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Bitachon Weekly

Chovos HaLevavos Sha'ar HaBitachon #85 Part 2

A Life of Bitachon Through the Light of Torah

The Toil of Torah Enables Us to "Breathe" *Emunah*

How Will the *Flesh* Understand?

The Avnei Nezer of Sochachov related that when he was a young man, he became very ill, and the doctors warned him that it was dangerous for him to exert himself in learning. Left with no choice, he studied lighter subjects, including *mussar sefarim.*

Once, his father-in-law, the Kotzker Rebbe, asked him which *sefer* he was learning, and he answered that he was currently perusing the *Sefer Bechinos Olam,* a medieval *mussar sefer* authored by Rav Yedaiah Bedersi, a 13th-century sage, in which he emphasizes the vanity of worldly pursuits.

Said the Kotzker Rebbe to his son-in-law: What did this *sefer* innovate? That the world is הבל הבלים?! Your *seichel* already understands this very well! The question is only: ***How will your flesh understand it? How will your guf internalize it?*** If you learn a *blatt Gemara b'iyun,* then your very flesh will understand that the world is הבל הבלים!

Toil in Torah Changes a Person

Thus, we can speak about *emunah* and *bitachon.* We can reiterate that the world is false and illusory—and our minds believe it and internalize it! But the *guf* doesn't know it yet. And there's only one way for this knowledge to permeate our *guf* as well: *limud haTorah.*

Speaking to his son-in-law, the Kotzker Rebbe added that when Moshe Rabbeinu issued his parting words in the *shirah* of האזינו, he said, יערוף כמטר לקחי תזל כטל אמרתי, *may my teaching drop like the rain, my speech flow like the dew*; he thus ensured that for all generations, the Torah seeps into the very being of Klal Yisrael, enabling them to grow, just as rain makes the earth fertile.

This was Moshe Rabbeinu's parting message: When a *Yid* learns Torah with toil, it will change him and transform him completely, and it will enable everything he knows about Hashem to permeate his entire essence.

Emunah Gives Perspective; Torah Gives Strength

And so, when a *Yid* learns Torah with toil, with the proper approach, with humility and fear of heaven, with *kedushah* and *taharah,* but he hasn't also studied the fundamentals of *emunah* and *bitachon,* he may have become transformed into a refined person... but he lacks the proper perspective and attitude with which to navigate his life.

Conversely, if one focuses exclusively on learning *emunah* and *bitachon,* but he doesn't invest in *yegi'as haTorah,* he is armed with *knowledge. Still,* he lacks the strength to overcome the falseness of our *Olam HaSheker.*

Perfection is found when a person engages in both: He works on his *emunah* and *bitachon* and reiterates their principles, and he simultaneously devotes himself to toil in Torah. This elevates him into a real *Yid*—for **the Torah infuses strength and feeling into the principles a person knows cognitively.** The Torah enables him to overcome the illusions of This World.

No Other Way

Rav Yisrael Yitzchok Reisman, a sage of old Yerushalayim, related that in his youth, his father prescribed for him a regimen for his Torah learning: when to awake, which Torah subjects to learn, which areas of *mussar* and *kabbalah* to master, etc.

He then added, "You must know, my son, that every morning you're entering a world that distorts the *seichel*—and this happens every morning anew." For Chazal teach us יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום, *the yetzer hara of a person seeks to overpower him every day*. Merely entering This World already has a distorting effect. And there's only one remedy for this: Immediately in the morning, you must go through the entire regimen I have written out for you. This will nourish and sustain your soul so that it doesn't become warped.

Many tzaddikim said similarly that *limud haTorah* is the only tool that can enable a person to see the truth. When the Chortkover Rebbe was asked how *Yidden* will survive the darkness and the concealment of the era before Mashiach, he said that the only *eitzah* will be to devote our minds to learning. *This* is the only thing that can illuminate the darkness. For it is one thing to *know* our *emunah,* but to *feel* it in our bones, we must engage in the intensity of Torah learning.

