

## The land shall observe a Shabbos rest for Hashem. (25:2)

In addition to our biological ascendance from the *Avos Hakedoshim*, Patriarchs, we are distinguished as Jews because of our acceptance of – and adherence to – the Torah. Hashem offered the Torah to the other nations, who refused it due to its incompatibility with the prevalent lifestyle. Stealing, murder and adultery are prohibited as part of our religious code. The other nations live by a different moral compass. Hashem presented us with the Torah, accompanied by an unprecedented and unparalleled Revelation on *Har Sinai*. We accepted with the resounding declaration, *Naaseh v’Nishmah*, “We will do and we will listen!” All this is history.

From a *hashkafic*, philosophic perspective, *Naaseh v’Nishmah* is the affirmation of our faith and trust in Hashem. *Bitachon*, trust, is a fundamental principle of Judaism which is essential to our existence. To be an observant Jew is to have unequivocal trust in Hashem. A true *baal bitachon* must work to overcome the constant challenges to our *bitachon*. To the level of his success, he is blessed with a state of calm, an acknowledgement that everything is ultimately in Hashem’s hands. While “there are no atheists in a foxhole,” and everyone at one point or another ends up looking to Hashem for salvation, it should not be the choice only after he has exhausted all other avenues of endeavor. The attitude of, “What can I lose?” is not the way to approach *bitachon*. One should believe only in Hashem, with the understanding that every other agency is only *hishtadlus*, endeavoring.

Our *parshah* begins with the laws of *Shemittah*, which constitute the primer for *bitachon*. How else can a person close up shop for a couple of years and trust that he will be availed with sustenance for his family? This is why these people are called *giborei koach*, strong ones of the spirit. We have no shortage of *sefarim*, *shmuessen*, and stories which buttress the importance of *bitachon*. As such, I picked a few vignettes which inspire me. In closing, I feel that we should reiterate the famous *tefillah* (popularized by a song) of the *Tiferes Shlomo*. I take the liberty of offering a free translation:

*Ribon kol ha’Olamim, yadaati ki hineni b’Yadcha l’vad*; “Master of the Universe, I know that I am in Your hands alone, like clay in the hand of the potter. And even if I will attempt with plans and contrivances/schemes, and (even) if the entire world will stand by my right side to help and support my soul, without Your strength and help, there is no *ezrah v’yeshuah*, help and salvation.

On the basic, everyday level, earning a livelihood presents us with an enormous *bitachon* challenge. Some worry all the time about their *parnassah*. Others do nothing, maintaining a blasé attitude towards earning a living. Actually, we may divide these individuals into three groups: the true *baal bitachon* who places his trust completely in Hashem; the individual who is too depressed to think about it, having given up hope of achieving any form of success; the ne’er do well who has no self- esteem and whose laziness encourages him to live on whatever public assistance he can garner for himself. We will, of course, address the *baal bitachon*, the super hero, who triumphs over challenge by maintaining his trust in Hashem.

Arriving in America, which was touted as the *goldeneh medina*, golden country, where opportunity for wealth abounded, the observant Jew immediately discovered this opportunity presented a concomitant challenge: *Shabbos*. Jobs were plentiful, but they came with a tall price:

*Shabbos*, he could not work the rest of the week. It was a package deal. Sadly, many succumbed to the lure of the dollar. The few noble, strong Jews who did not, those whose trust in Hashem superseded their fear of poverty, lived with less, but merited to raise families which, to this very day, continue to bestow Torah *nachas*. Many of their families have formed the backbone of Orthodoxy throughout the globe.

In the summer of 1928, *Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zl* (*Rosh Yeshivah* of Kamenetz and author of the *Bircas Shmuel*), traveled to America to fundraise on behalf of his *yeshivah*. He arrived prior to the Great Depression, when funds were already running short, compelling him to extend his trip for eighteen months. His loss was the American Jewish community's gain. During the time that he spent here, he inspired and invigorated the observant community, encouraging them to maintain their devotion and continue their good work, despite the adversity which they encountered. Their primary challenge was *Shabbos* observance. People have to eat, but, without a livelihood, providing for a growing family was, in many cases, an insurmountable challenge. The *Bircas Shmuel* focused his *drashos*, lectures, on the topics of *Shabbos*; *bitachon*; and what it means to be a Torah Jew. He succeeded in reaching many Jews who were inspired by his heartfelt words.

One *Shabbos*, he was walking down a street in New York when he passed a locked store. It was Jewish-owned, and the large sign in the window stated, "Closed." *Rav* Baruch Ber walked over to the padlock on the door and kissed it! "This lock is declaring to all who pass by, 'It is *Shabbos kodesh* today. Hashem is our G-d and we are proud to be His faithful servants!'"

*Horav Sholom Tzvi Shapiro, zl* [his *nom de plume* was *tzaddik nistar*, hidden *tzaddik*, lived in Bnei Brak, and he was known to be a saintly scholar, lived on *bitachon*. He somehow provided for his family, even though he had no visible means of support. When the time came to marry off his daughter, the added expense to his present deficit was daunting. He had a friend – with whom he had been quite close when they had both been students in *Yeshivas Mir/Shanghai* – who had moved to America and was doing well financially. He turned to his revered *Rebbe*, *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, and asked for a letter of approbation attesting to his need.

*Rav* Chatzkel had taught his students the meaning of *bitachon*, emphasizing time and again that one relies solely on Hashem. Thus, asking the *Mashgiach* for such a letter was going against his grain. However, one must be *mishtadel*, endeavor, and this was *Rav* Sholom Tzvi's *hishtadlus*. *Rav* Chatzkel's prodigious response is inspiring and should compel us all to think. He said, "*Rav Sholom Tzvi, Der Eibishter veist punkt der matzav*, "The Almighty is well aware of your situation. Why would you turn to a human being for help? Turn instead directly to Hashem."

A few days passed, and *Rav* Sholom Tzvi intimated to a friend, "If the *Mashgiach* had given me the

letter, I probably would have raised five thousand dollars – enough to cover the expenses of this wedding. With his words, ‘*Der Eisbishter veist punkt der matzav,*’ however, he helped me marry off all of my children!”