone else, He removes His personal *Hashgacha* from us and allows us to be taken care of by that person, to no avail.
8. We are taught the danger of relying on our own *Tefillos*, or even those of another adult, because this can lead to the *M'katreg* raising the following accusation: "This person is confident in his *Tefillah*, let us review his actions and see if he is truly deserving or not (most of us could do without such additional scrutiny)." However, we can rely on the prayers of young children who have no sins.
9. We are taught the dangers of relying even on Bitachon. There is a fine line between relying on my own Bitachon (confident state), and relying on Hashem's kindness and mercy, which is what Bitachon is really all about. However, we are assured that when one has Bitachon, he is guaranteed results, despite his personal standing as a righteous or even a wicked person.
10. *Chazal* tell us that wealth truly depends on Divine mercy and as such, prayer is the critical factor and our efforts are only conditions that we must fulfill in order to receive the Divine blessing. The Chofetz Chaim in *Shmiras Halashon* advises that more than *Segulos* for *Parnassah*, meticulous care not to speak *Lashon Harah* is much more effective and for sure a person's financial status will be blessed more than from *Segulos*.

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Sources:

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# TEN STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU SURVIVE A FINANCIAL CRISIS

*Following these directives from Chazal will help you weather financial downturns while strengthening your trust in Hashem.*

- 1** Learn the Halachos of Tzedakah and Maaser scrupulously and set up a special fund to ensure you give properly.
- 2** Invest your money according to the directives of Chazal: 1/3 in real estate, 1/3 in business (i.e., stocks) and hold 1/3 in cash.
- 3** Concentrate intently when you say "*Poseach es Yodecha*" in Ashrei, and "*Barech Aleinu*" in Shmoneh Esrei.
- 4** Say the Tefillah for Parnassah in Shema Koleinu and add specific personal requests at the end of Shmoneh Esrei.
- 5** Study Bitachon every day from the Halachic and Mussar sources and work hard to internalize the message.
- 6** Think of Hashem as the Master of everything and Source of all blessings whenever you say the words "*Baruch Atah Hashem.*"
- 7** Review your own incidents of *Hashgacha Pratis* (personal "small" miracles) before going to sleep every night.
- 8** Accept the responsibility of Torah study upon yourself and the burden of your financial obligations will be eased.
- 9** Practice the advice of our Rabbis: Pray for a friend who has a similar need, and you will be answered first.
- 10** Say a personal Tefillah of gratitude for every small improvement and make a resolution to recite *Nishmas* when your situation improves dramatically to show your sincere appreciation for Hashem's help.



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LIFE'S  
DIFFICULTIES:  
A SOURCE OF  
STRENGTH

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# *Letter to a Friend*

*Dear Friend,*

Needless to say, I was very saddened and disturbed by the problems that you shared with me. They certainly are enough to upset anyone, and together not only pose formidable difficulties, but also cause great pain.

As we have referred to in previous letters (In the previous section “Bitachon In Business”), we know that everything is from Hashem and everything that Hashem does is for the good. We also know that the problems and challenges of life are all part of a process spurring us on to greater Bitachon. This Bitachon can then turn situations around dramatically, and in the merit of our enhanced Bitachon and deepened relationship with Hashem, we can merit even greater kindness and assistance from Him.

Maybe a few words about suffering are in order. After that we can suggest to Hashem that we have benefited from the difficulties and now we turn our Bitachon to Him to get us out of these problems.

The challenges of pain and suffering fall into two broad categories: The irrevocable finality of tragedy, and the pain and suffering of a work in progress. The ability to see Hashem’s goodness and kindness in the former enhances our capacity to rely on Him in the latter. The more deeply

and thoroughly we recognize His love in the most tragic of situations, the greater our awareness of His loving kindness, which helps us to rely on Him that He will extricate us from life's most difficult challenges. Please refer to the readings enclosed for some insights into this positive attitude towards tragedy.

About two days after we spoke, a young man, a teenager, approached me with a question. For about a week before a snowboarding trip, he prayed to Hashem that he should not get hurt. However, he did get into a painful accident. "How does Hashem expect me to continue Davening to Him, if He does not show me some response?" he questioned.

We know that Hashem is the *Shomay'ah Tefillah*, the One who hears and answers our prayers. We know that *Tefillah Oseh Mechtzah*, prayer always accomplishes at least a partial result. Yet, when we pray with a specific request, and we should do so, and we do not see any apparent response, it can be discouraging. Especially when one Davens over and over again and there is still no visible results, it can become more and more difficult to continue. When these feelings are compounded by a sense that one really trusted that Hashem was going to help him, and still he is left disappointed, it becomes a serious challenge to his faith to be able to continue praying and trusting.

Yet, this challenge seems to be an integral ingredient to the Tefillah/Bitachon human development system. The perseverance in prayer and trust, despite the apparent

lack of results, spurs one onto even higher and higher levels of closeness to Hashem, bringing the relationship to new heights and deeper feelings of hope and reliance.

This lesson is even relevant after the fact, as in the case of the young man's accident. Bitachon and Tefillah are part of an infinite continuum. The more we do and grow in them, the more assured the results, since their purpose in the first place was to bring us closer to Hashem.

Our Rabbis in the Medrash express this concept in the following comments: "Why were our matriarchs, Sara, Rivka, Rochel, and even for a while, Leah, not able to bear children? Because Hashem craves the prayers of the righteous." It certainly does not mean that Hashem uses their prayers for His need. It can only be for the benefit that the prayer affords those who Daven. It seems that Tefillah performed again and again has a profoundly beneficial impact on the one who prays. It brings the person ever closer to Hashem.

A question arises: Why didn't Hashem set it up that, for example, Sara could pray until she was 60, have a child, and then spend the next 30 years thanking Hashem for answering her prayers after so many years of being childless, instead of praying until she reached 90 years of age and then having a child? It seems that Tefillah in need brings us closer to Hashem than Hallel, thanks for granting our requests. When we are in need, we keep at it again and again, until we see some results. With Hallel, first we are very thankful, and then as time goes on we tend to forget the kindness that was given us. It therefore cannot

enhance our relationship with Hashem, as much as does prayer in need.

