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Ask HaRav Nebenzahl

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The Rav asks that his and other Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi's sermon.

*Shabbat Shalom,
 Nehemiah Klein*

The Yeshiva would like to express its gratitude to Richard and Anita Grossman for their ongoing support for the Yeshiva in general and specifically our computer center. This enables us to communicate this sicha to you each week - "lehagdil Torah ulehaadira".

BITACHON

My esteemed teacher HaGaon HaRav Chaim Shmuelewitz zt"l had a tradition passed down to him by his Rebbe HaGaon HaRav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l, the Mashgiach of Mir, that during the week of Parshat Beshalach one should speak about bitachon - trust in Hashem.

AM YISRAEL UNDERGO TESTS IN BITACHON

In this week's parsha the Jewish nation undergoes several tests of their bitachon. At the outset of the parsha we read:

"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: 'speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-Hachiros between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Zephon; you shall encamp opposite it, by the sea" (Shemos 14:2).

Moshe is commanded here to tell the Jewish people to do an about face and to march back in the direction they came! For what reason? In order to mislead Pharaoh, so that he shall say that they have lost their way (Rashi there). Hashem goes even further and reveals to Moshe that the result of this reversal would be that: "Pharaoh will say of the Children of Israel 'they are imprisoned in the land, the Wilderness has locked them in'. I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh and he will pursue them" (ibid. 3-4).

I am not sure if Moshe relayed these details to the Jewish people, but they easily could have surmised on their own that a return to Egypt would both surprise Pharaoh and awaken in him a desire to pursue the Jewish people. Despite this, the nation heeded the directive of Moshe and turned back in the direction of Egypt.

"YOU FOLLOWED ME IN THE WILDERNESS"

If we examine this subject in the Gemara, we will see that in fact this trial was much greater than appears from the psukim. We learn that the pillar of cloud that accompanied them every day of their journey always moved in a forward direction (Yoma 75b). We must therefore conclude that when they did this about face, the pillar did not accompany them and they only encountered it again as they neared the Yam Suf. It would have been understandable for Am Yisrael to question Moshe's command, asserting that his directive was in direct contradiction to the pillar of cloud, yet to their credit the people did not complain and turned back in the direction of Egypt.

"They listened to the voice of Moshe and they did not say how can we draw close to our pursuer? We must run away! Rather they said: 'we rely only on the words of the son of Amram.'" (Rashi)

Am Yisrael had already passed a very difficult test. They obeyed Hashem's command to leave Egypt immediately and go out into the desert even though they had no food (See Shemos 12:39). One thousand years later Hashem fondly recalled and praised them for this act of blind faith:

"I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, how you followed Me in the Wilderness in an unsown land" (Yirmiyahu 2:2).

The nation's bitachon would now be put to an even greater test and they would triumph over this one as well.

AM YISRAEL - "BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE AND THEY CRIED OUT TO HASHEM"

The Jewish people arrive at the sea only to discover that they are indeed being pursued by the Egyptians. Chazal liken their predicament to that of a dove who flees from a hawk and tries to hide inside the cleft of a rock. On entering the crevice, the dove comes face to face with a snake rearing up to strike. Where can the dove go? If he moves forward he will come closer to the snake, if he retreats he will be in danger of the hawk. In the same manner the Jewish people had nowhere to turn, the sea was in front of them and the pursuing Egyptians were behind them, what could they do?

Chazal record differing factions among the people regarding what the proper response should be. Some of the people wished to battle Pharaoh while others among them wished to return to Egypt, complaining to Moshe that they were better off in Egypt. "The Children of Israel cried out to Hashem" (Shemos 14:10) (See Yalkut Shimoni Beshalach 232).

What is interesting to note is that Chazal count this as one of the ten times the Jewish people "tested" Hashem in the desert (See Erchin 15a). What do Chazal mean? What better response can there be than to cry out to Hashem for help? Even one who finds himself in lesser circumstances where a natural solution appears possible should cry out to Hashem, how much more so when their chances of coming out alive appear so dismal! In fact the Ramban rules that praying is a Torah obligation only in times of distress (see his commentary to the Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos Mitzvas Asei 5). Certainly according to the Rambam who opines that we have a daily obligation to pray, praying in such dire straits is fulfillment of a mitzvah.