Everything But the *Blatt*

This is the *yesod.* The Torah infuses us with the ability to take what we learn in *sifrei mussar,* what we reiterate in the *Ani Ma'amin's,* and thereby refines us so we can truly internalize those principles and overcome the illusions and the lies of This World.

The Belzer Rav would say: The *yetzer hara* will allow you to say *Tehillim* and go to the mikvah. He will allow you to collect *tzedakah* for the needy and engage in other wonderful mitzvos. But he will *not allow* you to learn a *blatt Gemara*—for that is his downfall! It is for this reason that the *yetzer hara* places so many obstacles in the way of *limud haTorah*; for he knows that nothing has the power to transform and elevate like the Torah.

Torah Transforms

It is truly a wondrous phenomenon: A person may learn *Maseches Shavuos* or *Kreisos*—subjects that seemingly have no connection to *emunah*—and yet this learning enables him to internalize the fundamentals of *emunah* and *bitachon* into his heart. There is no other way.

With this, we can understand why some people work very hard on their *emunah* and *bitachon* yet still struggle to internalize these principles, while others do succeed in living with their *emunah* and *bitachon.*

Some people may say: *This person engages in limud haTorah while I invest in emunah and bitachon... that is his subject, while this is my preoccupation...*, when in fact the two are inseparable. It is the Torah that enables the *emunah* to permeate, and without it, one will not succeed in his quest for a life of *emunah* and *bitachon.*

One must daven to Hashem for the *kochos* and the wherewithal to be able to devote time to serious Torah learning, for without it, one will not receive the nourishment to look at the world through the prism of truth.

How Women Can Attain the Gift of a Life of *Bitachon*

The Necessity of *Bitachon* for Everyone

Now, the question arises: Regarding *Mattan Torah,* we learn כה תאמר לבית יעקב...; that is, the Torah was given to men and women in equal measure—and this includes the important principles of *emunah* and *bitachon.* In addition, we see empirically in the world that women need *bitachon* no less than do men. And so, if the only path to internalizing *emunah* and *bitachon* is through the toil of Torah, **what is the path to *bitachon* for women?**

The Gemara in *Berachos* asks, נשים במאי זכין? In which *zechus* do women merit *Olam Haba?* The *mefarshim* explain that the Gemara doesn't mean to ask how women merit a portion in the World to Come—for it is obvious that by performing their exalted mission of bringing children into the world and guiding them on the proper path, they surely earn an ample portion in the World to Come.

Rather, the Gemara's question is: How do women earn the heavenly reward in *This World* that is exclusive to those who learn Torah? That they will earn a portion in the World to Come is certain. The question is: How can they access the special gifts in This World that can be attained only through Torah study?

Building Our Olam Haba Here in This World

The *sefarim hakedoshim* teach us that the reward of *Olam Haba* isn't a new creation—rather, it is the very world that we have fashioned while in This World. The toil that a person invests during his earthly life fashions the reality in which he will live in the Next World. In fact, the Beis Aharon explains that it is called עולם הבא, *the world that comes*... because it has already come. It is the world that we have created down here.

And so, the Gemara's question is: How do women merit to fashion such a reality of *Olam Haba* while living in This World? We may hear *shiurim* on *emunah* and *bitachon* and draw *chizuk* from stories, but how can women tap into the transformative aspect that comes through toil in Torah?

Every Jewish Daughter Can Attain Every Level of *Emunah*

A Portion in Torah

The Gemara in *Berachos* also answers this question. By transporting their children to learn Torah and by assisting their men in learning Torah, the women attain a portion in Torah. Behind every *Yid* who is able to devote time to learning stands a mother who cared for him and instilled in him a love for Torah, and a wife who enables and assists him.