We know that the Tefillah that is most irresistible to Hashem, so to speak, is the Tefillah born of an intimately close relationship with Him. Therefore the Tefillah that must be repeated over and over again to bring us closer to Him is also more powerful and effective. Therefore, it may well be that the continued repeated Tefillos are not only necessary to bring us closer to Him, but the enhanced quality of the latter Tefillos may be the merit needed to achieve our difficult goals.

A similar dynamic applies to the system of Bitachon, placing our total and complete trust in Hashem that He will come through for us and not disappoint those who rely solely on Him. Sometimes, we really feel trust in only Him and confidence that He will not let us down, and yet, nothing seems to be happening. One of many such situations comes to mind. I remember an occasion when I needed \$30,000 for a payroll with an absolutely no more than a day deadline. I recall not being concerned the first day, because I felt an unusual surge of Bitachon and confidence that Hashem was not going to let me down. By the next day, nothing had happened. I was perplexed. I never felt such strong, real Bitachon, and yet, nothing happened. I finally had no choice but to try to borrow the money. The individual I called on had only \$10,000 to lend for one week. When I explained to him my confusion as to why my Bitachon was being disappointed, a realization hit me. It went like this: If I did not really have true Bitachon, rather, I was fooling myself in thinking

that I did, then the question of why there was no response falls away. I really don't have true trust and confidence in Him. If, however, my Bitachon is, in fact, more real than ever before, then I bet that Hashem is giving me an even harder test to force me to an even higher level of Bitachon.

With this inspiration, I reviewed every insight and concept about Bitachon that came to mind for seven minutes, to strengthen even farther my level of Bitachon. I then entered my office. I walked a young man who was dealing with some merchandise that we inherited. He informed me that he just concluded a deal with a company in another city to purchase \$30,000 worth of our merchandise. They would Fedex a bank check for \$20,000 to arrive early the next morning, and would pay the remaining \$10,000 as soon as they received the merchandise. This is unheard of in normal business dealings. I borrowed the \$10,000 for one week, and they paid the rest in time.

In short, if we recognize Hashem's loving kindness even in irrevocable tragedy, we can come to rely on that loving kindness in the face of crises and challenges. This can allow us to continue to grow in sincerity of Tefillah and true Bitachon.

The elevated levels of Tefillah and Bitachon can undoubtedly serve as a powerful merit, to be able to witness the positive answers to our Tefillos and the reward for our Bitachon, in the complete fulfillment of our hearts' desires.

With best wishes for continued heartfelt Tefillah, and complete trust in Hashem leading to the fulfillment of all our hearts' desires.

**Sincerely,**

*Your Friend*

# TRAGEDY – A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

**W**e are a nation experienced in tragedy. Our people have suffered the severest pain and persecution on both the personal and communal level, yet miraculously, our people have endured, persevered and even flourished, despite these brutal conditions. Should not the reaction of a constantly suffering people have been one of demoralization, of rejection, of shattered faith? The answer to this question captures the very essence of Klal Yisroel with its unique understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and its special relationship with the Almighty.

King Solomon in the Song of Songs (Chapter 5) describes the saga of the rejected lover seeking to reunite with his beloved. “Open the door, my beloved.” He pleads to be allowed entrance but is rejected. “I have removed my garment, must I get up and get dressed? I have washed my feet, must I get up and dirty them?” Despite the most ardent pleas, the woman remains cold, aloof and unmoved. Yet, suddenly, she observes his hand through a crack in the door and immediately her emotions stir. She rises from her bed and hastens to let him in.

We know that the entire Song of Songs is analogous to the relationship between Klal Yisroel and the Almighty. The Ramban interprets the previous episode in the following manner:

The prophets come to Klal Yisroel and plead with them to repent their evil ways. Despite all their exhortations, the people turn a deaf ear and show no response. However, when Hashem causes Klal Yisroel to suffer, there is a definite reaction and a return to righteous ways. It would seem at first glance that the analogy in Song of Songs is a bit strained. How can the appearance of the man's hand through a crack in the door be compared to an act of punishment meted out by G-d to His children?

If we analyze the following sentence of the Psalms of King David, the analogy becomes clear. "Your staff and your cane, they will comfort me." A stray lamb, separated from its flock, alone and bewildered, suddenly feels the stinging staff of its master upon its back. At that very moment, despite the piercing pain, the lamb feels the greatest comfort. My master is here! I am not alone! Despite the pain and suffering inflicted upon us by Hashem, it is that very same pain that strengthens our knowledge of His presence. We recognize His need to reprimand us for our wrongdoings, and, therefore, we realize that the punishment is a revelation of His existence and manifestation of His concern. It is for this reason that we respond. Not out of fear, but rather, out of love.

This approach is what has sustained us through centuries of bloodshed and torture. However, it still remains to be explained how we, as a people, have been able to reach this astounding level of perception. How, as a nation, have we been able to see through the clouds of agonizing pain and focus on the reality of our suffering?

Man lives in an imaginary world. He believes that the pleasures in which he indulges himself will last forever. The pursuit of gratification is his overwhelming concern, leaving little or no room for an honest examination of the reality of his existence. The truth is, of course, that life is just a fleeting moment in eternity and even that short period of existence is filled with difficulty and pain. The reality is that the soul is immortal, that a future does exist, that this life is no more than a corridor to the World to Come. It is man's lack of control, his inability to curb and harness his passions, that distorts his grasp of reality and leads him to a life of false fulfillment and mistaken values.

The people of Israel are different. As the nation that embraced the Torah, as those who adhere to its precepts and ideals, we do not live under the haze of illusion. The Torah outlines for us a life, which calls for the subjugation of desires. With the Torah we avoid being enslaved by our passions, and, therefore, we can free our minds to objectively pursue a life of significance and meaning. The Torah is the heartbeat and soul of our people. Its message as to the purpose of life is aflame within us. It is for this reason that when tragedy strikes we are not defeated. The pain and suffering help us focus on the reality of life and intensify the fires of faith with a reevaluation of our actions and a reassessment of our life's purpose, followed by a renewed commitment to the Torah and Mitzvos.

