

The Stop You Thought You Missed

BY DON JARASHOW

Living as a Yid is living with *bitachon*, drawing *chizzuk* from wherever we can in order to hold on to strength.

I recently read a *ma'aseh* in *Sichos Yisroel* from Rav Yisroel Brog. Besides being the Brisker Rav, a *tzaddik* and *baal bitachon*, he carried the heavy burden of supporting the Brisk Yeshiva. A very wealthy man once offered to take full financial responsibility for the yeshiva for the rest of his life.

The Brisker Rav refused. He explained that if he accepted the money, he would lose his constant need and connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. It wasn't *kedai*. And he didn't just say it. He actually turned down money that would have removed all worry and given him complete *menuchas hanefesh*. He didn't want a life in which he no longer needed Hashem. The Brisker Rav didn't just believe in *bitachon*, he needed Hashem. And he chose that need deliberately.

This story teaches us not by words but by action that *bitachon* isn't something we turn to only when we're stuck. It isn't *bidieved*. It's *lechatchila*. It's *הם חיינו*, it is life itself. If we aren't living in a perpetual state of needing Hashem, then what is life? What is it worth?

The more we say "*kochi v'otzem yadi*," Hashem says, "Okay, let's see what you can do." That tug-of-war is constant, and our *avodah* is to choose *bitachon* over our own strength.

It's not me. It's all the Eibeshter. On that note:

PREREQUISITES TO TORAH

In this week's parshah we come to Matan Torah. We're not just repeating the story of Kabbalas HaTorah. As the *sefarim hakedoshim* teach, we relive it. In 2026, we are receiving it new, right now.

The Medrash famously relates, *במדבר רבה א:א*:

נתנה תורה בשלשה דברים: באש ובמים ובמדבר

The Torah was given with three things: with fire, with water, and in the desert.

This wasn't incidental. Each one is a prerequisite to becoming a true *mekabel Torah*.

Rav Meir Shapiro explains that these three aspects, three key ingredients, represent three prerequisites of ironclad commitment, *emunah* and *bitachon*, to be a receptacle vessel of the Torah.

Eish represents *mesiras nefesh* of the individual. Like Avraham Avinu entering the *kivshan ha'eish*, it represents personal sacrifice, inner fire, and moments where a person gives everything for Hashem.

Mayim is *mesiras nefesh* of the *klal*. At Krias Yam Suf, *klal Yisrael* stepped forward together in a one-time, national act of courage and self-sacrifice.

But then comes *Midbar*, forty years of uncertainty. This wasn't the individual test of Avraham, and it wasn't the one-time demonstration of the entire nation at Krias Yam Suf. This was about living Torah as a constant, ongoing reality. Every day brought new questions, new challenges, and new unknowns.

Midbar teaches us that Torah is only fully received when commitment is long-term and all-encompassing. It's not enough to have one fiery moment of *mesiras nefesh*, and it's not enough for the nation to unite once in courage. True Torah requires perpetual *emunah* and *bitachon*, a trust in Hashem that persists even when nothing is certain. It's about showing up day after day, in the unknown,

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and continuing with courage, faith, and dedication.

This is the deepest lesson of Matan Torah: Torah is not just a story to retell, a moment to celebrate, or a historical event. Torah is our life, lived in trust of Hashem, even in the Midbar, even in the dark, uncertain moments. Only then can we become a true *mekabel Torah*.

TYPES OF NISYONOS

Rav Nachum Binder offers another *pshat* on the three aspects of Torah, fire, water, and desert, as three types of nisyonos.

Eish is the battle of persecution and external attack: war, destruction, tragedies like the Holocaust or October 7th. These are the extreme tests, when the world is hostile and aflame against us. It can feel overwhelming, but the more Torah we have, the more fuel we are given to overcome. Torah sustains us; it is what allows us to endure. אין לנו שיוך רק התורה הזאת.

