

AN EXCERPT FROM THE UPCOMING BOOK

שער הבטחון

The Gate of Trust



A CHAPTER FROM

חובות הלבבות

Duties of the hearts

חיינו
CHAYENU

DAILY TORAH STUDY. DELIVERED.

INTRODUCTION



RX for CoronaVirus Anxiety

What's more contagious and perhaps dangerous than COVID-19 itself is the panic, anxiety and hysteria we are seeing plaque society. Being bombarded by media reports is leading to pandemonium, fear and heightened levels of stress and worry.

While we are instructed by the Torah to heed medical authorities' advice and we are taking necessary precautions for our bodily health, what are we doing to protect our mental, psychological and spiritual health?

Furthermore, these are not two separate domains or lives.

Our inner spirit directly affects our physical health, too.

Recent studies have proven unequivocally that when one is in a state of fear and anxiety the immune system is more vulnerable.

Thus, strengthening our mind and spirit is not only a spiritual imperative, but a holistic approach for physical wellbeing too.

But, how do we strengthen our inner, spiritual immune system?

Strengthening our Trust in G-d.

What are some differences between faith and trust?

Faith is the belief in G-d's existence;

Trust is that He takes care of me and wants my best.

Faith is the belief that all we have is from G-d;

Trust is the knowledge that G-d will provide.

Faith is the belief that all G-d does is for the good;

Trust is the knowledge that we will see the good.

Faith can be detached; Trust is internalized and real.

Developing an intimate trust that G-d runs the world and that everything is part of a plan, His plan, this will minimize anxiety and stress.

But what is the best and most effective way to accomplish this?

“The best and most effective thing to do, in a situation such as yours, is to study thoroughly those sections and chapters in our sacred books where the matter of Divine Providence and Bitochon are discussed, such as Chovos Halvovos, Shaar Habitochon, and similar. It is well to keep in mind those chapters and verses in the Tehillim which speak of these subjects, as well as the Midrashim and interpretations of our Sages on them. These things should be studied with such depth that they should become a part of one’s thinking. In this way there will be no room left for any kind of anxiety or worry, and as King David said in the Tehillim, “G d is with me, I shall not fear. What can man do unto me!””

(From a letter by the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

At these moments, when we feel like humans have lost all control, there is no better time to dedicate ourselves to harnessing this potent prescription of trust. We therefore are sampling here the first section of our forthcoming edition of “The Gate of Trust” — a chapter from Chovot Halevovot (Duties of the Hearts) by Rabbenu Bachya ibn Pekuda, along with traditional and Chassidic commentary.

Read it. Study it. Make it your reality. Let the calmness sink in!

לרפואה שלימה
חיים צבי הירש בן גושל
שלום דוב בער בן מרים בלומא
מנחם מענדל בן שושנה
מרים בת חנה



לעילוי נשמת
מנחם מענדל בן אברהם

Dedicated to all those who need an immediate Refuah

משפחת פעלליג

השער הרביעי
SECTION FOUR

שְׁעַר הַבְּטָחוֹן
THE GATE OF TRUST

OVERVIEW: In the introduction to *Sha'ar Habitachon*, the *Chovot Halevavot* will list and elaborate on the benefits that having *bitachon* (trust in G-d), brings a person both in spiritual matters and in worldly matters. In total, he will list five “spiritual” benefits and five “worldly” benefits.

בְּבְטָחוֹן עַל הָאֱלֹהִים יִתְבָּרַךְ לְבָדוֹ On Placing One's Trust in G-d Alone

אָמַר הַמְּחַבֵּר Introduction

The *Chovot Halevavot* begins his introduction to *Sha'ar Habitachon* (the Gate of Trust) — by explaining the connection between this “gate” and the preceding “gate” — *Sha'ar Avodat HaElokim* (the gate of the service of the Almighty).

He explains that the reason why he placed the *Sha'ar Habitachon* immediately after *Sha'ar Avodat HaElokim* is because having trust in G-d is extremely important in order for one to be able to be a true servant of G-d:

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁקִּדְמָה מֵאֲמַרְנוּ בְּחַיִּיב קִבְּלַת
עֲבוּדַת הָאֱלֹהִים, רְאִיתִי לְהֵבִיא אֶתְרִי
מִה שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ יוֹתֵר מִכָּל הַדְּבָרִים
לְעוֹבֵד הָאֱלֹהִים יִתְבָּרַךְ, וְהוּא הַבְּטָחוֹן
עָלָיו בְּכָל דְּבָרָיו, בְּעֵבֹר מִה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בוֹ
מִן הַתּוֹעֲלִיּוֹת הַגְּדוֹלוֹת בְּעֵינֵי הַתּוֹרָה
וּבְעֵינֵי הָעוֹלָם.

