

תשורה

מחגיגת הבר-מצוה

של

הת' מנחם מענדל שי' ווענגער

יום ה', ז' סיון – יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

מאנטרעאל, קנדה

פתח דבר

אנו מודים לה' על כל הטוב אשר גמלנו ובחסדו הגדול זיכנו בחגיגת הבר-מצוה של בנו היקר, הת' מנחם מענדל שי'.

התודה והברכה לקרובינו ידידינו ומכרינו אשר הואילו לשמוח אתנו יחדיו ולברך את חתן הבר-מצוה ואת כולנו שיגדל להיות חסיד ירא שמים ולמדן כרצו"ק של רבנו נשיאנו ולנחת רוח הוריו וזקניו שיחיו.

בשמחה ובטוב לבב מתכבדים אנו להגיש למשתתפים בשמחת הבר-מצוה לזיכרון טוב, תשורה מיוחדת זו הכוללת מכתבי כ"ק אדמו"ר באנגלית בפרסום ראשון, מארכיונו המופלא, רב הכמות והאיכות של זקננו, איש האשכולות הנודע לתהילה, הרה"ח הנעלה רב הפעלים שזכה לשמש בקודש עשירות בשנים כמזכיר כ"ק אדמו"ר מוהרי"צ וכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו, הלא הוא הרב ד"ר ניסן מינדל ע"ה.

תודתנו וברכתנו הלבבית נתונה לחתנו, סבו של חתן הבר-מצוה, הרה"ח הנעלה והנכבד, עוסק בצ"צ וכו' ורב פעלים בהפצת המעינות חוצה הרב ר' שלום דובער שפירא שי', אשר אותו הפקיד ומינה הרב מינדל ע"ה על ארכיונו.



הא-ל הטוב הוא יברך את כאו"א מהמשתתפים בשמחתנו, בתוך כלל אחב"י יחיו, בברכות מאליפות מנפש ועד בשר, ויהי רצון שבקרב "נזכה זעהן זיך מיט'ן רבי'ן דא למטה אין א גוף ולמטה מעשרה טפחים והוא יגאלנו".

מוקיריהם ומכבדיהם
מרדכי ורבקה ווענגער

ערב חג השבועות תשע"א
מאנטרעאל, קנדה

Table of Contents

יום ש"ק פ' נשא, י"ב סיון ה'תנש"א	5
Torah And Mitzvos Are A Connection To Hashem	7
The Purpose Of Mattan Torah	8
The Purpose Of Mattan Torah (2).....	10
Lesson From Bar Mitzvah For War Orphans	11
Significance Of Mitzvas Tefillin	12
A Jew Is A Jew	13
Every Jew Is Necessary For The Giving Of The Torah.....	14
Naaseh V'Nishma Brings To Understanding And Appreciating Torah	16
Jewish Meditation And “Zen”, Etc.	17
Parents Behaviour Affects Children: Taharas Hamishpacha. Naaseh V'Nishma	18
How To Avoid Temptations. Proof Of Revelation At Sinai.....	20
Secular Education. Belief In The Existence Of G-d	21
Understanding The Written Torah	23
Creation Of The World, According To Torah	24
There's A Creator, And He Gave A Plan, Which We Can Follow	25
Unity In The World.....	27
Jewish Survival: Torah	27
Torah – The Written And The Oral	29
Rambam Hilchos Melachim	30
The Devil, And Afterlife In Jewish Religion.....	30
Jewish Survival: Torah (2).....	31
Shmittah, Shabbos, And Their Benefits.....	32
Bible Criticism	34
Significance Of Number Seven	35
A Lesson From Economics.....	36
Mitzvos With Kavana	37
Shechita And Korbanos	38
Physical And Spiritual Health.....	40
Influencing Another Person	40
Concept Of Yarmulka	41
“From My Flesh I See G-d”	42

Positive Outlook Helps Cure	42
Reluctance To Seek Medical Advice	43
A Living Example Influences Others	44
Confidence And Trust In Hashem	45
Overcoming An Undesirable Habit	45
Helping The Wounded In Eretz Yisroel	46
Hashgacha Protis, For You To Improve The Situation.....	47
A Village For Special Teens And Adults	47
Beis Refuah, Not Beis Cholim	48
Duration Of A Day In Chumash Breishis	49
Descendents Of The Alter Rebbe	49
Staying In Eretz Yisroel In A Time Of Crisis.....	50
A Meaningful Life	51
Lesson From Stamp Collecting.....	52
Now, We Can Accomplish More, In Less Time.....	52
Devote Your Energy And Time To Torah And Mitzvos.....	53
Strengthening One's Own Yiddishkeit, Helps Others.....	54
My Duty To Inform You To Check Your Tefillin.....	55
Disagreement About Resettling In Eretz Yisroel.....	55
Knowledge Is Good, Must Be Naaseh V'Nishma	56
Not To Mix Shidduch, And Chinuch Of Others	56
Advice.....	57
Vessel For Hashem's Blessing.....	58
Allocations For Youth Education	59
Jewish Community In Bombay.....	59
Clarification About אהה.....	60
Granting Yechidus	61
Gimatrias And The Mitzvah Campaigns	61
People Of Prominence Have A Moral Obligation	62
No Jew Should Be Despondent.....	63
Boys Held "Against Their Will".....	63
Fighting The Yetzer	64
Lesson From 12 Tammuz	65
Taking Care Of One's Health	65

Battling The Yetzer. Women Learning Torah	66
Each Jew Can Help Jews Everywhere	67
Not To Extend Period Of Mourning, The Soul Is Eternal	68
Quoting Non-Jewish Sources.....	68
Procedures For Infertility	69
Nichum Aveilim.....	70
Importance Of Taharas Hamishpacha.....	71
Not To Participate In Comparative Religion	72
Brief Meeting Has Limitless Benefits.....	72
Importance Of Growing A Full Beard.....	73
Creating Sholom Bayis	74
Building In Eretz Yisroel.....	75

יום ש"ק פ' נשא, י"ב סיון ה'תנש"א

Notes that the father of the Bar Mitzvah boy recorded for himself, a few days after the Rebbe unexpectedly entered the downstairs shul of 770 at mincha time on Shabbos Parshas Naso 12 Sivan, 5751, twenty years ago.

בס"ד. י"ז סיון תנש"א

I was standing in 770 at around 8:00pm on Shabbos Parshas Naso, 12 Sivan. There was a minyan for mincha that started in the front of 770 where I was standing. They took out a Sefer Torah and called up a Kohen. There wasn't any Ba'al Koreh, so I offered. As I opened the Sefer Torah and was about to show him the place, I heard a tumult in the background, and the pushing of benches. The first thought that crossed my mind was that the Rebbe was coming. I turned around and about 20-30 feet away was the Rebbe walking towards the front (everyone else was walking behind the Rebbe). The Rebbe was holding a gold kvort which was $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water. (there is a machlokes in metzios where the Rebbe filled it up. One bochur (?) says that he saw the Rebbe fill it up downstairs in the back of 770, and Y. H.'s oldest son (from E. Y.) says he saw the Rebbe go straight from the steps (of gan eden hatachton) into 770), and a white towel (small) was draped over the Rebbe's arm. (I think this was the right arm), and the Rebbe's siddur was under the left arm. (for some reason I also remember the Rebbe actually holding the towel in the Rebbe's left hand, but it could have been after the Rebbe reached the bimah).

I quickly ran to the other side of the bimah, the Rebbe went to the right side of the bimah and stopped, facing northeast and put the siddur down on the bimah. The Rebbe said "א שיסל". Someone (named S.) says that after a minute the Rebbe turned towards his direction and said "בריינג א שיסל, ס'ווערט שפעט". I was standing 1-2 feet away from the Rebbe. People started screaming to bring a shisl. A minute or so later someone came with a brown shisl, (I think it was the brown container used for the coffee). Someone standing behind the Rebbe grabbed it from the person who brought it and held it with two hands on the right side of the Rebbe. The Rebbe turned to his right and washed his right hand three times and then his left hand three times. The Rebbe then started to dry his hands. Meanwhile people started yelling to bring challah. (Either now or while the Rebbe was waiting for a shisl, they passed the kesser of the Sefer Torah away from the bimah. The Rebbe watched the Kesser being passed back). The Rebbe waited for what seemed like 3-4 minutes for challah. The whole time until the challah came the Rebbe was drying his hands with the towel. While the Rebbe was waiting someone brought the Rebbe's chair down from the platform where the Rebbe usually davens. They put down to the right of the Rebbe, but not directly behind the Rebbe.

Then R' Binyomin Klein came running down with a medium sized challah (braided) in a plastic bag (which had a white sticker on it). (He was totally unprepared, he wasn't wearing a gartel, and his kapote wasn't buttoned. R' Binyomin took the challah out of the bag and put it down on the bimah in front of the Rebbe. They moved the Rebbe's chair behind the Rebbe who had turned towards the bimah (while he was drying his hands) and was standing on the right side, as we said.

The Rebbe sat down on the chair on the right side of the bimah, held the challah and said hamotzei. Then the Rebbe tore off, with his right hand a small piece of challah, from the end of the challah and put it down on the right side of the challah. The Rebbe then broke off a second piece and while holding the piece of challah in his right hand, turned to R' Binyomin on his left side and looked up to him and smiled (seeming to mean salt). People started to shout for salt, but before salt came the Rebbe sat back in his chair and ate the challah. (I don't think the Rebbe dipped the challah in anything, even to the rest of the challah, but לא ראיתי אינו רא'י).