Our Rabbis tell us (Smachos, Chapter 8) that Rabbi Akiva lost his beloved son, Rabbi Shimon. When Rabbi Akiva rose to deliver the eulogy and beheld the great assembly of people, he was overwhelmed with emotion and

proclaimed, “Do not think it is easy to bury a child. But now that I see so many people gathered to perform “honoring the deceased” because of my son, I am assured that he is guaranteed a place in the World to Come, and I have been consoled.” The Talmud related that this same Rabbi Akiva was once traveling and stopped to spend a night at an inn. He was told that there was no room for him at the inn. At that moment, he proclaimed, “All that the All-Merciful does is for the best,” and proceeded to sleep out in the field. While in the field he lit a candle, but a wind came and blew it out. Again he repeated, “All that the All-Merciful does is for the best.” Rabbi Akiva again repeated the same phrase when his rooster was killed, and again, when the same happened to his donkey. The next day, Rabbi Akiva discovered that the inn was attacked by thieves and all the lodgers were killed. Had he spent the night at the inn, he certainly would have been killed. Had his candle been lit, had his rooster crowed, had his donkey brayed, he would have been discovered. Had nothing happened to the inhabitants of the inn, Rabbi Akiva still would not have registered any complaint. That Hashem does everything for the best was expressed with complete sincere will before he knew how his misfortunes were really preserving and protecting him.

Yet this same Rabbi Akiva did not find comfort for the loss of his child with, “All that the All-Merciful does is for the best.” To intellectually accept and adjust to such a loss is feasible. To find emotional comfort seems an impossible task. This is what Rabbi Akiva meant when he said, “Do not think it is easy to bury a child.”

Did Rabbi Akiva have to inform us of the difficulty of burying one's own child? Rabbi Akiva knew that, logically, no one could comprehend his consolation other than with the assumption that his loss was not that profound. Rabbi Akiva explained that his loss was extremely profound, but the knowledge that his son was guaranteed a place in the World to Come, and the deep understanding that this was all that mattered, gave him solace and comfort.

Rabbi Akiva did not have a distorted picture of the meaning of life. His comprehension that our life in this world is temporary and transient was complete. When he was assured that his son was guaranteed a place in the World to Come, he knew that there had been no end. The momentary pain can only be soothed by the knowledge that eternal pleasure has been guaranteed.



# “IF ONLY WE COULD SEE”

*By Baruch Cohen, in memory of Hinda Cohen*

Parshas Re'ay gives us a very clear glimpse of the attitude the Torah enjoins us to have towards death: You are sons of Hashem, your G-d, do not gouge yourselves over a death [14:1]. The custom of the gentiles was to scratch and cut themselves in order to show and vent their agony over the death of a dear one. We are prohibited from acting in such a fashion. Why? Because we are the sons of Hashem.

What is the connection between being the sons of Hashem and the prohibition of gouging ourselves over the death of someone we loved?

Of the different explanations of the many commentators, the Ohr HaChaim and the Chizkuni are the most poignant.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the Torah is teaching us that death is a loss to those that remain alive – not to the one that died. It can be compared to a person who sent his son to a faraway land in order to start a business there. After many years, the father summoned the son to return home and the son acceded to his wishes.

The son is not lost. Those who had grown to love him are no longer able to see him and to build the relationship further, but the son is not lost. On the contrary, the son is returning home to his father. The thought of those friends going ahead and gouging themselves over the agony of the son's departure is preposterous. Sadness and a

melancholy feeling of detachment are in order. Gouging is definitely out!

"You are the sons of Hashem your G-d." At 'death,' the person is simply returning to the Father. The duration of that person's visit to this transient world has come to a close. The time has come for the return trip – to return home. Therefore, "do not gouge yourselves over a death." Reacting in such a way really contradicts our beliefs.

The Chizkuni explains that the basis for the command not to gouge ourselves is that we are the sons of Hashem – we are mere children. Do we have an understanding of why we live and why we die? Can we fathom the Divine decisions which determine these occurrences? A child does not comprehend the decisions that a mature father makes – we too are children. "do not gouge yourselves."

What follows is a very powerful story by R' Yom Tov Ehrlich which is based on the writings of Rav Chaim Vital, the primary student of the great Kabbalist, the Ari z"l. This was taken from the Sefer Yalkut Lekach Tov, vol. 1, p. 284.

*Newly married Chaim walked his younger brother David home from shul one Shabbos evening to wish his mother a good Shabbos. The house glowed with warmth and peace. Candles burned brightly, announcing the arrival of the holy Shabbos. The only thing disturbing the restful atmosphere was the empty chair at the head of the table, the chair that had once been their father's. Since he had gone to his eternal rest two years earlier, longing and anguish filled their hearts. The mother sat in her usual place, reading.*

*“Good Shabbos,” her sons greeted her joyfully.*

*“Good Shabbos,” she answered them, trying to hide her tears with a smile.*

*“Mother! You’re crying again,” Chaim exclaimed in distress. “Please. Today is Shabbos – crying is forbidden.”*

*“But you know as well as I do,” the widow sobbed, “that exactly two years ago today your father left this world! How can I not cry?”*

*“Yes, Mother,” Chaim said kindly, “it is true – today you have a reason. But what about yesterday and the day before? Two years have already passed, and still you are not comforted. You continue to cry and mourn, but do you think this makes Abba happy in Gan Eden? As for our Creator – it is certainly against His will. The Shulchan Aruch tells us when to mourn and when not to mourn. If you behave differently, you are disobeying Hashem’s will. Forgive me, Mother, for speaking to you this way,” Chaim pleaded.*

*His mother stood up and wiped away her tears. “You are right, Chaim. But even though I wish with all my heart to forget, I am not able to.” She began to sob.*

*Little Shoshana begged her, “Mommy, Mommy, we want you to be happy all the time.”*

*“I also want to be happy,” the mother whispered. “I promise I will try my best.”*

*Chaim wishes his mother “Good Shabbos” and left for his own home. His younger brother, David, made*

*Kiddush over the wine, and the whole family sat down to a wonderful Shabbos meal. A feeling of well-being enveloped the table and everyone felt the true peace of Shabbos. Their mother even laughed. The children told stories from the weekly Parsha, and their mother felt so much Nachas.*

*By the time everyone was ready for sleep, it was much later than usual. The widow felt a sense of quiet such as she had not felt since the day her husband left her. She began to think about her fate. She realized, perhaps for the first time, that she was not the only person in her situation. But she also realized that many other young widows had found happiness again, because, unlike her, that had accepted their bitter lot. Her thoughts drifted to the Shidduch that had recently been proposed to her. How could she betray her beloved husband's memory? Sleep overcame her, and she dreamt a beautiful dream.*

