

# ON THE ROAD TO BITACHON

*by Rabbi Ephraim D. Becker, Ph.D.*

There is an ideal called Bitachon which, loosely translated, means assurance drawn from HaShem, and is associated with tranquility and freedom from any anxiety or anger. Anxiety and anger are preoccupying states of mind which drain precious resources from one's service since the focus is on the self and self-needs and less on the needs of others and on Divine service. Bitachon leaves the person free to serve HaShem with all his heart and soul. We function better with Bitachon, we relate to HaShem more appropriately through Bitachon and we are fulfilling His Will when we relate to the world with Bitachon. We are also more likely to be successful when we approach tasks with Bitachon, a small benefit compared to the boundless reward we will receive for striving to attain Bitachon. This ideal state is built from a number of components. Each of these components can be acquired to varying degrees, resulting in more or less of the tranquility associated with Bitachon. These components include:

1. An awareness of HaShem as all-powerful and in absolute control (Emunah).
2. An awareness of HaShem as only desiring my welfare (Chesed).
3. An awareness of the existence of eternity (Olam HaBah).
4. An awareness that the good is not only in this world but ultimately in the next.
5. An acceptance of the limitations of human understanding of what is best for me.
6. An acceptance of reality as the backdrop against which one is meant to operate.
7. The relationship between human effort and reliance on HaShem.
8. An understanding of the concept of prayer and its role in our relationship with HaShem.

I think that it is only fair that we treat each of these components a bit more extensively (they are, after all, the core of a lifetime of effort). It should be clear, though, at the outset, that many of these components are likely to run quite contrary to our daily assumptions and as such will require a good deal of maturity and thought to master. This resistance gives us a glimpse into the real; the list of components give us a snapshot of the ideal; and we'll have to discuss the process:

The Real: My world is fashioned by me; nature is cruel; what you see is what you get; if I don't fix it then it will remain broken; I've determined what is best for myself and for the world; reality is the problem and I am the solution; and there is no one to turn to but myself.

The Ideal: Acute awareness of each of the assumptions listed above such that they entirely inform my feelings and reactions. I react to the world as a master of Bitachon (Ba'al Bitachon).

The Process: Clarification, thoughtful contemplation and application in my daily interactions (we'll try to explore these more fully as we go along). Every little bit of Bitachon goes a very long way.

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