On the surface, it may seem like a technical partnership. Since the men couldn't do it without them, the women receive their portion in the Torah that is learned. But this is difficult to understand... since they don't truly experience the rigor and the toil of a Gemara with *Tosafos*.... Of course, they will reap a reward in the Next World, but what about in This World? The women require a life of *emunah* and *bitachon* no less than the men do. How can they attain the clarity and the attitudes that can be attained only through Torah?

The Essence Is *Bittul*

The truth is that the effect of Torah toil is not something we can understand. There's no logical explanation why learning a *blatt b'iyun* in *Maseches Yebamos* transforms a person's feelings and outlook in matters of *emunah* and *bitachon*. It is a power that lies hidden in the Torah.

How, indeed, does it work?

When a person toils to understand Torah, he must invest his entire mind in this pursuit. He must channel all his energies to understanding Torah. This entails tremendous *bittul* to Hashem. This person casts away all worldly concerns for the sake of learning. This isn't easy, and there's a great *yetzer hara* that works against doing so wholeheartedly. The *bittul* this requires is on a level unlike that of any other mitzvah. Once a person does his part with *mesirus nefesh*, nullifying and being *mevatel* his own desires for Hashem, he is given the gift of clarity in *emunah*.

Thus, our ability to internalize our knowledge of *emunah* isn't a direct outgrowth of our toil in Torah—rather, it is a gift that is given to us because of it.

Bittul Is for Everyone

If so, when women exhibit *bittul* to assist their husbands and children in learning Torah, despite the difficulties, they can truly tap into the gift of *emunah*. Sometimes, the family wants to do something or go somewhere, but they forgo it for the sake of the Torah of the men and children. **There's so much toil and sacrifice on the part of Jewish women, and thus, they engage in true *bittul* for Torah.** Thus, just as the men receive the gift of clarity in *emunah*, so too do women receive the gift that

emunah will permeate their hearts, and they will live lives of *emunah*.

The Unique Spiritual Path of Women

The Maharal (*Drashos Maharal: Drush al HaTorah*, Section 38) writes that when women engage in their unique mission, they attain the *madreigos* of living with *emunah* without the necessity of *limud haTorah*. He explains that the women naturally possess an innate *emunah* that the men must toil in Torah to attain. (Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rav Tzadok of Lublin further develop this idea.) According to these tzaddikim, the levels of *emunah* for which men must toil in Torah can be attained by women without that toil.

Women make the *berachah* שעשני כרצונו, stating that Hashem created them in accordance with His will. They're already there.... They don't require Torah learning to bring them to *emunah*. When they properly perform their unique mission, they attain the same levels of *emunah* that the men attain through their Torah learning.

To conclude: Learning and studying *emunah* and *bitachon* are very important—but that learning and studying must be accompanied by intense Torah study (i.e., the highest level of *bittul* to Hashem, which women access by enabling Torah learning), which transforms the heart and mind. When a *Yid* toils in Torah, his body and its natural attitudes are muted, and the *neshamah* comes alive.

When this happens, we will see that our entire outlook changes, and *emunah* and *bitachon* will light the way in our lives.

Havineini Weekly
פרשת וישלח

Perfect Praise for an Imperfect Situation

Measure for Measure

Yaakov Avinu emerged from his battle with the angel of Esav injured and limping. The Torah tells us ויזרח לו השמש כאשר עבר את פנואל, *the sun went up for him as he crossed the river Penuel.* Rashi explains that the sun rose for *him*, to heal his injury.

The question arises: why is it important for us to know that this took place after he crossed the river Penuel? The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains this in the following way: "In truth, you must know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't do anything to a person, only measure for measure, in accordance with the actions of this person, as Chazal teach us (*Megillah* 12b) במידה שאדם מודד מודדין לו, *as a person measures out [to others], so it is measured out to him.*

"The Chovos Halevavos and other *sifrei mussar* teach us that there are two levels among *Yidden* when it comes to recognizing the goodness of Hashem. One level is when they recognize the goodness of Hashem—that He is the One Who constantly provides them with benevolent kindness, and they give praise and thanks for this kindness. This recognition, in turn, prompts the Creator to grant them even greater goodness and blessings.

