



SPECIAL TOPICS: DIFFERENT LEVELS OF BITACHON

AFTER THE POISONOUS SNAKES

In parshas Chukas, a famous episode took place where Klal Yisrael began to complain to Hashem and complain to Moshe. They were saying all kinds of nasty things. “Why did you take us out of Mitzrayim? What kind of food are you giving us?” And Hashem got upset and sent them a “present.” It wasn’t the kind of present that we’re looking forward to. You know what the present was? Hashem sent them fiery snakes. Very not *geshmak*. And the snakes’ poison burned very badly and וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת הָעָם וַיָּמָת, “and they bit the people and many people died” (Bamidbar 21:6)

Hashem says that for people complaining and badmouthing Hashem and Moshe, Hashem sends forth snakes. And obviously, once this happened, Klal Yisrael did *teshuvah*. They responded. They came and said, וְכָרַךְ הָאָדָם כִּי דִבְרָנוּ בְּה' וַיִּכָּר, “we sinned because we spoke about Hashem and about you, Moshe” (v. 7). And they asked Moshe to please *daven* to Hashem to remove the snakes. Moshe davened to Hashem and the snakes disappeared, according to many of the *Rishonim*, *al yedei* the *tefilos*. Some *Rishonim* say the snakes didn’t disappear until Hashem told Moshe Rabeinu, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שֵׁרֶף, “make for yourself a pole” and put a copper serpent on top of the pole (v. 8). He had the workers create a copper serpent and they put it in a very high place where people were able to see it and anybody who got bitten by the snake was able to look at the serpent and become healed.

So the *mishnah* (Rosh Hashanah 29a) asks the obvious question: “Do snakes heal? Do snakes kill?”¹ The *mishnah* answers: When Klal Yisrael looked at the snake, it reminded them that the one in charge is Hashem and the one whom they wronged was Hashem. Klal Yisroel understood that they brought upon themselves this challenge. And they were *m’shabed* themselves, they subjugated their minds to Hashem, and they got healed. And if they hadn’t, they would have perished.

HASHEM’S CHESHBON IN SAVING PEOPLE

Now, there is a *sefer* written by the son of the Rambam, the great Rabeinu Avraham (1186-1237). In one of the sections of that *sefer* (ה'המספיק לעובדי ה'), he discusses the subject of *bitachon*. And he says that sometimes, a person could have *bitachon* in Hashem and in spite of that, Hashem has hidden reasons why He does not save that person. He gives an example of the *asarah harugei malchus*. It’s not because Hashem could not save them, but there are reasons that are hidden from mankind and only known by Hashem. And then, he says, there are people that sometimes live above nature, *lemaalah min hatevah*. And if a person lives *lemaalah min hatevah*, Hashem shows him special *hashgachah pratis* and then natural factors have no power over him.

In the *perek* עֲלִיּוֹן עֲלִיּוֹן (Tehillim 91), it says: עַל שַׁחַל וְפָתוֹן תִּדְרֹךְ - “Upon the lion cubs and vipers you will tread.” And he says, such an episode was demonstrated in this story of this week’s *parshah*. The *yidden* were faced with a terrible calamity, a tragic situation – imagine thousands upon thousands of fiery serpents. Most people that I know are scared of snakes and even if they are not scared of snakes, they are definitely scared of snake bites. And of fiery snakes that provide a terrible burn, that surely people are petrified of. And Moshe Rabeinu told them, “You want to get healed? I’m going to tell you what you have to do. You’re going to have to rise above *teva*. You need to acknowledge that everything happens is from Hashem and there is no *teva* in the world, and if you connect your hearts to Hakadosh Baruch Hu *bashamayim*, then you will be healed. The natural events, phenomena of snakes will have their power diminished and turned off.”

And that wasn’t easy. For a person to rise quickly to such a *madreiga*, where you’re turning your heart to Hashem and taking a leap of faith, is something that is very difficult to do. But when a person is facing a life and death situation, you know what happens? The person rises to great heights in a very short time. So Hashem told them, “If you can, rise to that level now.”

If a person is bitten by a snake and the poison is coursing through the person’s body, burning like fire, and the person is starting to blow up from the poison, he could then rise to the occasion. And the people who were *zocheh* to rise to the occasion made it.

He says, similarly, we find in the *gemara* in Berachos (33a) that there was a certain place where they were suffering from a snake and it used to bite people. So the people came to R’ Chanina ben Dosa and they told him their problem. “Could you help us?” You know what he said? He said, “Show me where the hole that the snake goes into is.” And they showed him. And what did he do? He put the heel of his foot into the entrance of that hole and what happened? The snake bit him and the snake died. Then he pulled the snake out of the hole and he carried it on his shoulders and he brought it to the *beis medrash*. Can you imagine seeing

¹ כִּי־יִצְאָא בְּדָבָר אֲתָהּ אוֹמֵר: “עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שֵׁרֶף וְיִנְשְׁכוּ אֶת הָעָם וַיָּמָת” אוֹתוֹ וְיִחַי, וְכִי נִחַשׁ מִמֵּית, אוֹ נִחַשׁ מִחַיָּה? אֵלֵּא: בּוֹמוֹן שֵׁיִשְׂרָאֵל מִסְתַּכְּלִין כֻּלְּפִי מַעֲלָה וּמִשְׁעֻבְדִּין אֶת לִבָּם לְאֲבִיהֶם שְׂבִשְׂמִים - הֵיוּ מִתְרַפְּאִין, וְאִם לֹא הָיוּ נִימוֹקִים

R' Chaim Kanievsky with a snake, one of those big pythons or rattlesnakes – like when you go to the zoo, you see these huge snakes sometimes?! Nu. Then he said, “Look, my *kinderlach*. My children, look, look. The snake doesn't kill. The only thing that kills is *cheit*, אין עָוֹן מִמִּית, אֲלֵא הַחֵטָא מִמִּית.”