HASHEM PUTS US IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES BECAUSE HE WANTS US TO CRY OUT

Furthermore, Chazal teach us that the reason Hashem places us in such circumstances is because He longs for our prayers. The Midrash compares this to a king who was traveling on the road and heard the cry of a princess: "Help! Save me from these bandits!" The king heard her cry and rescued her. After a number of days the king wished to marry the woman. He greatly desired to talk to her but she was not interested. What did the king do? He sent another group of robbers with the express purpose of frightening her in order that she cry out and once again the king would be able to come to her rescue. When the bandits came, she cried for help and this time when the king galloped to her rescue he explained: "I sent these bandits

because I had such a longing to hear your voice" (See Shemos Rabba 21:5). When the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt they turned to Hashem in desperation:

"during those many days, it happened that the king of Egypt died, and the Children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out, their outcry because of the work went up to Hashem" (Shemos 2:23).

The Torah records Hashem's response: "Hashem saw the Children of Israel" (ibid. 25). Hashem then began the process of taking them out of Egypt with an outstretched arm and a strong hand. Later, Hashem had a tremendous desire to hear their voices again but they did not respond. What did He do? He sent Pharaoh after them:

"Pharaoh approached; the Children of Israel raised their eyes and behold! Egypt was journeying after them, and they were very frightened, the Children of Israel cried out to Hashem" (Shemos 14:10).

Hashem in fact tells us that He did so in order to hear their cries:

"O My dove, trapped at the sea as if in the clefts of the rock, the concealment of the terrace. Show Me your prayerful gaze, let Me hear your supplicating voice, for your voice is sweet and your countenance comely" (Shir HaShirim 2:14).

The pasuk does not state "let me hear a voice" rather "your voice" - that same voice that I came to know in Egypt.

This of course strengthens our previous question. If the entire purpose of orchestrating Pharaoh into pursuing the Jewish nation was so that they would pray to Hashem, why do Chazal criticize them for having done so? Indeed, the idea of crying out to Hashem was the right course of action, where they went wrong, however, was in their complaint to Moshe: "were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?" (Shemos 14:11) This is not a befitting manner in which to speak to Moshe Rabenu. In addition to a lack of respect for Moshe Rabenu, their behavior implied a lack of bitachon in Hashem.

Hashem commanded Moshe Rabenu: "tell the Children of Israel that they shall travel forward" (Shemos 14:15) and that the sea will be split. The sea was not going to be split until the people would actually enter. The Gemara records a dispute regarding the Jewish people's reaction. One opinion states that each tribe wanted to have the honor of being the first one to enter, while the other opinion states that on the contrary, each tribe declared that they will not go into the sea - it was only Nachshon ben Aminadav who agreed to enter.

THE ACT OF NACHSHON BEN AMINADAV

My Rebbe HaGaon HaRav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l asked the following question: If Hashem commanded them to enter the sea, why is it that the only one who followed this command was Nachshon ben Aminadav? R' Chaim answered that had Hashem commanded them to die al Kiddush Hashem at sea, many would have followed. But to actually go into the sea believing that nothing would happen to them is a level only one person was able to achieve. I must say that I have not yet been able to understand this, for can we truly say that Aharon and Yehoshua, Caleb, Pinchas, Elazar, and Itamar did not share this belief with Nachson? Did others not also witness all of the great miracles in Mitzrayim that should have strengthened their bitachon as well? Furthermore, had Moshe not promised them long before that they would eventually leave Mitzrayim to receive the Torah and enter the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey? Clearly Hashem was not planning to drown them!

Had it not been for R' Chaim's interpretation, I would have explained it differently: Nachshon ben Aminadav's reaction was: "If Hashem commanded us to enter the sea, we must do so. What can possibly happen - Will I drown? Who knows! Did Avraham know that Yitzchak would emerge alive when he placed him upon the altar to be slaughtered? When Yitzchak agreed to be bound upon the altar, was he convinced that nothing would happen to him? Did Chananya, Mishael, and Azaria know that they would emerge from the furnace unscathed?" Nachshon therefore entered the sea knowing that whether or not he would remain alive was up to Hashem yet believing "this is the best I can do right now and this is the best thing for me." The rest of the nation at the sea should have realized that if Hashem decrees that they must die, G-d forbid, then this too is for the best. It is also possible that Nachshon was simply quicker than the others and was the first to reach the water. By the time the next person arrived ready to jump in, the sea had already split.

AM YISRAEL'S SIN AT MARA: THEY SHOULD HAVE ASKED, NOT COMPLAINED

We often have a tendency to criticize the generation that was in the desert: how could they not have withstood their trials? Let us try to put ourselves in their place and imagine how we would have reacted. We, Baruch Hashem, are learning in Yeshiva and are not slaves performing back-breaking tasks with mortar and bricks. Following the crossing of the sea, the narrative records,

"They went for a three-day period in the Wilderness, but they did not find water" (Shemos 15:22).