*In her dream, she saw people running, so she ran too. They all ran out of the city until they came to a thick forest. Even though it was dark, they continued to run. Suddenly, there was a burst of light and the forest ended.*

*The sun shone brightly and she saw before her a large garden filled with beautiful flowers which filled the air with a wonderful fragrance. The garden was filled with streams of sparkling blue water. Suddenly, a white bearded Jew dressed in a long white garment appeared before her eyes. He asked her if she would like to see her husband. Heart pounding, she*

*followed him. The sage stopped near a large tree laden with beautiful ripe fruit. From afar, she saw a spacious clearing, surrounded by a golden fence. She saw colorfully dressed Jews sitting in rows learning Torah. In their midst a young man stood teaching them.*

*“Please wait a moment,” said the elderly Jew. “Soon they will conclude the lesson, and you will have a clearer look.”*

*She could not believe the dazzling sights her eyes beheld. When the lesson ended, the teacher began walking towards her. She almost fainted when she saw it was her husband.*

*“Avraham!” she cried, and swooned against a nearby tree.*

*“Yes, it is I,” her husband replied. “Be calm.”*

*For a long time, she remained where she was with her eyes closed. When she recovered, she opened her eyes and asked, “Why did you leave me at such a young age?”*

*“Please understand,” he answered serenely, “that the world in which you live is like a land of exile. People are sent there to complete specified tasks, or to suffer for earlier transgressions. The true world is here. Before you ever knew me, I once inhabited the world below. I was a Torah genius and perfectly righteous. My only fault was that I was unwilling to marry and bring children into the world, because I wanted to remain undisturbed in my learning.*

*“When I departed from that world, I was made head of a yeshiva in Gan Eden, where I began to ascend to ever-higher levels. But when they found out that I had never married and had never had children, I was sent back to the lower world in order to marry and bring children into the world.*

*“So, I married you, and, Baruch Hashem, we were blessed with children. When our seventh child was born, I was called again to return to my yeshiva in Gan Eden, where everyone awaited me. Great is your merit that I am your husband, for I have a good name here. When the right time will come, we will again live together in this world in delight.”*

*“But,” his widow protested, “I did not know you were such a great scholar. You never had much time to learn.”*

*Her husband replied, “I too did not know, since I came to the lower world only to correct what I lacked – that is, to marry and have children, and to provide for them. When I departed from that world, my mind was immediately filled with endless Torah knowledge.”*

*His wife continued her questions. “Why doesn’t our Chaim prosper in his affairs?”*

*Her husband responded, “You surely remember the Din Torah Chaim had with a certain Jew. Although Chaim won legally, he was judged guilty of causing great pain to the other Jew, and faced a harsh sentence. I prayed on his behalf and asked that he be given only four difficult years. In just one more year,*

*the period of his penalty will be complete, and he will begin to prosper.”*

*“And what about our David? Not a single Shidduch has been offered him. I don’t even have the money to make a wedding.”*

*He husband smiled and explained: “The reason for that situation is that David’s mate was late in coming into the world. She is now only thirteen years old and lives in a distant land. In another five years, she will come to your city. She will then become engaged to David and her parents will pay for the entire wedding.”*

*His widow began to tremble as a painful memory arose within her. In a soft voice she asked her husband, “Why was our three-year-old son killed by a drunk?”*

*He husband smiled and said, “Follow me!”*

*She began to walk towards a light-filled garden. Small trees lined her path. Radiant beams of multicolored light shone from above, while beautiful songbirds flew from tree to tree. She found herself able to understand their songs. Some were singing, “Light is planted for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. “ Others were singing, “To sing to your glory...” She heard: “Peace, peace to the distant and the near...” Small deer leaped back and forth singing, “I will sing of Your might; I will laud Your kindness daily.” Even the grass was singing: “May Hashem’s glory be forever!” The trees too joined in with: “All the trees of the forest will sing...”*

*Suddenly, she saw leaping circles of fire in many colors. They positioned themselves near her in column-like formations, followed by small angels who also settled down near her. A wonderful melody played by musical instruments was heard from all sides, and she felt her soul slipping away. Her husband rushed to place a flower from the garden close to her. Her strength returned, and a Chuppa canopy made of sparkling precious stones appeared before her. Under the canopy, facing her, stood a small angelic form. She recognized her murdered son, who was now laughing with great joy. Again she felt faint, and again her husband gave her the flower to smell. She opened her eyes, and saw that she was not mistaken – it really was her son.*

*“Why did you leave me when you were so young?” she asked.*

*“Everything is in accordance with the plans of the Creator,” he answered, “I had already been in the world once before, as a member of a prominent family. There had been wild attacks on the Jews in our town, and the gentiles murdered everyone. I was the only survivor. I was then about six months old, and a gentile woman took me into her house and raised me until I was redeemed by Jews. They taught me Torah and I studied until I became a great Torah scholar. I lived the rest of my life in comfort and peace. When I left that world, I was received in the True World with joy. I rose higher and higher, until I reached a point where I could rise no higher, because I had nursed from a non-Jewish woman. It was decreed that I be born again to a Jewish mother, and*

*live those early years in purity. That way, I would be able to continue to rise in the upper world.*

*“I was then born to you, Mother. It was a great merit for you. After three years, I was taken back to my place, for there was nothing left for me to do in that lowly world.”*

*“But why were taken in such a horrible way?” his mother asked.*

*“When I was about to depart form the world,” explained her son, “a terrible decree was issued against the Jews of our town – everyone would have died, including you and Abba. I was given the honor to be the sacrifice for the entire town. I was killed for their sake, and thus the town was spared. For that reason I receive all this honor now. Nobody in Gan Eden is allowed to approach me except for Abba, who can see me whenever he wishes.” The child laughed softly, and wandered away until he disappeared from view.*

*“So you see now, there is an answer to all your questions,” the Torah scholar told his wife. “Our Creator does no evil.”*

*“I must return now to my students,” he concluded. He escorted her to the place where she had first opened her eyes, near the great tree, where he said to her: “It is very good here, but I cannot bear to see your suffering. You will do me a great favor if you now begin to live happily. You have been offered a Shidduch – please accept it.”*

*He vanished, and once again the old man appeared and led her back to the forest.*

*She awoke from her dream a changed person. For a long time she lay in bed with a smile on her face, as the images of her content husband and smiling son lingered in her mind. A great stone had been lifted from her heart, and she was consoled.*

*She remarried and lived a life of happiness and contentment.*

The Ari z"l taught deep secrets of the Torah and, in particular, the subject of Gilgulim, transmigration of souls. He taught that all creatures are like cogs in the great machine called Creation. Hashem places each cog in the world and adjusts it to suit the operating needs of the mechanism. He brings into the world souls that have a function in this world, and removes the souls that are needed Above, for this world and the Next World are both part of the same machine.