The *gemara* concludes by saying that they started saying from then on, “Woe unto the person who was bitten by a snake and woe unto the snake that meets R' Chanina ben Dosa.”

So R' Avraham ben haRambam says, what is the *pschat*? Wasn't it a poisonous snake? It was, he says, but R' Chanina ben Dosa was somebody who lived beyond nature. He was so connected to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so attached to Hakadosh Baruch Hu that *teva* had absolutely no effect on him.

There is the famous *ein od milvado* rule, that if a person can rise above nature and come to the awareness that *ein od milvado* and ignore everything else that exists, that person will not be subject to *teva*.² But here, it's a bigger *chiddush*. R' Chanina ben Dosa wasn't just a subject to that snake's bite or its poison. He ruled *over* the snake! He killed it! It would be enough if the snake didn't bite him. I would have expected, “Okay, the big *tzaddik*, R' Chanina ben Dosa, will put his foot over the snake but it won't bite him.” No. The snake came out to bite R' Chanina ben Dosa and it died as a result of that. It was the opposite.

More than that, in our *passuk* we see, he says, the people who were bitten by the snake were healed. We don't say that once they were bitten by the snake, it was too late. Hashem told them, even after you were bitten by the snake, if you understand that it wasn't the snake that bit you, you understand it was your *cheit* and because you weren't attached to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, you will be saved.

FOUR LEVELS OF BITACHON

Then Rabeinu Avraham tells us as follows. There are four levels of trust in Hashem. And he says they are all interconnected. They all have *shaychus* with each other. And he says, each level is unique to each person, and even with each person, it depends on his *matzav* at that specific time.

LEVELS 1 - EXPECTATION, LEVEL 2 - DAVENING

He says, number one, is someone who puts his hope in Hashem and looks forward to Hashem's kindness and mercy.³ This is a person who expects to get saved by Hashem. Now, the person may be nervous, the person is worried that maybe Hashem won't give him what he hopes to get; he thinks that because of his sins, maybe he won't be *zocheh* to get what he wants. But in spite of that, the person says, “I'm putting my trust in Hashem, I'm hoping for the best.” That is the lowest level of *bitachon*, he says. You're putting your hope in Hashem, you're looking forward to his kindness even though you know you may not get what you desire and Hashem may deny you what you want.

Level number two, he says, is a person who, in addition to his hope in Hashem and his dependence on Hashem, he also seeks out Hashem in his heart and with his mouth.⁴ He *davens* to Hashem. That means, this person's trust is a little more concrete. He communicates to Hashem and expresses his desires. That person is at a higher level. A person who is on this level is also worried. He's also apprehensive. And you know what he does? This person seeks natural means in order to get his desired results, but in his heart he leans on Hashem and he knows that the only result he will get is going to come from Hashem.

For example, let's say a person has a sickness. The person hopes that Hashem is going to make him better. He even *davens* to Hashem and he communicates this to Hashem, but he is still apprehensive. Now, what does he do because he is apprehensive? He looks for the best doctor. But he knows that the doctor is not the one who has any power to heal him. Any results that he's going to get from this doctor is going to be only the result of Hashem's decree. That is the second level of a *boteiach*. He seeks Hashem, he is *mevakesh* Hashem, he hopes to Hashem, he *davens* to Hashem.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF BITACHON - PREMONITION

And then you have a third level, he says. That is a person who takes refuge in Hashem.⁵ What does that mean to say? He

² ובאמת הוא ענין גדול וסוגלה נפלאה להסיר ולבטל מעליו כל דינין ורעונות אחרים שלא יוכלו לשלוט בו ולא יעשו שום רושם כלל. כשהאדם קובע בלבו לאמר הלא ה' הוא האלקים האמיתי ואין עוד מלבדו יתברך שום כח בעולם וכל העולמות כלל והכל מלא רק אחדותו הפשוט ית' ש. ומבטל בלבו גמור ואינו משגיח כלל על שום כח ורעון בעולם. ומשעבד ומדבק טוהר מחשבתו רק לאדון יחיד ב'ה. כן יפיק הוא יתב' בידו שממילא יתבטלו מעליו כל הכחות והרעונות שבעולם שלא יוכלו לפעול לו שום דבר כלל. **הגהה**: וזהו ענין מאמרם "ל במשנ' ר"ה (ב"ט א') עשה. לך שרף וכו' וכי נחש ממות או נחש מחיה. אלא בזמן שישראל מסתכלין כלפי מעלה ומשעבדין את לבם לאביהם שבשמים וכו'. ר"ל כשהסתכלו כלפי מעלה להנח' השרף והתבוננו בכחו הרע ועכ"ל בטלוהו מלבם ולא השיגוהו על כחו הנורא ושעבדו את לבם באמת רק לאביהם שבשמים לכו הוי מתרפאין. והוא אמיתת ענין המתקת כחות הדינים בשרשם. והוא מבואר למבין (נפש החיים, שער ג י"ב:ח)

