

B”H
Finding Faith in Turbulent Times
Chicago Women’s Retreat
Instructor: Sara Bluming

1. *What is faith?*

The difference between TRUST and BELIEF:

בטח = בטחון -certainty, confidence. TRUST. Bitachon (trust) is **practical** whereas Emuna (faith/belief) is **conceptual**.

A person with Emunah (faith) knows in his mind and believes in his heart that G-d can provide for all his needs, but he does not apply this faith in actual practice. A person with Bitachon (trust) however, leads his life in accordance with the knowledge and belief that G-d provides for him. When faced with a crisis, the person with true Bitachon (trust) will deal with the situation in a way that reflects his conviction that only G-d can help him, and any measure he takes toward resolving the crisis will be consistent with that attitude. (Chazon Ish)

- Emunah (faith) is the belief that Hashem is the Creator of the World, while Bitachon –Trust is living your life in a way that reflects your belief in Him.
- Case in point: The Praying Thief: "A thief is at the mouth of the tunnel [i.e., he dug to the place from which he will steal], and calls out to Hashem." (Brachot 63a)
- Bitachon-trust is a feeling of relief, a sense of tranquility and calm. It’s not a concept. You feel it. Trust means I can rely on you, you are reliable, dependable. You can relax, you have tranquility.

2. *How can I be commanded to have faith??*

I believe with perfect faith....How can one command belief? Belief is a state of mind and not an action that is dependent on a person’s will.

➤ The second, uniquely Jewish soul is truly “a part of G-d above”. (Tanya Chapter 2)
Being that the soul is an actual part of G-d, it is continuously experiencing G-dliness. **Faith is part of the DNA of every Jewish soul because it experiences G-d first hand. Faith is the very essence of the Jewish soul.** Impossible for a Jew not to have this innate faith in G-d, as this faith is not based on learning, understanding or doing for G-d.

- A Jew neither wants to nor can depart from G-d.”
- The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: **They are believers, the children of believers** הן מאמינים (Shabbat 97a).

So when we talk about the declaration “I Believe with complete faith..” this is truth for the soul. Belief is part of the soul’s essence and nature so this belief is very real and true. However this faith remains in our essence and does not translate into our daily lives. Our job is to tap into this faith, bring it to life and allow it to permeate and guide our lives.

3. *How can I access and cultivate my innate faith especially during difficult times?*

Tool #1: Open your Eyes-Find G-d in your life.

An artisan in Hebrew is called an "uman"—because he has practiced his craft repeatedly until it becomes natural for him. So too, ***emunah grows taller and deeper as you accustom yourself to see all the phenomena of life as manifestations of the Creator's presence and glory.*** אומן=אמונה

- Can you find G-d in your life, can you notice G-d's "hugs" He sends you daily? What do you see when you witness a birth or notice a beautiful sunset?
- Language-Thank you G-d, Baruch Hashem.
- Story of open wagon. Find G-d Hashem in nature
Lift your eyes upward/heavenward" (Isaiah 40:26)

Synagogues make large windows, not only for better natural light, but also to be able to see the heavens, which represents the Heavenly Throne, and all this can lead to increased fear of heaven. So the Rebbe says, by traveling in a wagon on the open road, you are able to fulfill this constantly. The abbreviation of these three Hebrew words spell SHEMA. (*From the 5703 talks of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn*)

- Divine Providence. Nothing happens by chance or coincidence. The more sensitive we make ourselves to this concept, the easier and more natural trusting in G-d becomes
 - *"The concept of Divine Providence is this: Not only are all particular movements of the various creatures directed by Providence, and not only is that Providence itself the life-force and maintained existence of every creature - but even more, the particular movement of any creature is in general terms related to the grand design of Creation... The aggregate of all individual acts brings to completion G-d's grand design in the mystery of all Creation. Ponder this: If the swaying of a blade of grass is brought about by Divine Providence and is crucial to the fulfillment of the purpose of Creation, how much more so with regard to mankind in general, and Israel (the people close to him) in particular!"* (Hayom Yom, Cheshvan 28)
 - I trust that there must be a reason this is happening
 - I can let go of the stress of the moment because G-d is in control
 - G-d is involved in every moment of our lives, everything that happens is according to His Divine Master Plan
 - Sent vs Stuck:

There was the time in 1967 when I attended the convention of N'shei Chabad, the Chabad Organization for Women and Girls, in Detroit. When the convention ended, I found myself with 20 other ladies waiting to board the plane for home—where my husband and the other ladies' husbands were anxiously waiting—and hearing that the flight was canceled. There was a snowstorm, and nothing was flying.

Of course, we all rushed to a payphone—this was before cell phones, remember—and we called the Chabad headquarters in New York to ask the Rebbe what to do. The leader of the group, Mrs. Miriam Popack, spoke with the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Binyomin Klein, and told him that we were stuck in Detroit. He put us on hold, and a minute later came back on the line: "The Rebbe doesn't understand the word 'stuck.'" Mrs. Popack then tried to explain what "stuck" means—all the while plugging more quarters into the payphone so the line wouldn't go dead—to which Rabbi Klein replied, "The Rebbe knows what stuck means. The Rebbe says that a Jew is never stuck."

So we got the message, and we rose to the occasion. We started running around the airport handing out Shabbos candles. And there now are women all over the United States who are lighting Shabbos candles because we got "stuck" in Detroit. As far as the Rebbe was concerned, there is no such thing as "stuck." Wherever you are, it's where you are supposed to be. You are sent, not stuck.

- Believing is Seeing Vs Seeing is Believing.

Tool #2: Learn, Study!!