"Another category, however, are *Yidden* whose hearts aren't complete with Hashem. They know that all the goodness that they have comes from Hashem, and **nevertheless, when they see in their friend a greater good that Hashem has blessed him with, they are disappointed, and it seems to them that Hashem is withholding blessings from them...** in fact, it even seems to them that Hashem is doing bad for them.

Tzaddikim, however, know that they are completely undeserving, and that everything they have comes from the abundant mercy and kindness of Hashem. Thus, it would never occur to them to be dismayed because they don't have what has been given to their friend—since everything is a gift freely bestowed by Hashem."

Measuring Ourselves Against Others

This is a deep and fundamental *yesod* that the Be'er Mayim Chaim has taught us here from the words of the Chovos HaLevavos, and it is important to reflect on just how far this goes. Many people judge their own situation—the level of good in their own lives—by comparing it to what others (friends, siblings, neighbors, etc.) have.

There was once a father of a special-needs child who got up to speak and said: "Imagine that every family would have such a child...among the tasks for every family would be to care for a developmentally delayed child. It would be perfectly normal, and no one would complain about it. Proof of this is that no one complains when they give birth to an infant who must be fed and whose every need must be provided. Thus, when "everyone has it," no one complains. It is only when a person perceives that he's the only one with this problem that it becomes an issue—because he's constantly comparing himself to others: *Why, why? Why only me?...* He's pained, and he's unable to appreciate that the Ribbono shel Olam has done something good for him.

The same applies when it comes to money. How does a person know whether or not he has money? He looks around at what other people have and, through this, determines whether he has what he needs.

We hear this constantly from people. They manage to cover their expenses. They have what they need. They marry off their children... and yet, they're bitter and disappointed. Why? Because they have friends and neighbors who are engaged in big business deals and the accumulation of wealth. They can't understand: *Why do I deserve this? Why can't I make money?* All this because they aren't earning as much as the next person. This causes them to feel poor and unsuccessful.

Now, we may laugh at this person because we can't relate to his feelings. But the truth is that we all carry around a similar attitude, to one extent or another: **we look around, comparing ourselves to others to determine whether we have what we need. Based on what others have, we conclude whether or not Hashem has blessed us with goodness, or, *chas v'shalom*, the opposite.**

Praising Through the Pain

The Be'er Mayim Chaim continues: "Now, Yaakov Avinu appreciated the great miracle that was done for him in being spared from the fiery angel—even though he emerged injured, and even though his grandfather, Avraham Avinu, was rescued from multiple dangers completely intact. It did not occur to him to think less of his own miracle, and it didn't cross his mind that Hashem had done something bad to him by allowing him to become injured. On the contrary, he only praised, thanked, and lauded Hashem for saving his life. When he said "ותנצל נפשי", he was sincere in his praise for Hashem for sparing his life.

Yaakov Avinu could have complained and viewed his situation as a net loss. He could have thought to himself: *why did all this need to happen to me? Why did I have to come away injured from my altercation with Saro shel Esav? Why weren't greater miracles done for me like they were for my grandfather, Avraham?* Instead, he was consumed with praise and thanks for Hashem.

This is truly a difficult *nisayon*, and we must study the words of the Be'er Mayim Chaim deeply, for this *nisayon* to compare often strikes when we're least prepared for it. Sometimes, a person endures a medical ordeal, and he comes away with scars—often physical, other times emotional, and in some cases with both. He looks around at other people who went through a similar saga, and he thinks: *why me? Why was I chosen for this?*

When Yaakov Avinu found himself in this situation, it didn't dawn on him to compare himself to others. He simply focused on the good that was done for him.