³ ואשר למדרגת הבטחון בה' יתעלה הריהו ארבע במספר **המעלה הראשונה** בהן היא שיהא האדם מקווה ומצפה להשגת משאלתו מאתו יתעלה ברוב רחמי, הגם שהוא חושש ודואג באותה משאלה שזמ' יהיו עונותיו מנועים ממנו את הרחמים. וזהו הנקרא מיחל לחסד ה' ומחכה לו ומקוה רחמי וכיוצא בזה. ופסוקי דוד בענין זה רבים עד מאד: (תהלים ל"א כ"ה) "חוקי יואמיך לבבכם כל המיחלים ל-ה" (שם קמ"ז י"א) "המיחלים לחסדו" (ועוד נאמר) (שם כ"ז י"ד וגם ל"ז י"ד) "קוה אל ה'" (שם כ"ה ג') "גם כל קוץ לא יבשו" וכיוצא באלה. (ובעל) מעלה זו הוא הנקרא (בעל) ראה ותקוה ועליו אמר דוד (שם קמ"ז י"א) "רוצה ה' את יראיו את המיחלים לחסדו". יראיו הם המפחדים מעונש ו' המיחלים לחסדו" הם המקיים למתן טובתה, וכו'.

⁴ **והמדרגה השנייה** היא מדרגתו של מי שעל תקותו ותוחלתו נתווסף הביקוש מאתו יתעלה, ביקוש פנימי שבלב וחיצוני שבלשון ובתפילות. וזהו הנקרא "דורש ה'" ו"מבקש פניו" ו"קורא אל ה'" וכיוצא באלה. ופסוק מפורש בתורה (דברים ד' כ"ט) "ובקשתם משם את ה' אלהיך ומצאת כי" וכו'. ופסוקי הנביאים בענין זה רבים עד מאד ובפרט פסוקי דוד (תהלים ק"ה ד') "דרשו ה' ועזו בקשו פניו תמיד" וכן (שם כ"ז ח') "לך אמר לבי בקשו פני את פניך ה' "מבקש" ועוד (שם ל"ט) "אלוך ה' אקרא" וכן (שם ל"ד י"א) "דרשי ה' לא יחסרו כל טוב" ועוד נאמר (צפניה ב' ג') "בקשו את ה' כל עניו הארץ", וכיוצא באלה.

⁵ **והמעלה השלישית** היא מעלת מי שבטוח בהשגת משאלתו מאתו יתעלה ומאמין בזאת בודאות ובלי ספקות. והוא הנקרא "חוסה בה" ו"מאמין בו" ו"בוטח בו" וכיוצא באלה, כמו שנאמר באברהם (בראשית ט"ו ו') "והאמן בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה" ונאמר באבותינו (שמות ד' ל"א) "והאמן העם וישמעו כי פקד ה'". ועל דור המדבר יצא הקצף מפני שחסרים היו מעלה זו כמו שנאמר (דברים א' ל"ב) "ובדבר הזה אינכם מאי מינים בה' אלהיכם". ואסף אמר (תהלים ק"ו ט') "לא האמניו לדבריו... ולא חכו כלע" צעו" כלומר: לא דיים ש"לא האמניו" אלא אף "לא חכו" ומעלת בטחון (שלישית) זו לא ישוגה רוב בני האדם אלא רק מי שנשלים אליו בחזון נבואי ומבשרים לו עתידו, כמו אמונת אברהם אבינו כשנתבשר בחזון על הבנים (בראשית ט"ו ו') "והאמן בה' ויחשבה לו צדקה", וכמו יוצא מצריים כשיבשר אותם שליה ה' עליו השלום על דבר הגאולה כמו שנאמר (שמות ד' ל"א) "והאמן העם וישמעו כי פקד ה' את בני ישראל וכי ראה את ענים ויקדו וישתחו", ועל מעלה זו אמר דוד ע"ה (תהלים ל"א א') "בה' חסיתי... (שם ט' ז') "בה' חסיתי... (שם ל"ז ז') "וישיעם כי חסו בו... (שם כ"ה ב') וגם קמ"ג ח') "בך בטחתי", ולפעמים יבוא הביטוי ביטחון" במובנו הנזכר לעיל. ומדרגה זו היא הנעלה והנשגבה שבמעלות הבטחון ולא בכלל תושב, ולכן הגדילו הנביאים בערכה כמו שנאמר (שם ל"ב ב') "והבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו" ונאמר (משלי ט"ז ב') "ובוטח בה' אשיריו" ונאמר (תהלים פ"ד י"ג) "ה' צבאות אשירי אדם בוטח בך". ומעלת בטחון זו אין משפטה כשתי המעלות הקודמות, שבהן חייב כל שומר-דת להחזיק בכל דרכיו, ואילו מעלה זו לא תיכון אלא במי שהוא חף מן העונות ונקי מן הפשעים ותגיע אל השלימות וטעם מהשגחתו יתעלה (בשיעור) המחייבו למידת בטחון כזאת, כמו שאמר דוד (שם ט' א') "ויבטחו בך יודעי שמך כי לא עזבת דורשיך ה'". ומאמרו "ומאמר" כי לא עזבת דורשיך ה' מורה על המעלה השנייה, כי ה' דרישה" השלימה והאמנה והאמינות (הנובעת מתוך הפנימיות) היא אקדמה ל"בטחון", כמו שמסופר על ר' חנניא בן דוסא במה שאמר המשנה (ברכות ל"ב ב') שהיה מתפלל על החולין ואומר זה חי זה מת. אמרו לו מניין אתה יודע? אמר להם אם שגורה תפילתי בפי ידע אני שהוא מקובל ואם לאן ידע אני שהוא מסורף. ועם היות שבעלי המעלה הזאת בטוחים בהשגת מבוקשם, אין זה מפאת בטחונם בצדקתם וכוחיותיהם אלא מפאת בטחונם בחסדי יתעלה, כמו שאמר דוד (תהלים י"ג ו') "ואני בחסדך בטחתי", וכו'.

