

Praise Hashem & Pass the Ammunition!

PARSHA INSIGHTS - SHOFTIM (5757)

BOOST YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE!

“When you go out to war against your enemies, and you see horses and chariots, a nation more numerous than you, DO NOT FEAR THEM, because Hashem your G-d is with you...” (*Perek Chof, Pasuk Alef* [chapter 20, verse 1]). *Rashi* remarks that an army that seems unconquerable to humans can be defeated by Hashem with no difficulty whatsoever.

But still, how can we be expected not to be afraid of bunches of hostile soldiers charging at us? In addition, what is at the root of self-confidence and success during warfare?

You might be aware that the *Chofetz Chaim* addressed this very issue in his monumental work designed for soldiers, *Machane Yisroel*. In *Perek Yud* [chapter 10], the topic is *bitachon* [placing our trust in G-d]. Let us look at his inspiring comments.

After the soldier has examined his deeds and regretted his sins, and he has accepted upon himself wholeheartedly to fulfill all the precepts of the Torah to the best of his ability, one important task remains for him as he approaches the battlefield. **He must trust in Hashem** that He will certainly assist him as he fights. It is clear from the Torah, says the *Chofetz Chaim*, that even at a time of *midas hadin* [character trait of judgement], when the Heavenly attribute of justice seems to reign, as on a battlefield, a person simply needs to direct himself totally to Hashem. If he does so, G-d is immediately with him. This applies to all situations of challenge and adversity.

Even if the opposing army appears much greater and better armed, the soldier must not weaken in his firm *bitachon*. Similarly, even if the odds seem to be against us succeeding in our endeavors and undertakings, we must boost ourselves with encouragement, in the form of *bitachon*. Many *psukim* [verses] from *Tanach* [the entire Hebrew Bible] are cited by the *Chofetz Chaim* to build his concept, and the message is clear and unmistakable. The main reason a person is spared from death during war is his strong trust in Hashem that he will survive. **Degree of victory is in proportion to degree of bitachon.**

Perhaps the clearest example of this is in *Shmuel Alef* [Samuel 1], *Perek Yud Dalid* [chapter 14]. Yonasan Ben Shaul and his weapon bearer, without assistance from a regular army, accomplished the main victory over the *Plishtim* [Philistines] that day. What was the underlying factor that made them so overwhelmingly and supernaturally successful? The *Chofetz Chaim* points to the remarks of Yonasan to his assistant, in *Pasuk Vav* [6]. “Come, and let us go over (just the two of us!) to the garrison of these uncircumcised people; it may be that Hashem will perform a (miraculous) deed for us, FOR THERE IS NO RESTRAINT UPON HASHEM TO SAVE BY MANY OR BY FEW.” This, says the *Chofetz Chaim*, is a statement of *midas habitachon* [unshaking trust in G-d]. The powerful, holy thoughts of the *tzadik* [righteous man], Yonasan Ben Shaul, were at the root of that earth shattering victory.

It should be noted that the *sefer Shmuel* [Book of Samuel] contains multiple examples of *bitachon* leading to triumph. The *Chofetz Chaim* immediately cites another incident, this time from *Shmuel Alef* [1st Samuel], *Perek Lamid* [chapter 30]. You are probably familiar with the narrative. Dovid and his staff of warriors had been away from their city, Tziklag, because of some very pressing circumstances. Upon their return, they found that the entire city had been raided and burnt down, and their wives and children had been led away as captives by an invading gang of *Amalekim* [Amalekites]. Dovid and his men lifted up their voices and cried until they had no more strength to weep. Suddenly, in *Pasuk Vav*, we are told that “Dovid fortified (strengthened) himself in Hashem his G-d”. Right afterward, the *navi* [prophet] writes that Dovid consulted the *Urim V'tumim* [a device used to communicate with Hashem]; the reply was that he would find imminent success in chasing and defeating the *Amaleki* band which had raided Tziklag. Indeed, this was the outcome - all the captives were retrieved, and the foe was destroyed. Why did the *pasuk* seem to emphasize that Dovid consulted the *Urim V'tumim* AFTER he strengthened himself in Hashem? *Chofetz Chaim* answers this using the theme we have been developing. It is to teach that the *Urim V'tumim*'s news of success for Dovid was only BECAUSE he had strengthened his trust in G-d. Again, the victory was the RESULT OF the *bitachon* in Hashem.

In summary, the *Chofetz Chaim* concludes that “according to the extent of the *bitachon* is the extent of the success”. This stands to reason, since *Chazal* [our Sages] teach that all of Hashem’s rewards are measure for measure. The one who places his steadfast trust in G-d deserves His assistance in that matter, *mida kneged mida* [measure for measure].

Now we understand the Torah’s admonition not to fear the enemy. The actual lack of fright, the confidence in Hashem’s power to protect and redeem, brings us our victory! G-d appreciates this attitude so much that He rewards it in this manner. Furthermore, since it is not easy to develop and maintain such thoughts of *bitachon* in the face of challenge and difficulty, the payment is according to the effort.

Of course, the daily vicissitudes of life are not usually as dramatic as a genuine battlefield, although at times they come close. However, we all meet challenges every day, without fail, some small and some major. This lesson of *bitachon* should serve to fortify us with unfaltering confidence in dealing with these tests. “Cast your burden on Hashem, and He will sustain you” (*Tehillim* [Psalms] 55:23). True, we must engage all three of our main faculties - **thought, speech, and action** - in tackling our daily challenges. *Davening* (using the power of **speech**) for success is essential, and the need for effort (**action**) to achieve our goals cannot be understated. But some matters are simply out of our control. The *davening* [prayer] does not always yield immediate results, and the *hishtadlus* [effort and action] sometimes falls short as well. What is left to do? We can only rely on G-d with our minds and hearts - our **thoughts** - by sending the burden upon Hashem, the One capable of everything. That is the definition of *bitachon*.

As a new school year begins for us, we must employ our G-d-given abilities to make it a success. Taking all the above into account, there is no doubt that such will be the result if we truly turn our hearts to Hashem and His Torah.

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