Having previously discussed in the previous gate — *Sha'ar Avodat HaElokim* — the obligation to accept upon oneself the service of G-d, I have seen it to be appropriate to now explain that which is most necessary* for one who wishes to be a servant of G-d, and that is to rely on him, in all his matters; for by doing so,* there will be great benefits* both in Torah matters, and in worldly matters.*

❧ COMMENTARY ❧

❧ **Most necessary.** Rabbi Avraham, son of the Rambam, writes that “trust in G-d, may He be exalted and blessed, is one of the choicest character traits we can have. It is, in fact, one of the foundations of the Torah, and therefore we find no one who argues on its necessity.” (*Hamaspik L'Oivdei Hashem* ch. 8).

In his commentary to Proverbs 30:5, the Vilna Gaon writes: “Trust is a general commandment which protects us from transgressing any of the commandments.”

We must know that faith is not something that can merely remain in our thought; rather, it must permeate the totality of our lives. The first principle of faith is that G-d controls the world. If He can deal with a billion and a half people, we can be sure that in regard to personal matters, we will see the fulfillment of the promise stated in the verse “I

have made you, and I will carry you. I will sustain you and deliver you” (Isaiah 46:4; *Igrot Kodesh* vol. 4, letter 984).

❧ **For by doing so etc..** The translation here follows the explanation of the commentary *Marpeh Lanefesh* who understands this sentence to be referring to the benefits of relying on G-d. However, the *Ne'edar Bakodesh* explains the words “in it” to be referring to the *Sha'ar Habitachon* and that it contains material which will be helpful in one's spiritual and materialistic pursuits.

❧ **Great benefits.** Although the author seems to imply here that it is merely beneficial to have trust in G-d, in his introduction he clearly states: “Examples of positive commandments from among the duties of the heart are.... to place one's trust in Him.”

While the Rambam does not list *Bitachon* among

If you place your trust in G-d it will be easier for you to act in accordance with the ways of the Torah. It will also be easier for you to acquire your materialistic needs as well, as the *Chovot Halevavot* will explain.*

ותועלתו בו בתורתו, מהן: **And it's benefits in so far as Torah matters:**

The *Chovot Halevavot* now lists five ways in which *bitachon* is beneficial to one's *Avodat Hashem* (divine service):

❧ BENEFIT OF TRUST: TRANQUILITY ❧

The first benefit is that *bitachon* causes a person to be free from worry allowing him to devote his energy to serving G-d:

מנוחת נפשו ובטחונו על אלהיו
 יתברך, כמו שהעבד חיב לבטוח על
 אדוניו, **Among the spiritual benefits, is tranquility of one's
 soul, free from worry as a result of his reliance on
 G-d,* just as a servant is bound to place his trust in
 his master.**

The first benefit of *bitachon* insofar as your religious life is concerned is that *bitachon* brings you to a state of tranquility which allows you to dedicate yourself to your service of the Almighty. The *Chovot Halevavot* explains this by comparing us to a slave

❧ COMMENTARY ❧

the 613 (*taryag*) commandments, we find numerous authorities who do attribute it as a component of one of the 613.

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3:32) explains *Bitachon* as an extension of Maimonides' Negative Commandment 40, that a soldier at the time of combat may not fear the enemy: "When you go out to war on your enemy and you will see a horse and chariot, a nation bigger than you, you shall not fear them" (Deuteronomy 20:1). We are hereby warned that if a person sees an immediate calamity, G-d's salvation shall be in his heart, and he should place his trust in it."

Furthermore, Rabbeinu Yonah (commentary to Mishlei 3:7) attributes the commandment of trust to the commandment of fear, suggesting that true fear of G-d is attained through a complete trust that everything comes from Him. Rabbeinu Yonah also attributes trust to the commandment of faith, suggesting that trust in G-d is the fullest extension of the commandment of faith.

However, the *Chareidim* (Commandments Dependent on Thought, 21) cites opinions that *bitachon* is indeed one of the 613 commandments. Writing in the name of Rabbeinu Yonah: "Complete trust in G-d is a commandment, as it states: 'Be complete with G-d your G-d' (Deuteronomy 18:13)." Likewise, (the *Chareidim* continues,) the Ramban (addendum to Rambam, positive commandment

8) also writes that the above-mentioned verse is a positive commandment: "not to seek the future from astrologers or the like; rather, we must believe that everything is from G-d, and He can annul all the astrological signs, if we come close to G-d." From this we can learn that it is a commandment to place the full trust of our hearts in G-d, in all our affairs. This is enumerated according to Rabbeinu Yonah, Rabbi Shlomo ibn Gabriel, Ramban, and Semak.