trusts Hashem and he believes in Hashem completely and is confident that Hashem will give him everything he wants without any doubts and he has no apprehension. He doesn't have any need to resort to natural means. I don't need doctors. I know Hashem is going to help me. I'm certain. Just because I got sick, I believe that Hashem is the *roifei choilei amo Yisrael*. Now, he says clearly, this level cannot be attained by everyone. The people who had it naturally were *nevi'im* who had that connection to Hashem and a few others. Very few people. People that had a promise from Hashem or were tipped off by Hashem that they were going to be taken care of.

Who is an example of that, he says? R' Chanina ben Dosa. The *gemara* says in Brachos (34b) that people would come to R' Chanina ben Dosa to *daven* for them and he would *daven* and then tell them, "You are going to die, you are going to live." So they asked him, "How do you know?" and he would say, "If my *tefilah* goes easily and fluently, then I know it was accepted. But if it gets *farhakt*, and doesn't come out clearly, then I know I've been turned down." So he had a sign from *shamayim*. So even though he wasn't a *navi*, he had a sign from *shamayim* that allowed him to know that his *tefilos* were accepted.

Human beings sometimes are *zocheh* to that on occasion. Hashem shows them a *mish'an*, Hashem shows them a *hashgachah pratis*. And this person, he says, doesn't rely on his *tzidkus*, his righteousness. What he relies on completely is Hashem's kindness and he is certain that because of Hashem's kindness, his desire will be realized. He says, the way to attain such a *madreigah* is that a person has to work intensely in his belief of Hashem. You have to be *mechazek* your *emunah* and *bitachon* constantly. Then, that person can be *zocheh* to what is called a premonition. Hashem gives you a premonition about a specific matter.

This person now relies on Hashem because of the premonition, even though Hashem didn't tell him clearly. He brings an example of this from the *gemara* (Berachos 60a). Hillel was once on his way into his city, where he lived, and they heard some screaming coming from a house. So Hillel said as follows, "I am certain that it has no *shaychus* to my house." That's what he said. So they asked him, "How do you know?" He said, "I know." The *gemara* says, about him the *passuk* לא ירא (Tehillim 112:7) a man is not afraid of possible *ra* because נכון לבו בטח בה - "his heart is firm in his *bitachon* of Hashem." That means, Hillel sensed that nothing happened to his house. He had a sense, he had like a premonition, that it has no *shaychus* to him.

A lot of times you have *farkert*. People have premonitions, "Uh oh, maybe that's my kid. Maybe something happened in my house."

I remember a story where I was involved in a bombing, the first bus bombing in Yerushalayim. I was present. At the time, I didn't know it was the first bus bombing. Recently, I was reading a story about that bombing and it said it was the first bus bombing in Yerushalayim. There were two people that died in that bombing. One of them was a person I was *metapel* with. I went to the home to be *menachem avel* and the wife said that she heard the boom. It was nowhere close to her house. She left her house, she was pregnant, and she started running in the direction where she saw all the cops going. She had a premonition, she said, "My husband is there." I said, "Why would you even think so? There are thousands of people, why would you even dream that your husband was there?" It was a premonition.