Here below, the machine operates with souls plus bodies, while Above, it works with souls alone. If we would know how it all works, we would never become upset, for in the very near future, all the souls will return to this lower world. Here, they will serve Hashem with body and soul combined, until all the physical bodies will become purified and soul-like. This last stage will take place towards the end of the sixth millennium, which will be followed by the "Great Shabbos" (R' Chaim Vital, heard from his great teacher, the Ari z"l).

# PERSPECTIVE

*By: Miriam Kramer*

**S**o many years ago, in so far away a place,  
there was a little village of poorly constructed  
huts. Travel was accomplished with a horse  
and cart through unpaved streets traversed  
with ruts.

Winters were brutal and summers equally so,  
and there was little available to deal with the weather  
extremes.

Just an extra lining of paper in hole-ridden shoes,  
or an extra splash at laundry time in the nearby stream.

The Jews who lived in this simple village  
lived a simple and straightforward existence.  
Their job was to survive, bear children, have Nachas  
and learn Torah with Mesiras Nefesh and persistence.

At the helm of this village was the Rebbe

to whom all looked for guidance and inspiration.

To him they turned for Halachic answers,  
and to him they brought their heartaches and frustrations.

A spouse who was sick, a child who needed a Shidduch,  
an income that provided for a tad more than starvation,  
to the Rebbe they brought every problem they had  
and begged him to alleviate their situation.

The Rebbe admired the **אמונה פשוטה** of these Yidden,  
and looked upon each villager with compassion and love.

He did all he could to assuage their pain  
by storming the gates of Heaven above.

Reb Yankel came one day to the Rebbe's house,  
his face etched with lines of anxiety and stress.  
"Rebbe," he sobbed, "my Ruchaleh is such a fine girl,  
but in Shidduchim she just has no success."

The Rebbe nodded and sent Yankel home,  
and then went to his Davening room alone  
Where he wept and sweated and beseeched Hashem

that mercy to Reb Yankel should be shown.

Some few months later, music could be heard  
as the villagers turned out en masse,  
to watch with great happiness  
as Ruchele's Chosson broke the traditional glass.

Srulik's mother came one day to the Rebbe's house,  
bowed and broken with sorrow.  
"My Srulik's been sick for so long,  
the doctors don't think he'll live till tomorrow.

The Rebbe nodded and sent Srulik's mother home,  
and then went to his Davening room alone  
Where he wept and sweated and beseeched Hashem  
that mercy to Srulik's family should be shown.

A few weeks later, boys were playing,  
racing through the streets chasing each other.  
Wondering how she would clean those mud-spattered  
pants,  
was Srulik's ecstatic and grateful mother.

Reb Itzik the tailor came one day to the Rebbe's house,  
his devastation and despair complete.

"Rebbe," he wept, "my business just doesn't support us,  
and we simply have nothing left to eat."

The Rebbe nodded and sent Itzik home,  
and then went to his Davening room alone  
Where he wept and sweated and beseeched Hashem  
that mercy to Itzik's family should be shown.

A few weeks later the country's military required  
a slew of uniforms for each soldier and sailor.  
And who do you think they commissioned to sew them?  
None other than Itzik the tailor!

Many years passed in this fashion,  
and the villagers became used to the Rebbe's heavenly  
ways.

But then one sad day the news was released-  
The Rebbe was ill and had only a few more earthly days.

“Woe to us!” the Yidden cried in fear.  
“Who will intercede to Hashem on our behalf?”  
But even as they all wept in despair,  
one wise villager began to laugh.

“Why do you wail in so heartrending a fashion?  
Don’t you see that our lives will be better than ever  
before?  
If the Rebbe’s Tefillos are so effective on this earth,  
near the *Kisei Hakavod* he’ll be able to accomplish even  
more!”

“Surely our lives will be good and sweet  
when the Rebbe will have direct access to Hashem.  
He’ll advocate to reverse our harsh judgments,  
and you’ll see, we’ll have no more Tzaros then.”

Even as the Yidden mourned the passing of their Rebbe,  
they breathed a quiet sigh of relief.  
In their trouble-free future they took solace,  
so simple and pure was their belief.

But as the months passed, reality was bitter,

for troubles and anguish besieged these poor village folk.

And try as they might to plead with their Rebbe,  
his compassion they could not seem to invoke.

They Davened at his Kever, begging for help,  
asking for the same compassion he'd always shown.

But as time progressed with no change in their  
circumstances,  
they felt so abandoned- so alone.

Finally one night, the Rebbe appeared in a dream  
to one of the respected village men.  
And he said, "I haven't forgotten you, my beloved friends,  
but my perspective now is so different from then."

"When I lived amongst you, I ached when you did,  
and my heart broke as each of you grappled with pain,  
and I used that empathy to storm the heavens  
to reverse the harsh verdict that was ordained."

"But now, my children, I see differently,  
and I know now what I've never before understood –

that what seems harsh and unjust on this earth  
is really and truly eternally good!”

“Hashem has a plan that we cannot perceive,  
and in our limited understanding it seems cruel and  
unfair,  
but in the long view of your lives,  
it’s really a Chessed beyond compare!”

“Divine *cheshtonos* are for your benefit,  
and the good they produce is eternal,  
but you can only see the truth of that  
from the advantage of a perspective supernal.”

“So how can I Daven for you,  
and why should I beg to have the verdict changed,  
when I know now with utmost certainty  
that it’s for your benefit that all is arranged?”