Three days without water in the middle of the desert! And remember it was the end of Nissan which is a period of immense heat. I still do not know how they did it, perhaps Hashem performed some sort of miracle, or they may have had a limited quantity of water that was able to sustain them for the three-day period. Finally they discover water, only to realize that it is too bitter to drink (see *ibid.* 23). Perhaps the men would somehow be able to withstand it, but what about the women and children

- can we expect a father to ignore the cries of his young ones? Perhaps one can explain to an older child that he must have bitachon, what about the smaller ones? There were not only children to deal with, but there were countless animals as well: "and flock and cattle, very much livestock" (Shemos 12:38). We do not know the total number of animals, what we do know is: "there was not a Jewish person who did not possess ninety Libyan donkeys laden with the silver and gold of Egypt" (Bechoros 5b). If each of the six hundred thousand people had ninety donkeys, there were fifty-four million donkeys in total!! Can we begin to imagine all fifty-four million thirsty donkeys braying simultaneously: "ee aw, ee aw"?

The noise alone could drive you out of your mind! Topped by the lack of water their screams must have been intolerable. Rabenu Bechaye describes this succinctly: "their journey in this great and awesome desert with their wives and children and their going for three days without water. After three grueling days they finally spot water from a distance only to discover as they approached the water that it was unfit to drink: 'they came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah because they were bitter.' (Shemos 15:23)". How could they not have given up? How could they keep from going out of their minds? Is it any wonder that "the people complained against Moshe saying: 'what shall we drink?'"

ASKING IN A DIFFERENT TUNE

By all accounts this was an awesome test for Klal Yisrael. Chazal, however, criticize their reaction. They regard this as one of the ten times they tested Hashem in the desert (See Erchin 15a). Why? If a person is dying of thirst should he not ask for water? They did not protest to Moshe "why is it that you have brought us up from Egypt" (Bamidbar 20:5) as we find in other situations. There is nothing wrong with asking for water, but the way to do it is to either turn to Hashem or to ask Moshe to pray on their behalf, not as the parsha records: "the people complained against Moshe saying 'what shall we drink' (Shemos 15:24) ". That was the act deserving of reproach - it was there that they tested Hashem. Even in such a desperate situation we must not lose perspective. Hashem does not lack for ways with which to save His nation.

Shortly thereafter in Refidim, He created a spring for them, followed by the well of Miriam at a later stage. Had Hashem wished, He could already have created Miriam's well in Mara. We can understand the braying of the donkeys, after all they are only donkeys - but the people should not have acted like donkeys! The proper response would have been to pray to Hashem and to have enough bitachon that whatever He does is for the good. Perhaps a miracle would have occurred and water would have appeared or they would have been able to survive without water, or Hashem would have transported them on eagle's wings to an area containing water. Hashem does not lack for ideas on how to provide miracles. Even if it had been decreed that they all die in the desert - this too must be viewed as being for the best. The same may

be said regarding the other trials and tribulations they experienced in the desert - the chet haegel, the meraglim, and more. They should have spoken to Moshe or prayed using a different "melody". Their question of "what should we drink" should have been sung in a Yom Tov tune, not one fitting for Tisha B'Av. It is for this that Chazal criticize them.

There is a story told of a Jew who received a letter from his son who was in a distant country. The father who could neither read nor write went to the local butcher and asked him to read the letter. The butcher read in a commanding and stern voice: "Father, send me the money! Said the father - is that how my son talks? I will send him a penny! The mother, on hearing this, suggested - maybe the butcher doesn't read so well. Let's take the letter to the chazan. They took the letter to the chazan - and in a voice full of pathos and emotion he beseeched "Father! Send me money!" On hearing this, the father said - "Nu, if he asks so nicely, I am prepared to send him some money! The same may be said of Bnei Yisrael at this point. When they asked "what shall we drink" they used the tone of the shochet and not the tone of the chazan. It was for this reason that this incident was counted among the ten times the Jewish people tested Hashem.

A FORTY YEAR SCHOOL OF BITACHON

The forty year sojourn in the desert was an amazing school of bitachon for the Jewish people. They traveled in a land of "snake, fiery serpent, and scorpion, and thirst where there was no water" (Devarim 8:15), despite all this, there was nothing they lacked: "this forty-year period, Hashem, your G-d, was with you; you did not lack a thing" (Devarim 2:7), "your garment did not wear out upon you and your feet did not swell" (Devarim 8:4). The people had nothing yet they had everything!

