

# Additional Resources for *Changing the World from the Inside Out* by Rabbi David Jaffe

## Learn the sources – Bitachon

*Bitachon may be one of the most difficult Middot to acquire. The Hebrew root for Bitachon is .נ.ט.ב (B.T.Ch.) which means to be at ease, to trust and to be confident. In modern Hebrew the word Bitachon also means security and thus the Misrad HaBitachon is the Defense Ministry or Bituach Leumi is the National Insurance system. In classic Jewish literature the ultimate source of this sense of security is God.*

*There are compelling reasons why Bitachon is so challenging. For Moderns, whose belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing and loving deity has been severely weakened by over two centuries of rationalist, scientific thinking and horrific violence and suffering of two world wars, to simply rely on God to take care of you rings hollow. How can I trust a God who allowed Auschwitz to happen? There is not much stronger a challenge to the idea that we can rely on God than that. However, our post-Holocaust generations were not the first to struggle with Bitachon. Bitachon was also a challenge in Biblical times when Jewish society more readily accepted the idea of an all-powerful God.*

*Bitachon as a middah does not require that we have absolute trust in an omnipotent God. Like with all middot, there is a continuum and we each get to locate our own souls on the continuum. Some people move through life with an unshakeable belief in God's goodness and protection. Others are much more anxious and worry fills their days. Neither extreme is necessarily good. Wherever you are on this continuum, working on Bitachon means moving towards balancing trust in a loving God or a good Universe with taking initiative. You never have to believe something you actually don't believe to grow in Bitachon. We will start with a very practical issue, our livelihood.*

## Bitachon and Making a Living, The Manna Test - Exodus 16:4-20

Just days after the Israelites crossed the Reed Sea accompanied by ample Divine pyrotechnics God gives them a test to see if they internalized the faith they professed at the sea.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וּלְקִטּוֹ דָּבָר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ  
לְמַעַן אֶנְסֶנּוּ הָעָם בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם לֹא:

Then said God to Moshe, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will follow my Torah, or no....

זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה לְקַטֹּף מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ לְפִי אֲכָלוּ עֹמֶר לַגִּלְגָּלֶת מִסֵּפֶר נַפְשֵׁיכֶם  
אִישׁ לְאִשֶּׁר בְּאֹהֶלוֹ תִקְחוּ:

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְקְטוּ הַמֶּרְבֶּה וְהַמִּמְעִיט:

וַיִּמְדוּ בַעֲמֹר וְלֹא הָעֲדִיף הַמֶּרְבֶּה וְהַמִּמְעִיט לֹא הִחְסִיר אִישׁ לְפִי אֲכָלוּ לְקַטֹּף:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אֶל יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בִּקָּר:

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹתֵרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ עַד בִּקָּר וַיֵּרֶם תּוֹלְעִים וַיִּבָּאֵשׁ וַיִּקְצַף עֲלֵהֶם  
מֹשֶׁה:

And Moshe said to them...This is the thing which God has commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an 'omer for every man, according to the number of your persons shall you take it, every man for them who are in his tent. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did measured it with an 'omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack;... Moshe said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. But they hearkened not to Moshe; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank...(Exodus 16:4, 16-20)

*In the Manna test people needed to work for their food. This requirement echoes the curse given to Adam in the Garden of Eden,*

(יז) וּלְאָדָם אָמַר כִּי שִׁמְעָתָה לְקוֹל אֲשֶׁרֶךָ וְתֹאכַל מִן הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ  
אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ בְּעֶצְבֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: ...  
(יט) בְּזַעַת אַפֶּיךָ תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבֶךָ אֶל הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לְקַחְתָּ כִּי עֹפֶר אֶתָּה וְאֶל עֹפֶר  
תָּשׁוּב:

"Cursed be the ground because of you; By toil shall you eat of it...By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat..."(Genesis 3:17-19).

*Once we need to work for our living, how can we avoid the trap pointed to in the following verse from Deuteronomy 8:17:*

וַאֲמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כָּחִי וְעֹצֶם יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחֵיל הַזֶּה:

"My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me." (Deuteronomy 8:17)

*The 11<sup>th</sup> century Mussar classic Duties of the Heart by Rabbi Bahya Ibn Pequda describes this challenge in the following terms:*

...Since Divine wisdom demands the trial of the soul with service of Hashem or rebellion, Hashem tries the soul with what will reveal its choice in the matter, namely, with the need and want for that which is external to it – food, drink, clothing, shelter, and sexual relations. Hashem commanded human beings to seek and obtain these requirements through the available means, in specific ways, and at certain times (meaning we need to work to attain livelihood-ed.).