“Yes, I know that problems with children or Parnassah  
feel like raw and brutal grief,  
but I beg you, my sweet villagers,

to hold on to your faith and belief.”

“Believe that Hashem wants the best for you,  
and believe that He yearns for your well-being and  
success,  
but he’s willing to sacrifice a few superficial joys  
to grant you the ultimate happiness.”

“I can’t intercede for you, my friends,  
when I have this newfound view.  
All I can tell you is that it’s never been clearer,  
just how much Hashem loves each one of you.”

## TEN WAYS TO INSPIRE BITACHON DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

1. Recognize our helplessness.
2. Surrender to Hashem.
3. Constantly review and stay focused on Hashem's kindness and mercy throughout our lives - even in the face of adversity.
4. Recognize that we have always been less than deserving of His kindness and mercy, and yet it remains constant.
5. Focus on His consistency - He has always helped us in the past and His consistency assures that He will continue to do so now and in the future.
6. Review daily His Hashgacha Pratis (personal "small" miracles) that have occurred to us or that we know firsthand. Imagine these things happening again.
7. Remember Hashem is the Master of all, in total control of everything. That is what His name means: "Master of All."
8. He is also the forever-overflowing source of all blessing.
9. Think of Him as the Source of all blessing and the Master of everything whenever you say: "Baruch Ata Hashem."
10. Study the meaning of critical parts of *Davening*, like *Adon Olam*, *Ashrei* and *Modim*, and say them with focus and feeling.



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# FACING THE UNKNOWN

*A Patients Guide to Bitachon*

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# FACING THE UNKNOWN: A Patient's Guide to *Bitachon*

**Y**esterday, you did not know what *Bitachon* was - or even how to pronounce it. Today, you are ready to stake your life on it, on the sure knowledge that G-d controls the world, and alters things for our benefit.

*Bitachon* -- what is it? And how do you achieve *Bitachon*?

## Not Me.

They are joking, you tell yourself. They do not know what they are talking about. They cannot mean me.

Unfortunately, they do.

While doctors, wearing white lab coats and concerned expressions, have been hovering around you for weeks, you lie on the bed and try to arrange your face. Calm repose. Plucky optimism. Jaunty, good humor. You even crack a few jokes, but no one laughs.

That is when you know it is serious. That is when you fall apart.

Finally, a doctor - older than the rest, speaking as the others nod silently - spells out your condition, and tells you of the number of days you have remaining.

No, he says sadly, there is no hope. They will try to make you as comfortable as they can.

## **The End Of The Road? Do Not Believe It!**

You still do not believe it. Surrounded by the world's most advanced medical technology, and the finest specialists, there is little help – at least not by them. Worst of all, you find out that man's ability to help you is a lie.

Have you come to the end of the road? Perhaps not.

Because until now you have suffered from a common misconception, the false belief that man can cure any illness. Sadly, you know that is not true... now.

## **Bargaining And Recriminations Won't Work.**

You start to ask, why me?

You search for reasons for what you have come to accept as a hopeless tragedy. But you find this is a false road as well. You are not even sure you really believe. You may not be sure how much you believe in G-d, but you start to promise Him things you will do if you recover. But you know you would forget those promises if there were a chance you might get out of that bed.

But just hold on a minute. Do not find fault. And do not promise. Start by recognizing who can certainly effect your recovery – and then ask for some help.

It is as simple as that.

## **G-d Is The Only Help.**

Now you have turned to where you should have gone in the first place. G-d, or more appropriately man's relationship with Him, has sustained hundreds of generations before you with the knowledge that He loves us endlessly.

Of course, you wonder how you can kindle a relationship which you have neglected for so long. And you ask what G-d can possibly do for you, given what the doctor said.

Be assured: **G-d will not let you down. G-d can, and will help to the degree that we recognize and feel a trusting relationship with Him.**

In fact, G-d is the only help.

## Who Came First: G-d Or The Medical Profession?

Who are the doctors, and why are they saying all those terrible things about you?

G-d in His Torah, tells us that He brings sickness – and that He brings cures.

So who asked doctors to get into the act?

In looking at the Torah view of medicine, we see a paradox: if G-d wills that a person be ill, how can we take it upon ourselves to administer cures? Yet in the Torah, G-d grants permission to heal, by using the world around us as a means toward that end. So, aside from his state license, a doctor has a Torah license as well.

However, when it comes to predicting who is beyond help, the doctor is an unqualified judge. Although he may use probabilities, his experiences and other measures, he cannot pronounce fate. That is G-d's business. You know it as well as your doctor does: every day, hundreds of people recuperate – against the odds.

So face it: no one can tell you how much time is left. No one, except G-d.

## **The Power Of Prayer.**

Yes, you say, but probability...

Before you say anything else, consider the Torah's story of Hezekiah, a king who became gravely ill. Hezekiah knew it, the people knew it – even the prophet Isaiah, speaking for G-d Himself, knew it: Hezekiah's days were numbered.

But Hezekiah refused to give up, even when the prognosis came from the Almighty Himself, Hezekiah continued to ask G-d for freedom from his illness. He offered no recriminations, no promises – just the complete knowledge that G-d alone is in charge, coupled with the sincere request that He grant more life.

G-d's immediate response was to grant Hezekiah a complete cure – plus 15 more years of life.

That is the power of prayer!

## ***Teshuvah* - Time to return to G-d.**

Don't you share in Hezekiah's request?

Consider the importance of the process of *Teshuvah*, as well. As hard as it might be to accept now, the Torah teaches us that illness is a message – a message to return to G-d. G-d is telling us – not that He wants to punish us for our faults – but that He wants us to recognize and overcome them by returning to Him.

He wants us to do *Teshuvah*.

*Teshuvah* is often translated as repentance, but it's more than that. *Teshuvah* is the recognition that G-d really is the Almighty, that He alone rules the world, that He alone brings illnesses, that He alone can heal us and that He alone will hear our request for forgiveness.

It may seem like a lot to say, but as Hezkiah showed us, there is no other viable path. Hezkiah recognized his shortcomings, felt remorse, and asked for help - through prayer. Then, probability or no probability, he was worthy of being healed.

## **Ask G-d for Help.**

Torah tells us that we are never allowed to give up. That if your worst enemy holds a sword to your neck, you must always think that escape is possible – with G-d’s help. In fact, even – or especially – given that situation, you are required to ask G-d for help. Because He alone can help.