A person has to know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu lets a person connect to Him. A person who is in tune with Hakadosh Baruch Hu has more of a connection to Him. Now, there are exercises that a person can do to get in tune with Hakadosh Baruch Hu. How is that? There are some people that thank Hashem. After the fact, they will say, "Hashem, thank You I didn't have an accident this week. Thank you that I slept good this week." But then, there are people who do exercises when they go to sleep, and they say, בְּיָדֶיךָ אֶפְקֹד רִגְלֵי, "in Your hands I'm depositing my soul" (Tehillim 13:6). They say, "Hashem I'm going to sleep well, because I'm going to sleep in Your hands." Here's a guy that is driving to work. He says, Hashem, "I'm going to arrive at my place of work because You are going to be with me." A person takes a walk to the *yeshivah* or he takes a walk home from the *yeshivah* and he says, "I'm going to make it to the *yeshivah*, I'm going to come home safely because Hashem is with me." That is different than the person who doesn't think at the time about Hashem but afterwards, he says, "Thank you Hashem for not creating any challenges to me." This is the exercises that a person can do. And every time you do that exercise, you are being *mekayem* a *mitzvah d'oreisa* of being *boiteiach* in Hashem. And as a result of being connected to Hashem, Hashem will also give you premonitions and Hashem will show you things.

Here is a person who is sitting and eating his food and he's enjoying it. Most people never think about thanking Hashem when they are eating and enjoying the food. Some people thank Hashem when they *bentch*, maybe. On rare occasions. But if you say while you are eating, "Hashem, I'm enjoying this food. I'm going to enjoy this meal because You are with me. You are providing me with this food, You are providing me with the means to enjoy it," then, you will get that joy.

Sometimes you get a sense, before you look at a food and say to yourself, "I wonder if I should eat this food. I think I should skip this. Don't eat this food." I remember, many times, I was with people and they said, "You know, I don't think I should eat this food. I don't think it's going to be good." I tell them, "Don't eat it. It's a sign from Hashem. Don't eat it. Hashem is telling you something. It's not going to agree with you."

I once had a *talmid* who was in the army in World War II. He went out on a mission for a whole day and came back at night. It was late and there was no food for them. But they had prepared sandwiches for his platoon. He said, "I picked up the sandwich, I looked at it, it didn't look good. I said to myself, I'd better not eat this." He turned to somebody, asking, "What is this?" "It's peanut butter." He said he forced himself to eat it because he hadn't eaten the whole day. He said, "There were 25 guys in the platoon - I was the officer - and I ate the sandwich. Within a couple of hours, I was delirious. I had food poisoning. I was sent to the hospital

and for a couple of days I was out cold. And I remember thinking when I woke up, what did I eat that food for? I knew it wasn't good for me. Hashem gave me a sign."

And when he opened up his eyes, he said the doctor came to him and said, "You're a Jewish boy, you know you shouldn't have eaten a ham sandwich." The guy told me this years later. Hashem gave him a message.

A person has to know how to be in tune with Hashem. If you live with Hashem, you become in tune with Hashem. And you can get a sense, if everything is well by you, or if everything is not well by you. Today is going to be a good day, today is not going to be a good day. If you think and you are aware of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's kindness in your life, your strong belief in Hashem creates a communication that brings you messages.

LEVEL 4 - NO HISHTADLUS

The highest level, level number four, Rabeinu Avraham says, is someone who entrusts his affairs into the hands of Hashem and does nothing natural.⁶ He never resorts to natural means. He knows it will make no difference whatsoever whether he goes to the doctor or not and therefore he is "הַשָּׁלַךְ עַל ה' יְהִיבךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָ" (Tehillim 55:23). He says, what was an example of this? Avraham's servant Eliezer. When Eliezer came to the well, he said that the girl who is going to greet him to give him water and his camels to drink, that is it. That is called doing no *hishtadlus* whatsoever *ki hu zeh klal*.

It says "הַשָּׁלַךְ עַל ה' יְהִיבךָ", "throw your burden (*pekel*) on Hashem," and He will sustain you." This person puts himself completely in the hands of Hashem, he says, and he's like a little child being held by his mother. He has no worries, no concerns and doesn't resort to making any *hishtadlus*.

Those are the four levels of *bitachon* in Hashem, he says.

WE AIM FOR LEVEL 1

Now, we hope, most of us are on the lowest level. We are afraid, we are nervous, we are worried but we say, you know what? "I'm going to have to rely on Hashem." Maybe a person will even try to be *mechazek* his *bitachon* by *davening* to Hashem. A person who has no *bitachon* looks similar to him, except the person who has no *bitachon* doesn't trust in Hashem. He trusts in his good choices to find a good doctor. He knows how to go online and find the best medical care possible. This guy holds himself as a big *mumcheh*, he can figure out how to save himself.

BITACHON "BY CHOICE" OR "FORCED" BITACHON

Rabeinu Avraham says that there are two main types of *bitachon*.⁷ There is a *bitachon* that one is "forced into" (הכרחי) and there is a *bitachon* "by choice" (רצוני), where a person chooses to be *boiteiach* in Hashem. He explains that forced *bitachon* is when a person finds himself in a situation that he has no natural means to rely on. For example, he lost all his wealth, or got bitten by a snake and he's in the middle of the desert. He has no cellphone. Or he is climbing Mount Everest and has nothing or no one to turn to, nothing to rely on. So in these types of situations, he's forced to rely on Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He has nothing else to rely on. He says, you find forced *bitachon* even by people who are non-believers. In English, we call that, "there is no atheist in a foxhole."