What the Creator decrees a person should attain of them, the person realizes and attains through ample means which are provided. What the Creator does not decree should be attained of them, the person does not attain, and the means are withheld (this is when we need to have trust and not think everything is in our control-ed.). The person's service or transgression is demonstrated through his or her intent on – and choice of- one to the exclusion of the other (meaning whether one will serve Hashem or rebel-ed.)...

*Where are you on the continuum of trust and control?*

*In what ways do try to control things too much? What is the impact on yourself and others?*

*In what ways do you take too much credit for your successes or failures?*

*Are there any areas of your life where you think you have too much trust and could use taking more initiative?*

#### **Bitachon as a Source of Renewal and Life, Jeremiah 2:13**

כִּי שְׁתֵּי רָעוֹת עָשָׂה עַמִּי אֲתִי עֲזָבוּ מִקְּוֵי מַיִם חַיִּים לְחַצְב לָהֶם בְּאֵרוֹת בְּשָׂבָיִם  
אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכְלוּ הַמַּיִם:

“Two evils have My people committed: they have forsaken Me, a freshwater spring (Makor Mayyim Hayyim) , to hew themselves cisterns (B’orot), cracked cisterns that can hold no water.”

-Jeremiah 2:13

A freshwater spring's water flows out of its source, whereas the water in a cistern is collected from somewhere else. It is separated from its source. Jeremiah relates Trust to water in another famous passage:

(ה) כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲרֻר הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּאָדָם וְשֵׁם בָּשָׂר זָרְעוּ וּמִן יְהוָה יִסּוּר לָבוֹ:  
(ו) וְהָיָה כְּעֶרְעֵר בְּעֶרְבָה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה כִּי יָבֹא טוֹב וְשָׁכֵן חֲרָרִים בְּמִדְבָּר אֶרֶץ מְלָחָה וְלֹא תִשָּׁב:  
(ז) בְּרוּךְ הַגִּבֹּר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בִּיהוָה וְהָיָה יְהוָה מִבְּטָחוֹ:

(ח) וְהָיָה כְעֵץ שְׂתוּל עַל מַיִם וְעַל יוֹבֵל יִשְׁלַח שָׂרְשָׁיו וְלֹא יִרָא \{יִרְאָה\} כִּי יָבֹא חֹם וְהָיָה עֲלֵהוּ רַעֲנָן וּבִשְׁנַת בְּצָרָת לֹא יִדָּאָג וְלֹא יִמָּשׁ מִמַּעֲשׂוֹת פָּרִי:

“Cursed is the person who trusts solely in people and makes his flesh his source of strength and turns away from God. He will be like a tree in the desert and will not see when good comes. He will inhabit the parched places of the desert, a salty, uninhabited land. Blessed is the person who trusts in God, and whose hope God is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit.”

-Jeremiah 17:17-18

Jeremiah uses such rich metaphors. Spend some time unpacking these metaphors. Specifically:

*How does this metaphor of a tree by water compare with our first metaphor of the spring and cistern?*

*In what ways do these metaphors relate to how you think about trust in your own life?*

*Both the metaphors seem to have to do with rejuvenation and renewal. What are your sources of renewal and do these relate to trust in any way?*

### **Bitachon as a Perspective of Confidence, Duties of the Heart, R. Bahya Ibn Pequda (11<sup>th</sup> century, Spain)**

The following source from Duties of the Heart explains how Bitachon helps one live a life of conviction and principle. The middah of Bitachon helps us do what we know is right because we don't base our self-worth or sense of security on whether we are liked by others. This can be an incredibly valuable soul trait for combatting injustice.

Another advantage of this trust is that it has the following effect: One who trusts in God will not submit to another; she will not set her hopes on any person or put her trust in human beings. She will not be subservient to them in order to win their favor, nor will she flatter them. She will not agree with them in what is not the service of God. Their ways will not frighten her, and she will not be afraid to oppose them. She will divest herself of the finery of their favors and free herself from the burden of expressing gratitude to them and the obligation of repaying them. When reproving them, she will not shrink from offending them; if she humiliates them, she will not be timid before them or adorn what is false. As the prophet said:

וְאֵדֹנִי יְיָהוּה יַעֲזָר לִי עַל כֵּן לֹא נִכְלַמְתִּי עַל כֵּן שָׁמַתִּי פָנַי כַּחֲלָמִישׁ וְאֵדַע כִּי לֹא אֲבוֹשׁ:

“But God, Hashem, helps me; therefore, I was not humiliated; therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be timid.” (Isaiah 50:7)...