The Rebbe then said "אלע זאלן קענען זעהן" or "מ'זאל ארויפגיין (אויבן) מ'זאל קענען זען". I think I heard

the first way. The Rebbe stood up and walked up the three steps to the platform, (someone brought up the chair) and sat down as soon as he reached the top of the steps, facing the crowd, and put the siddur down on the edge of the banister. (The challah was also brought up, by R' Binyomin, I think. Someone said that the Rebbe gave the challah to R' Binyomin, but I don't remember seeing that) The Rebbe took his siddur and opened it and turned to his right side (where I was standing two feet away from the Rebbe, on the side of the steps) and said "מ'זאל זינגען בני היכלא". We sang היכלא for a while and then R' N. K. made with his hand to stop singing. When we stopped the Rebbe turned to R' Binyomin on his left side and said "מ'האט בני היכלא געענדעקט ביז'ן סוף?" so we sang again for a while, while the Rebbe finished saying בני היכלא. Then the Rebbe put his siddur back on the banister and signaled with his hand to the people on the west side who were standing on benches etc., to get down and I think the Rebbe said (something like) "מ'זאל אראפ גיין". The Rebbe put his hands down on the armrests of the chair and started a sicha: "מ'שטייט (דאך) אין יב סיון וואס איז סוף ימי התשלומין..."

During the first sicha the Rebbe said to sing all the niggunim of the Rebeim so as soon as the Rebbe finished the sicha, we started singing the niggunim. The Rebbe sang along the whole time. I was able to see the Rebbe saying the words of הוא אלוקיני along with everyone. The Rebbe made with his hand during the first niggun and a lot and very strongly during ימין ה' רוממה. During the niggun of לכתחילה אריבער, at the part which is sung over ten times the Rebbe made with his head very strongly, which I can't describe! After ten times the Rebbe opened his eyes and looked around.

After the second sicha the Rebbe started to sing his father's niggun. Then the Rebbe said a third sicha. During and after the third sicha, there was a lot of pushing!! In front of me there was a little boy who was being pushed and was crying. The Rebbe glanced over to him, but the people were still pushing him and he was still crying. After a few minutes (or less) the Rebbe turned to R' Leibel Groner (who arrived towards the end of the first sicha), and said (very loudly) "וואס שטופט מען (דא), וואס שטייט מען דא" and the Rebbe was signaling with his hands to go down and to go away. I started running away so I didn't hear the rest myself. The people in the back didn't know what the Rebbe was saying so they were running forward and there was a whole confusion. The Rebbe said "דער עולם זאל פארנאנדער גיין יעדער על מקומו הרגיל, מ'וועט דאוונען מעריב". The Rebbe also said "מ'וועט ניט (אנהויבן) בענטשן ביז די עולם וועט ווערן רואיק און אז די גבאים קען ניט אײנשטילן ?? די עולם זאל מען (קלייבן – קריגן) נייע גבאים!!! וואו איז די גבאי??

Torah And Mitzvos Are A Connection To Hashem

By the Grace of G-d
2 Sivan 5711
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
New York, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessings:

With the approach of Shavuoth, the festival of Our Receiving the Torah, I want to send you and your spouse a brief message although I am greatly overburdened with work. This ought to indicate to you how highly I value the work of your group for advancement in both the knowledge of the Torah and the practice of its precepts.

Being G-d given, the Torah has infinite aspects. The purpose of this message is to point out to you one of the most important aspects of the Torah.

To many the Torah may be a means to gain reward and avoid punishment. Others consider the Torah as a guide to good living. I will give you my view after a brief introduction.

The world is a creation by G-d. As such, it can have no common denominator with its Creator. This cannot be amplified here, for lack of space, but it should be sufficiently clear anyway.

The world consists of a variety of creatures, which are generally classified into 'Four Kingdoms': minerals, vegetation, animals and mankind.

Taking the highest individual of the highest group of the four mentioned above, i.e, the most intelligent of all men, there can be nothing in common between him who is a created and limited being, and the Infinite, the Creator. No analogy can even be found in the relative difference between the lowest of the lowest 'Kingdom' and the highest of the highest, for both are created things.

However, in His infinite goodness, G-d gave us a possibility of approach and communion with Him. G-d showed us the way how a finite, created being can reach beyond his inherent limitations, and commune with G-d the Infinite.

Obviously, only the Creator Himself knows the ways and means that lead to Him, and the Creator Himself knows the capacity of His creatures in using such ways and means. Herein lies one of the most important aspects of the Torah and Mitzvoth to us. They provide the means and ways whereby we may reach a plane above and beyond our status as created being. Clearly, this plane is in-comparatively above the highest perfection which a man can attain within his own created (hence, limited) sphere.

From this point of view, it will no longer appear strange that the Torah and Mitzvoth find expression in such simple, material and physical aspects as the Dietary laws, and the like.

For our intellect is also created, and therefore limited within the boundaries of creation, beyond which it has no access. Consequently, it cannot know the ways and means that lead beyond these bounds.

The Torah, on the other hand, is the bond that unites the created with the creator, as it is written, And you that cleave to G-d your G-d, are all living this day.

To the Creator – all created things, the most corporeal as well as the most spiritual are equally removed. Hence, the question, what relationship can a material object have with G-d? has no more validity than if it referred to the most spiritual thing in its relationship to G-d.

But the Creator gave us a possibility to rise, not only within our created bounds, but beyond, toward the Infinite, and He desired that this possibility be open to the widest strata of humanity. Consequently, He has conditioned this possibility upon ways and means which are accessible to all, namely, the Torah and Mitzvoth.

From this point of view it is also clear, that no sacrifice can be too great in adhering to the Torah and Mitzvoth, for all sacrifices are within the limits of creation, whereas the Torah and Mitzvoth offer an opportunity to rise beyond such limits, as mentioned above.

It is also clear that no person has the right to renounce this Divine opportunity by professing indifference toward reward and punishment. Such views are but the product of his limited intellect which has no right to jeopardize the very essence of the soul, for the latter, being a "Spark of the Divine" is above the intellect and any arguments it can produce, to deter him from the utmost perfection which he is able to attain.

I wish each and every one of you and your respective families an enjoyable and inspiring Yom Tov with lasting effects throughout the year.

With blessing,



The Purpose Of Mattan Torah

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5733
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive, first, the telephone message and subsequently the personal regards through our distinguished mutual friend...

Since your participation in our vital work gives me much spiritual gratification, I will express my personal appreciation by sharing with you a timely thought, which was stimulated by your good deed, all the more so that it came in these auspicious days connected with the Festival of Mattan Torah. I will only add the prayerful wish that it be the forerunner of further and greater things, in accordance with the teaching of our Sage that "One Mitzvah brings another Mitzvah in its train," from which it is clear that the greater the Mitzvah done, greater in both quantity and quality – the greater is the Mitzvah it brings. And there is no greater Mitzvah than to promote the Torah education and Torah life of Jewish children, children in the plain sense, and "children" in knowledge of Torah and the practice of Mitzvoth.

The thought I wish to share with you is one of the Chassidic doctrines relating to the content of the Festival of Mattan Torah. And while the subject borders on the mystical, it is, like all matters of Torah, basically of practical relevance to the daily life in this world of action, where the essential thing is the actual deed.

The subject concerns the following question:

In the light of the fact, as our Sages tell us, that the Torah had already been known and studied for many generations prior to Mattan Torah at Sinai, and that, indeed, our Patriarchs Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov conducted a Yeshiva where the Torah was studied, a Yeshiva that was maintained even through the period of bondage in Egypt – what was the basic purpose of Mattan Torah at Sinai, and why was it only with the receiving of the Torah at Sinai that our people became a unique and holy nation among all the nations of the world?

Addressing himself to this question, the Alter Rebbe, the Founder of Chabad (and his successors after him), gives the following explanation:

The study of the Torah and its infinite wisdom (being derived from the Infinite) – however ardently and diligently it be studied, and not merely in the abstract, but with commitment to its values and tenets – will give the student profound concepts and insights into the greatness of G-d and His creation, but the effects of such Torah study may nevertheless be confined, basically, to the spiritual realm and spiritual life of the Torah student. In other words, it did not per se

transform the material aspects of the person's daily life – his eating and drinking and other mundane activities – to make them part of the realm of holiness.

Furthermore, while it is to be expected that under the influence of dedicated Torah study, a person would be moved to give expression to his deeper awareness of G-d and of the majesty of His creation, and consequently, by way of example, give Tzedako to a poor man out of a deeper sense of affinity with G-d's creatures - nevertheless, such resulting deeds may still remain within the experience of the Neshomo, while the body and animal soul remain essentially unaffected. Hence, as soon as the spiritual excitation wears off, or is terminated, the soul remains soul, and the body remains body, or as our Sages expressed it on a higher level: "The heavenly beings do not descend to earth, and the earthly beings do not ascend to heaven."

To be sure, so long as the individual was immersed in the spiritual realm of Torah, he would not, of course, do anything which would be in conflict with it, and would also act positively in harmony with it; and if he were thus immersed all day and throughout his life, his life would be in perfect harmony with the Torah. This, indeed, was the case with our Patriarchs who throughout their lives were "chariots" (vehicles) for the Divine Shechinah on earth, practicing righteousness and benevolence all the time. But those who could not maintain such a state of consciousness throughout their waking hours, lived in a dichotomy of two worlds, the spiritual and material. To the extent that one or the other was the predominant factor, the life of the individual, and of human society at large, was subject to fits and starts and internal contradictions, and, conceivably, the world could become a jungle, as history has shown in bitter fact.

What Mattan Torah accomplished is symbolically expressed in the Torah when "G-d descended on Mount Sinai" and Mosheh Rabbeinu "ascended unto G-d." At that great moment of Mattan Torah, and henceforth, the Jewish people have been given the power - by means of the Torah and Mitzvoth - to do away with the separation between the spiritual and the material, through the spiritual acting upon, pervading and permeating the material, so as to essentially transform the material into the spiritual and merging them both into one harmonious whole. The Jewish people became "One people on earth," which, in the Baal Shem Tov's interpretation, means "one people in earth," i.e. bringing unity also in earthly things.