The manna that fell in the desert was an extra special class in this school of bitachon. Hashem provided precisely the amount required for each day - each household woke up in the morning to discover: "an omer per person according to the number of your people" (Shemos 16:16). They were instructed to consume it until the last grain: "no man may leave over from it until morning" (Shemos 16:19). Unlike the Korban Pesach, they were not commanded: "any of it that is left until morning you shall burn in the fire" (Shemos 12:10). Whatever remained overnight: "became infested with worms and it stank" (Shemos 16:20).

Why was it forbidden to save the manna until morning? Because Hashem wished for them to have sufficient bitachon that He would sustain them the next day, whether by means of manna or something else. It is not up to us to insure what will be tomorrow - bitachon is the true way of the world. The manna itself was among the things created during the week of creation - Erev Shabbos Bein Hashmashos (see Avos 5:6). The Rambam in his Perush Hamishnayos writes that these were all supernatural entities. Yet paradoxically the manna comes to teach us a lesson regarding the natural order of the world - Hashem determines our livelihood and any

more or less hishtadlus is of no consequence. Moshe instructed the Jewish people that they must collect an omer for each of their household members, "and they gathered, whoever took more and whoever took less" (Shemos 16:17). How could they take more or less after Moshe Rabenu told them the precise amount they should gather? Perhaps the larger amount was in accordance with the measurement of the Chazon Ish, while the one who took less was following the measurements of HaRav Chaim Naeh, as is the custom in Jerusalem, nonetheless the end result was that everyone had gathered the same omer: "whoever took more had nothing extra and whoever took less was not lacking" (ibid. 18). (Unfortunately we have no evidence of the precise amount they collected, otherwise we would be able to determine whether the halacha is in accordance with the view of the Chazon Ish or of R' Chaim Naeh).

It made no difference whether one spent more time and came equipped with larger baskets, or whether one spent less time collecting and arrived with smaller baskets, in the end each person ate the same amount as his neighbor did. Why was this so? In order to teach us that our livelihood is from Heaven and not by: "my strength and the might of my hand" (Devarim 8:17). The idea of: "whoever took more had nothing extra and whoever took less was not lacking" applies in our times as well. Hashem decrees how much each of us will have. This is not readily apparent because today, unlike in the desert, some have more and some have less. It is true that the curse of "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" (Bereishis 3:19) requires us to put in our own hishtadlus, together with this, however, we must realize that our hishtadlus is not what provides us with our daily bread, it is Heavenly decreed.

The Chafetz Chaim once spoke to a merchant about closing his business on Shabbos. The merchant responded that times were difficult and he was not able to make a living without opening on Shabbos. The Chafetz Chaim answered with the following parable: there was a Jew who owned a store in which he sold wine. His friend asked him how business was going to which the man replied that he was going through a difficult period. The friend responded: "permit me to make a suggestion, why don't you make another tap for your barrel and that way you will have twice as much wine come out." The Chafetz Chaim explained that just like adding an extra tap will not produce more wine in the barrel, working extra will not change the amount of parnassah allotted us on Rosh Hashana.

As we mentioned above with the manna, no matter how much they took or tried to save for the next morning they ended up with the same amount. They were told not to collect on Shabbos but to have sufficient faith that they will be provided for. These were all tests of faith which the people underwent.

The Tanach is filled with examples of the struggle between hishtadlut and bitachon: We read of the Jewish people's battles against their enemies during the days of Otniel and Ehud ben Gera. Along comes Barak who was instructed not to immobilize his entire army but to come with only ten thousand men (see Shoftim

4:6).

This downsizing was to combat the feeling of "kochi veotzem yadi" that was prevalent during the days of the earlier judges when the people were still worshipping idols. We find that this does not change their attitude and Gideon is told to come with only three hundred soldiers (see Shoftim 7:3-4) "lest Israel aggrandize itself over Me, saying, 'My own strength has saved me!'" (Shoftim 7:2). Even a victory with only three hundred soldiers did not bring the people back to Hashem. As a result Shimshon was sent to fight the Plishtim on his own and would be victorious so long as he stringently observed the dictates of nezirut, but even this was to no avail and the people continued to sin.