A Special Sunrise

Yaakov Avinu was rewarded for this positive attitude, measure for measure. Just as he didn't think less of his personal miracle by comparing it to others, so too, Hashem gave him a personal gift of healing that no one else was privileged to receive. ויזרח לו השמש—the sun came up for him! For everyone else, the sun rose to shine and illuminate, but for Yaakov Avinu on that morning, the sun came up to heal him. This is the meaning of Rashi, who says, "לו, לרפואתו". It was a special sunrise for Yaakov Avinu.

Because he didn't look around at others, he was given something no one else had.

When he was injured, he understood and appreciated that Hashem was doing him the greatest kindness (indeed, according to *kabbalah*, there was a great purpose in the injury to Yaakov's thigh). Instead of feeling victimized, he called the place פניאל, for he saw *Elokim* פנים אל פנים, *face to face*. He felt privileged and blessed, and for this reason he merited being healed, as mentioned, in a manner of *middah k'negged midah*, and this is why the Torah finds it important to mention that the place was called Penuel.

Perfect Imperfection

Thus, the *avodah* of a *Yid* is that even when thoughts of comparing to others come to him, he must push them away. He must distract himself from his purported lack, focus on the shower of goodness from Hashem, and give praise and thanks for it.

It is common for people to marinate in their bitterness about what they don't have. They sit at home and chew over their sorry state. For example, their son has a certain problem, and they wonder what will happen with *shidduchim*. The truth is that they have no inkling of Hashem's *cheshbonos*. In so many cases, we can clearly see with our eyes how these blemishes are given to a person solely so he will agree to be *meshadech* with the girl who is meant for him!

It is the same in all circumstances in our lives. What may seem to us imperfect is actually the greatest perfection. Yaakov Avinu understood this about his own situation: it was *sheleimus*, *perfection*. There's a *mehalech* in *avodah* to repair the *middah* of *Hod*, that is, to acknowledge and submit to Hashem's plan, and to thank Him (*hoda'ah*) for whatever He does for us. This is also the *avodah* of Chanukah, which is to thank Hashem amid the darkness of the *galus*.

We must remember this *avodah*, and we must remember that when Hashem creates something that seems to us to be imperfect, it really is perfect. We must refocus from the lack to the immense kindness for what we have. This is the way of the tzaddikim, and this is what the Torah is teaching us here.

Gratitude and Growth

It must be noted that this *avodah* of gratitude and focusing away from the lack is no contradiction to the need to introspect when faced with adversity. On the contrary, it is part of the *sheleimus* of the situation. That is, the first thing we must recognize is that this "imperfection" is really perfect, and there's nothing to complain about. There's no place for doubt and second-guessing... *what if I had done such and such...*

A *Yid* must be grateful and give thanks for all the good Hashem does for him, and *then* he must think: *what else can I do to learn from my situation? How can I grow through this experience?* All the while, he must ensure that this reflection and introspection do not interfere with the quality of his gratitude.

Complete Gratitude for Incompleteness

The essence of this *Be'er Mayim Chayim* is that a person must accustom himself to giving one hundred percent thanks and gratitude for a situation that seems only to be ninety percent perfect. We cannot think, *I'll give thanks—but only for as much as I get. When I get 100%, I'll thank 100%.*

The *yesod* is to remember that whatever situation we're in is perfect for us—and the fact that someone else seems to have more is none of our concern. It happens that a person purchases a home, and he's elated—until he finds out that his neighbor paid a couple thousand dollars less for a similar home! We must abandon such thinking! When Hashem gives you blessings, you must give thanks for those blessings with your entire being—regardless of what others have.

Point to Ponder

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often enmeshed in such thinking ourselves. Even when we reiterate beautiful words about *emunah* and *bitachon*, and we study all these important principles, we may sometimes miss a sensitive *nekudah* without which we cannot advance in our *bitachon*.