By virtue of the Torah which the Jew studies, and the Mitzvoth which he fulfills, in his daily life, his physical body and animal soul become refined and purified, so that they, too, are absorbed in holiness and become holy. At the same time, the various material objects with which a Jew performs Mitzvoth (the leather of Tefillin, wool of Tzitzith, etc.) are also transformed into objects of holiness, holy things. Consequently, even such ordinary day-to-day activities as eating and drinking, etc., are transformed from simple physical functions into acts of holiness dedicated to G-d, in accordance with the rule of Torah: "Know Him in all thy ways."

In summary: Mattan Torah has brought heaven down to earth and elevated earth to heaven. Hitherto, the material contradicted and inhibited the spiritual; even when it was made subservient to the latter and, moreover, made a vehicle for it the material itself underwent no essential transformation, and when it became free from the spiritual influence, it retained its gross material character. Mattan Torah, on the other hand, brought about such a change in the material world that it could actually be transformed and changed into something essentially spiritual.

Mattan Torah has given each and every Jew the capacity, through Torah and Mitzvos, to bring body and soul into such an intimate union as has not been possible before. Through the mastery of soul over body and the spiritual over the material, specifically through permeating the material with holiness and transforming its essential nature, the Jew is able not only to attain complete harmony within himself, but also promote harmony and unity in the material world around him, in coalescence with the all-embracing Unity of the One G-d, thus realizing his own

destiny as well as the purpose and destiny of Creation, bringing closer the fulfillment of the prophecy, "G-d's glory shall fill all the earth."

Wishing you and yours a joyous and inspiring Festival of Kabbalas haTorah, to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness,

With blessing,

P. S. The above point, namely, the essential change brought about by Mattan Torah, could be made clearer by analogy from the difference between physical mixture and chemical compound.

In physical mixture the components retain their original properties, and they can be separated mechanically (e.g. in solids) or physically (in solutions). Even in the latter case, as, for example, dissolving sugar cubes in tea, the result is not really anything new, but only "sweet, tea." And while sugar and water together produce a true solution which is indivisible by such mechanical means as filtering, they can be separated physically, by simply boiling off the water into steam, leaving a residue of sugar.

In chemical compounds, however, the atoms of the compound elements combine to form molecules of a new substance, whose properties are not like those of the original elements, as, for example, when hydrogen and oxygen combine to produce water. Such a compound is formed through a chemical reaction (and only another chemical reaction could break it up).

*

The Purpose Of Mattan Torah (2)

By the Grace of G-d
3rd of Sivan, 5734
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Miami Beach, Fl.

Greeting and Blessing:

At this time, on the eve of Shovuos, the Festival of Mattan Torah, I extend to you and all yours my prayerful wishes for a joyous and inspiring Yom Tov, and the traditional Chasidic wish - to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness.

With blessing,

P.S. I take this opportunity to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . .

In connection with the Festival of Mattan Torah, it is appropriate to mention here the well known narrative of our Sages that when G-d was about to give us the Torah, the angels in Heaven appealed to G-d to give them the Torah instead, and to keep the Torah in Heaven. However, G-d replied that the Torah is meant specifically for earthly beings in this material world.

One of the insights into this narrative of our Sages is that the purpose of the Torah is to do away with the separation of Heaven and earth, in other words, to do away with a dichotomy between the material and spiritual, with a view to bringing about the ultimate perfection of both to the highest level of spirituality and holiness. And inasmuch as it is in this material world that the need for spirituality is the greatest, G-d gave us the Torah and Mitzvoth to be studied and observed here on earth. If one should wonder how can a human being have the power to change the very nature of the material and turn it into something spiritual and holy - the answer

is that every Jew has a soul which is actually a part of G-dliness Above, and it is through this Divine spark that the Jew receives Divine powers to transform the material into the spiritual.

Moreover, the objective is not merely to achieve holiness in a certain area, but to create a chain reaction for the continuous sublimation and spiritualization of the world through Torah and Mitzvoth. This is also one of the explanations why before Mattan Torah G-d accepted only the children as guarantors for the preservation of the Torah and Mitzvoth. For, it is not only the children themselves who are brought up in Torah and Mitzvoth, but they are so imbued with Torah and Mitzvoth, that they will bring up also their children in the same way, and through the latter the chain will be continued through their offspring, and so on.

There is no need to elaborate to you at length on the above. But I will only cite, in conclusion, the well known dictum of the Alter Rebbe to the effect that G-d gives Jews material things, and Jews transform the material into spiritual. Applying this to your case, may G-d grant you material prosperity in a very generous measure, inasmuch as you are following this principle of converting the material into the spiritual, and in the manner of a chain reaction, as mentioned above.



Lesson From Bar Mitzvah For War Orphans

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Menachem Av, 5731
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . , with the enclosed clipping, which is returned herewith.

I was pleased to note your feelings and response in connection with the mass Bar-Mitzvah celebration for the war orphans, which was held in Kfar Chabad, which is an annual event.

In this connection, and based on the principle of our Sages that the essential thing is the deed, I trust that your feelings and sentiments will be translated into actual deeds. I have in mind the many Bar-Mitzvah boys who are "orphans" in a real sense, inasmuch as their parents, for one reason or another, have failed to care for their spiritual needs, and thus many of them have not really had their Bar-Mitzvahs. For, needless to say, a true Bar-Mitzvah is not the external festivity or celebration or birthday party. A real Bar-Mitzvah has to do with permeating the Jewish boy with the feeling and recognition that he has become a full-fledged Jew, with all the duties and privileges pertaining thereto, namely the fulfillment of all the Mitzvoth in the daily life and conduct as is incumbent upon any adult Jew. In this country in particular it is necessary to emphasize that a Bar-Mitzvah is not a "graduation" and end of Jewish studies and Jewish education, but on the contrary, the beginning of adult life as a Jew. Moreover, it is also often necessary to refute some misguided parents who think that at the age of thirteen a boy is still too young to assume the full responsibilities of an adult Jew. For, as our sages remind us, G-d does not expect the impossible, nor does He deal despotically with His creatures by imposing duties and responsibilities which the individual is incapable of fulfilling. In other words, inasmuch as our Torah, called Toras Chaim and Toras Emes - because it is the true guide in life - tells us that the age of thirteen is the age of maturity for a Jewish boy, it is certain that it is so.

In light of the above, I trust that you are doing what you can to help such "orphan" Bar-Mitzvah boys in your own community and environment to be given the opportunity to celebrate their Bar-Mitzvah in the true and proper spirit, as indicated above. That is to say, to bring them

closer to their Father in Heaven by helping them strengthen their adherence to a life of Torah and Mitzvoth as an everyday experience.

It may be added that in most if not all the cases of such an "orphan" Bar-Mitzvah boy in this country, it is the result of ignorance on the part of the parents, either total ignorance or distorted ideas, and very often the parents would be readily responsive if the problem of their Bar-Mitzvah boys would be brought to their attention in a suitable manner. Though this is not a very easy effort, it is nevertheless easier than anticipated, inasmuch as one does not have to deal with antagonism, but simply with ignorance or other external causes. Furthermore, our sages have assured us that words coming from the heart penetrate the heart, and are eventually effective, especially when coupled with a living and inspiring example.

May G-d grant that you should have Hatzlacha in the above efforts, and thus put into operation an activity that would have a chain reaction, whereby those influenced by you would become sources of influence to others. This will also widen the channels for you and all yours to receive G-d's blessings in all your needs, materially and spiritually.

Hoping to hear good news from you in all above,
With blessing,

P.S. With regard to your desire to get in touch with those who arrange the Bar-Mitzvahs in Kfar Chabad, you may communicate directly with Rabbi Lebov, Tzeirei Agudas Chabad, Kfar Chabad.



Significance Of Mitzvas Tefillin

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 5731
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Toronto, Ont.
Canada

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your (undated) letter, in which you write about the Mitzva of Tefillin, and its impact and influence, etc. You ask what is it that endows it with special influence, and also about the holiness of the Hebrew letters and words in general.

First of all, I want to express to you my real gratification to read about your personal profound spiritual experience in connection with the putting on of Tefillin. This gives me the confident hope that you will not only observe this great Mitzvo meticulously, but will also share your experience with others, and endeavor to spread the Mitzvo to the fullest extent of your influence, in line with the great principle of the Torah, V'Ohavto L'Reacho Komocho. Our sages assure us that "Words coming from the heart penetrate the heart" and are eventually effective, especially if they are accompanied by a living example.

Now with reference to your question as to what gives the Mitzvo of Tefillin its special significance and impact - the greatest impact stems from the fact that it is, first of all, a Divine command, and as such has infinite ramifications, since it derives from the Infinite. Furthermore, since G-d is the Creator of man and He willed it that if the Jew would carry out a certain precept at His command, it should have a certain effect - it is certain that the effect is bound to be there, regardless of whether the person knows how it comes about. Indeed, it should not be surprising that a human being, with his created and finite mind could not fully grasp the Infinite. It is only

that G-d, in His kindness, has revealed and made it possible to understand some aspects of the Mitzvoth.

Thus, what has been revealed to us about Tefillin, as noted in many sources, is that the special significance of Tefillin is connected with the contents of the four sacred Torah portions written on parchment, and housed in the Tefillin, both the Hand-Tefillin and the Head-Tefillin. As the Shulchan Aruch mentions it succinctly, in a few words containing profound content, the meaning of the first two portions of Shema is centered on the subjugation of the heart to G-d. The main theme of the other two portions is Yetzias Mitzraim, the liberation from Egyptian bondage which, as we read in the current Sidras of the week, was accomplished in a supra-natural way. No one had ever before escaped from Egyptian slavery in those days, but the children of Israel were liberated 600,000 strong (besides women and children and old people), who left Egypt openly and triumphantly, etc. This shows how G-d takes special care of the Jewish people and helps them accomplish things in a supernatural way, which is true of our people as a whole, as well as of each and every Jew individually.

