



The Power of Positive Thought

טראכט גוט
וועט זיין גוט

Throughout the teachings of all our Rabbeim, the theme of *bitachon* in Hashem constantly repeats itself.

In countless letters, *maanos*, and *sichos*, the Rebbe delves deeply into this subject, expounding on the importance of trust in Hashem that all will turn out in a manner of revealed good.

Based on a story of the Tzemach Tzedek as quoted by the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe actually takes the *middah* of *bitachon* to a whole new level: “*Tracht gut vet zein gut*” implies that the actual trust in Hashem will bring about the good outcome.

Below is some background information, details, and insights into this very important subject.

Don't Despair!

The Frierdiker Rebbe relates in *Lekutei Diburim*:
The Frierdiker Rebbe was discussing how precious the memories of a Chossid's yechidus are, and how reliving these experiences and envisioning the scene in one's mind brings unparalleled hope and comfort in the Chossid's darkest hour. He then went on to relate this story:

In the yeshivah Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, one of the *mashpi'im* was the Chossid Reb Michoel [Blinner/Der Alter]. The older *temimim* [of today] remember who Reb Michoel was.

When he was a young man, one of his children became gravely ill, and the doctors said they have no cure and don't know what to do with the child.

Reb Michoel went over to his fellow Chassidim and relayed the bitter situation. The Chassidim encouraged him and insisted that he not despair. Hashem will surely help, they said. Then they urged him to go immediately to Lubavitch.

Reb Michoel cried profusely. He wished he could go to Lubavitch, but the

doctors predicted that there were only a few hours left, *r"l*. So why should he go?

One of the elder Chassidim reprimanded him sharply. “The Gemara says never to lose hope in Hashem’s mercy! The forces of good will certainly ask Hashem to hold out with the verdict until you get to the Rebbe.”

...Arriving in Lubavitch, Reb Michoel was lucky to be immediately received in *yechidus* [by the Tzemach Tzedek].

“When I came in to see the Rebbe,” Reb Michoel related, “and I handed over the *pidyon* for my son, I was overcome with the thought: Who knows what’s doing with my son? The doctors predicted that it’s only a matter of a few hours. So I began to cry terribly.

“The Rebbe read my note, and he said to me, ‘Don’t cry! *Tracht gut vet zein gut*. Don’t grieve! You will be at your grandchildren’s bar mitzvahs’.

“In those difficult times,” Reb Michoel said, “when in my home I faced the hardships of raising my children (צער גידול בנים), I would envision the Rebbe’s holy face, and the words he spoke at that *yechidus*, and all was good!”¹

The Rebbe’s Thought

In another letter, the Frierdiker Rebbe relates the story, adding another interesting point. He asks the recipient to notify him of any progress in the situation of a sick person for whom he had requested a *bracha*, and then the Frierdiker Rebbe relates:

There are three stories in this regard, spanning a course of three generations, from our Rabbeim. My father [the Rebbe Rashab] once responded to someone who cried to him, begging for a blessing for a gravely ill patient. My father told me that he heard from his father [the Rebbe Maharash], that he was also approached about a similar situation, and he [the Rebbe Maharash] said that his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, also had a similar story, and he responded to the one asking for the blessing: “*Tracht gut vet zein gut*.”

The Chossid replied, “What will it help if I think [good]. You, the Rebbe, must think [good]. Your thoughts can actually help!” The Tzemach Tzedek replied, “Yes. But you must notify [me] how things are doing.”²

Power of Bitachon

In a famous *sicha* defining the true meaning of *middas habitachon*, the Rebbe bases the very foundation of this *middah* on the timeless vort of the Tzemach Tzedek, “*Tracht gut vet zein gut*.”

Bitachon means that one actually believes and trusts in Hashem that all will turn out good in a revealed manner. True, we believe that everything is ultimately for the best, despite the fact that we don’t always understand Hashem’s ways. But real *bitachon* goes a step further. We must trust that things will actually turn out good in a way that we can see and appreciate—בטוב הנראה והנגלה.

How can this be, the Rebbe asks. What if the person is indeed worthy of heavenly punishment? Why should he trust that all will be good?

Based on the vort of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe explains that *bitachon* of a Yid itself is what deems him worthy of receiving all good. That’s what the Tzemach Tzedek meant when he said “*Tracht gut vet zein gut*.” By thinking positively and having total trust in Hashem, then, in the Rebbe’s words: “הבטחון עצמו יביא לתוצאות טובות”—the *bitachon* itself will bring about good outcome.³

SAFE AND SOUND

In this letter, the Frierdiker Rebbe writes to a father whose son was operating an airplane and had lost contact with ground control. Based on the date of the letter (25 Adar-Sheini 5703), we can assume that his son was part of the war effort, leaving all the more room for worry. The Frierdiker Rebbe writes:

I heard about your distinguished son who works on an airplane, and that there is still no word from him as to where he is now.

My great-grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, told one of the Chassidim—Reb Michoel Blinner of Nevel—when his son was in grave danger: “Arouse your trust in Hashem, your pure faith that He will save your son. Thoughts have effect. *Tracht gut vet zein gut*.” And so it was; his son was saved.

May Hashem help you to fulfill the advice of the holy of holies [the Tzemach Tzedek], זצ”ק.