The *Meshech Chochma* (Deuteronomy 10:20) explains the commandment of cleaving to G-d as a commandment to place one's trust in G-d.

Kina'as Sofrim (*Sefer Hamitzvos*, commandment 5) writes: "How can daily prayer not be a Biblical commandment, when the intent of prayer is to ask the Creator daily to fill all his material needs, without which one cannot live, and by praying we yearn for His mercy? For we believe that He oversees everything and that He provides bread to all flesh."

❧ **Torah matters, and in worldly matters.** The author continues to explain the benefits in one's relationship with G-d and in his materialistic pursuits when trust in G-d exists. The author, in attributing the power of trust to all areas of life, is including every type of person, be his/her pursuit one of wealth and worldliness, or of a pious, ascetic lifestyle, trust in G-d will be beneficial (*Marpeh Lanefesh*).

who relies on his master to take care of all of his needs and concerns himself only with his responsibility to his master. In a similar vein, we as servants of G-d rely that G-d will take care of our needs; and only concern ourselves with fulfilling our duties towards G-d.

In the next few paragraphs, the *Chovot Halevavot* will illustrate how only one who relies on G-d can be truly free from worry and be in a peaceful state of mind:

מִפְּנֵי שְׂאֵם אֵינְנוּ בּוֹטְחִים בְּאֱלֹהִים בּוֹטְחִים בְּזוּלָתוֹ, **For one who does not place his trust in G-d, places his trust in an entity other than G-d.**

If you do not place your trust in G-d to take care of you, then you must instead place your trust in an entity other than G-d.*

וְיִמִּי שְׂבוֹטָהּ בְּזוּלַת ה', מִסִּיר הָאֱלֹהִים הַשְּׁנֵחָתוֹ מֵעֲלָיו וּמְנִיחַ אוֹתוֹ בְּיַד מִי שֶׁבָּטַח עָלָיו, **If someone places his trust in something other than G-d, then G-d removes His divine providence from him and leaves him in the hands of the entity that he placed his trust in.***

The *Chovot Halevavot* will now quote five Scriptural verses which show how: a) if you don't rely on G-d, then by default you must be relying on some other entity to take

COMMENTARY

☞ **If you place your trust in G-d etc.** See *Marpeh Lanefesh*.

☞ **Tranquility of one's soul as a result of his reliance on G-d.** Trust in G-d in itself has an inherent benefit to a person. The Ba'al Shem Tov teaches that one has to pray that his trust be strengthened, for when G-d desires to punish, He begins with removing that person's trust (*Ketter Shem Tov* 382).

This can be understood in light of the Rebbe Maharash's: A Jew is not deficient in sustenance, he is deficient in his trust of G-d. From heaven there is an abundance of sustenance being provided for a Jew; however, if one is deficient in trust, then the sustenance does not reach us (*Sefer Hamaamarim* 1886 p. 168).

Bitachon is like a faucet: when we have it our blessings pour through; when we lack it, the faucet has been shut off (*Torat Menachem*, vol. 9, p. 124).

☞ **An entity other than G-d.** There are those who, instead of trusting in G-d, place trust in merely themselves, their own abilities, or in other people – i.e. “professionals” – or in the constellations, waiting for their lucky star to strike (*Pat Lechem; Tov*

Halevonon). All this is contrary to the tranquility achieved by placing trust in G-d alone.

From a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe: “You have two options: Until you see the fulfillment of the blessing, you can go about anxious that perhaps, Heaven forbid, the blessing will not be fulfilled, and after the blessing is fulfilled, you will yet again worry: why did you have to waste so much energy worrying for nothing? Alternatively, you can be strong in your trust and faith in G-d, that He will lead you on the proper path and fulfill all the blessings with which you have been bestowed; and afterwards, when you see the fulfillment of the blessings, you can tell yourself: See how well I handled myself, in that I did not worry about matters over which there was no need for concern!” (*Igrot Kodesh* vol. 4, letter 984).

☞ **If someone places his trust in something other than G-d, then G-d removes His divine providence from him and leaves him in the hands of the entity that he placed his trust in.** In *Moreh Nevuchim* (3:51), the Rambam explains that when we are separated from G-d, G-d is also separated from us, leaving us exposed to any evil that

Bottom line

➤ *Through reliance on G-d you will be tranquil.*

care of you and b) that by doing so you cause G-d to remove his divine providence from you.

וַיְהִי־הָיָה כְּמִי שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בּוֹ (רַמְבַּם ב, יג) "כִּי שָׂתִים רְעוֹת עָשָׂה עַמִּי אוֹתִי עֲזָבוּ מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים, לְחַצּוֹב לָהֶם בְּאֵרוֹת בְּאֵרוֹת נִשְׁבְּרִים,"

And he, the one who places his trust in something other than G-d will be like one regarding which it is said in the verse (Yirmiyahu 2:13): "For My people have committed two evils;* they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water."