Assuming all this is true, you say, can I actually ask for a miracle? Hezkiah is one thing. But I’m another. Will G-d actually reverse the laws of nature? For me?

He certainly can. But you must take *Teshuvah* a step further, through *Tefillah* to *Bitachon*, trust in G-d.

## ***Tefillah* Unlocks the Door.**

Fine, you say, but how do I get there? There must be some way to unlock the door, to help me express what I want.

There is, of course. The primary path to the astonishing power of *Bitachon* – is through *Tefillah*, prayer.

*Tefillah* is perhaps one of the greatest gifts G-d gave us: a way of speaking to Him. Moreover it is a natural means to achieve our goals. Indeed, Torah tells us we should take advantage of this special blessing.

While there is much in the *Siddur* (prayer book) of great importance, the central prayer is the *Amidah*, a series of 19 praises and requests.

The *Amidah* is structured into three parts. First, we praise G-d for what we know Him to be: the all-powerful,

benevolent and compassionate Master of the universe. Second, we ask Him to resolve our difficulties and dilemmas. Third, we thank Him.

### ***Tefillah* Works.**

You may feel far from it now, but when you recite the Amidah with understanding – and feeling – your own belief in G-d's mastery over the world is strengthened. Because the very act of prayer itself deepens your realization that G-d is in total control – and even this realization merits that your prayers be answered.

The effect is cumulative. Your belief deepens every time you turn to G-d. Because the more you pray, the more you know that He is committed to your survival.

*Tefillah*, then, is your single most powerful tool in seeking a cure.

Certainly, you are wondering why things have been so hard, why your *Tefillah* must be spoken in utter desperation. You might think, as many do, that focusing on the great miracles of the past and praising G-d for them would inspire the necessary faith in Him. That would be fine, except that Torah teaches us that different prayers carry different weight at different times.

Sound confusing? Take the case of *Sora Imanu*, our great ancestor Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Unable to have children, she prayed for a child all her life – 30, 40, 50, 70 years, well past child-bearing age. Finally, at age 90, G-d gave her a son, Yitzchok (Isaac).

Well, you ask, weren't her prayers good enough at 40 – or 50 – or 70? Why did she have to wait all that time?

G-d desires the prayers of the righteous because they represent a deep relationship with Him, which is

ultimately beneficial to man. If Sarah had been given a child at 70 not 90, her last 20 years of praise for having been given a child would not have resulted in the same closeness with G-d as her crying out in desperation over the same time. For Sarah, it was necessary that she spend the extra 20 years asking for G-d's help.

## Not As Arbitrary As It Seems.

G-d has a different desire for each of us. Life's road is not an arbitrary one, although it may seem that way. Instead, ours is a personal life, designed for us to achieve our greatest potential – and closeness with G-d.

That's why you should turn to Him now.

You've already felt this. You've prayed before - everybody has, in times of need. Unfortunately, we tend to take for granted the gifts He gives us. So we're placed in circumstances that cause us to turn back to Him, to establish the closeness that only comes through *Bitachon* and *Tefillah*.

We reach out to Him during times of need, feel His greatness, understand His kindness – and know He will answer our prayers. In *Tehillim*, King David says that during *Tefillah* we should look to G-d as all-powerful, and all-concerned with our good.

That way, the *Ba'al Tefillah* (possessor of prayer) will turn all his energies to G-d, reestablishing that closeness with Him, having Him shape our lives to our benefit.

No one knows that better than you do.

## G-d Sees to it that You are not Helpless

The *Ibn Ezra*, a medieval Torah commentator, has written

that a servant is incapable of independent action. Even if his life is endangered, he must wait for his master. That is absurd, you say, for surely the master would condone the servant saving his own life. Yet the *Ibn Ezra's* point is subtler than that: the servant is psychologically dependent on his master; he is incapable of moving without an order.

You stand before G-d utterly helpless, to the extent that, in the words that precede the *Amidah*, you must ask Him to “open my lips so my mouth will speak Your praise.”

And you know that it's the literal truth. You cannot even open your lips in prayer unless G-d helps. This is not only a realization about *Tefillah* – it is the essence of *Tefillah*. The great medieval commentator *Ramban* (Nachmanides) adds that *Tefillah* is only required according to the Torah, in times of crisis, when we feel truly helpless. According to him, the obligation at other times is of rabbinic nature.

When you are healthy and doing well, it is hard to feel dependent upon G-d. It is even harder to recognize that only He deserves our trust. Only in times of extreme distress are we able to give our undivided attention to prayer – and the role it plays in deepening our relationship with G-d.

### ***Bitachon* is More Than Faith.**

The result of *Tefillah* is *Emunah* (faith) - *Bitachon* is like *Emunah* in overdrive. *Bitachon* is absolute trust in G-d and His infinite power – including His kindness and mercy. And *Bitachon* is far more powerful than you might imagine – in terms of its ability to help us, in terms of what G-d will do for us.

Do not think you can have *Bitachon*? Think again.

The *Vilna Gaon*, the great Lithuanian Torah scholar who lived 200 years ago, described *Bitachon* as the feeling an

infant has when it has just finished nursing. The baby knows no lacking whatsoever – its world is complete. It cannot even anticipate that it will ever be hungry again.

This is *Bitachon* – the certainty that G-d will take care of us. Not only will He solve all problems – but through heartfelt prayer, He will eventually erase the perception of problems altogether.

## The Benefits Of Suffering

Great, you say, I'll buy it. Now, when do I check out of the hospital?

Not so fast.

*A student once asked the Ba'al Shem Tov, the 18th-century founder of Chasidus, what it means "to rejoice in suffering." Instead of an answer, the young man was told to see a man who lived outside the city.*

*The student found the man living in abject poverty, a life of torment, pain and extraordinary suffering. He told the man that the Ba'al Shem Tov sent him and hesitantly asked his question: What does it mean "to rejoice in suffering"?*

*The man looked puzzled and said he was sorry, but that he could not answer because he had never experienced suffering.*

We are capable of learning that there can be an uplifting aspect of suffering.

## The Power Of *Bitachon*.

A story is told from the *Alshich Hakadosh* that shows that a person's trust in G-d is in direct correlation to G-d's will to grant him whatever he desires.

