

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

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (*mitzvah* 84) offers three reasons by which to understand the *mitzvah* of *Shemittah*: first, to teach the Jew to maintain his *emunah*, faith in Hashem, second, to imbue him with the *middah*, character trait, of *vatranus*, yielding/selflessness/forbearance; third, to have *bitachon*, trust in Hashem, that He will “come through” and provide for his needs. [I underscore “needs” as opposed to “wants.” A Jew has what he needs. Wanting is a different class. Hashem provides for our needs. He determines our needs.] In other words, a Jew is to be faithful to the Almighty and to trust in Him. One who lives a life guided by *emunah* and *bitachon* obviously prioritizes others over himself, which is what *vatranus* is all about.

The *Chazon Ish* was wont to say that *emunah* is a *halachah*; one must believe in Hashem. It is the basic principle of our faith. A Jew who lacks *emunah* lacks Jewishness. *Bitachon* is actualized *emunah*, taking what he believes and incorporating it into his life. When one’s faith is challenged, *bitachon* kicks in and overcomes the issues that present themselves. *Emunah* is the tree, and *bitachon* is the fruit. I may add that the fruit can only be as good as the tree on which it grows. The quality of outcomes depends on the source of the foundation. In a moral or educational context, this metaphor reflects the idea that children or students often reflect the values, character and guidance of their parents, mentors and environment. In a personal context, one whose *emunah* is at best weak will hardly do well when he confronts a challenge. Cultivating faith in Hashem is a prerequisite for Jewish living.

One whose faith is unequivocal exemplifies trust in Hashem under the most challenging conditions. In the city of Mir, Poland, lived a young orphaned girl who was of marriageable age. A number of young men were presented for her consideration, all of whom she rejected. She felt that, because she was an orphan and poor to boot, she was not being presented the strong learners. One day, she decided to pen a letter to her Father in Heaven, “*L’kavod Ribono Shel Olam*. You are the Father of *yesomim*, orphans. As such, You are my Father. I am no longer unattractive because, as the Creator, You would never create anything unappealing.” She signed the letter, “Your daughter.” She proceeded to the forest, waited for a strong wind to blow and flung the letter up in the air. The next day, one of Mir’s elite students was walking and “chanced” upon the letter. He read the letter and was amazed by the spiritual character of its author. He brought the letter to the *Mashgiach* of Mir, who said, “Perhaps this is a Heavenly sign that this young woman is your Divinely-designated *zivug*, match.” The rest is history: they met; they married and built a *bayis nee’man b’Yisrael* – all due to her deep-rooted trust in Hashem.

The *Brisker Rav*, *zl*, received a large dowry consisting of prime real estate in Warsaw, Poland. Something happened, a financial decision went wrong, and, overnight, he was left with nothing. At the time, he was studying the *sefer Chovas Ha’levavos*, *Shaar Ha’Bitachon*. He commented, “The world thinks that a wealthy man is he who owns a large real estate portfolio. Veritably, the true rich man is he who “possesses” the *Shaar Ha’Bitachon*, “Gate of trust,” by the *Chovas Ha’levavos* (*Rabbeinu Bachya*).

His daughter once came to him and remarked that food prices had risen exponentially. He told her, “*Chazal* (*Beitzah* 16a) teach that Hashem determines and decrees a person’s food, sustenance, on *Rosh Hashanah* for the coming year. If they would have said that Hashem decreed a person’s money at the beginning of the year, then when food prices rise, I might have had reason for concern. Since they said, however, that on *Rosh Hashana* Hashem determines the amount of food that one will have – why should I be concerned with its price?”