In this verse the prophet Yirmiyahu rebukes the Jews for forsaking G-d who is compared to the source of the living water. The water in the verse refers to the good things that are bestowed upon us. G-d is referred to as the source of *living* water; for the good that comes directly from G-d is like living water which 1) comes directly from the source and 2) is not subject to any interruption.

This is in contrast to the water which is found in broken cisterns which refers to the good that comes to a person as a result of relying on any entity other than G-d. Just like the water that is to be found in the broken cisterns 1) do not come from its source, and 2) cannot be contained by the cistern, so too the good that one receives from entities other than G-d 1) does not come directly from its source — G-d, and 2) will also eventually cease to exist.

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might befall us. This is the meaning of the verse, "And I will hide my face from them, and they shall be consumed, and many evils and troubles shall befall them. On that day they will say: Are these evils not befalling us, because our G-d is not among us?" (Deuteronomy 31:17). It is clear that we ourselves are the cause of Divine concealment, and that the screen that separates us from Him is of our own creation.

The *Kli Yakar*, similarly, explains the meaning of the verse, "If you treat my commandments with indifference, then I will treat you with indifference in my vengeance" (Leviticus 26:23-24). G-d is saying that His response to the Jewish people's indifference will, indeed, be His own indifference. In other words, removing His providence from one who trusts in others instead is not a punishment, rather a natural consequence.

A person's existence is dependent on G-d's providence and kindness; when he chooses not to acknowledge this and places trust in something other than G-d, then G-d, so to speak, responds in kind: "If you do not acknowledge this reality and you do not need me, then I will indeed remove My providence from you, and your destiny will be in that which you place your trust."

This does not mean that G-d has removed His providence from the person; rather, He has

obfuscated His apparent involvement.

Although everything comes from G-d, there are two layers of Divine Providence:

1. Inner Providence. In this higher layer, G-d's involvement is not hidden in natural phenomenon, and His "fingerprints" are, rather, quite apparent. One can detect a supernatural force guiding his ways.

2. External Providence. In this lower layer, G-d is also the ultimate source (for everything comes from G-d). However, the situation is concealed by natural entrapments. One cannot even detect that G-d is involved, and he feels as if he is leading his own destiny – "a life of his own," subject to the whims of nature. This is because he has chosen to put his trust in fickle elements, other than in G-d Himself (*Likutei Sichot*. Vol. 31, p. 171ff; Vol. 18, p. 199).

☞ **For My people have committed two evils.**

This verse points to the double folly of turning away trust from G-d, who is the source of everything. By not placing your faith in Him, you are essentially leaving the wellspring, the source of the water in the cisterns; and you are placing your trust in something other than G-d. Those "others" are mere "vessels" through which G-d provides to His people and, without G-d's provision, broken cisterns (*Tov Halevonon*).

This verse implies that one who does not place his trust in G-d must necessarily place his trust in an entity other than G-d. Secondly it states that just as the cistern does not hold the water the good will eventually be removed from him. This is a source for the concept advanced by the *Chovot Halevavot* that G-d removes his divine providence from those who stop relying on him.

A second verse is now quoted:

וַאֲמַר (תהלים קו, כ) "וַיִּמְרוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדָם
בְּתַבְנִית שׂוֹר אוֹכֵל עֵשֶׂב",
And as it says (in Tehillim 106:20): "They exchanged
their glory for the likeness of an ox eating grass."

This verse refers to the time when the Jews worshipped the golden calf, substituting G-d for the image of a grass eating ox. In subsequent verses it states that as a result of this, G-d was ready to destroy the Jewish nation, were it not for the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu interceded on the Jewish people's behalf.

Here too we see that as a result of the Jews substituting G-d with another entity, G-d was ready to remove his providence from them and destroy them.

A third verse:

וַאֲמַר הַכְּתוּב (ירמיה יז, ז) "בְּרוּךְ הַגֵּבֵר אֲשֶׁר
יִבְטַח בָּהּ וְהָיָה ה' מִבְּטָחוֹ",
And as Scripture says (in Yirmiyahu 17:7): "Blessed is
the man who trusts in the L-rd; the L-rd shall be
his trust".

This verse assures you that if you have *bitachon* in G-d you will be protected by G-d, once again implying that if you do not have *bitachon* you will not be protected.

A fourth verse:

וַאֲמַר (תהלים מ, ה) "אֲשֶׁרִי הַגֵּבֵר אֲשֶׁר שָׁם
ה' מִבְּטָחוֹ וְלֹא פָנָה אֶל רֵעֵבִים וְשָׁמִי כָבוֹד",
And as it says (in Tehillim 40:5): "Praiseworthy is the
man who made the L-rd his trust, and did not turn
to the haughty and those who turn to falsehood."