I remember, there was once a doctor's wife who was the daughter of a very big *apikoros*, a big denier of Hashem. He called himself an atheist. And she was maintaining her father's *shita*. Her husband was becoming *frum*. And I remember speaking to her at length, trying to explain to her the fallacy of not trusting Hashem and acknowledging Hashem, and how sometimes a person might discover the reality of Hashem in a very unpleasant way. And then one morning, early in the morning, maybe at 6 o'clock, I get a call from her and she says to me, "I'm in the clinic. Did my husband tell you? They found something and it looks very bad. I'm in the clinic right now. Rabbi, I'm holding my husband's prayer book. What prayer should I say in this situation?" I told her,

⁶ והמעלה הרביעית היא מעלת ההפקדה, ופירושה שיפקיד האדם את עניניו או אחד מהם בידי ה' יתעלה וערסל עצמו מכל צפיה ותשוקה עד שאתה היא לו אם ישגי דבר שהוא משתוקק אליו או אם ישגי את ההיפך ממנו, ונמצא מסתפק במה שגזר ועושה ה' יתעלה. זאת המעלה, אם (אפשר למנותה) עם מעלות הבטחון, הריהו העליונה שבכולן, ואם אין (למנותה) ביניהן הריהו עליונה על כולן, (כל השלוש) שכבר ביארנון לעיל. וכבר נרמזה מעלה זו וגם נזכרה במפורש בתורה ובספרי הנביאים. הרמז בתורה הוא במאמרו (שמות י"ד ג') "התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' וכו'", והקצף שיצא על דור המדבר כשבקשו מים לצמאם ואוכל לרעבם, ויש בזה רמז על חיוב הבטחון לפי המעלה הזאת שהיא מעלת ההפקדה. אלה הם הרמזים, והמפורש הוא במעשה אליעזר עבד אברהם באמרו (בראשית כ"ד ומ"ג) "הנה אנכי נצב על עין המים וכו' הוא האשה אשר הוכיח ה' וכו'" כלומר הפקיד את הדבר בידי ה' יתעלה ובמה שיבחר ויחפוץ (ה') ולא במה שהוא (אליעזר) יתכוון ויחליט. וכאן ברור הענין ואיננו טעון ביאור, ובספרי הנביאים ודבריהם (מציוג) מאמרו דוד (תהלים נ"ה כ"ג) "השליך על ה' יתבן והוא יכלכלך" - כלומר "מסור את הענין בידי יתעלה והוא יכלכל אותך כפי מה שתגורנה חכמתו ורחמנותו". וזהו ג' פירושי אמירתו בסוף הפסוק "ובטח עליו והוא יעשה רצונך", כלומר כפי מה שיעלה רצון מלפניו. אך אם הכוונה "הוא יעשה רצונך" או מתחברת מעלה זו אל מעלת הבטחון הראשונה, כאילו אמר הכתוב "אם לא תוכל להגיע למעלת ההפקדה שעליה עוררתי בפסוק "גול על ה' דרכך". החזק למיעצר במעלת הביטחה והאמונה כמו שנאמר (לעיל) "ובטח עליו והוא יעשה". ודומה הדבר למאמרו (שם ט' י"א) "ויבטחו בך יודעי שמך כי לא עזבת דרשך היי, שהוא צירוף המעלה השנייה, מעלת ה' דרישה", עם המעלה השלישית שהיא מעלת ה' ביטחה" - כל מדרגות הבטחון ראיות לשבח ותהילה וזכויות זו בזו, ומפאת הקשר ההדדי ביניהן תשמשת בצוותא. כי בעל הבטחון יש שהוא במעלה הראשונה שהיא מעלת "התקוה והיראה" ויש שהוא במעלה האחרונה שהיא מעלת ההפקדה; ולפעמים מצינו הוא באחת ממעלות הביניים. ומה שנזכר במפורש על אודות ההפקדה בספרי הנביאים הוא מאמרו דוד ע"ה (ש"ב כ"ה - כ"ו) "אם אמצא חן בעיני ה' והשבנתי והראני אתו ואת נורו ואם כה יאמר לא הפצתי בך הנני יעשה לי כאשר טוב בעיניו". ולכן נתכוונה (גם) חנניה, מישראל ועזריה (דניאל ג' י"ז - י"ח) "הן אייתי אלהאן די אנתנא פלחין יכל לשיבוטנא. והן לא ידע להו לך וכו'".