Emunah is innate, yet it must be enhanced through study, experience and reason. Without that nurture, a person's emunah may remain divorced from his attitude and actions. The Talmud describes how a thief also believes in G-d: On the brink of his forced entry, as he is about to risk his life and the life of his victim—he cries out with all sincerity, "G-d help me!" The thief has faith that there is a G-d who hears his cries, yet it escapes him that this G-d may be able to provide for him without requiring that he abrogate G-d's will by stealing from others. ***For Emunah to affect him in this way he needs study and contemplation.***

- "All Jews are believers, descendants of believers". Faith and intellect are not only distinct entities, they are antithetical; for example, when something is understood, faith is not necessary. The Alter Rebbe therefore now goes on to explain that this intellectual perception is also implicit in the word emunah ("faith"). For this word is etymologically rooted in the word uman ("artisan"). In order for an artisan with a talent for painting, creating vessels, or whatever to be successful, he must habituate and train his hands; only then will they reveal the latent talents of the artistry found in his soul. The same is true here: The soul of every Jew possesses the abovementioned faith. However, in order for this faith to be actualized so that one's actions will be in consonance with it, one must habituate and train himself to realize that all he sees—heaven and earth and all of creation—are but G d's external garments. By constantly remembering that their inwardness is G dliness, the soul's essential faith will be revealed and will affect one's actions. (Tanya Chapter 42)
- *"The foundation of all foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to **know** that there is a Primary Being who brought into being all existence. All the beings of the heavens, the earth, and what is between them came into existence only from the truth of His being". (Mishnah Torah Chapter 1)* Note that the Rambam uses the word "to know", and not "to believe". By stating that the command is "to know" - i.e., to develop one's knowledge and awareness of G-d - these questions are answered: Though one believes in G-d, he must work to internalize that belief and make it part of his conscious processes. Furthermore, the intellectual activity necessary for this process of internalization is an act which can be required of a person. (*Derech Mitzvosecha, mitzvas HaAmanat Elokut*)

Our innate faith is meant to be tempered by reason. G-d does not want us to be puppets, He wants us to engage our intellect and emotions in our service to Him. When we use our intellect to understand G-d as much as humanly possible, and then that knowledge affects our emotions and ultimately our actions, we are serving G-d with every part of our body and soul.

- Study Shaar Habitachon-Bitachon Bestseller ☺ (see Meditations below)

Tool 3: Prayer-Talk to G-d!

Tefillah-Have a daily coffee date with G-d. Talk to Him, share what's in your heart. Ask Him for help to find Bitachon. Prayer reminds us of Hashem protecting us and being with us.

The Adon Olam Prayer:

The first part of this prayer contains some of the most foundational Jewish beliefs about G-d:

L-rd of the universe, who reigned before anything as created, at the time when by His will all things were made, then was His name proclaimed King, and after all things shall cease to be, the Awesome One Will reign alone. He was, he is and He shall be in glory. He is One, and there is no other to compare to Him, or consort with Him. Without beginning without end, power and dominion belong to Him.

- ✓ G-d exists
- ✓ His existence isn't contingent on our existence
- ✓ He is the sole authority
- ✓ His authority was not granted to Him by another being
- ✓ All things were created by Him
- ✓ He is One
- ✓ He transcends time

When we think about these themes, we may conclude that this Awesome and Almighty G-d is way beyond caring for me. He transcends everything we know and is infinite. How is He relevant to me and I relevant to Him?

The prayer continues:

He is My G-d and my ever-living redeemer. The strength of my lot in time of distress. He is my banner and my refuge, my portion on the day I call. Into His hand I entrust my spirit, when I sleep and when I awake. With my soul, my body too, the L-rd is with me, I shall not fear.

This second part of the prayer reassures us that G-d's providence is on each and every individual. G-d cares about my life, my struggles and my happiness.

How can this prayer help us when we are feeling anxious, worried or afraid?

Step 1: Think about the first part of Adon Olam. G-d is the creator of the world. He is in control, orchestrating every detail. Nothing is by accident.

Step 2: Realize how G-d is YOUR personal G-d. *"The L-rd is with me, I shall not fear"*

The Adon Olam prayer is the ultimate prayer of trust in G-d. It reassures us that we are in G-d's loving hands and He is with us.

If we can internalize the message of this prayer that G-d is with us always, He loves us and He wants the best for us, we will experience inner peace, tranquility and calm.

*The Lubavitcher Rebbe and the little girl who was afraid

Tool 4: Tap into your Feminine Faith!

As Jewish women, Bitachon is our trademark, it's part of our DNA!

From our matriarch Sara to the prophetess Miriam, from the women in Egypt to Queen Esther, from modern day Israeli Heroines to YOU, it was and is always the Jewish women who have led the way with unwavering trust in G-d.



Closing Story: The Weary Traveler

Man doesn't realize that whether or not we "carry our burden"-we worry over our physical distress etc., G-d is truly carrying it. "*Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will bear you*" (Psalms, 55:23)

The more dependent you are on G-d, the more independent you truly are.

B"H

Bitachon Meditations

FROM SHAAR HABITACHON

1. *G-d loves me and has compassion for me*
2. *G-d watches over me always. He never abandons nor neglects me*
3. *G-d is invincible and smarter than anyone or anything. G-d can do anything, even find solutions to problems that seem impossible to solve*
4. *G-d knows what is best for me, even better than I myself know. G-d has a plan that is perfect for me*
5. *G-d is in constant control. I am under His exclusive, loving care from the moment of my birth and throughout my life-from beginning to end*
6. *G-d is in complete control. Nothing and no one can help or harm me, except with the permission of G-d*
7. *G-d loves me unconditionally and has deep compassion for me, even when I am undeserving or unworthy*

LET GO AND LET G-D