The verse praises one who relies on G-d rather than turning to others. In this verse we also see that one has a choice: either to rely on G-d or in another entity; there is no middle ground.

A fifth verse:

וַאֲמַר (ירמיה יז, ה) "אָרוּר הַגֵּבֵר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח
בְּאָדָם וְשָׁם בָּשָׂר זְרוּעוֹ וּמִן ה' יִסּוֹר לִבּוֹ".
And as it says (in Yirmiyahu 17:5): "Cursed is the man
who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and
whose heart turns away from the L-rd."

This verse teaches us how bad things befall one who relies on other people instead of on G-d. This is another source which supports the *Chovot Halevavot's* original statement that G-d removes his divine providence from you, if you do not have trust in him.

Bottom line

➤ *If you place your trust in something other than G-d, G-d removes His providence from you.*

Up until now the *Chovot Halevavot* has been explaining in general terms that when a man relies on any other entity than G-d, it is doomed to fail. Now, the *Chovot Halevavot* brings specific examples of things that people tend to place their trust in, and how they do not provide security for a person:

וְאִם יִבְטַח עַל חֲכָמָתוֹ וְתַחְבּוּלוֹתָיו וְכַח
גּוֹפּוֹ וְהַשְׂתַּדְלָוֹתוֹ, יַעֲזֹבֵהוּ ה' לְנַפְשׁוֹ:
יִיגַע לְרִיק וְיִחַלֵּשׁ כַּחַז וְתִקְצַר תַּחְבּוּלוֹתוֹ
מִהַשְׂיָג חֲפָצוֹ, כְּמוֹ שְׂאֵמֵר הַכְּתוּב (אִיּוֹב
ה', יג) "לוֹכֵד חֲכָמִים בְּעֶרְמָם".

If he relies on his wisdom* and his schemes, his physical strength and his own efforts,* then his efforts will be for naught, and he will become weak and loose that physical strength, and his schemes and wisdom will fall short of accomplishing his goals, as Scripture says (in Iyov 5:13): "He, referring to G-d, traps clever people in their shrewdness."*

This means that instead of the shrewd plan having the desired positive result, G-d orchestrates that the very same plan, is itself the cause of one's failure.

This verse is brought as proof that one cannot rely on one's plans, however shrewd they may be.*

וְאָמַר (קְהֵלֶת ט, יא) "שָׁבַתִּי וְרָאָה תַחַת
הַשָּׁמַיִם, כִּי לֹא לְקָלִים הַמְרוּץ, וְלֹא
לְגִבּוֹרִים הַמְלַחֲמָה, וְלֹא לְחֲכָמִים לֶחֶם".

And as it says (in Kohelet 9:11): "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race does not belong to the swift, nor the war to the mighty; neither do the wise have bread..."

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☞ **Relies on his wisdom.** On the verse "you will eat from the labor of your hand" (Psalms 128:2), the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, explains: The verse does not say 'the labor of your head,' for one is to work for his livelihood only with his physical abilities, his hands; his head, on the other, is to be utilized for the study of Torah (*Likutei Torah, Shelach*, 42d).

☞ **If he relies on his wisdom... his physical strength and his own efforts.** Although one is not to rely on his wisdom and efforts to achieve his goals or earn his living, one can and should utilize his abilities and strengths to accomplish what he needs, because it is the vehicle which G-d gave him to achieve his success. He must just be conscious of the fact that blessings and success ultimately come from G-d, and it is G-d who chooses that His blessings come through the channel of a human effort.

The *Sifri* explains that it is actually mandated to invest in work, as he expounds on the verse "And G-d will bless you in all that you do" (Devarim 15:18), that "I would think that one can sit idle (and do nothing), therefore, the verse teaches us 'in all that you do'" (*Likutei Sichot* vol. 31, vol. 172ff).

In fact, in Chapter 4, Rabbeinu Bachya writes: "With the clear conviction that his affairs are given over to the decrees of the Creator, May He be exalted.... He must at the same time pursue means beneficial to him and choose what appears to him to be the best [course of action] in the matter."

☞ **He traps clever people in their shrewdness.** The Malbim on this verse brings the example of Yosef's brothers who plotted to sell their brother into slavery, and yet their very plan caused Yosef to be second to the king which was the total opposite of their desired goal.

Bottom line

- Your wisdom and ingenuity or physical strength on its own are inadequate to achieve your goals.