The above are general outlines. But if you will study and reflect upon the said four portions of the Tefillin - Shema (Deut. 6:4-9); v'Hoyo Im Shomoa (Deut. 11:13-21); Kadesh (Ex. 13:1-10) and v'Hoyo ki Yeviacho (Ex. 13:11-16) - you will surely be able to derive a great deal more inspiration and insight into the significance of the great Mitzvo of Tefillin.

With blessing,

By



A Jew Is A Jew

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Succoth, 5721
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . , and needless to say, I was shocked to read in it that you consider yourself "a goy" by certain standards, Heaven forbid.

It was not the declaration per se that called forth the above reaction, since, with due respect, I do not consider it valid. For, as our Sages ruled, it is the view of our Torah, which is called Torath Chayim, the "Law of Life," that "A Jew, though he has sinned, remains a Jew." For this reason, it is the duty of every Jew to make the benediction every morning, thanking G-d "for not making me a goy". Furthermore, there is no indication in your letter as to wherein consists your sinfulness.

To be sure, when a Jew conducts his life not in accordance with the Law of Life and with its commandments, "whereby Jews live", he detaches himself from the source of life, the Living G-d, Who is the Giver of Law of Life. But there is this cardinal difference for in the former there rules the principle that "Nothing stands in the way of repentance", no matter how the past had been. Moreover, when the resolution to return to the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth has the force of suitable determination, the person is endowed from On High with the capacity not only change the present and the future, but also the past. More on this subject in the enclosed copy of my Rosh Hashanah message.

What did shock me is the thought that it is precisely this kind of attitude as expressed in your declaration that is one of the tactics of the Seducer (the Yetzer Hora), which unfortunately is often quite effective. It is, namely, the idea that inasmuch as one has strayed from the Jewish

way of life, it is too late to make a change; consequently one might as well enjoy himself and do what he likes.

Apart from the fact that such an idea is totally wrong, since it is never too late for a Jew to begin living in accordance with the Jewish way of life, and it is never all lost and hopeless, there is this additional consideration: Ultimately, a Jew has no choice but to be a Jew in the full sense of the word, since every Jew possesses a soul which is verily part of the Divine Substance, hence indestructible. Consequently, when one reflects on the matter one realizes that since sooner or later the Divine soul will assert itself, the sooner the better, for in that case the process is much easier, not entailing such radical changes and corrections. On the other hand, those who do not want to consider the above, for whatever reason, must inevitably fulfill the promise of the Creator of man that none will forever be rejected, and ultimately "the spirit of uncleanness will be dispelled from the earth." In that case, however, the process entails infinitely more difficulties for transformation and change to the way that is good and proper.

Per an illustration of what the nature and destiny of a Jew is, I will turn to your own field. Animals that live underground all their lives do not possess a fully developed sense of sight, because, inasmuch as they have no use for it, it could only hinder them. If, for the sake of illustration, any other species of animal would choose an underground life, and would in the course of time lose its eyesight, it would amount to the greatest possible regress and deficiency, since such a life is not consonant with its essential nature and being. When eventually it will emerge to its own proper life in the light of day, its predicament can be well imagined, and as our Sages declared, "blindness is tantamount to death." But in the end the eyesight will be restored, with all the birth-pangs of evolution and waste of time and energy that such a rebirth would entail. The parallel is obvious, for it is the destiny of the Jew to see the light in accordance with the prophetic assurance, "And G-d will be unto you for an everlasting light."

I trust that the above lines, all too short in relation to the subject, will suffice. May G-d grant that you find your way more easily than you anticipate, and that you will have good news to report; furthermore that you spend the next days of Yom Tov in a suitable and stimulating atmosphere and surroundings in fulfillment of your wish, which you express in your letter.

Wishing you a happy Yom Tov,
With blessing,

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Every Jew Is Necessary For The Giving Of The Torah

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5731
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessings:

I was pleased to receive regards from you through mutual friends, and am especially gratified to hear of your active participation in the work of Lubavitch for the strengthening and spreading of Yiddishkeit in general, and in the area of Jewish education in particular.

Now that we have entered the auspicious month of Sivan and the day on which our forefathers came to Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, it is well to recall one of the teachings of our Sages in this connection. Our Sages tell us that if there would have been one Jew short (absent) of the 600,000 adult Jews at the time of receiving the Torah, the Torah would not have been given at all.

Needless to say, like all matters of Torah, which have countless aspects, teachings and instructions, this saying of our Sages also has many implications. I can only dwell on one of them in this letter.

At first glance it seems hard to understand why all of the Jewish people, even Moshe Rabbenu, would have been deprived of the Torah if there was one Jew short. After all the Jewish people themselves consisted of various segments ("from the Heads and Princes of the Tribes to the hewer of wood and the drawer of water"). Moreover, there were a number of matters of the Torah which had already been given to the Jewish people before Mattan Torah, with certain obligations assigned to some segments. Also after Mattan Torah, there are Mitzvoth which obligate only Kohanim, or Leviim, or men only, or women only, etc.

In order to understand the essential meaning of the above mentioned saying of our sages, it is well to take an illustration from the physical body. On the one hand the body consists of different limbs and organs, in some cases radically different, such as from the highest intellectual aspect of the brain to the toenail. But however different these various parts of the body may be, they have one common and essential aspect, namely the general vitality of the body which must extend to all parts of the body. Thus if the vitality is lacking insofar as the toenail is concerned it means that there is a lack of vitality also in the brain.

Similarly in the matter of the Torah and the Jewish people. Insofar as the essential and vital aspect of the Torah is concerned, the giving of the Torah by G-d and the receiving of it by the Jewish people - there is no difference between the least significant individual and the most significant individual. Indeed, in order that the greatest Jew should receive the Torah it is necessary that also the least significant Jewish individual should receive the Torah simultaneously.

The practical consequence of the above is, as we also mentioned it during our conversation when you were here, that at no time must we give up or despair of any Jew. It is the duty of each and every one of us, especially those who have an influence in the community, or can influence individuals, to help every Jew become an active part of Torah Judaism, and also involve everyone in the activities connected with the education of Jewish children in particular, the kind of education that prepares them to receive the Torah and live the Torah in the daily life on the basis of Naaseh (first, and then) v'Nishma, as at the time when our forefathers first received the Torah at Sinai.

I therefore hope and trust that you and your friends will do everything possible to involve your and their friends and acquaintances to become active in this most vital work of Torah-true Chinuch.

I had occasion to mention this before that the misconception which is often applied here, namely the principle of "mind your own business", is completely out of place. For, aside from the fact that this is indeed the business of each and every Jew, it also has this advantage that every Jew inwardly desires very much to be brought closer to the Torah, as the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, put it: "No Jew can, nor does he wish, to be separated from G-dliness." If, for some reasons, a Jew has strayed or become alienated, it is only because external aspects have somehow obscured his essential inner being. Consequently, anyone helping to remove this outward crust and reveal his essence, not only renders a vital service, but earns the sincere and everlasting gratitude of the individual so helped.

Finally, let me also say that this kind of work knows no limit and however many friends one has succeeded in involving in this work, there must be one more that could participate, and who knows maybe that additional person has a very special function to carry out for the benefit of the whole cause. And since this is a matter of Zechus Horabim, it will surely stand you and all your friends in good stead, to be blessed with Hatzloco in all your efforts.

With blessing,

Naaseh V'Nishma Brings To Understanding And Appreciating Torah

By the Grace of G-d
17th of Sivan, 5731
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. _____
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . , in which you write about the concept of Torah Min HaShomayim, etc.

It is somewhat surprising that you should write to me on this subject, or that you should have any problems about it, inasmuch as the matter is adequately treated in various sources, especially if you have discussed it orally with your Yeshiva teachers, as you note in your letter.

You write that you are interested in positive proof, but I do not know what you mean by "positive". If you are referring to so-called scientific proof, this has also been given in various sources. Some aspects on the matter will be found in the enclosed brochure, though very brief.

Inasmuch as everything is by Hashgocho Protis, some practical use must come from this exchange of correspondence. I therefore trust you will not take amiss my following observations.

When we accepted the Torah on the basis of Naaseh (first, and then) v'Nishma, this was not only a necessary condition of accepting the Torah in general, but this approach also serves as the true method to the understanding of the Torah and everything connected with it. This is also evidenced from the Gemoro (Shabbos 88 a/b), where we find that through the Naaseh v'Nishma approach, i.e. by accepting G-d's Will unquestioningly, and with complete faith, and not let any distracting thoughts interfere with the observance of the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life, leads to the fulfillment of the verse, "The wholeheartedness of the upright shall lead them" (Prov. 11:3), whereas without this approach the end of that verse is inevitable.

To put it in another way, if one truly wants to understand the Torah and be given deep insights into it, it is necessary to realize that the Torah is quite different from any other science. For example, there can be a great physician who is an expert on every aspect of internal medicine, etc., who can give true and effective prescriptions and directions to his patients, yet in his own personal life, he may act in a way quite contrary to his own directives. But insofar as the Torah and Mitzvoth are concerned, of which it is written, "For they are our life and the length of our days," theory and practice cannot be separated for it is only through the practice of the Torah and Mitzvoth that they can be appreciated and understood, as mentioned above, and as also our Sages of blessed memory expressed it, "If he is worthy and lives accordingly, the Torah becomes an elixir of life for him, and if not (G-d forbid), then -" etc.

Needless to say, the purpose of the above is not to preach, but with all due respect, to urge you to strengthen your adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life, and then you will find that your doubts and questions will disappear, or at any rate, you will become more sensitive and receptive to the ideas and concepts which have been expounded by our great thinkers in resolving any doubts and questions in regard to the Torah.

I would also suggest that you should have your Tefillin checked to make sure they are Kosher, as well as the Mezuzo in your room.

Wishing you Hatzlocho in your Torah studies, the kind of study that leads to the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth, as our Sages expressed it, "The essential thing is the deed".

With blessing,

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Jewish Meditation And "Zen", Etc.