Many will pay lip service to the *middah* of *bitachon*, and, for all intents and purposes, they do place their trust in Hashem, until the situation appears hopeless. It is at this point that the sincere *baal bitachon* shows his/her true colors. A young *talmid chacham*, who would spend time learning and *davening* in the *bais hamedrash* frequented by *Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zl*, became gravely ill. He went to the top doctors in *Eretz Yisrael* who gave him the grim diagnosis that modern medicine could do nothing for him. One of the well-known *askanim* (influential leader/worker on behalf of the Jewish community), who was well-connected with members of the medical field, encouraged him to fly to New York, where he knew a specialist who could hopefully help the patient. The young man’s wife readily agreed, but first wanted to visit *Rav Elyashiv* for a *brachah*.

They had an appointment set for Friday. The young man, his wife, and the *askan*, all visited with *Rav Elyashiv*, who listened to the entire history and ruminated over it for a few moments, “All I can say to you is that Hashem should bless you with a *refuah sheleimah*, complete recovery.” Everyone assumed that with *Rav Elyashiv*’s blessing, the meeting had come to an end. It was at that moment that the wife interjected and said, “According to the *Rav*’s word, it appears that I will shortly become a widow with a number of young orphans to care for. I accept Hashem’s decree with love. I have, however, one question to ask: When my children grow older and ask me, ‘*Imma*, did you do everything possible to save *Abba*?’ What will I tell them? Will I be able to look them in the eye and say; ‘Yes,’ I did all that was in my power to do?”

*Rav Elyashiv* listened intently to the young mother’s words, and he immediately turned toward the *askan* and said, “Leave immediately for New York, together with this couple. Go straight to the doctor.” *Rav Elyashiv* reiterated the word, “immediately.” The *askan* was incredulous, wondering if he had heard correctly. Just a minute ago, *Rav Elyashiv* had given the impression that there was no medical hope; they should pray. Now, the venerable sage made a complete turn around and instructed them to fly immediately to New York. He asked, “Is the *Rav* saying we should fly even on *Shabbos*? Or that I should make all the arrangements and then fly?” *Rav Elyashiv* replied, “I thought I told you to fly now.”

The conclusion of the story: They flew on *Shabbos*, and, in a short while, the husband returned home and was able to participate in *Rav Elyashiv*’s *shiur* for many more years.

Great story with a happy ending, but how did the wife’s few words change the sage’s attitude? The question was presented to *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl* (*Rav Elyashiv*’s son-in-law), who explained that, when this woman declared her acceptance of Hashem’s decree – with complete

love and equanimity – she demonstrated an elevated level of *bitachon*. One who has achieved such a *madreigah*, level, of *bitachon*, has the power to “tear,” override, a *g’zar din*, Heavenly decree. He (*Rav Elyashiv*) knew that the cure was available for this young man (in merit of his wife’s extraordinary *bitachon*). Thus, he instructed them as part of their *hishtadlus*, endeavoring, to move quickly and fly to New York.

*Horav Reuven Karlinsky, zl (Yechi Reuven)*, relates a vignette concerning a distinguished well-to-do Jew in London, who said, “I, *baruch Hashem*, have *parnassah*, livelihood. Like me, many of my friends and associates are financially secure. Our plan is to support our children, so that they can devote themselves to Torah study. We do not pinch on our support, but we give readily and generously. The issue that troubles me is: What about our grandchildren? Our children are learning and being supported by us – their parents, but who will support the next generation?

This man made the rounds of distinguished lay leaders, Torah giants and various *Rabbanim*, asking the same question: Who will sustain our grandchildren? While everyone gave him the standard “have *emunah* and *bitachon*” response, it did not satisfy him. When he visited *Eretz Yisrael*, someone suggested that he present the question to the *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Bais Yisrael*. He was not only a brilliant scholar, but he was also keen in the ways of the world.

He went to the *Rebbe* and presented his question. He was not prepared for the response, “*Mishigener!*” the *Rebbe* cried out. “This man is out of his mind.” The *Rebbe* had given him the answer. Why is he worrying about what will be in half a century? Things happen; situations change. We do not worry concerning what will be fifty years from now. We do not even know what will be tomorrow! A person who trusts in Hashem either does not worry, or he focuses his attention on the here and now. Someone who occupies his time worrying about fifty years from now needs serious help.