

Our Parashah opens: "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit. Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing. You will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your land." Despite the implication of these verses that timely rain and plentiful harvests are our reward for performing *Mitzvot*, commentaries stress that the true reward for *Mitzvot* is in *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come.

Why, then, is *Olam Ha'ba* not even mentioned in the Torah? R' Saadiah Gaon z"l (882-942; Egypt, *Eretz Yisrael* and present-day Iraq; author of the earliest known work systematically laying out our essential beliefs as Jews) writes that *Olam Ha'ba* is not mentioned expressly because it does not need to be. It is obvious from at least thirteen places in the Torah that there is a World-to-Come, R' Saadiah writes.

For example, when Avraham believed that he was supposed to bring Yitzchak as a *Korban* / sacrificial offering, Yitzchak cooperated willingly. How could he have done so unless he believed that a better world awaited him after his death?! The strongest proof, however, is suggested by our *Parashah*, says R' Saadiah. Moshe Rabbeinu served *Hashem* better than anyone in history, yet he died outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. He never owned land and was never rewarded with timely rain and plentiful harvests. Where, then, is his reward? Surely, in a future world--*Olam Ha'ba*! (*Ha'emunot Ve'ha'de'ot* IX 2)

Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we will iy"H devote this space to discussing the related subject of *Bitachon* / placing one's trust in *Hashem*.

This week, we conclude our discussion of the question: Does having *Bitachon* guarantee a "good" outcome, i.e., the outcome that I want? As discussed, R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z"l (1878-1953; Bnei Brak, Israel; the "Chazon Ish") describes that understanding of *Bitachon* as "an old misconception rooted in the hearts of many." Understood correctly, he writes, *Bitachon* is the conviction that nothing happens by chance; rather, everything that occurs is decreed by *Hashem*. We noted that the *Chazon Ish's* understanding of *Bitachon* is also the view of R' Avraham ben Ha'Rambam z"l (son of Maimonides; Egypt; 1186-1237).

On the other hand, writes R' Baruch Aryeh Halevi Fischer shlita (rabbi and educator in Brooklyn, N.Y.), many great authorities do accept the understanding of *Bitachon* that the *Chazon Ish* rejects. Included in this latter group are R' Yosef Albo z"l (Spain; 1380-1444) (in *Sefer Ha'ikkarim* IV 47-49), R' Moshe Sofer z"l (1762-1839; the "Chatam Sofer") (quoted last week), and R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik z"l (1886-1959; the "Brisker Rav"). [Some contemporary Torah sages point to hints in the *Chazon Ish's* words that he, too, does not reject the popular understanding of *Bitachon* as completely as a superficial reading would suggest.]

R' Fischer asks: Our everyday experience is that people have *Bitachon* yet they do not get what they were hoping for--be it good health, financial success, a marriage partner, etc. How, then, are we to understand the view of the latter group of authorities, which seems, in fact, to be the view of the majority of Torah sages? - **Continued on page 3** -

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He explains: There are aspects of the Torah—whether beliefs or practices-- that seem, to our understanding, to be contradictory. To take a familiar example: *Rosh Hashanah* is a day of judgment, when the Books of Life and Death are open before *Hashem*. Therefore, one might expect *Rosh Hashanah* to be a day of fear and trembling. Nevertheless, *Halachah* tells us to wear *Yom Tov* clothing on *Rosh Hashanah* to express our *Bitachon* that our sins will be forgiven and we will be inscribed for a good year. Then, even as we are wearing those *Yom Tov* clothes to express that *Bitachon*, when the *Chazzan* intones the words of *U'netaneh Tokef*, “Who will live, and who will die,” many are overwhelmed by tears, feeling that our lives and our futures are hanging in the balance on this day. Our earlier *Bitachon* seems to have evaporated. Not too long afterwards, however, we finish *Mussaf*, and the *Chazzan* recites *Kaddish* in a joyous tune that again expresses the *Bitachon* we felt earlier. But, we are not done; the next day, we return and cry during *U'netaneh Tokef* all over again. Then, we sing the joyous *Kaddish* again! Finally, during the year, we discover that we were not inscribed for a perfect year despite our *Bitachon*, and we accept *Hashem's* judgment nevertheless.