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Kislev, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . , in which you write about Jewish meditation and "Zen."

Needless to say, your enthusiasm for the latter astonishes me greatly, all the more in view of your introducing yourself as a Ph.D. . . . , and having had discussions with knowledgeable Rabbis - which reveal's a search for the truth, but regrettably misdirected.

To state some of the reasons for my astonishment, let me, first of all, point out that one of the basic scientific methods is to proceed from the simple to the complex, looking first for simple explanations, and failing to find such, to search for a more complex one. In psychology, too, the first approach should be to relate the problem to the subject's natural element and atmosphere in which he was born, since this has a very strong impact on the person's psyche, for a disturbance or disruption of one's natural element and environment is most likely to be the primary cause of the psychological problem of the patient.

A second basic point is that the treatment should, of course, be fully consistent with the proper diagnosis, without being subjectively detracted by any method that may seem effective in other circumstances. By way of a simple example: When a drug is prescribed, it should be based entirely on its effectiveness, not by the attractiveness of the pill for its appearance or taste.

A little more deeply. One should not be carried away by immediate but short-lived effects that may be achieved from relieving symptoms, but look for a true and lasting cure, however important it is also to relieve symptoms.

After these prefatory remarks, which are no doubt superfluous in your case, it surprises me that in mentioning your personal background and qualifications, you did not indicate at all how many years you have devoted to in-depth study of the psychological approach expounded in Jewish sources, by Jewish authorities on the subject of guiding Jewish perplexed in every generation. (Some of such sources are available also in translation in various languages).

Moreover, these studies and conclusions have not remained in the realm of theory, but have been tested and proven over the years. For, as in the case of all science, it is actual testing and experimentation that are conclusive, and the more of these, the stronger is the evidence.

Now, although your letter does not indicate that you have had this preparation, either in theory or in practice, which is indispensable in treating Jewish patients with psychological problems, yet you come out with categorical conclusions as to how to treat Jewish patients and, more astonishingly, with the aid of Zen practice at that!

Apparently you are unaware that Zen, as commonly practiced now, is connected with Avoda Zara (idolatry). To be sure, some pagan practices, witchcraft and the like as had been practiced since ancient times, have had palliative effects, by using for example, incense, rhythmical bodily movements and the like, which in the way that tranquilizers nowadays are used as palliatives. Nevertheless, the Torah, Toras Chaim and Toras Emes being our true guide in life, strictly prohibits pagan methods and practices insofar as Jews are concerned. And this is because not only will such practices be of no benefit for the soul or body, but will rather be destructive to both - just as there are many "pleasant" substances which also have palliative ingredients but, nonetheless, the total effect is poison. Indeed, it is precisely the external side

effects and relief which such practices may bring that cover up the insidious harm and makes them all the more dangerous.

It is surely unnecessary to point out that the purpose of this letter is not polemical. But it is the duty of every human being, certainly of a Jew who follows the teachings of the Torah, to warn any person against pitfalls and help save him, or her, from harm. Since I am a firm believer in G-d's benevolent Providence, as well as in the teaching of our Sages that the heart of every Jew is always awake and responsive to the truth, I trust you will accept what has been said here in the true spirit, and will diligently apply yourself to the study of Jewish sources on the subject of the Jewish soul and psychological make-up. And then, I am confident, you will "taste and see" - to quote a familiar phrase from Tehillim. And by using the proper approach, you will indeed be able to utilize your qualifications and capacities in the fullest measure, to help many who are suffering from confusion and perplexity in these difficult times.

As a young, energetic scientist, who has shown a capacity for research and endurance in the quest for professional excellence, as is evident from your letter, I trust you will accept the new direction I am suggesting to you as a challenge, and I am confident that you will prove equal to it. All the more so as we have the assurance of our Sages, "Make the effort and you will succeed," coupled with the promise of Divine help.

Wishing you Hatzlocho,
With blessing,

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Parents Behaviour Affects Children: Taharas Hamishpacha. Naaseh V'Nishma

By the Grace of G-d
7th of Menachem Av, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. & Mrs. _____
Ca.

Greeting and Blessings:

I received your letter and Pidyon, and will remember you in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, for the fulfillment of your hearts' desires for good, especially to bring up your children to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds, in good health physically and spiritually.

Although what follows is self evident, its importance requires to be emphasized, at any rate briefly.

To begin with, it is obvious that the said blessing of healthy offspring both physically and spiritually is largely dependent upon the conduct of the parents. For, just as the physical health and constitution of parents have an impact on the physical health of the children, so it is also mentally and spiritually.

Indeed, as every intelligent person understands, the spiritual aspect is stronger than the body, so that the order should be reversed, namely, that the spiritual impact is predominant.

Inasmuch as the Torah, Toras Emes, declared that Jews are "Believers, the sons of believers," meaning that in addition to one's own belief in G-d, one has the cumulative heritage of countless generations, beginning with our Father Abraham, the first believer, that the Source of blessings is G-d, the Creator and Master of the universe. If a human being who introduces a certain system must give guidelines as to how the system works, how much more so is it to be expected that G-d would provide guidelines as to how a human being, and especially a Jew, must live. These guidelines were revealed at Sinai with the Giving of the Torah and Mitzvoth, which were transmitted from generation to generation, not only in content, but also in the exact

terms. Thus, the Torah provides the guidelines as to how Jews have to conduct their life, especially their family life. But inasmuch as a human being, however perfect he may be, is liable to fail occasionally, G-d has provided the way in which it can be rectified, namely by way of Teshuvo which, as our Sages declare, was created even before the world. And Teshuvo is effective not only in respect to the future, but also retroactively to a large extent, inasmuch as G-d is omnipotent and is not restricted in any way.

It is a matter of common experience that it is part of human nature that parents will make every sacrifice for the benefit of children, even in a case where the benefit may not be certain, but has prospects.

All the above is by way of introduction to my earnest plea that regardless how it was in the past, you will strengthen your commitment and adherence to the Will of G-d, the Creator and Source of all blessings, particularly in the area of the strict fulfillment of the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpoch which, aside from the essential aspect of their being Divine imperatives, have the Divine Promise of reward in terms of healthy offspring, physically, mentally and spiritually.

Needless to say, when it comes to carrying out the commandments of G-d, it is absolutely irrelevant what neighbors or friends might say when they see a radical change in the everyday life.

Herein is also the answer to many questions, including the question of why this or that Mitzvo has to be observed. For a human being to question G-d's reasons for His Mitzvoth is actually contradictory to common sense. If one accepts them as Divine commandments, it would be presumptuous, indeed ridiculous, to equate human intellect with G-d's intellect, which would mean limiting G-d's intellect to that of a human being. By way of a simple illustration, which I had occasion to use before: one would not expect an infant to understand the importance of nutrition as set forth by a professor who has dedicated his life to this subject, even though the difference between the infant and the professor is only relative in terms of age and education, and in fact, the infant might some day even surpass the professor. There can be no such comparison between a created human being and the Creator, where the difference is absolute.

It should therefore be a matter of common sense to understand what the Torah, Toras Ernes, explains clearly, that whatever doubts and difficulties a Jew may have in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth are only tests of his faith in G-d, and that a person is equipped with the capacity to overcome such tests and distractions, for it would be illogical to assume that G-d would impose obligations which are beyond human capacity to fulfill. Indeed, if one has more difficult tests, it only proves that he has greater capacities to overcome them.

In summary, just as when we received the Torah and Mitzvoth at Sinai, we accepted them on the basis of Naaseh, first and then, V'Nishma, namely on the basis of unconditional obedience and readiness to fulfill G-d's Mitzvoth regardless of our understanding them rationally, so has our commitment been ever since. And while we must learn and try to understand as much as possible, prior knowledge and understanding must never be a condition to living up to the guidelines which G-d has given us in regard to our actual way of life and conduct.

Your letter and Pidyon reached me during the period of the "Three Weeks" and, in fact, during the "Nine Days." Herein is also a timely message in that the observance of these sad periods commemorating the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash is not meant to simply cause us grief, but in order that we should rectify the causes that brought it about. And since the main cause of it was, as we say in our prayers, "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land," the way to rectify it is for every Jew to strengthen adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth, both in his and her personal life, as well as to strengthen and spread Yiddishkeit wherever one has any influence. In this connection, it is well to remember the Great Principle enunciated by our Sages, and which the Rambam, our Great Teacher and guide for all times made a rule in his Code,

namely that a person should consider himself and the whole world as equibalanced, so that one good deed could tip the scale in favor of himself and the whole world. Thus, if a single individual should think what can I achieve by a single act in one way or another, the answer has already been given by the Rambam.

With prayerful wishes for Hatzlocho and good tidings in all above, and may every one of us, in the midst of all our people, soon see the fulfillment of the Divine Prophecy that these days of sadness will be transformed into days of gladness and festivity, with the Geulo Shleimo through our righteous Moshiach.

With blessing,

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How To Avoid Temptations. Proof Of Revelation At Sinai

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Adar 1, 5725
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your letter of the . . . , in which you ask a number of religious questions, etc.

Generally speaking a letter is not the proper medium to discuss such questions in due detail. Actually there is no need for this, because you have in your community a fine Rabbi, and scholar, Rabbi Abramson, with whom you could discuss all these questions personally. You may also mention to him that I referred you to him.

However, inasmuch as you have already written, I will make some observations relating to your questions.

You ask how to avoid various temptations or undesirable habits, etc. The answer to this and similar questions has already been given by our Sages of blessed memory a long time ago, namely "Try hard and you will succeed". In other words the only way to overcome these things is by a real effort and with a determined will. On the other hand human nature is such that a radical and complete transformation should not be expected all at once. It is necessary to proceed steadily step by step.