The reason we may often miss the point is that when we learn a piece of *Chovos HaLevavos*, for example, who exhorts us not to place our trust in our wealth... we assume that he's addressing wealthy people. *He must not be speaking to me... I have no wealth to trust in...*

But this is a mistake—for wisdom and money are merely examples of the abilities and resources on which we tend to rely. The point is that a person must not rely on whatever talents and abilities he thinks he has. **Every person encounters countless situations throughout the course of a day—and he doesn't realize how much he relies on his own abilities to navigate those events, instead of relying on Hashem!** And this is why many people fail: their misguided and misplaced trust kills success!

You Must *Do Something*

Whenever a problem—large or small—presents itself, our natural instinct is that *we must do something*, and thus resolve the issue. ***There's a problem? I'll get right on it. I'll call this one and reach out to that one, and get it resolved...***

Thus, we accustom ourselves to trusting in our actions. We believe in our own efforts and initiatives. We often hear people say, *"From doing nothing, nothing will happen." If I sit with my feet up, the matter will certainly not be resolved.... One's got to do something!"*

Effort Is Necessary; Reliance on It Is Misplaced

But the truth is that this is simply untrue. The resolution of our problems has very little to do with our efforts. Our problems aren't solved because of our *hishtadlus*. Everything that happens in the world is orchestrated by Hashem, and so our *tefillah*, our *tzedakah*, and our thoughts of *emunah* are the real things that resolve issues.

It's very difficult for people to hear this, because we have become conditioned to believe that "action" is the strongest thing, while thought and speech are weaker. For this reason, people would much rather engage in efforts and actions before thinking *emunah* and davening to Hashem.

We tend to think that *if we're required to do hishtadlus, it must be effective!* And for this reason, we place our trust in our *hishtadlus*. And when it doesn't work, we try again and again... and we wonder: *I davened and I gave tzedakah—why aren't my efforts bearing fruit?!* But the Kedushas Levi gives us the answer: **When you trust in your *hishtadlus*, you essentially ensure its failure.**

And so, while *hishtadlus* is necessary, we must never trust in it to bring about our desired outcome.

Of course, we must engage in *hishtadlus*—as much as is necessary. In most cases, there's an *obligation* to perform *hishtadlus*. But *trusting* in the *hishtadlus* lays waste to its *chiyus*.

Let us accustom ourselves to living with this mindset. Yes, we must perform *hishtadlus*, but we mustn't rely on it. On the contrary, relying on the *hishtadlus* is its demise.

Point to Ponder

Believing in Hishtadlus Only Ruins Things

The False Kings: When We Place Our Trust in the Wrong Sources

At the conclusion of *Parashas Vayishlach*, the Torah teaches us ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום, *and these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom.* Later, the Torah tells us about their reign, and then that the kings died—וימלוך...וימת. According to *Kabbalah*, this refers to the *inyan* of שבירת הכלים, the spiritual worlds that once existed but were later shattered. But we know that even these lofty concepts have real-world applicability to us on a practical level.

Said Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev, in the name of his illustrious Rebbe, the Maggid of Mezrich: וימלוך...וימת... and he reigned, *and he died.* **When a person attributes power and control to any given entity—believing that a person, wisdom, talent, or ability is the source of his success—then… וימת, that thing will die off**, and the success will vanish. Attributing success to an entity robs that entity of vitality—solely because you have placed your trust in it.

Trusting in *Hishtadlus* Cuts Off Its *Chiyus*

The reason for this is that, when a person thinks that an outside entity can help him, he indicates that he believes that an entity outside Hashem can bring success—and this cuts off the *chiyus* to that entity. For everything in This World is sustained from the *chiyus* of Hashem within it—but if a person places his trust in the entity, not in the power of Hashem within it, this causes the *chiyus* of Hashem to that thing to cease.

Thus, our misguided thoughts regarding this matter have the power to cut off *chiyus* from whatever we attribute success to (money, wisdom, etc.).

What Are We *Really* Relying On?

It's easy to say this, but we don't realize how much we're

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