One would expect that those who are physically strong would win the war. This verse is brought as proof that one can't rely on one's physical strength for success either.*

Another verse is quoted:

וְאָמַר (תהלים לד, יא) "כְּפִירִים רָשָׁו וְרָעֵבוּ וְדוֹרְשֵׁי ה' לֹא יִחְסְרוּ כֵּל טוֹב." **And it says (in Tehillim 34:11): "Young lions suffer want and are hungry, but those who seek the L-rd lack no good."**

The "young lions" in the verse refers to those strong people who rely on their strength, and the verse teaches us that ultimately they are destined to be poor and hungry. On the other hand "those who seek G-d", which refers to those who rely on G-d, will not be lacking any good that they may need.

From all the above Scriptural verses we see that one cannot rely on one's own talents, be it strength or cleverness for one's success; only one who relies on G-d is guaranteed to be taken care of.

Having discussed how one who relies on his own talents will not be successful, the *Chovot Halevavot* now turns to address one who relies on his wealth:

וְאִם יִבְטַח בְּרַב עֲשָׂרוֹ: יוֹסֵר מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּשְׂאֵר לְזוּלָתוֹ, **And if he relies on his abundance of wealth,* it will be removed from him and left to someone else.**

The *Chovot Halevavot* now quotes Scriptural verses which illustrate the transitory nature of wealth:

כִּמּוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב (איוב כו, יט) "עֲשִׂיר וַיִּשְׁכַּב וְלֹא יָאִסֶּף, עֵינָיו פָּקַח וְאִינְנוּ", **As Scripture says (Iyov 27:19): "A rich man lies down with his wealth intact, he opens his eyes and it is no longer his."**

וְאָמַר (משלי כג, ד) "אַל תִּינַע לְהַעֲשִׂיר, מִבִּינְתֶךָ חֲדַל", וְאָמַר (שם ה) "הִתְעִיף עֵינֶיךָ בּוֹ וְאִינְנוּ", **Similarly, the verse says (Mishlei 23:4): "Do not toil to become wealthy, from your own understanding desist." And the next verse (Mishlei 23:5) says "Before you can set your eyes on it is gone."**

COMMENTARY

☞ **This verse is brought etc.** See *Pat Lechem*.

☞ **This verse is brought as proof.** The verse continues by saying that "nor does bread come to the wise". According to some commentaries the verse is not only brought as proof to the fact that one cannot rely on one's strength, but also that one cannot rely on one's intelligence.

☞ **If he relies on his abundance of wealth.** The author explains the folly of relying on these three things, wisdom, strength and wealth, in accordance of the verse "the wise shall not boast with their wisdom... the strong with their strength... and the rich with his wealth" (Yirmiyahu 9:22-23; *Pat Lechem*).

Wisdom, wealth and strength in themselves are

nothing to boast about. If one, however, sees them as a method to serve G-d, and as a gift of G-d then there is something to boast.

The Midrash says "three great gifts were created, that if a person merits in any one of them he receives the delight of the entire world; if he merits wisdom he merits it all, if he merits strength he merits it all and if he merits wealth he merits this all. When does this all apply? When he sees it as gifts from Heaven which are bestowed through the power of the Torah, but human strength and wealth are valueless..."

When these gifts (are viewed as) coming from a source other than G-d they will eventually cease (*Midrash Rabbah, Bamidbar, 22:7; Or Hatorah, Nach II, p. 877*).

In these two verses, Shlomo Hamelech warns a man not to engage in amassing riches, because it won't last.

וְאָמַר (ירמיהו ז', יא) "בְּחַצֵּי יָמָיו יַעֲזֹבֵנּוּ
וּבְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ יִהְיֶה נָבֵל".

Likewise, it says in Yirmiyahu (17:11): "At a young age, it, i.e., one's wealth will leave him, and at his end he will look foolish."*

אוּ תִמְנַע מִמֶּנּוּ הַנְּאֻתוֹ בּוֹ, כְּאֲשֶׁר
אָמַר הַחֶכֶם (קהלת ו', ב) "וְלֹא יִשְׁלִימֵנּוּ
הָאֱלֹהִים לְאִכּוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ".

Alternatively, even if the riches themselves are not removed from him, his ability to enjoy the wealth will be held back from him by G-d. As the wise man, Shlomo Hamelech said (in Kohelet 6:2): "The Almighty gives him no power to eat of it."

The verse continues by saying, that instead a stranger will benefit from his wealth.

If G-d doesn't want him to derive any enjoyment from his riches, then why does G-d leave it with him?

וְיִהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ פְּקָדוֹן שְׂשׂוּמָר אוֹתוֹ מִן
הַפְּנָעִים עַד שְׁיָשׁוּב לְמִי שֶׁהוּא רָאוּי
לוֹ,

It will be by him as a deposit, so that he will guard it from harm, until the time that it will be returned to the one who is deserving of it, and who it was meant for.