You also ask how the validity of the Revelation at Sinai could be proved, and how our religion is different from others who also claim validity on the basis of tradition. This question in particular should be discussed at length personally, rather than in a letter. However to put it very briefly, the difference lies in the fact that our tradition goes back uninterruptedly to the Revelation at Sinai, which was witnessed by hundreds of thousands of adult Jews, several millions of men, women and children altogether. These eyewitnesses transmitted what they saw and heard to their children and grandchildren in such an identical manner, that there is nothing in human history which has the strength of greater human evidence than this historic fact. However in regard to other religions, there are periods in their history where their whole religion was concentrated within one person, or a small group of persons. Incidentally, the Revelation at Sinai is a unanimous recognition also by the Christians and Moslems, although G-d forbid that we should have to rely on the support of external evidence or external sources.

Being satisfied with the truth of our own religion, we are not interested in disproving the validity of other religions based on claims of "miracles" etc. Even assuming that such miracles took place, they would not shake our faith and conviction knowing that the Torah itself has

warned us precisely against such situations, which should be regarded by us as nothing more than tests of our own faith.

Finally, the central aspect of the Revelation at Sinai was the giving of the Torah, and particularly the Ten Commandments which begin with the very basic idea of pure monotheism. Any faith that accepts the Revelation, yet takes the liberty of changing such fundamental things as pure monotheism or shifting the observance of the Shabbos to another day in the week, etc. - you have here a self contradiction.

In conclusion, let me say that it is a pity to waste time on some of the speculations and questions which you mention in your letter, for the essential thing is the daily life and conduct in accordance with the Torah and Mitzvoth, with simple faith and sincerity, realizing that the Divine commandments are essentially beyond the ken of the human mind, except insofar as G-d Himself chose to reveal. At the same time the very fulfillment of the Mitzvoth with sincerity and faith enlightens the mind, and gives one new insights to better understand and appreciate the deeper significance of the daily religious observances, simple as they seem to appear.

With blessing

By



Secular Education. Belief In The Existence Of G-d

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Marcheshvan, 5727
Brooklyn, N. Y.

New York, N. Y.

Blessing and greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . , with the enclosure, which is returned, herewith.

I was, of course, pleased to find in your letter confirmation of my hope regarding your attitude towards your son's learning. As for the question of his attending college, you are also right in assuming what my attitude would be concerning Yeshiva students in general. In your son's case, there is an additional consideration. It is that when a person has developed a strong attachment to a certain matter to the extent of its touching his whole life, it is very doubtful whether it is advisable to try to create in him a desire for an additional matter, regardless of its merits. For, by doing so, one might affect the wholesomeness of his inner life. Add to this the fact that the very approach of the college atmosphere (an approach not limited to the realm of theory, but which is expressed in the practical daily life, since the atmosphere is created by the professors and students, with whom one comes in daily contact) is in direct contradiction to the approach and atmosphere of Torah, not only in questions of a general nature, but actually in regard to the personal and individual daily conduct and outlook - there is the obvious danger that the inclusion of this element would inject a most disturbing discord in one's personal life.

Needless to say, it is known that there have been many individuals who combined both the sacred and the secular. However, such individuals would fall into one of two categories, as has been my experience with such individuals: a) There are individuals whose approach to secular sciences was without any doubt that of the well known expression - Thus the possibility of any conflict of world outlook was forestalled from the start, since these individuals were thoroughly permeated with the Torah world outlook. b) The other category is that of individuals who do not come out unscathed, more or less.

I am sorry to say that at any rate those individuals with whom I came in contact in various countries, including even in Germany, where the idea of Torah v'Derech Eretz originated in

orthodox circles, I have not met one who did not belong to one of the two said categories. This is particularly true in such countries where secular education is compulsory, and the child is, from the age of five, fed a secular outlook, being much more impressed by the secular world which is antagonistic to the Torah world. As I have already had occasion to discuss this point at length, it is unfortunate that even in Yeshiva Day Schools, the child is impressed by the external glamour of the secular department as compared with the Hebrew department, the inequity in attitudes, salaries etc. This is a painful situation which is unfortunately quite prevalent without objection or protest.

Turning to that part of your letter which deals with the question of belief in the existence of G-d, you will forgive me if I point out that you have apparently misinterpreted my remarks in my previous letter. What I said there was not by way of proof of G-d's existence, but only to show that the person under discussion, despite all protestations to the contrary, is himself a believer in the existence of G-d. For, actions speak louder than words. By way of example, if a person should persistently deny a certain thing, yet at every step conduct himself in a manner which affirms the contrary, we would take his actions rather than his words as evidence of his true belief.

The paraphrase in your previous letter, in which you cite the opinion of a good friend, seems to me to be much more applicable to the reality that the Jews may be divided into three categories: a) Those who believe in G-d, and endeavor to fulfill His commandments as fully as possible, regardless of whether or not they are pleased with G-d's conduct of the world, or could raise serious objections. b) Those who militate against G-d and are desirous of being spiteful to Him, because they are not satisfied with His management of world affairs. This too betrays a belief in G-d's existence, for otherwise there would be none to militate against. c) Those who altogether ignore the question of whether or not G-d exists and the corollaries involved, because they are too engrossed in other matters.

This then is what I meant when I dwelt on the subject of the individual who protests and fights against G-d, thereby showing that inwardly he believes there is a G-d, for otherwise he would have no one to protest or fight against, nor would he be surprised at seeing certain things that he sees around him. . .

Insofar as the name is concerned, you have surely heard that in Chassidus, based on prior sources, the naming of a person is a matter of great responsibility, for a name is related to the inwardness of the soul and its very core, particularly when it comes to changing a name. Consequently, although I feel quite certain that a Jew should have a Jewish name, and should certainly reject a German name, I will not assume the responsibility of choosing a name for another person. The only assumption that I am prepared to make is that inasmuch as you have already used a Jewish name, a name which has been publicized among more than ten Jews (which would have already been sufficient for making it "Parhessia"), and your Ben-Yochid has used it in connection with his wedding, why should you wish to change it? Let it remain . . . unto a ripe old and happy age. . .

With blessing,

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Understanding The Written Torah

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Elul, 5733
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of the . . . I regret that pressure of duties delayed my reply.

You introduce yourself as a physical scientist (Ph.D. etc.), and set forth what in your view is a problem concerning the chronology of the Torah, suggesting also certain interpretations in regard to the Creation account in the Torah, etc.

In view of your scientific background, I will preface my reply by some introductory remarks based on the scientific method of deduction and evidence.

The Torah has two aspects: a. the text, and b. the precepts in terms of actual conduct that follow from the text, as defined by the Written and Oral Law, which have come down to us from generation to generation since the Giving of the Torah at Sinai.

Needless to say, both - i. e. the text and its actual application in terms of daily observances and practices must be correlated. This means that if there should be any doubt as to the interpretation of the text or of the Oral Tradition that has come down with it, there is the criteria of verifying it, namely, by examining how the text has been interpreted and implemented in terms of actual conduct and practice mandated by the text.

The force of such criteria is indisputable, inasmuch as the Mitzvoth have been practiced and transmitted by millions of people from generation to generation. In other words, the interpretation of the text which forms the basis of these religious practices is not something that has arisen recently, and has yet to be determined, but goes back in an unbroken chain of transmission to the first generation that witnessed the event of the Revelation at Sinai, witnessed by the whole nation.

Of course, there are now, as there always have been, non-observant Jews, or such individuals and groups that wish to "reform" the interpretation of the Torah, in part or in total. But this in itself underscores the nature of this attempt, in that it aims to changing the accepted and time-honored validity of the Torah. It cannot, however, raise any legitimate doubt as to how the Torah has been understood and practiced for the past 3,290 years, since the record of this is plain and beyond question.

To illustrate the above, I will cite two points, to which you refer in your letter.

Wherever the word mayim, "water", appears in the Torah, including many instances where "water" is a component of certain Mitzvoth, there is a compelling reason to understand this word in its plain meaning. To attempt to reinterpret the word as meaning "gas" or any other liquid, as you suggest, would clearly do violence to the text as well as to the logical meaning of it.

Similarly, where the word "year" or "month" or "week" or "day" appear in the Torah, they can only be understood in their literal and plain meaning, since our Jewish calendar, including Shabbos and Yom Tov, Rosh Hashono, etc., all testify to the plain meaning of these words as they appear in the Torah. Likewise, the dating of documents throughout Jewish history and in Jewish life, including such documents as Gittin (Bills of Divorce), etc., which require the greatest exactitude, verify without a doubt the true intent of such terms as "year", "month", etc., as they appear in the Torah.

Now to refer to another point which is mentioned in your letter, namely, the "difficulty" of accepting such passages in the Torah which imply knowledge of HaShem's motives. I must confess that I fail to see your point at all. What is the difficulty of accepting the idea that when G-d gave us the Torah, He also chose to reveal certain motives or reasons for His actions? On what basis can one limit G-d's prerogatives and deny Him the right to reveal motives?

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

The limitations of a letter preclude further elaboration in all above, which, I trust is not necessary in any case, judging by your writing. However, should you wish to further clarify any point, a competent Rabbi in your vicinity will gladly do it.

Wishing you a Kesivo vaChasimo Tovo,
With blessing,

P.S. I take this opportunity of enclosing a copy of a timely message, which I trust you will find useful.

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Creation Of The World, According To Torah

By the Grace of G-d
14 Elul, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . with enclosure, in which you write about, what you call, a novel analysis and rendering of the Genesis Recording in the Torah, asking me to comment on it.

I trust you know that every so-called "orthodox" Jew (the reason for the quotations marks is that according to our Sages all Jews are 'believers the sons of believers,' in other words, "orthodox," even though this essential nature of a Jew is in some individuals eclipsed in actual practice) believes in the literal interpretation of the Torah, including the Creation account with which the Torah begins. You might say that Jews are the original "fundamentalists", to use a familiar term in this country.