*There was a Jew who had heard the Alshich saying that G-d sustains those who have perfect trust in Him to such an extent that they need do nothing. While he was not lazy, this man so believed the Alshich that he decided he would no longer work in his fields. Ignoring his justifiably shocked family, he sat all day reciting Tehilim (Psalms), King David's supreme poetic expressions of faith.*

*Not needing to work any longer, the man sold his donkey to a neighboring peasant. Shortly after the peasant bought the donkey, he struck gold, mined it, and filled the donkey's saddle bags with the treasure. Yet, as soon as the bags were filled, the peasant fell to his death. The donkey, having been with his new master but a short time, returned to the Jewish farmer laden with gold.*

*When the family realized the great reward G-d had given the man in return for his Bitachon, they too knew the Alshich spoke the truth.*

## All Help in Proportion to *Bitachon*

The farmer's reward does not mean we do not have to work – or seek medical help. But we must realize all decisions are G-d's, and He helps us in direct proportion to our *Bitachon*.

And it happens to a remarkable degree.

*One time, the Rashash, a great scholar of the 1800s, questioned the statement of Rabbi Yisroel*

*Salanter, the 19th-century master of ethics, that even luxuries are granted through Bitachon. Rabbi Salanter said that he would prove it: from that moment he had Bitachon that he would receive a gold watch.*

*At the time, a ship was caught in a violent storm. The frightened captain vowed that should he survive and dock safely, he would give his gold watch to a rabbi in that port. A few days later, when the captain presented the watch to the shocked Rashash, he exclaimed, “this does not belong to me. Give it to Reb Yisroel Salanter. It is his.”*

## **There Is Nothing G-d Can Not Resolve**

And history shows that when Jews understood the Almighty’s control of every aspect of existence, and combined that knowledge with a deep appreciation of His loving kindness for His people, their difficulties were invariably resolved.

Because there is nothing that G-d cannot resolve. There is, instead, only the absolute security that He is in total control – and can do anything.

## **How To Get There**

How can you develop such trust? First, you must recognize *Bitachon’s* awesome power. You are in a unique position to do just that. Because you know that nothing else works.

Even the transitional state – the one you are in now – is beneficial. Because you are ready to move from confusion and doubt to the comfort and peace of mind of the *Ba’al Bitachon*, the truly fortunate person who has complete

confidence in G-d. In itself, this serenity is extraordinary. But the power of *Bitachon* goes far beyond that.

### ***Bitachon* – It Must Be Complete**

On another occasion, a man in desperate need of 10,000 rubles came to Rabbi Salanter. When he told the man he need only buy a lottery ticket and have complete *Bitachon*, the man bought the ticket – and did not win.

When he complained to Reb Yisroel, he asked the man if he would have sold the ticket for 5,000 rubles. When the man answered yes, Reb Yisroel told him he did not have complete *Bitachon* – and did not merit his reward.

## A Cure Is Possible.

When we turn to G-d, sincerely, with complete *Bitachon*, fully realizing that science and medicine are powerless without His direct intervention, He answers our prayers.

And as you lie in the hospital, a *Ba'al Bitachon*, you pray. You do not pray that your sickness never existed, because G-d does not reverse time. But you do pray for a cure. Even – or especially – because the doctors say it is impossible, you are steadfast in your *Bitachon*.

Because now you know a cure is possible.

What is that? You are a newcomer to *Bitachon* and you think you are not worthy of a miracle? Think again.

The Talmud says that with *Tefillah* it depends on who you are, and your motivation. Yet *Bitachon*, - built upon that absolute knowledge that G-d and only G-d is in control — does not depend on who you are, or the sincerity of your prayer. *Bitachon* will fulfill the wishes of even the most undeserving person (which is certainly not you). If he has absolute trust in G-d, even the most wicked person will be rewarded. And even if he does not have absolute trust, to whatever degree he places his trust in G-d, it is to that degree that he influences the outcome.

## By *Bitachon* Alone

Rabbi Chaim Volozhin, founder of the yeshiva movement, said that if a person recognized that G-d controls everything, and there are no accidents, then he will be kept from harm. Further, even those who have been harmed – as you have been – are assured that G-d will help.

There are countless examples of how reliance on G-d works. Take the story of the two friends who were in

trouble. One, the head of a yeshiva, desperately needed a large sum of money – without it, his school was certain to close. The other had just been given the terrible news that his father was diagnosed to have a malignant tumor and had only a few months to live.

The only consolation each had was *Bitachon* – the kind Hillel had, who could walk into his city when a fire was raging and be certain that his house was unaffected.

The son of the sick man was suddenly inspired to give *Tzedakah* (charity) in the name of his father, and so donated the required sum to the yeshiva. Moments later, he received a call from one of his father's doctors, who told him they had read the X-ray incorrectly. What they thought was a tumor was really an irregularity present since birth. Your father, the doctor said, is fine.

## Active Partners with G-d

Those two men had *Bitachon* – and then acted. Because for all its power, we are encouraged not to rely on *Bitachon* alone. Indeed, a person is expected to resolve a problem by his own effort – even while he understands that G-d is accomplishing everything. So even though you are praying for a miracle, you are not permitted to rely solely on a miracle. First, you have to do your best.

Confused? Don't be. For the central truth of Torah is that G-d created us to be His active partners. How much we do, and how much He accomplishes for us, is a complex equation. But in spite of the fact that He is the only one who actually accomplishes, we must play an active role.

Only then will our wishes be fulfilled.

## You Are Never Alone

You have done all you can. And so have your doctors. Yet the power within you – of *Teshuvah*, *Tefillah*, *Bitachon* - is immense. Turn to it. Use it. Because you are never alone.

G-d can affect miracles.

And with His help, so can you.

Although we may hold miraculous power to avert an untimely death by the power of our *Bitachon*, it is easier said than done.

Most people, will have great difficulty reaching such a level of *Bitachon*, that they can truly feel beyond any doubt, that they will become well again.

Often times, even if a person would have that potential, the Almighty, would thwart his efforts, to have such *Bitachon*, because ultimately, He wants otherwise.

However, we must understand that to the degree that we do develop confidence in the Almighty's granting us a positive resolution, it is to that degree that we, in fact, help to improve our situation. So it certainly pays to try.

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