

## Practical Bitachon- Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

*Chazal* say that before Adam sinned, not only did he not have to work for his bread, but the angels served it to him on a silver platter. It was obvious to Adam that everything came from Hashem. After the sin, the situation changed. Adam was cursed that he would have to work. In fact, *Chazal* say there were eleven processes Adam had to do before he could obtain bread. This idea of having to work to subsist is unique to humanity. All other creation get their sustenance easily. If Hashem created us to serve Him, why did He make it that we need to devote so much of our energy to physical work? Wouldn't it have been better to dedicate all our time to spirituality? The need to work after the sin, was in order to help us correct what went wrong. A person has to work hard to make a living, but at the same time he must know that there is no connection between what he does and the outcome. And that's a very difficult test. My headache disappears not because of the Excedrin I took, but because this is what Hashem wanted. We can say the same for earning a living. Rav Dessler explains that Hashem is hidden. To my eyes it might look as if I can make things happen the way I want. It's easy to say my efforts brought me success. But in this concealment, we must arouse ourselves to recognize not only in our head, but in our heart, that nature has no power and everything is only from Hashem.

Nothing happens without his decree. This is how we reveal Hashem from within the hiddenness. It's a difficult test because the external and the internal seem to contradict each other. I'm investing so much effort and time and I have to believe it's not what is bringing me sustenance, it's Hashem.

The *Chazon Ish* gives an example of what it means to really live *bitachon*. Reuven has a successful store and he seems to be a strong *baal bitachon*. Then he learns that a competing store is planning to open next to his. In the beginning, he's ashamed to speak about it. But then he starts to take action against his competitor which turns into fighting, *loshon hara*, and baseless hatred. A true *baal bitachon* will try to help his competitor. How much holiness is added to the world when this causes people to praise those who fear Hashem. *Bitachon* has to be expressed in what we feel and do and there are many levels. Even those that are not so strong in faith, still believe. Even among *tzadikim* there are always higher levels. Our job is to raise our level as we go on in life. Wherever we are, we have to aim higher.

In order to grow from stage to stage, it's important to understand the three major levels of *bitachon* as spelled out by Rabbi Avraham, the son of the Rambam.

The first level is the level of *tzadikim*. Yonatan took a boy with him to the Midianite camp. He fought the Midianites and won the war. It was an open miracle. Does this mean we can do things that according to nature would never work? It depends on one's level. Rabi Avraham says that people who did this felt the spirit of Hashem inside them. They felt an urge and a strength that made them capable of fulfilling their mission. It's a spirit from above, much like divine inspiration, that fills the person up and gives him the knowledge that it's right for him to do what he plans to do and to know that he will succeed. This level is for great *tzadikim* who are deserving of miracles.

Wars are not fought by people but by Hashem. He runs the show in a way that it looks like cause and effect in order to test us. One must take action as if it will really help but at the same time, one must think it doesn't matter. It's Hashem who will determine the results. People on a high level of *bitachon* already passed this test. They don't always have to consider the laws of nature. Still even great people should work in the framework of nature, in ways that we perceive are cause and affect. Only occasionally when they perceive an awakening from above and they understand that this is the will of Hashem in this particular time, can they do supernatural acts, regardless of numbers and strength.

## Bribe and Extortion Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

The Gemara gives several examples of how careful we must be not to take bribes. Shmuel was walking across a river and someone came and helped him across. Shmuel became suspicious and asked him why he was helping him. The man answered, "I have a court case today." Shmuel immediately said, "I'm not allowed to judge your case. By helping me across the river, you've given me a bribe." Although it was very subtle, Shmuel felt it would influence his decision.

Amemer was sitting in court and a bird broke into the courtroom and perched on his head. A person who was waiting to have a case judged, got up and chased it away. Amemer

then said, "I can't judge your case." Mar Ukva was walking along a road and there was spittle on the ground. Someone came and covered it up for him so he could continue walking. Mar Ukva asked the man why he did it. The man answered, "I have a case with you today." Mar Ukva then said, "I can't judge your case." Even a small favor is considered a bribe.