⁷ להיות הכרחי או רצוני, והרצוני יכול להיות כללי או פרטי, והבטחון הכרחי הוא כמו שמצינו הרבה מבעלי העושר והכבוד והשררה וכיוצא בהם, אם ירששו ויאבדו את כבודם ושררתם הגשמית או ישובו אל הבטחון - (הוא אמרו) אינם דבקים בו מרצונם הטוב אלא בכוח הנסיבות וכפיתיון מפני שנתבלעה חכמתם ונתאכזבו מן המשגעת הרצויה ובת החלוק כגון העושר והכבוד והבריאות וכיוצא באלה. ודבר זה מצוי תדיר אפילו אצל עובדי עבודה זרה, כי בטחונם בפסיליהם (בני על הנחמה) שהללו אמצעי ביניים הם בינים לבין המושעי האמיתים, כמו שידוע לך מן המעשה במלחי הספינה שירד בה יונה (יונה א' ה'): "ויעקב איש אל אלהיו", וכשהגיד להם יונה מי אלהיו אחרי שאמרו לו (שם ש' ו') "מה לך נרדם קום קרא אל אלהיך" תיאר הפסוק את פחדם הנורא מפני ה' יתעלה: (שם ש' ו') "ויראו האנשים יראה גדולה ויאמרו מה זאת עשית כי ידעו האנשים כי מלפני ה' הוא ברח כי הגיד להם" - הגם שהיו עובדי עבודה זרה! - ועוד אמרו (שם ש' י"ד) "אנא ה' אל נא נאבדה בנפש האיש הזה ואל תתן עלינו דם נקיא וכו'", והלא יודע אתה מה עשה מלך כבשור יונה על שהקריב את בנו בכבודו והיה בזה קצף גדול על ישראל (מ"ב ג' כ"ז); ואף על פי שנאמר כי "הקצף" יצא מפני שאילצוהו לעשות (את המעשה הזה), אין זה סותר את העובדה כי כוננו היתה (לשרת את) ה' יתעלה בעת צרתו. וכן רוב עובדי עבודה זרה (עיקר) יראתם חזרת אליו יתעלה אף על פי שהם טועים ותועים בדרכם. ועל זה אמר ירמיה (ירמיה י' י"ז) "מי לא יראך מלך הגוים כי לך יאתה". ולכן הגדיר (גם) דוד עניין זה באמרו (תהלים ס"ה ו') "מבטח כל קצוי ארץ וים רחוקים". והבטחון הרצוני הוא בטחונם של יחידים סגולה המיוחדים (את ה'), בדקים בתורה ומאמינים באמת ובתמים שכל האמצעים שכללם יתעלה, ולכן (נותנים) עליו משענתם ובטחונם אפילו כשהם בעלי עושר וכבוד ובריאות וכוח. ובכן, מאמרו הנביא (תהלים ק"ד כ"ז) "כלם אליו ישרונו" ו"עני כל אליו ישרונו" (שם קמ"ה ט"ו) וכיוצא באלה, כוונתם שאם מרצונם הטוב ואם בעל כורחם הריהו חוזרים אליו ואתה הוא המגורסם. [ואשר לבטחון הכללי והפרטי: הכללי הוא כבטחון כלל בני האדם בשלשונם או במחשבת לבם. והלא ידוע לך כי שנחריב, למרות כפירתו, אמר (ישעיה ל"ו י') "ועתה המבלעדי ה' עליית וכו' ה' אמר אלי". כלומר: כל זה נעשה ברצונו יתעלה. וה (בטחון) הפרטי הוא כבטחונם של יחידים סגולה הדבקים בתורה ובתמים בה' יתעלה שיתן להם את פרנסתם בעולם הזה, ובתוך כך נוסקים במקרה וממירך ובשיח ושגי ככל האדם ומשועים לנגדם את יראתו יתעלה ושמים מבטחם בו ולא בניועתם או פיקוחנם בעסקיהם, כמו שאמר שלמה (משל ג' ה - ו) "בטח אל ה' בכל לבך ואל בנייתך אל תשען בכל דרכיך דעהו", הפירוש "התכוון אליו" וכיוצא בזה. ובכן, מאמרו (תהלים קמ"ה ט"ו) "עני כל אליו ישרונו" וכדומה פירושו או באופן כללי או באופן פרטי הראוי להיות נחלתם של יחידים סגולה הדבקים בתורה הן.]

“Listen, forget about the prayers. You’re in good hands. The Cleveland Clinic is a respectable institution. What are you going to do, prayers now? All of a sudden, you go religious on me?” She said, “Just in case.” I said, “You want to hedge your bets? You’re going to regret it afterwards.” She said, “No, if I want to pray to Hashem, where do I find it in the prayer book?” And I told her. I said, “Remember, this goes to prove the old adage, that there is no atheist in a foxhole.”

Anyway, about six weeks go by and now she’s *baruch Hashem* alright and I meet her again. I was learning with her husband and I met her. And she says to me, “Rabbi, remember that episode when I called you in the morning? I was so silly. I was so silly.” I said, “I got the proof. I’ll never forget that. There is no atheist in a foxhole. You’re fooling yourself. You were in a situation where you were forced to have *bitachon*, to acknowledge Hashem. And I’m telling you,” I told her, “it’s a lot better to acknowledge Hashem from a situation of choice than by being forced to acknowledge Hashem.”

And then, there is *bitachon* by choice. You deliberately choose *bitachon*. It’s when a person has wealth, he has his health and he says, Hashem, “I know that whatever I have, whatever joy I have, is only because of You, because of Your *hashgachah*. And I know my natural efforts did not bring about anything. You provided me with the money, I was in the right place at the right time. And I’m choosing to depend on You, Hakadosh Baruch Hu.”