(Igros Kodesh vol. 7 p. 197)

Machshava has Effect

Throughout the years, the Rebbe repeated this instruction of the Tzemach Tzedek countless times. When people asked the Rebbe for his *brachos*, the Rebbe often quoted this timeless *horaah* as a means to bring about Hashem's salvation.

In one letter, the Rebbe explains that the power of *machshava* actually effects the goings-on of this world. Therefore, it is crucial to have only positive thoughts:

In response to your letter; it seems that I still have not influenced you to have a better spirit. I believe that I've already told you several times what is explained in *sefarim*, not necessarily in Chassidus, that one should not bring new negative thoughts into this world, and this will ensure that [negative occurrences] will not be brought into actuality...

...This is also understood based on the phrase of our Rabbeim, related by the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, "*Tracht gut vet zein gut.*"⁴

In another letter, the Rebbe reprimands a *bochur* for his lack of *bitachon* in strong terms. The *bochur* wrote to the Rebbe during the month of Av that he plans to go home for Rosh Hashanah and not remain in yeshivah, because his father is not well. The Rebbe replied:

I am flabbergasted and in shock from this display of lack of *bitachon* in Hashem. At the end of Menachem-Av you have already decided and are certain that your father's health will still not be better in a month's time. Because of this, you intend to lessen your *avodas hatefilla* [by not staying in yeshivah for Rosh Hashanah].

It would be much better and appropriate if you would comply with our Rabbeim's instruction:



A GROUP OF CHASSIDIM ON MIVTZOIM WITH ISRAELI SOLDIERS DURING CHANUKAH, 5744. IN THE FACE OF TRYING AND ARDUOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY DANCE.

*Tracht gut vet zein gut. Be certain that your father's health situation will improve, and you will surely be able to increase in your avodah...*⁵

The Thought Will Help

Rabbi Moshe Feller once wrote to the Rebbe about hardships he was experiencing in his shlichus in Minnesota. The Rebbe responded with the following powerful lines:

It is astonishing that we speak and speak [about this concept], but when it comes to actuality, everyone thinks that we meant someone else; not him!

The phrase/horaah of our Rabbeim was quoted many, many times; “Tracht gut, vet zein gut.” (With the meaning being that the thought will actually help).

Instead of [complying], you “create” thoughts contrary to this [theme]. Despite our standing in the month of Adar, when we are commanded to increase in joy, you wallow in depression (see Tanya about this).

To conclude with *dvar malchus* [from our Rabbeim]: Tracht gut vet zein gut—in a visible and revealed manner.

When Exactly?

In conclusion, we share an amazing story, as told by Rabbi Avraham Rottenberg of Eretz Yisroel.

In 5717, Rabbi Rottenberg was living in Crown Heights, when he suddenly received a letter from his brother in Eretz Yisroel that their father suffered a heart attack and was in critical condition. Rabbi Rottenberg relates:

The letter was mailed out on Sunday and I received it on Thursday. Today it's hard to understand this; we would simply pick up the phone and call. But in those days, all I got was a letter.

Receiving a letter like this, what was I supposed to think? So I immediately wrote a note to the Rebbe explaining what my brother had written, that the situation was extremely critical, and I concluded, “וכבר אינני יודע מה לחשוב”—“I don't know what to think at this point...”

The Rebbe underlined those words, and he wrote:

“ולפלא!!! שהרי ידוע ציווי רבותינו נשיאנו בכגון

דא—טראכט גוט וועט זיין גוט. ואחכה לבשרו.”

“Shocking!!! Because the command of our Rabbeim in such situations is well known: *Tracht gut vet zein gut*. I await good news.”

[The exact *lashon* may have been a bit different, but the three exclamation points were certainly there -ed.]

After such an answer, I knew my father was still alive.

Shabbos passed, and on Sunday night I mustered my courage and I telephoned Eretz Yisroel. (My parents and I both had telephones, but it was still quite rare in those days to call overseas.) My mother picked up the phone, and I asked her, “How is father?”

“He's out of danger,” she replied.

“When did this happen?” I asked.

“Thursday night,” she answered.

I crossed over Eastern Parkway to 770 for *mincha* and stood near the Rebbe as he left the *shul*. “Nu, do you have *besuros tovos* for me?” the Rebbe asked.

“Yes,” I said. “I just spoke to Eretz Yisroel and he's out of danger.”

“Since when?” the Rebbe asked.

“Thursday night,” I said.

The Rebbe continued: “ווען האסטו אנגעהויבן צו—“When did you start to think good?”

“When the Rebbe told me to,” I said.

“And when was that?” the Rebbe asked.

“Thursday night...”

The Rebbe concluded: “זאל דאס נאכאמאל זאל נישט טרעפן, אבער דו זאלסט וויסן אלעמאל צו טראכט גוט...” —“It should never happen again, but you should always know to think good...”⁶ 1

FURTHER READING:

לקו"ש חל"ו שמות (א)

מאמר ד"ה הבאים ישרש יעקב תשמ"ח - תו"מ סה"מ מלוקט

עמ' רכח

1. Sichas Shavuot 5694. Lekutei Diburim vol. 1 p. 316.
2. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYaTZ, vol. 2 p. 537.
3. Likutei Sichos vol. 36 p. 4.
4. Igros Kodesh vol. 6 p. 286.
5. Ibid. vol. 9 p. 281.
6. Based on Rabbi Rottenberg's My Encounter interview with JEM; published on “A Glimpse Through the Veil” vol. 1.