The immediate consequences of this literal interpretation are: (1) that the universe was created ex nihilo; (2) that immediately on the first day of Creation both heaven and earth came into being, as distinct entities (contradicting the so-called "Big Bang" theory which you mention, or other cosmogonic theories); (3) that the six days of Creation refer to actual days, not "periods," as clearly evidenced by the "seventh day" in the same context, which the Creator blessed and sanctified as the day of Shabbos, and which He commanded us, Jews, to observe every seventh day of the week. And while we also have a Sabbatical Year, Shemittah, which is the seventh year of a seven-year cycle (incidentally, the new year, 5740 is such a year), the seventh day of each week - Shabbos - which Jews have observed for countless generation to this day is living testimony that "in six days G-d made heaven and earth."

I am, of course, aware that even in certain orthodox circles there have been well-meaning apologists, who attempted to reinterpret the Creation account of the Torah in one way or another in order to "reconcile" it with changing theories as to the origin of the Universe. But since I am speaking of the authentic, time-honored traditional view, the way it has always been understood and taught to Jewish children, in Chedarim and Yeshivos as it is still understood and taught today, the above mentioned three basic points of Creation are absolutely fundamental; and there are other corollaries, which cannot be entered into here.

In addition to plain text of the Torah shebiksav (written Torah) there are numerous teachings in the Torah shebe'Al-Peh, (Talmud, etc.) reiterating and expounding the Creation account, which is the very foundation of our religion and belief. The Rambam (Maimonides), the great Codifier of Jewish Law, clearly rules that our belief in the Divine origin of both the Written

and Oral Law is in divisible, and if one is denied, G-d forbid, in whole or in part, so is ipso facto the other.

As for your statement that scientific data were not available generations ago, etc., let me say this, that with all due respect to science, it has not in any way (except in a most speculative way) challenged the authenticity of the Torah account of Creation. Be it noted that the Torah itself gives science a strong validity (in the so called exact and empirical sciences), as for example when a physician rules that a person must not fast on Yom Kippur, in which case the doctor's opinion assumes the validity of a Torah rule overriding the Fast.

Unfortunately, most contemporary scientists seem to conceal one of the inescapable consequences of the relativity theory, according to which neither the principle of Ptolemy that the earth is the center of the Universe, nor that of Copernicus that the sun is the center of the "solar system," is relevant any more, since modern science cannot, a priori, rule on this question definitively. From the viewpoint of modern science, either of them could be right, and if one of them is rejected on any ground, the same objection would apply to the other, as anyone who is familiar with the theory of relativity knows.

A further point that has a bearing on the subject matter of your letter has to do with the various theories of dating the age of the Universe according to the theory of evolution. The various hypotheses that attempt to set a date, are not only highly speculative, but are full of contradictions, depending on the criteria used for dating, whether geologic, astronomic, atomic, and the like. They are also mutually contradictory by virtue of the fact that the maximum age according to one theory is smaller than the minimum age according to another. Besides, and this too is an essential point, according to the principle of probability which is now universally accepted in modern science, the evolution from the simple to the complex, not to mention from inorganic to organic, would require such a fantastic number of years that would far exceed the various maximal evolutionary theories.

This is not the place to present a bibliography where all the above can be verified, but a particular bibliography may be found in the book by Avigdor Miller.

I am very sorry that what has been said above is quite categorically at variance with your interpretation, in which you evidently invested a great deal of time and thought. But surely you wished to hear my candid opinion, and not some equivocal palliative remarks, especially as there is no room for palliatives in matters that are basic to our religion and beliefs.

Wishing you a Kesivo vachasimo toivo for a good and sweet year,
With blessing,

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There's A Creator, And He Gave A Plan, Which We Can Follow

By the Grace of G-d
8th of Adar, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____

Blessing and Greetings:

I am in receipt of your letter, postdated the . . . Needless to say, the general topic of your letter can hardly be discussed in a letter. But there is no need for it, since you can discuss it personally with an Orthodox Rabbi in your community. I note from your letter that you have already had such contact.

Nevertheless, inasmuch as you have written to me, I will attempt to answer some points within the limitations of a letter.

To begin with, it is not only a matter of belief, but also of common sense, that the world in which we live has a Creator that directs and supervises its affairs to the minutest detail. Suffice it to cite a simple illustration: When a person enters a highly complex industrial plant, with numerous machines, all working in harmony according to plan, each with its own specific purpose - there is no need to prove that someone has planned and coordinated the entire complex. Be it remembered that no man-made computer or industrial complex can compare in the slightest to the complexity of the world order, and one need only reflect on the infinite complexity of the human body, or the cell structure of even any part of it, to realize that there is a Supreme Being who created it all.

Herein is also the answer to the common question, if so, why are there phenomena that seemingly contradict the Divine order? One simple answer is that if something is 99% perfect, and 1% seems imperfect, common sense dictates that the seeming imperfection is undoubtedly in the eye of the observer, and that this "imperfection" is surely itself part of the overall perfection. Our Sages explain it, on the basis of a text in the Torah, that it was part of G-d's plan of Creation to leave certain aspects "unfinished" in order to enable man to participate in the act of Creation.

As to what part man should play in the universal order - it is also a matter of common sense that having created such a complex and perfect masterpiece, the Creator would not have entrusted it to man without giving him detailed instructions how to conduct his personal affairs and the affairs of the world in accordance with the Divine plan. Hence, there had to be a Divine Revelation - the Revelation at Sinai - when G-d revealed His Plan and gave a set of clear principles and a code of laws (the Torah) for man to order his life accordingly. Not only Jews, but people of many faiths, acknowledge the Divine Revelation at Sinai. However, because of one of G-d's greatest gifts to man, namely freedom of thought and action, there were people who, for one reason or another, chose to insert distortions, or to add to, or detract from, the Torah, disregarding the contradiction in terms: If the Torah is Divine, it is out of bounds to human interference; and if man presumes to tailor it to his convenience, it forfeits any claim to Divinity.

From what has been said, it also follows that G-d has provided every person to carry out His instructions in the best possible way, for it would be illogical to think that G-d would give one a task beyond one's capacity to fulfill. Hence, if a person experiences extraordinary difficulties, it can only mean that that person has been endowed with extraordinary capacities to overcome them, and G-d desires that person to utilize his or her full potential, for his or her good, and as an example and inspiration to others.

The above applies to every Jew, and even more strongly to a Jewish mother, blessed with children, and blessed also with special qualities of love and devotion to bring up her children in the true Jewish way, while being the Akeres Habayis, the foundation of the home who largely sets the tone for the whole atmosphere of the Jewish home, and who has it in her power to illuminate the home with the light and warmth of the Torah and Mitzvoth.

With the approach of Purim, it is timely to remember the historic role of Jewish women in Jewish life, as exemplified in the festival of Purim, as related in the Book of Esther. The very name of this book of the Holy Scriptures - not being named after Mordecai, nor after Mordecai and Esther jointly, but solely after Esther - further emphasizes the important role of the Jewish woman.

Wishing you and yours a joyous and inspiring Purim,
With blessing,

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Unity In The World

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Adar, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessings:

Thank you very much for the copy of your . . . (3rd edition) as well as the enclosed reprints.

Although the subject matter is not in my domain, I trust that I will be able to glean something useful from these texts. Especially as we live in a world where everything is so intimately interrelated, so that there is an underlying unity in all the multiplicity, as it is brought out in the Chabad philosophy. Indeed, modern science has also shown a tendency to find some unifying principle in the physical world, as you surely know.

There is no need to add, that the concept of monotheism in general, and especially in its purest form as reflected in our Torah and Jewish religion, is a corollary of the recognition that there is One Creator and one creative force in the universe, and although with King David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, we say, "How manifold are Your works, Oh G-d!", it is immediately followed by the declaration, "All of them You made in wisdom."

With esteem and Blessing,



Jewish Survival: Torah

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shabbos Nachamu,
5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. & Mrs. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . .

I take this opportunity of sharing with you some thoughts, based on the well known teaching of the Baal Shem Tov to the effect that one should learn from everything in one's personal experience how better to serve G-d.

Since your field is History, I will dwell briefly on one aspect of Jewish History which is particularly instructive.

Anyone, especially a historian, reflecting on the long history of our Jewish people cannot fail to recognize its unique character, unparalleled in the histories of other nations. On the one hand, our people has suffered endless and harsh persecution, and extreme vicissitudes and changes from time to time and from place to place. Yet, on the other hand, it has not only managed to survive, but also to outlive mighty empires and cultures which had been its tormentors, and while these had long ago disappeared from the face of the earth - Am Yisroel Chai ve'Kayam!

Having recognized this plain and undeniable fact, the question is how to explain this extraordinary phenomenon; in other words, what is the secret of Jewish survival, its strength and eternal vitality?

The usual scientific method in establishing a so-called "law" of nature is to find that constant factor which keeps on appearing in all tests and experiments. In this way the essential correlation is established, which must then be accepted as an indisputable fact.

Applying this method in the case of Jewish history, we find that the usual factors which are important for national identity and preservation insofar as other nations are concerned, notably territory, statehood, language, dress, etc., cannot be said to have played an essential role in the preservation of our Jewish people, since these were not constant, and changed from time to time and from place to place. The only constant factor that runs like a golden thread throughout our Jewish history is Jewish adherence to our G-d-given Torah and Mitzvos: The same seventh day - Shabbos , the same laws of Kashrus, Tefillin, Mezuzah, and so on, have been adhered to by all Jews in their everyday life, since the time of Mosheh Rabbeinu.