Rabbi Yishmael ben Reb Yosi had a worker who used to pick the fruits from Rabbi Yishmael's orchard and bring it to him. One day, the worker came early. Rabbi Yishmael asked him why. He answered, "I've got a case in court today." Rabbi Yishmael refused to judge the case. Still he wanted to hear how the

case would go, so he stood outside the door and listened. He heard the worker making his claim and he started to think, he's not expressing his case clearly. Why is he saying that, he should say this. And suddenly he thought, look how I was influenced. He gave me my own produce, he just brought it earlier. Nevertheless, it still made an impact.

If the bribe was given long before the case was scheduled, the judge himself must consider if he's fit to judge the case or if he's now biased. If he feels even a slight leaning, he should refuse the case. We see that deciding cases must be done with the utmost integrity and even the slightest bribe can cloud

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one's point of view. We see the strength of a bribe that it can completely change someone's opinion and how careful we must be.

The Jewish months are fixed according to the moon which is always behind the sun.

However, every few years an extra month is added so that the holidays come out in the correct seasons. When there is an extra month, Yom Kippur comes out later in autumn when the weather starts getting colder. That means the kohen gadol who must immerse many times in the mikva to complete his

service on Yom Kippur will need to immerse in colder weather. This minor bias, says the Rambam, disqualifies him from being part of the decision-making body who will determine if an extra month will be added.

## Understanding The Tales of Our Forefathers

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Shlomo Hamelech tells us in *Kohelet*, "B'boker zara zarecha ub'erev al tanech yadecha...- In the morning plant your seeds and in the evening do not rest your hand..." The world doesn't stop. When it's night in one part of the world, it's day somewhere else. Hashem is constantly pumping energy into the world to sustain man. He teaches us through creation how to live our lives, with *temidut*, never to say - I've worked enough. Shlomo Hamelech taught that every time period has its advantage. What a person can do when he's young, he cannot do when he's old. Yet old age has its place and importance. Every day and moment has its purpose.

The Gemara in Brachot tells a story of a *chassid* (Rabbi Yehuda Bar Ilai or Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava) who gave charity very often. His wife got angry at him, so he left the house and went to sleep in a cemetery. The commentators explain that he didn't actually go to the cemetery, but somewhere close by. Or perhaps he was alone in the house which is considered as if one is dead. Therefore, he decided to be with the dead and went to the cemetery. There he heard two spirits speaking to each other. One said to the other, "Go out and hover around the world and find out what *peruniyut* (punishment) is destined to come. The spirit went and soon returned and said, "I

heard that the first planting on *Gimmel Cheshvan* will be destroyed. The best time to plant is the second planting." When the *chassid* heard this he waited for the second planting to plant, and sure enough everything that was planted in the first planting was destroyed. A while later, the *chassid* went again to the cemetery and heard the spirit say that planting the first time would yield success and the second planting would be destroyed. He planted the first time and his plants were saved. The *chassid* went out a third time and overheard the spirit again saying to the other, "Go out and find out what will be." The other spirit answered, "I'm not going because man will find out and that is not his *tafkid* (purpose)."

Not every calamity and secret do we need to know. Our mission is to do, not to accomplish. There's no *halacha* that we have to become a *talmid chacham*. Our job is to learn *Torah*, to serve Hashem, and not to worry what will be in the future. David Hamelech wanted to know when he would die. Hashem didn't divulge the exact date but He did reveal to him that it would be *Shabbat*. From then on, David Hamelech was careful to be totally involved in spiritual matters on that day. One day he got distracted and the Angel of Death overpowered him. Our job is not to be concerned with when

we will die. Our mission is to be concerned with how we will live, what we will do with our time on this earth.

*Avos D'Rav Nosson* brings another story of a *chassid* who went on a ship that was caught in a storm and drowned. One day he reappeared and Rabbi Akiva asked him, "How did you get out?" The man answered, "The *mitzva* of charity saved me. Strong waves lifted me up and brought me to safety." When Rabbi Akiva heard this he cried out the verse in *Kohelet*, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it." When a person gives *tzedakah*, he gives away a part of himself, the time he spent working for which he was paid, to help others. The *chassid* saved lives with his money. Measure for measure, his life was saved.

In *Kohelet* it says, "*Ohev kesef lo yisba kesef.*" The commentators explain this to mean, someone who loves *mitzvot* will always run after more. Why then didn't the Torah clearly say this? The Baalei Mussar answer, a person by nature will not run after *mitzvot*. He will run after money. However, if he uses his money for spiritual purposes that strengthens him to eventually become an *ohav mitzvot*.