Does this mean that we do not believe wholeheartedly on *Rosh Hashanah* that *Hashem* will inscribe us in the Book of Life? No! R' Fisher writes, we do believe that! Whenever *Bitachon* is called for, it must be complete, which means believing wholeheartedly and unequivocally that *Hashem* will respond to our *Bitachon* in the way we hope. But, there are times in life when *Bitachon* is not the *Middah* / attribute that is called for. Sometimes, another *Middah* is appropriate--be it the belief in reward and punishment (“If something bad happened to me, maybe it was for my atonement”) or perhaps another attribute.

Still, continues, R' Fischer, this seems contradictory. How can we believe everything will “work out” (*i.e.*, have *Bitachon*) when we see that things often do not “work out”? This question, he writes, is similar to the famous inquiry: Do we really have free will if *Hashem* knows what we will choose in the future? Such questions arise because our minds are limited. When aspects of the Torah are, to our logic, contradictory, it is not because they don't “make sense,” but only because our logic system is part of this world, while Torah does not originate in this world, but in a much “higher” world. Feeling like we are being asked to have contradictory feelings on *Rosh Hashanah* is a consequence of our inability to grasp *Hashem's* “thought process.” At the same time, it is a testament to *Hashem's* faith in us, for the Torah trusts us to function amidst seeming contradictions. (R' Fischer gives other examples of such paradoxes in the realm of *Halachah* and in other areas.) The seeming contradiction between believing that *Hashem* will respond to our *Bitachon* in the way we hope and admitting that often He does not--albeit, always for a good reason--is another paradox we accept. And, that itself is a testament to our faith!

(Lev Ha'ari p.49)

“I will provide peace in the land . . . and a sword will not cross your land.” (26:6)

Rashi z"l comments: If there will be peace, then it is unnecessary to say that no army will enter your land to make war. Rather, this means that no army will enter even to pass through your land on its march to wage war with another country. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) explains: Even if a transiting army had peaceful intentions, it would scare the populace of *Eretz Yisrael*, which would realize that this army could attack it some day. This would cause the Jewish People to observe the Torah out of fear, which is not the ideal. Says the Torah: If you observe the Torah out of love, *Hashem* will have no need to frighten you into submission, so no army will pass through your land, even peacefully. (*Tiferet Yehonatan*)

“Any dispute that is *l'shaim Shamayim* / for the sake of Heaven will have a constructive outcome.” (Pirkei Avot ch.5)

R' Shlomo Ephraim of Lunschitz z"l (rabbi of Prague; author of *Kli Yakar*; died 1619) asks: Why does the *Mishnah* use the phrase, “*L'shaim Shamayim*” / “for the sake of Heaven,” rather than, “*L'shaim Hashem*” / “for the sake of G-d”?

He explains: We read (*Bereishit* 1:7-8), “*Elokim* made the *Rakia* / firmament, and separated between the waters which were beneath the *Rakia* and the waters which were above the *Rakia* . . . *Elokim* called the *Rakia* - ‘*Shamayim*’.” Why, asks R' Shlomo Ephraim, did *Hashem* rename the firmament “*Shamayim*”? Because, he answers, the firmament represents *Machloket* / divisiveness, being the first creation that separated two things. Indeed, our Sages say that *Hashem* did not declare “*Ki tov*” / “It is good” on the second day of Creation, because division was created on that day.

To mitigate the effects of this *Machloket*, R' Shlomo Ephraim continues, *Hashem* called the firmament “*Shamayim*,” a contraction of “*Esh*” / “fire” and “*Mayim*” / “water.” Fire and water are “enemies,” yet they coexist in the heavens, as we read (*Iyov* 25:2), “*Oseh shalom bimromav*” / “He makes peace in His lofty places.”

In this light, R' Shlomo Ephraim concludes, we can understand, as well, why our *Mishnah* refers to a dispute that is “*L'shaim Shamayim*.” What type of dispute will have a constructive outcome? A dispute in which both sides are actually cooperating toward a common goal, just as *Esh* and *Mayim* do in the heavens. As an example of such a dispute, our *Mishnah* cites the disagreements between the academies of Hillel and Shammai, disputes in which both sides shared the goal of seeking the truth.

(*Olelot Ephraim* II:1)