YOSEF HATZADDIK

I was thinking the application of this example would be Yosef Hatzaddik. Yosef was in jail. Yosef is in the dungeon. He has no recourse. At that point, he was forced to have *bitachon*. He had a sentence, he had no way to get out. They didn’t have any appeal system in those days. So the man is stuck in jail. He is forced to have *bitachon*. There is no natural means of him getting out. And then after ten years, something happens. Pharaoh’s servant has a dream. He ends up in prison with him and all of a sudden, Yosef sees a natural means of getting out. Now he has some *hishtadlus* that he can naturally do. Yesterday, he was forced to put all his trust in Hashem and rely on no one else and nothing else, but today he has a choice. Today he had to make a choice. You know what he says? He tells the butler, “Listen buddy, remember me before Pharaoh.” He makes the most minimal *hishtadlus*. He knew it’s 100% from Hashem, but Hashem faulted him for that. You know what Hashem said? “Until now, you had no choice. You were *boteiach* in me 100%. You were going to get out at the end of the 10-year sentence. But now, even though you trusted in me, you engaged in some natural means of *hishtadlus*. I tested you by opening the door and showing you a natural means of *hishtadlus* and you made that *hishtadlus*. And for you, that was not the proper way to go, so for that you’re going to pay with another two years.”

HOW TO READ A SITUATION AND PROCEED

And that is what a person has to know. A person has to be *mechazek* himself and recognize that if he’s bitten by a snake, he’d better run to a doctor right away, even if he has a choice. Most people don’t have a choice. They are compelled to call Hatzalah. Hashem wants you to call Hatzalah in order to try to find medical assistance! If you’re in a situation where you are not able to do anything to save yourself, don’t lose hope and rely on Hashem. That is what Hashem wants from you. If a person *chas veshalom* has an illness, and the doctor says he can’t help you, you know what you do? A person should remember that even if he has to resort to some natural means, that natural means is another test for him. Do I believe in that natural means, or do I understand that the natural means will not help me *ki hu zeh klal* and the only thing that is going to help me is going to be Hakadosh Baruch Hu? Hashem doesn’t like when people rely on miracles.

So over here, in our *parshah*, Klal Yisroel was forced to rely on Hashem. They were facing a dire situation. Moshe Rabeinu says, “I’m forcing you. You have to rely on Hashem, get connected to Hashem, rise to a level where you are *lemaalah min hatevah*. That is what the doctor orders right now.” So every time you have an illness or you have a challenge, you always have to consider, how does Hashem want me to respond? *Yiush*, hopelessness, is *never* what Hashem wants you to do, as bad as the situation sounds and as bad as it seems! Hashem always wants you to rely on Him. For most people, Hashem wants you to go find a good doctor, do the best natural means you can do. People say, “Why should I find the best doctor? It doesn’t make a difference” But that is what Hashem wants you to do. He wants you to employ natural means.

Here is a person that was in jail - Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin. It is known that he worked on his *bitachon* unbelievably. Whenever a person came in, all day long he repeated, “Alef beis gimmel, alef beis gimmel, alef beis gimmel.” Alef - *emunah*, beis - *bitachon*, gimmel - *geulah*. He worked on his *bitachon* amazingly. But at the same time, he had a group of high-powered lawyers. Klal Yisrael raised phenomenal sums for him to make appeals and to try to do all kinds of things, and then he was *zocheh* to get out. Now, sometimes people are not in that position, they are not *zocheh* to that. They are stuck. They don’t have that *zechus*. They

THE BOTTOM LINE

If a person is on a *madreiga* to live *l'maaleh min ha'tevah*, Hashem will show him special *hashgacha pratis* where *teva* will have no control over him. To save Klal Yisroel from venomous snakes, Moshe Rabbienu purposely put Klal Yisroel in a situation where were forced to be completely *boteach* on Hashem, whereby, in the process of completely subjugating their minds to Hakosh Boruch Hu, they rose to the *madreiga* of *lemaalah min hatevah* and were saved from the mortal danger. To understand the basic inner workings of *bitachon*, let's briefly review its four levels, according to the Rabbeinu Avraham ben Rambam. The first level is where a person, despite his checkered past, will look forward to *yeshuas Hashem* and the *chesed* of Hashem - even though he knows that he may not get it as Hashem may deny him his request. A person on the second level of *bitachon* - in addition to hoping to Hashem, he also davens to Hashem - so he has a more concrete trust in Hashem. This person is also apprehensive, as he seeks natural means to get to his desired results, but in his heart he understands that only Hashem will send him what he wants. A person on the third level of *bitachon*, is confident that Hashem will give him everything he wants, without any doubts or apprehension, and he doesn't need to resort to natural means at all. Needless to say, this is a special level of *bitachon*, reserved for *nevi'im* and *anshei segulah*, like R' Chanina ben Dosa, who received certain premonitions and signs from *shamayim*. The fourth, or the highest level of *bitachon*, is reserved for someone who entrusts everything to Hashem and does no *hishtadlus* whatsoever, as he knows it will make no difference. While this highest level of *bitachon* is called *bitachon "by choice,"* most challenging situations we face "force" us to rely on Hashem (like Klal Yisroel in our parsha) and also employ some natural means. This coming week, if I am facing a difficult challenge, I will ask myself whether I am being forced into relying on Hashem - because I don't have anyone else to rely on - or whether I have a choice for *bitachon*, and despite having a natural way to get out of my predicament, I will only put my trust in Hashem.