

Bitachon – Living A Life Of The Soul¹

Bitachon: Believing

We will discuss what is called *Bitachon* – the ability of our soul to place our trust in a higher power than ourselves.

Bitachon is the power in our soul to believe and place one's trust in something. Generally speaking, there are two ways how our soul uses the power of *Bitachon*.

One kind of *Bitachon* we have is, simply put, to trust in Hashem (G-d). This needs to be explained well, because we also know that we are required to make effort (*hishtadlus*), so we need to understand how we balance our *Bitachon* with our human efforts. (Later, we will explain this point).

The second kind of *Bitachon* is to have *Bitachon* in oneself, which in our language is called *bitachon atzmi*, “self-confidence.”

First, we will discuss the way our soul can use its power of *bitachon* to feel reliant on Hashem. What is the root of this power?

Bitachon: Nothing Opposes You

The first time in the Torah we find the word “*Bitachon*” is by Shimon and Levi, when they weren't afraid of being attacked by Shechem; as it is written, “*And they came upon the city confidently (betach).*” They had “*betach.*” In other words, they were able to trust in Hashem's salvation, because they didn't see Shechem as a threat. They feared no opposition.

From here we can see that *Bitachon* doesn't just mean that one simply places his trust in Hashem, but rather, that *because one doesn't feel opposed*, that is why he trusts in Hashem.

(There are differing opinions what *Bitachon* is. The *Chovos Halevovos* says that *Bitachon* is that a person should know that if it was decreed upon him by Hashem that something good will happen, then it will happen, and if it is something bad, then it will not happen, because everything is good. Other opinions, however, have a different approach: anything can definitely happen to a person, because everything Hashem does is for the best. Soon, we will explain these differing approaches.)

Let us explain this.

¹*Editor's Note: This section, entitled “Bitachon”, was a series that the Rov concluded with in the original shiurim he gave in the series, “Getting To Know Your Feelings”. This material was not included in the Hebrew sefer, but it now appears in print for the first time. It concludes the subject of feelings, as it deals with another part of our emotional world: fears. Working on our Bitachon has alot to do with overcoming fears, as we will see. The last chapter was not given as part of this series but taken from a derasha which the author gave at a different time.*

Bitachon Is Found When We Access Our Inner World

This world seems like a dangerous place full of challenges; there are constant fights, wars, and battles. But that is only in the physical world we see. We indeed cannot have *Bitachon* when we simply look at this world through the lens of this physical world.

But if we look at life through the lens of our *inner* world, we will find only peace there. We will be able to find in ourselves a place in which nothing opposes us, and there, we can find our *Bitachon*.

In the inner world within us, we can find there a place of confidence and trust in Hashem. This is the meaning behind what is written, “*And you will settle the land, confidently.*” The possuk is saying that we were able to come into the land of Israel, conquer it, and rest assured that Hashem would help us settle it - and this is what happened.

There is a concept known in the *sefarim hekadoshim* as *Olam* (world), *Shanah* (year\time) and *Nefesh* (soul).² What this means for us is that every concept in creation takes place in the world, and in time, and in our soul. Where do we find the concept of *Bitachon* in the world, in time, and in our soul? In the world, the place where *Bitachon* is found is in Eretz Yisrael. It is written, “*And you will settle it, betach (confidently).*” Until we arrived at Eretz Yisrael, we were not yet in this situation of *Bitachon*, but after settling in Eretz Yisrael, we settled it with *betach*, which comes from the word “*Bitachon.*” In time, there is *Bitachon* found in Shabbos, because on Shabbos we rest and we don’t think about our worries. On Shabbos we have *Menuchah*, calmness that comes because we don’t see any opposition to us.

Where is *bitachon* in our soul? In our soul, there are two layers. The outer layer feels opposition from life’s challenges, but in the inner layer of our soul, there is a whole different world that exists: *a place in which we do not feel any danger whatsoever*, to see that things are the way they are supposed to be. When we know that *things are the way they are supposed to be*, we have *bitachon*.

In fact, the entire idea of feeling challenged is really all a *superficial* mentality that come from the external layer of our soul. The inner level of our soul can tell us that in reality, *nothing* opposes us.

Just like Hashem said “Enough” when He was finished creating the universe, so do we in our souls have the power to say, “Enough”, and be relaxed.

This is an inner solution to how we deal with our challenges, setbacks and failures: that really, nothing opposes us. It is the ability to say, “Things are the way they are supposed to be.”

Even our power of *bechirah*, free will - to choose between good and evil - is only using our outer, superficial layer of our soul. Our free will seems to imply to us that everything is up to us, because we were given the power to choose. But if we access the deep, inner layer of our soul, we will be able to see that there is *nothing* that truly holds us back.

2 *Sefer Yetzirah, III*

This is where we find *bitachon* in our soul: a place in which we are living in a *whole different world than the one we know of*.

Some Clarifications About “Bitachon”

Bitachon doesn't simply mean for a person to superficially utter the words, “I have *Bitachon*.” It is to *enter into a whole new place* we are used to!

The Alter of Kelm said that to live with *Bitachon* is to experience the kind of life that existed before Adam sinned. Before the sin, nothing was a challenge to Adam. Now we are after the sin, and we do have challenges. But there is still a deep place in our soul which has in it the state that existed before sin. In that deep place in our soul, we can see that *nothing really challenges us*.