*In what kinds of situations do you get the most timid?*

*When do you have the most confidence?*

*Where are you on a timidity-confidence continuum and what is one thing you could do to become more confident? If you think you are overly confident, what is one thing you could do to have a more balanced sense of confidence?*

*What would you have to face if you were going to be less timid with your congregation, family, or colleagues?*

## For Further Study

**Source 1: Bitachon in Relationships, Duties of the Heart, The Gate of Trust, Rabbi Bahya Ibn Pequda (d. 11<sup>th</sup> century, Spain)**

*This source discusses people helping each other. It is broken up into three sections with reflection questions after each section. In preparation for the text, think of examples from your own life of when you needed someone to do something for you, or you were asked to do something. These examples can be with people from work, family, or other relationships.*

...When the need arises to ask for something from someone..., she should rely on God for it, and regard the people as the means of securing it, just as one tills the soil and sows it as a means to her livelihood. If God wishes to support her from it, the crops grow, thrive and flourish, and no thanks are due the land for this, only the Creator. If God does not wish to support her from it, the land yields no produce, or it yields produce which suffers damage, and the land is not to blame...

If it is carried out by one of them, she should thank the Creator who fulfilled her wishes, and also thank the one through whom it was carried out for his goodwill, and for being the agent of the Creator's aid...

If her request is not carried out for her by any of them, she should not blame them or attribute to them negligence, but she should thank God for having chosen what was for her good. She should also thank them, in accordance with what she knows of their efforts to fulfill her request, even though it was not carried out as she – and they- had wished.

She should also conduct herself this way in her relations with intimates and friends, business associates, employees and partners.

*Like the other sources we've seen from Duties of the Heart, R. Bahya describes a level of Bitachon that is most likely unfamiliar to many of us moderns. Try to stretch and imagine what impact this type of Bitachon might have on your relationships.*

### **Questions:**

What impact do think this approach would have on interpersonal relationships? Why?

What do you think this approach does to personal responsibility and accountability?

### **Duties of the Heart (Cont.)**

Similarly, when asked by someone... [to do] something, he should try to do it with all his heart and focus his mind on carrying it out, provided that he is able and that the one who asked him is worthy of the effort. Then he should put his trust in God for its accomplishment.

#### **Questions:**

The above section seems to describe the balance of Hishtadlut (effort) and Bitachon.

Why do you think it matters if the person is “worthy of the effort?”

### **Duties of the Heart (Cont.)**

If God brings it about through his agency, and uses him as the instrument for benefiting his fellowman, he should offer thanks for this privilege. But if, after going through much trouble and effort, he is prevented from doing so and is unable to fulfill his neighbor’s request, he should not blame himself, and should inform his friend that he tried his best.

#### **Questions:**

How close or far are you from this type of attitude in your own life?

How do think this approach would enhance or detract from your spiritual and ethical growth?

**Source 2: Bitachon, Birth and Creativity, Advice, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (d. 1810, Ukraine)**

בטחוני הדור הם בחינת כלי ההולדה. כי כל ההולדות וכל ההשפעות נמשכין על ידי בטחון. וזה זוכין על ידי ששומעין ספורי מעשיות מצדיקים אמתיים שיש להם כח לעורר מהשנה על ידי ספורי מעשיות שלהם, שעל ידי זה יוצא הדבור בכח גדול. שאותן שהיו בבחינת שנה שהיו כאלמים ממש ולא היו יכולים לדבר כלל שום דבור שבקדושה, נתעוררין עכשו משנתם ומתחילים לדבר בכח גדול, ועל ידי הדבור נתחזק הבטחון ועל ידי זה נפקדין העקריות וזוכין ליראה.

The trustful ones of the generation reflect aspects of reproduction. For all birth, and all spiritual influences are drawn into the world through Bitachon. This [birth] is merited by hearing stories told by the truly righteous who have the ability to awaken others from sleep through their stories. Through this awakening, full-throated speech emerges. For, those who were asleep were like mutes and could not speak any words of holiness. Once they awaken they begin to speak with much strength. Through this speech Bitachon is strengthened, which leads to birth and awe.

*In this cryptic passage Rebbe Nachman describes a circular process in which those with Bitachon can awaken others from spiritual sleep, empowering them to speak words of holiness. In turn, these words of holiness strengthen the Bitachon of themselves and others and lead to more creativity (birth) and awe.*

**Questions:**

In your own experience, how is Bitachon related to birth or creativity?

What is like for you to experience spiritual sleepiness and how have you been awoken in the past?

In your experience what is the relationship between speech, particularly holy speech, and Bitachon?