

You shall count for yourself seven cycles of Sabbatical years ... You shall sanctify the fiftieth year ... You shall not sow, you shall not harvest. (25:8,10,11)

Bitachon means trust. For a Jew, *bitachon* means trust in Hashem, because *ein od Milvado*, no one other than He exists. Without Hashem, nothing is possible; with Hashem, everything is achievable. It is as simple as that. Without the Almighty, we simply cannot function. The *mitzvos* of *Shemittah* and *Yovel* are the “poster” *mitzvos* which underscore the need for *bitachon*. After all, to close up shop for a year – and, during *Yovel*, for two years – demands super human trust in Hashem. One might think that living with *bitachon* is a specific characterization of one’s religious observance, as if to say, “He is an observant Jew who has incredible trust in the Almighty.” Such a statement implies that one can be observant but not trust in Hashem. Any thinking person understands that this is untrue, because if one does not fully believe with all his heart that *ein od Milvado*, for whom is he performing *mitzvos*?

We have more. *Bitachon* is not simply a supplementary positive attribute. *Bitachon* redefines a person. One who lacks *bitachon* lacks an essential Jewish quality. *Horav* Reuven Hexter (*Mashgiach*, Modiin Illit) observes that Eliezer, *eved* Avraham *Avinu*, was an exceptional student of his master. He was able to quell his *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. He absorbed all of his master’s Torah. Indeed, his countenance was similar to that of his master. One would, therefore, assume that if Eliezer sought Yitzchak *Avinu* as a son-in-law, Avraham would readily agree. That is, however, not what happened. Eliezer asked, and Avraham said no. Avraham told Eliezer the bitter truth, “You are a descendant of Canaan, son of Cham ben Noach, whom Noach cursed (because of his malevolent behavior when Noach had imbibed a bit too much). I am blessed (Hashem blessed Avraham and all of his future offspring). *Ein arur midabeik b’baruch*; “One who is accursed cannot unite with one who is blessed.” End of story. In other words, Eliezer had it all. As Avraham’s *talmid muvhak*, primary student, he represented everything that the Patriarch looked for in a student. He was, however, missing one critical attribute: he was not a *baruch*. The playing field had just changed. Avraham could not unite with an *arur*.

What is the criterion for achieving *baruch* status? Just virtue of birth is not sufficient. One needs to prove himself as a *baruch*. *Rav Hexter*, *Shlita* quotes the *Navi Yirmiyahu* (17:7), *Baruch ha’gever asher yivtach b’Hashem, v’hayah Hashem mivtacho*, “Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, then Hashem will be his security.” The *Navi* states clearly that the criterion for achieving *baruch* status is *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. This implies that one who does not trust in Hashem will not be a *baruch*. Only one who believes with every fiber of his body that *ein od Milvado* is considered blessed. We can have no greater blessing than not having a care in the world, because, once one realizes that everything is up to Hashem, he will stop worrying about the various challenges that he encounters.

Many people claim that they have *bitachon* – and it might even be true. The *Imrei Emes* teaches

that when someone contends that he has *bitachon*, complete trust in Hashem, it might mean that he trusts in Hashem because he is simply too lazy or cognitively deficient to give the statement considerable thought. He just echoes what others say. It is easier to say, "We are," than to consider what the statement implies. If we would take the time and make the effort to think about what having *bitachon* means, we would mouth this statement with great trepidation.

We are too preoccupied with being like everyone else that we forget who we are. Without self-identity, one's beliefs, ideals and achievements are not his own. He does not know who he is, because he is imitating someone else. If he seeks credit for what he accomplishes, he should decide who he is. Perhaps the following analogy rendered by *Horav Chanoch Henach, zl*, m'Alexander, will shed some light on this.

Once a fellow suffered from poor memory. He was otherwise an alert, caring and friendly individual. He just had difficulty remembering the simplest chores and locations. In fact, when he arose in the morning, he could not remember where he had left his clothes the night before. It got so bad that people would refer to him as the "*golem*," a sad, but unfortunately accurate, nomenclature.

One night, he decided to write a list indicating where he left each article of clothing, so that in the morning he would not have difficulty locating his things. The next morning, he arose bright and early and immediately proceeded to scan his list. He was so excited to find his shirt, pants, socks and shoes exactly where he had left them the previous night. The list worked like a charm. It was the answer to all his problems. He dressed, put on his tie, jacket and hat and was quite happy with himself until, as he was about to leave, he began to wonder: "I have located everything on the list, but myself. Where am I?"

"So it is with us," the *Rebbe* concluded. "We are not dissimilar from that *golem*. Where are we?" How easy it is to lose sight of oneself and hide within the identity of someone else. It relieves the pressure of being who we are. We can mouth the right words, walk the walk, and talk the talk, but: who are we?