

To Believe Or Not To Believe

There was a Rosh Yeshivah in Europe whose dedication to his students was legendary. The yeshivah regrettably had no money and was, consequently, often forced to miss providing meals. Yet, the students reciprocated with devotion to their rebbe. Often they went to bed satiated spiritually, but physically starved. One day the Rosh Yeshivah heard that in a neighboring community a wealthy philanthropist, who was very generous to yeshivos, lived. The Rosh Yeshivah decided that he had no alternative but to go to the philanthropist and appeal for his assistance. He bade farewell to this students and left for the train station. While he was waiting for the train, one of the town's outspoken skeptics appeared.

"Rebbe," he asked, "what brings you out of the yeshivah into the 'real' world?"

The Rosh Yeshivah ignored the derogatory stab and responded, ""I am going to the next town in an attempt to raise money for the yeshivah."

"Have you purchased your ticket?"

"No," replied the Rosh Yeshivah.

"What do you mean? You do not have a ticket? The train will arrive any minute, and you will be left here!"

"I have no money for a ticket but I am not concerned - Gut vet helfen"(G-d will help).

Hearing this, the skeptic shook his head, muttering under his breath, "These frum, observant, Jews are out of their minds." He decided to hang around the station to see what would occur. Would G-d really help the Rosh Yeshivah?

Five minutes later, the train whistle sounded and the train pulled into the station.

"Tickets, tickets," the conductor called out. "Have your tickets ready."

To the man's bewilderment, the Rosh Yeshivah proceeded to get into the line.

"Rabbi, are you out of your mind? How do you get into line without a ticket?"

"Do not worry," answered the Rosh Yeshivah. "G-t vet helfen."

The skeptic scratched his head in amazement. "I cannot figure out the rabbi. He has no money to buy a ticket. Yet, he gets into line to board the train." As he got closer to the train, he said, "Ok, Rabbi, I am going to give you the money for the trip now, but do not rely on me again. How could you be so naive as to think that G-d will help?"

Here we have a case of a believer and a non-believer. The believer had no doubt that he would get on the train. The non-believer was so obsessed with his heresy that he never realized that he was the medium through which Hashem helped the Rosh Yeshivah - to sustain his entire yeshivah. His bias prevented him from believing that "G-t vet helfen."

The second narrative demonstrates how deeply committed one can be in his belief and to what extent this faith will carry him. It is a story about two chassidim who visited their Rebbe annually on Succos. Each year, they would stop overnight at the same inn. One year, the innkeeper approached them humbly and said, "You know, I am neither a chasid nor a disciple of your Rebbe, but I have a great favor to ask of you. My wife and I have been married for ten years, and, unfortunately, we have not yet been blessed with a child. Please ask the Rebbe to pray for us." The chassidim agreed to do so.

The very next morning, the innkeeper's wife began parading around the neighborhood with an expensive baby carriage. When her friends came over to wish her mazel tov, she explained that while

she did not yet have a child, she soon would, since the Rebbe was going to pray for her. Hearing this, the two chassidim were somewhat embarrassed, because they knew that prayers did not always produce the desired result. They said nothing and continued on with their journey, faithfully carrying out their mission when they arrived at the Rebbe's court.

When the two chassidim returned the following year to the inn, the baby's Bris, circumcision, was in progress. The innkeeper understandably was quite elated and thankful to have them, treating them as guests of honor. Later on, when they arrived at the Rebbe's home, one of the chassidim entered the Rebbe's office and complained, "Rebbe, you do not even know the innkeeper. Yet, you prayed for him - successfully. I have been your trusted disciple since I was a child. I visit you every year just as my father did before me. Yet, I am married for twenty years, and I have made the exact same request of you - and my wife has still not conceived. Rebbe, is it fair?" The Rebbe took his trusted chassid's hands and looked deeply into his eyes, asking, "During all those twenty years, did you ever go and buy a baby carriage? How great was your faith in comparison to that of the innkeeper's wife?"

Bitachon, trust in Hashem, has to be unequivocal. We either believe, or we do not. To believe when it is convenient, to trust when there is no other alternative, is not trust. It is self-serving and hypocritical. When we say we believe, when we express our trust, we have to be prepared to purchase that baby carriage.