Mayim corresponds to the *nisayon* of *kedushah*, the pull of desire and distraction that can pull a person away from Hashem. When one falls or succumbs, the yetzer hara whispers, “You don’t belong here; you are impure. You don’t belong learning Hashem’s Torah. Go back to where you belong.”

Midbar, the last and arguably most challenging *nisayon*, is the *nisayon* of uncertainty and anxiety: the relentless *sfeikos*, the question marks of life, *parnassah*, *shalom bayis*, children, *refuah*, *shidduchim*. Not knowing what’s next, how things will unfold, or when challenges will end. That is the constant Midbar.

Hashem gave the Torah *b’eish*, *b’mayim*, *u’vamidbar*, not by chance. These are the three fronts of battle. Until we can face the yetzer hara on all three – attacks, desire, and uncertainty – we cannot fully receive Torah.

When we tap into *Lechteich*, when we truly follow and accept the Torah now, in 2026, we live with *bitachon* even in the Midbar. We keep learning, doing chesed, and keeping mitzvos, even amid uncertainty and lost battles.

As followers, we keep going. When we fall, we get up, dust ourselves off, and continue fighting the תורה של תורה.

That is how a person becomes a true *mekabel Torah*, and how Torah continues to guide and sustain us, generation after generation.

A JEW IS NEVER LOST

Rav Mordechai (“Reb Mottel”) Pogromansky, whose *yahrzeit* is coming up on the 25th of Shevat, was a leading Lithuanian Torah scholar.

It was a Friday morning when Rav Mordechai Pogromansky was traveling by train to a certain town where he planned to spend Shabbos. A man sat down next to him, and they began talking. The man was a mohel and shochet, and also a talmid chochom, and he seized

the opportunity to engage Rav Mordechai in learning.

They became so absorbed in their conversation that neither noticed the train passing their stop. Only later did the mohel look out the window and realize they were far beyond their intended destination. By then, it was too late. There was no train back before Shabbos.

He turned to Rav Pogromansky in distress. “Where will we stay for Shabbos?” he asked. “Where will we get wine for Kiddush, challos for *lechem mishnah*, and food *lekavod Shabbos*?”

Rav Mordechai calmly consoled him. “A Jew is never lost,” he said. “When a Jew finds himself in a certain place, it is with hashgacha pratis. Hashem wants him there.”

At the next stop, they disembarked. The area appeared sparsely populated, and they knew no one. They began asking passersby whether there were any Jews in town. No one seemed to know. The mohel grew discouraged and stopped asking, but Rav Mordechai continued. Finally, someone directed them to the town’s only Jewish home.

They hurried there and knocked. When the homeowner opened the door and saw them, he burst into tears. To him, it felt as though Avrohom Avinu and Eliyohu Hanovi had appeared at his doorstep. The guests explained that they were ordinary people, sent to him *min haShamayim*.

The man warmly invited them in and offered them a place to stay for Shabbos. When he learned that one of the guests was a mohel, his joy was complete.

“A week ago, my wife gave birth to a baby boy,” he said. “Today is the day of his bris. I spent the entire day davening and crying, begging Hashem to send a mohel. And now you are here.”

The bris was performed, with Rav Mordechai serving as the *sandek*. The two guests remained with the family for a joyous Shabbos.

As they departed after Shabbos, Rav Mordechai turned to the mohel and said, “Remember, a Jew is never lost.”

Even when we think we’ve missed the stop, we are exactly where Hashem wants us to be. A true *mekabel Torah* receives Torah in fire, water, and *midbar*. Living with *emunah* and *bitachon*, the essence of *Lechteich*, means trusting Hashem through every uncertainty. Every twist, every delay, is part of His plan, preparing us to receive Torah and life fully. *Bitachon* isn’t just for hard moments; it is how we are meant to live. Nothing is wasted, nothing is accidental. The *yesod* is clear: with Hashem guiding everything, we never truly miss the stop. Every step, every moment, even when we’re unsure or think we’ve missed it, is exactly as it should be. With the Eibeshter, everything is perfect. •

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