This concept, that sometimes a man is given wealth, solely for the purpose of safeguarding it until another person will receive it, is supported by two verses:

כְּמוֹ שֶׁפְּתוּב (שם ב', כו) "וְלֹחֲוִימָא נָתַן
עֵינָן לְאַסוּף וְלִכְנוּם לְתַת לְטוֹב לְפָנָי
הָאֱלֹהִים",

As it says (in Kohelet 2:26): "And to the sinner he gives the urge to gather and amass wealth, to give to one who is good in front of the Almighty."

This verse is quoted as proof that the sinner is merely a middleman who amasses wealth for the righteous man. The following verse is brought as proof that the sinner does not even derive any benefit from the wealth while it is by him:

וְאָמַר (איוב כו', ז) "יְכִיֵּן וְצַדִּיק וְלְבָשׁ
וְכֶסֶף נָקִי יַחְלֹק".

As it says (in Iyov 27:17): "He, the wicked man, will prepare, and the righteous man will use it, and the innocent will divide the money among themselves."

The pasuk speaks about the wicked merely 'preparing' for the righteous, implying that the wicked person does not derive any benefit from his wealth at all.

COMMENTARY

☞ **At a young age, it will leave him etc.** While this verse actually refers to one who obtains his wealth dishonestly, the *Chovot Halevavot* quotes it as yet another source from a verse, of the transitory nature of wealth. Cf. *Pat Lechem*.

Bottom line

- One should not rely on his wealth, for it can be taken away from him or he can be denied the opportunity to enjoy it.

Until now we discussed two possibilities of what might happen to one who relies solely on his wealth: 1) he might lose his wealth 2) even if he retains his wealth, he will not be able to enjoy it.

Now the *Chovot Halevavot* goes further and says that sometimes not only is a man not able to enjoy his wealth, but the wealth itself is cause for bad to befall him:

וְאִפְשָׁר שְׂיִהְיֶה הַמָּוֶן סִבַּת רָעוֹת וְאִבְדָּן נַפְשׁוֹ, **It is possible that his money will be the cause of his misfortune* as well as the cause of the destruction of his soul.**

Sometimes money can be the source of one's physical and spiritual downfall.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (קהלת ה, יב) "יֵשׁ רָעָה חוֹלָה רְאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ, עֹשֶׂה שְׂמוֹר לְבַעְלָיו לְרָעוֹתוֹ." **As Scripture says (in Kohelet 5:12): "There is a sickening evil that I have seen under the sun — riches hoarded by their owner, to his own misfortune."**

Until now, the *Chovot Halevavot* has elaborated on the first spiritual advantage of *bitachon*, namely that it causes a man to be relaxed. One who relies on other people or on one's own talents or wealth always has to be worried that at some point his success will not last.

❧ BENEFIT OF TRUST: INDEPENDENCE FROM OTHER PEOPLE ❧

Now the *Chovot Halevavot* moves on to list another spiritual advantage of *bitachon*:

מֵהֶם, שֶׁהַבְּטִיחַ בְּאֱלֹהִים יְבִיאֵנוּ: **Among the spiritual benefits of *bitachon*, is that trust in G-d will bring:**

הַבְּטִיחְתוּ עָלָיו שְׂלֵא יַעֲבֹד זֹולָתוֹ, **Trust in Him will bring a man not to serve any other entity.***

וְשְׂלֵא יִקְוֶה לְאִישׁ, וְלֹא יִיחַל לְבְנֵי אָדָם, **He won't need to place hope in man or expect anything from other people.**

❧ COMMENTARY ❧

❧ **The cause of his misfortune.** Wealth is often a reason for arrogance and cause for a feeling of superiority, which leads to sinful acts and betraying G-d, as the verse states "and He will add to your silver and gold, then your heart will become arrogant and you will forget G-d, your G-d" (Devarim 8:13-14; *Pat Lechem*).

❧ **Any other entity.** He will not turn to idolatry, looking for "another G-d." His trust that G-d provides his needs will prevent the erroneous conclusion that G-d has left the controls of the world to the discretion of the stars and constellations, and therefore one must serve them to receive substance (*Pat Lechem*).

❧ Bottom line

- *Your wealth can be the cause of your undoing.*
- *Your trust in G-d will enhance your interaction with your fellow person.*

As a result of not needing to rely on other people he will avoid many sinful behaviors:

וְלֹא יַעֲבֹדֵם לְהִתְרַצוֹת אֲלֵיהֶם, וְלֹא יִחְנִיף לָהֶם, **He won't need to be subservient to them in order to win their favor or flatter them.**

וְלֹא יִסְכְּמוּ עִמָּהֶם בְּבִלְתֵּי עֲבוֹדַת הָאֱלֹהִים, **He won't need to consent to being involved with them in spending time with them on matters that are not related to the service of G-d.**

Why not?