This is the depth of *Bitachon* in Hashem. The true *Bitachon* in Hashem is when we truly realize that nothing opposes us. It appears that we have challenges, such as making a living; so a person has no choice but to have *Bitachon* in Hashem, because only Hashem can provide one with a living. That is true, but it is only a superficial attitude. If we have an inner attitude through our soul, we can have *Bitachon* in Hashem for a deeper reason: because since nothing opposes Hashem, it makes perfect sense to trust in Him.

Bitachon doesn't mean, however, for a person to simply believe that “everything will work out”. This cannot be the true meaning, because maybe a person will indeed lose his job, and he won't have a livelihood! When we believe that everything will work out, that can only be from the **result** of *Bitachon*. But the **essence** of *Bitachon* is to know that nothing opposes you, that everything is supposed to be that way,

A person can't just “work” on his *bitachon*. Rather, *bitachon* is *to live in one's inner world of one's soul*. This inner kind of *bitachon* is for a person to connect one's self to a higher power than himself, which shows a person that he cannot be opposed.

Bitachon: I'm Not Being Challenged

When a person has *Bitachon*, he will also find that he doesn't hate others. On a simple level, this is because a person has to accept that whatever Hashem brings upon a person is good, so that is why it doesn't make sense to hate someone.

But it is more than that. *Bitachon* means that no one, nothing, can oppose a person. With *Bitachon*, a person sees no opposition, and thus there is also no room either for hatred. He won't hate someone; hatred will not exist by him. It's not possible to hate someone when you uncover true *Bitachon*.

If a person sees that no one can oppose him, he will have no reason to hate anyone, because a person who lives with *Bitachon* lives in a world in which there is no opposition or enemy, and thus

he doesn't feel any negativity toward others, because he has entered a perspective which is above any allowance for hatred.

This is also why we are commanded to love other Jews like our own self; this *mitzvah* of the Torah is showing us that in essence, in the true reality, there is no place for opposition between people.

This is also why a wife is called “a helpmate who opposes” her husband (*ezer k'negdo*), because even though it appears that she opposes him, really, she is helping her husband by challenging him sometimes.

Using Bitachon Enables One To Withstand Evil Temptations

From here we also see the depth of a sin, and how we can avoid sin.

A person only is able to sin when he thinks that that the evil is opposing him, and thus he despairs and falls into the sin. If he would view the temptation as something cannot really oppose him – because he can have *Bitachon* in Hashem that He will help him – a person would then never come to sin!

After a person falls to a sin, the sin lingers in the background and continues to cause a person to think that life is full of opposition, and that there are challenges bombarding him. That is the negative effect of a sin; it warps the person's mind and convinces him that he can be opposed and defeated.

If the person would gain the inner perspective of *Bitachon*, he would be able to fight the resulting despondency caused by his sins.

The Cause for Fear of People

All our fears only exist whenever we feel like we are somehow being opposed. When people don't have confidence, or when they are afraid of others, it is really because they think that others can oppose them.

Once a person sees that other people cannot really oppose him, he will find that he has no reason to be afraid of any person.

Of course, this force in one's soul can unfortunately be used for evil as well, because a person can get carried away with this concept and then he never does *teshuvah* for his sins, since he has detached from all his fears, and then he doesn't even fear punishment. However, this is an evil use of this power, because the person acts extreme with it, and it is misguided *Bitachon*; we are not speaking of this. We are simply learning about its root power, which is good in its essence.

Our entire inner world is built on this ability to realize that nothing really opposes us, and in turn, all superficiality is really based on feeling like we are opposed.

All of us have the power in ourselves to be above feeling any opposition, and sometimes we succeed in revealing it - but only in a superficial manner. This ability usually remains hidden away deep in our soul, and even when we make use of it, it doesn't come from a deep place in our soul.

How can we see this? Many times, people place their blind trust in something. We do this all the time in our daily life, but we don't realize where it really comes from. For example, no one is afraid that the cup of water he is drinking contains any poison. We have a natural in-born trust in things.

Whenever we place our trust in someone or in something, really this ability comes from the G-dly spark that is in every person, the power to have *Bitachon*. We end up using this ability superficially, like by placing our trust in the bank, or in our insurance. A child also has pure trust in his parents. This is also a power that stems from the soul's *Bitachon*, but it is just being revealed in a superficial manner.

What we need to learn is how to use that root of this power, and in turn to reveal our real power of *Bitachon*. Our task here is to remove our "garments" of this power of inborn trust – to remove our natural trust in people, and in other things – and to come to reveal our real *Bitachon*.

Our job is thus not to "get" *Bitachon* – we already have it deep within our soul! Our job is to reveal it – to reveal its real power, which we use superficially every day (just we don't realize how).

This is also the depth of the statement, "*The victory of Yisrael does not lie.*"³ From where does one's ability to be victorious in winning his struggles against evil come from? It is when a person sees that nothing really opposes him.

Realizing who is in charge

Bitachon doesn't mean that a person simply believes that "whatever will be, will be". It is to realize Who is really in charge – the One who has no opposition.

If a person thinks simply that "I" am in charge, then deep down, he is admitting that can be opposed; after all, he is only human. But if a person recognizes that Hashem is the one in charge, he will see how nothing opposes him.

(There is a separate discussion which is considered a "higher" kind of *Bitachon*: Either when a person trusts that whatever will happen will happen, even if a person doesn't experience a salvation; or that he trusts that Hashem will definitely bring a person his salvation. We have not addressed this yet; we have only begun to discuss the roots of *Bitachon*. In the next chapter, we will discuss what the higher *Bitachon* is).

3 Rebbi Nachman of Breslev