At a later stage Shmuel instructed them to go out to war without any preparation - the entire nation was gathered and told to gather water and to pour it out before Hashem: "as a sign of subservience, we are to you like these waters that are spilled" (Rashi Shmuel I 7:6). We then read that: "Shmuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up entirely as an elevation-offering to Hashem; Shmuel cried out to Hashem on behalf of Israel and Hashem answered him. Shmuel was offering up the elevation-offering when the Plishtim approached for the battle with Israel, Hashem then thundered with a great noise on that day against the Plishtim and confounded them, so that they were defeated by Israel" (Shmuel I 7:9-10).

The Jewish people were still not satisfied, for they had no desire for victories resulting from miracles involving lambs, they wished to win by natural means - who knows if they will always have sufficient merit to be victorious in this miraculous fashion. Because their request: "give us a king to judge us" (Shmuel I 8:6) contained a rejection of Hashem's Divine ways, Hashem's reaction was: "for it is not you whom they have rejected, but it is Me whom they have rejected from reigning over them" (ibid. 7). We find still later in the days of Shaul: "thus it was on the day of war that there was not to be found sword or spear in the possession of any of the people who were with Shaul and Yonatan" (Shmuel I 13:22) - only Shaul and Yonatan were armed, and they managed to rid themselves of the Plishtim.

Later on Assa king of Yehuda was questioned why he felt the need to bribe the king of Aram to come to his assistance (see Divrei Hayamim II 16:2-9) and his son Yehoshafat was criticized by the prophet for aligning himself with the king of Yisrael who were idol worshippers (see Divrei Hayamim II 19:2). Earlier Yehoshafat had been greatly praised for his belief in Hashem which resulted in his earlier victories. Amatzia then hires a regiment from the tribe of Ephraim and the prophet instructs him to send them away for if he arrives with them he will lose, and if he appears alone he will be more successful (see Divrei Hayamim II 25:5-8). The kings of Israel as well as the kings of Yehuda were later criticized for enlisting the help of the Egyptians. We read of so many disputes between the prophets and the kings - the prophets teaching not to use an excessive amount of hishtadlut but to rely more on bitachon.

Yeshayahu HaNavi instructs Chizkiyahu king of Yehuda not to fear Sanherib: "Therefore, thus says Hashem about the king of Ashur: He will not enter this city, and will not shoot there an arrow; he will not approach it with a shield, and will not pour a ramp against it" (Yeshayahu 37:33). Chizkiyahu was a man known for his great faith in Hashem: Scripture testifies of him: "He trusted in Hashem, the G-d of Israel" (Melachim I 18:5). Despite this great faith, Chazal criticize his behavior during the battle against Ashur. The Gemara teaches us that he removed the doors of the sanctuary in order to send them as bribery to the king of Ashur and that he prevented the king from finding water by stopping up the waters of the upper Gichon (see Brachot 10b). If we would have performed these acts we would have been commended for our hishtadlut. However, a person on the level of Chizkiyahu, whom Chazal say was worthy of becoming moshiach, should have had greater bitachon.

Asa King of Yehuda "became ill in his legs in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, until his illness spread upwards" (Divrei HaYamim II 16:12). Rather than consulting with the prophet regarding what sin he should repent for: "in his illness he did not seek out Hashem, only the doctors" (ibid.). The Ramban writes that his sin was twofold - that he did not repent and that he consulted with the doctors. We can compare this to one who has eaten chametz on Pesach - he is guilty of eating chametz and of not fulfilling the positive commandment to eat matzah. We are not on such a level if we get ill, G-d forbid, we must pray to Hashem and also seek out appropriate doctors. The Ramban himself was a doctor as were many other gedolim.

The Ramban writes that when the Am Yisrael is on a high spiritual level there is no need for doctors - Hashem leads them with miracles and all illnesses are the result of specific sins. The cure therefore lies in discovering the cause of the ailment and repenting. We are not on this level and we must therefore consult with doctors.

The Gemara teaches us that Chizkiyahu placed the Sefer HaRefuot (Book of Remedies) in genizah (see Pesachim 56a). The Rishonim discuss his reasons for doing so. The Rambam and Rashi opine that Chizkiyahu, a man of great bitachon as we mentioned earlier, did not wish for people to be cured with natural medicine, but that they pray to Hashem for help. The Ramban does not concur with this view claiming that just as when one is hungry he must eat and not wait for a miracle, so too when one is ill, he must seek a cure and not wait for a miracle. We of course are not on this level and we have to rely on doctors. Even a great man like the Chazon Ish consulted with doctors - he often disagreed with them but he never advised people against using them.