וְלֹא יִפְחָדְהוּ עֲנֻנָם, וְלֹא יִירָא מִמִּחְלָקוֹתָם, **Because he will not be afraid of their wicked behavior, i.e., the repercussions of not flattering them and he will not be fearful of their arguments with him.**

As a result he won't feel the pressure to join them in their inappropriate behaviors.

אֲבָל יִתְפַּשֵּׁט מִבְּגֵדֵי טוֹבוֹתָם וּמֵרַח הוֹדָאתָם וְחוֹבַת תְּגוּמוֹלָם, **Rather, he will divest himself from their favors and from the bother of being gracious to them, as well as from the obligation to pay them back for any good they do to him.**

וְאִם יוֹכִיחַ אוֹתָם, לֹא יוֹהֵר בְּכַבּוֹדָם, וְאִם יְכַלְמֵם, לֹא יבוֹשׂ מֵהֶם, וְלֹא יִיפֶה לָהֶם הַשֶּׁקֶר. **If he needs to rebuke them he will not need to be careful with their honor, and if he needs to shame them while rebuking them, he will not be embarrassed by them, and he will not praise their false ways.**

A man who solely relies on other people for his livelihood and success, will need to ensure that he stays on good terms with them, so that he can continue to have his needs served by them. This could cause him to sin in a number of ways: 1) he might see the need to flatter them,* 2) he might see the need to join these people by spending time with them engaging in inappropriate behaviors which he would not have engaged in, were he not to be relying on them for his needs.

On the other hand, one who has *bitachon* will not be hesitant to rebuke them even if it requires being somewhat disrespectful of them.* Additionally in instances in which rebuking them requires that he shame them,* he will not be embarrassed to do so, being that he does not rely on them for his needs.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַנְּבִיא (ישעיה נה:ז) "וְה' יִשְׁעוּר לִי, עַל כֵּן לֹא נִבְלַמְתִּי, אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁעוּר לִי, **As the prophet said (in Yeshayahu 50:7): "But the L-rd, G-d helps me, therefore, I was not embarrassed; therefore,**

~ COMMENTARY ~

☞ **The need to flatter them.** This means telling a wicked man that he is in fact righteous or the like; which is a grave sin.

☞ **Being somewhat disrespectful of them.** Oftentimes, if one rebukes while making sure to show respect to one he's rebuking, it does not have the desired effect.

☞ **Requires that he shame them.** Although in general one he rebukes a person is not permitted to embarrass him while doing so, there are instances in which it may be permitted to do so and even necessary. See Maimonides, Deiot 6:8 for more details.

על כן שמתי פני פחלמיש ואדע כי לא אבוש", **I made my face like flint, and I knew that I would not be ashamed".**

Due to his trust in G-d's help, Yeshayohu didn't need to rely on any other person. This is what the verse means when it says "therefore, I was not embarrassed". His trust also enabled him to rebuke other people which is what the verse means when it says "I made my face like flint," referring to those times when it was necessary for him to rebuke people.

The verse is brought as support, for that which was stated above, that one who has *bitachon* can rebuke someone without fear of repercussions.

ואמר (יחזקאל ב, ו) "אל תירא מהם ומדבריהם אל תירא", ואמר (שם) "מדבריהם אל תירא ומפניהם אל תחת", ואמר (ירמיה א, ח) "אל תירא מפניהם", ואמר (שם ז) "אל תחת מפניהם", ואמר (יחזקאל ג, ט) "כשמיד חזק מצר נתתי מצחך, לא תירא אותם ולא תחת מפניהם". **And as it says (in Yechezkel 2:6): "fear them not, and fear not their words," and at the end of the same verse, it says: "fear not their words, neither be dismayed by them." And as it says (in Yirmiyahu 1:8): "Fear them not" and later on in the same Chapter, it says (Yirmiyahu 1:17): "be not dismayed by them." And it says (in Yechezkel 3:9): "As shamir, stronger than flint, I have set your forehead; fear them not, neither shall you be intimidated by them."**

These Scriptural verses are brought as support, for that which was stated above, that someone who trusts in G-d will not be afraid of the repercussions of not flattering the wicked, and will be able to stand up to them.

Bottom line

➤ *Your trust in G-d will remove distractions.*

About the “Gate of Trust” Project

Over the past 2 years, Chayenu has been serializing “Sha’ar HaBitachon” (The Gate of Trust) - the most classic, authentic and original treatment on this subject - which is a chapter from Chovot Halevavot (Duties of the Hearts) by Rabbeinu Bechaya ibn Pekuda (11th century).

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