In a later generation, when Tzidkiyahu fights against the king of Bavel, Yirmiyahu tells him that he should not have "bitachon" but rather should surrender and not fight. If Hashem tells him to surrender then there is nothing to have confidence in. The false prophets claim "The king of Babylonia will not come upon you and upon this land" (Yirmiyahu 37:19). Yirmiyahu states in the name of Hashem, that there is nothing to

have "bitachon" in, for the people are not very righteous and thus are not deserving of Hashem's protection. Even if Tzidkiyahu is a righteous person, as were many others of that time, Yirmiyahu, Yechezkel, Daniel, etc., yet the generation as a whole was not worthy.

Yirmiyahu declared in the name of Hashem that they must not fight. Under these circumstances, where there is a specific commandment not to fight, having "bitachon" that Hashem would save them. "The Sanctuary of Hashem, the Sanctuary of Hashem, the Sanctuary of Hashem" (Yirmiyahu 7:4) would be a grave sin, not a Mitzvah. We must realize when to have confidence that Hashem will save us and when not. In this instance there was a clear directive not to: "Even if you try to fight against the Chaldeans you will not succeed" (Yirmiyahu 32:5)

According to Chazal, Tzidkiyahu was one of the most righteous people in the world: "The Holy One Blessed is He sought to restore the world to formlessness and emptiness, on account of the generation of Tzidkiah. Hashem looked at Tzidkiah and His anger abated." (Sanhedrin 103a). If Tzidkiah was so righteous that through his merit the world was saved, why did he not heed the words of the prophet and simply surrender?

Perhaps the fear of all the enemy officers was greater than the fear of what the prophet was saying. Yirmiyahu even promised Tzidkiyahu "If you go forth in surrender to the officers of the king of Bavel, your soul will live, and this city will not be burnt down in fire; rather you and your household will survive. But if you do not go forth to the officers of the king of Bavel, this city will be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they will burn it down in fire" (Yirmiyah 38:17-18). Even with this promise, Tzidkiyahu did not surrender. Tzidkiyahu told Yirmiyahu "I fear the Jews who have deserted to the Chaldeans, lest they give me over into their hand and they abuse me" (ibid 19), to which Yirmiyahu responded "lo yitenu" "they will not give you over" (ibid 20). All these promises that no harm will come to Tzidkiyahu and that the city will not be destroyed are insufficient to convince him to surrender. This is difficult for us to comprehend.

We cannot judge such a righteous person, yet these were the events that transpired. Tzidkiyahu's refusal to surrender renders him being viewed as responsible for the burning down of Yerushalayim.

Bitachon as we understand it means to have the confidence to follow Hashem's directives and to know that whatever happens as a result is for the best. The prophet provides us with an example of misplaced bitachon. The prophet tells us: "Her leaders judge for bribes and her Kohanim teach for a fee and her prophets divine for money - yet they rely on Hashem, saying: 'behold Hashem is in our midst; no evil can befall us'" (Micha 3:11). The prophet is referring to people who sin and act in ways that are contrary to the Torah's commandments. On the face of it, the latter part of the pasuk seems praiseworthy. While it is true that they are guilty of many infractions, they still

have bitachon in Hashem. Yet, the prophet continues: "Therefore, because of you, Zion will be plowed over like a field; Jerusalem will become heaps of rubble and the Temple Mount will become like stone heaps in the forest" (ibid. 12).

Bitachon of this nature not only is not considered a mitzvah but in fact is an aveira! Why so? Are they not relying on Hashem rather than on the powers of avoda zara or even forces of nature? The explanation is that this type of bitachon is a chillul Hashem. Hashem promised that the Land of Israel would be given to the Jewish people only "if you hearken to My commandments" (Devarim 11:13). Moshe Rabenu was told to leave Egypt and travel onwards and he would eventually reach Eretz Yisrael. In the incident cited by the prophet they thought that they could rely on Hashem even while acting in violation of His will. True faith and confidence in Hashem means a desire to bring about a Kiddush Hashem. Someone who claims to have faith in Hashem without observing the Torah is guilty of creating a chillul Hashem, for he thinks he can go against Hashem's commandments. Bitachon means believing that Hashem will keep His word and not that He will always bring about the end that you desire.

Bitachon in Hashem means knowing that Hashem helps the tzaddikim and punishes the wicked. It is incumbent upon us to learn Torah and to keep mitzvot and only then can we hope that Hashem will fulfill our wishes. We hope and pray that we will merit always returning to Hashem and that our prayers will be accepted and Hashem will then do what is truly best for us.

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