And while the language in which the Torah was studied and expounded varied from ancient Aramaic to present day English, etc., and the level of exposition of the Torah and Mitzvos varied from the plain to the most profound, and from the rational to the esoteric, the actual performance of the Mitzvah remained the same, down to the very text of the Brochos - "who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us..." So also in regard to the details of the religious articles involved in the performance of the Mitzvos. For example, the Tefillin which a Bar Mitzvah begins to put on for the rest of his life, the Hand Tefillin and the Head Tefillin, remained the same through the ages, nor has its significance been diminished as symbolic of the whole Torah, as it is written, "And it shall be for a sign upon your hand and for a memorial between your eyes, in order that G-d's Torah be in your mouth" (Exod. 13:9). And so also the very first Mitzvah which a Bar Mitzvah boy performs as an adult Jew - the Mitzvah of Shema, on the night before, by which the Jew proclaims daily (evening and morning) the Unity of G-d, his love and fear of G--d, and his total commitment to G-d's Mitzvos, with all his heart and all his soul and all his possessions. All this has not changed through the ages.

Clearly, therefore, it is the Torah and Mitzvos, an everyday experience and way of life that has always been the true and eternal link that unifies and preserves our Jewish people, in good times as in emergencies.

If further proof be needed, our history has shown that those groups or individuals who deviated from this vital link (and we have had them since the worshippers of the Golden Calf and thereafter), sooner or later ended up in one of two ways: either they returned to the fold, or were completely lost to our people through assimilation, etc.

As a matter of fact – which I had occasion to point out before - our contemporary generation is more privileged than the early generations who received the Torah from Mosheh Rabbeinu and his successors in that those early generations had yet to rely largely on faith as to vital correlation between the everyday observance of the Mitzvos and our survival as a nation and as members of this Holy Nation; whereas for us this is a matter of self-evident truth, reinforced by the facts and experience of our Jewish history.

With blessing,

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Torah – The Written And The Oral

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Kislev, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . , in which you refer to the Chumash and Rabbinic Law, and ask why the Chumash is not specific in regard to some laws.

Surely you know that all disciplines and sciences, including medical science, begin with general principles, which are then defined in specific detail. The same is true also to codes of law, where there are laws and by-laws, etc.

The Torah which we received through Moshe Rabbeinu at Sinai, consists of Torah Shebiksav (Written Law) and Torah She-b'al-peh (Oral Law). The Chumash, or the Five Books of the Torah, were written down by Moshe Rabbeinu, but they were also expounded in detail throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. This is clearly stated also in the Chumash itself. Eventually, also the Oral Law was recorded in the Mishna and Talmud, etc., and all the laws and practices required by the Torah were arranged and condensed in the Shulchan Aruch.

Our great teacher and codifier, Maimonides known also as the "Guide for the Perplexed" (after one of his works) - not only for the perplexed of his time, but for the perplexed of all subsequent generations, to this day, and who was also one of the greatest physicians of all time, begins his introduction to his famous and authoritative Code by declaring: (אלו הן) תרי"ג מצוות – שנאמר בסיני הן וכללותיהן ופרטותיהן ודקדוקיהן "All the laws given to Moshe at Sinai were given with their specifics".

When G-d gave us the Chumash, it contained, as it were, in "shorthand," all the specifics concerning our Mitzvoth. Thus, when the Torah tells us "Remember the day of Shabbos, to keep it holy," and "You shall do no manner of work on the day of Shabbos," it was explained to Moshe and he further taught it to the 70 elders, who taught it to all the people, how the Shabbos is to be kept holy, what kind of work was not permitted, and so on. And the same applies to all 613 Mitzvoth of the Torah which are mentioned only in general terms, but were specified in all detail in the Oral Tradition.

All the above is really basic, and could have been clarified with any Rabbi or knowledgeable person. Since you have written to me, and since everything is by Divine Providence, I see in this correspondence an opportunity to call your attention to something that is specifically pertinent to you as a Jew and as a physician. A doctor's function is, of course, to heal and promote the health of his patients. As you know, physical health is inseparably intertwined with spiritual health, or, to quote a familiar adage, mens sana in corpore sano. For Jews, mens sana is directly linked with the Torah and Mitzvoth in the everyday life and conduct. For gentiles, mens sana is linked with the observance of the Divinely-given laws of morality, justice, etc. – the so-called Seven Laws, given to the children of Noah, i.e. all mankind, with all their ramifications, which are the basis of any human society worthy of its name.

I trust that you are applying this principle in the fullest measure in promoting the good health of your Jewish and non-Jewish patients respectively.

With all good wishes, and with blessing,

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Rambam Hilchos Melachim

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Nissan, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . , in which you refer to "A Thought For The Week," specifically to the quotation from Rambam, Hil. Melochim, regarding the sequence of events preceding Kibbutz Golyos. You question the definitiveness of the sequence in the Rambam on the ground that he uses the expression v'im - "And if..."

However, the p'shat in the Rambam is not, as you suggest, that the Rambam gives here only one possible example of the order of the actions which Moshiach will carry out. Rather - as can be seen from the continuation of the text there - the v'im refers to the person of the Moshiach and how he is to be identified without a doubt by his actions and accomplishments; it does not refer to the order of his actions.

As for your argument that the Rambam should have used a definitive expression, such as "Osid le-", he does indeed begin the whole chapter that way, as you also note in your letter. Note here, too, the order:

המלך המשיח עתיד לעמוד ולהחזיר מלכות דוד ליושנה לממשלה הראשונה ובונה בית המקדש ומקבץ נדחי ישראל.

At this time, with the approach of Pesach, Zman Cheiruseinu, I extend to you and yours prayerful wishes for a kosher and joyous Pesach, and may we all, in the midst of all our people, achieve true liberation from all distractions that hinder avodas Hashem wholeheartedly and with joy, and merit the fulfilment of the prophecy, בביאת משיח, נפלאות, אראנו מצרים אראנו נפלאות, כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נפלאות, בביאת משיח, בביאת משיח, בביאת משיח.

צדקנו בקרוב

With blessing,

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The Devil, And Afterlife In Jewish Religion

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Elul, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
New York, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is in answer to your letter of . . . , in which you request information on the concepts of 1) the Devil, 2) Afterlife, and, 3) Hell in the Jewish religion, and where one can find reading material on the above in the Bible (O.T.), etc.

First of all, the idea of a Devil as an independent power opposing to G-d, as it is conceived in certain religions, is not a Jewish concept and has no place in the Jewish religion and faith.

(The existence of a "Satan" is mentioned in several places in the Bible, but in the sense of an angel taking orders from G-d, like other angels, and acting primarily as a messenger to put a person to a test of his belief in G-d. In this context Satan - as the meaning of this Hebrew word indicates - is sometimes identified with the Yetzer Hara, the evil inclination within man, whose

purpose is to tempt, but not really seduce. Thus, no matter how difficult the test may be, it can never be greater than the capacity of the individual to overcome it. This, too, is part of the benevolent design of the Creator, which is all for the benefit of the individual, in order to bring out his, or her, inner powers to enable him or her to attain a higher level of attachment to G-d.)

With regard to the subject of Afterlife, etc., it is significant that the Torah (the Bible) speaks very little about it, for the simple reason that Judaism is essentially concerned with this life, that it be conducted in accordance with G-d's Will as set forth in the Torah, through the observance of the Mitzvoth in the daily life. This way of life ensures that it be a truly happy life both here on earth, as well as in the soul's eternal life after its sojourn on this earth.

The nature of Afterlife is discussed in various passages in the Talmud and in Post-Talmudic Rabbinic sources. Since you did not mention about your background or knowledge of Hebrew, there is no point in referring you to a long list of scattered references in the original sources. However, we can recommend to you at least two brief reviews of this subject in English, in two of our publications by our Kehot Publication Society, which will give you at least some idea about the Jewish concept of Afterlife:

The Commandments by Nissan Mindel (Esp. pp. 35 ff.)

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, volume 2 - the philosophy of Chabad, by the same author (Esp. pp. 248 ff.)

With best wishes for a happy new year,
With blessing,

Secretary

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Jewish Survival: Torah (2)

By the Grace of G-d
22nd of Av, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I hasten to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . in order to assure you that my previous letter was not intended, G-d forbid, to put you "on the defensive," to use your expression. I only wished to share with you some thoughts, which are not merely my absolute belief, but are supported also by logical reason, as brought out in that letter.

To reiterate the main point more explicitly:

Looking objectively and without preconceptions on our long Jewish history - with which the destiny of every individual Jew, as part of our Jewish people, is intimately linked - one must inevitably conclude that the only constant single factor that has preserved our people through all its vicissitudes is the tenacious adherence to Torah-true Yiddishkeit. I do not think that "centrality of Judaism," as referred to in your letter, is the proper term for it, for, with all due respect, it is too vague and lends itself to various interpretation.

The said conclusion, I explained - in light of your background in medical science, which is true of all so-called empirical sciences - is based on the scientific approach, which is, first of all

to ascertain the facts, then deduce from the essential correlation, or "law." Having established the "law," it must be followed if the same results are desired. Understanding of the law is secondary, for it operates independently of our understanding of it. If it is understood, well and good; if it is going to take time to understand it, we cannot postpone following it. This is the normal procedure, for example, in the case of a drug that has been thoroughly tested and found to be effective, though the reasons for it are not clearly understood, or not at all.

Applying this method in the case of Jewish history, we find that the usual factors which are important for national identity and preservation insofar as other nations are concerned - notably territory, statehood, language, etc. - cannot be said to have played an essential role in the preservation of our Jewish people, since these were not constant, and changed from time to time and from place to place. The only constant factor has been Jewish adherence to the Mitzvos in the everyday life, as a way of life. Hence the inevitable conclusion that this is the "law" of Jewish survival. It is not important whether we call it "centrality of Judaism," or by any other name, so long as we know what kind of Judaism we are talking about.

It is true, of course, that "Judaism" is understood differently by different individuals - depending on one's trend of thought, or personal preferences. But in light of what has been said above, there can be no doubt as to what constitutes authentic Judaism in terms of Jewish survival. To this day I have not yet met anyone who could logically deny the above-mentioned conclusion that it is the actual every-day adherence to the Mitzvos that has preserved our Jewish people. One can have no objection to adding to it also peripheral aspects, provided they are not made into substitutes, G-d forbid, for authentic Torah-true Yiddishkeit, or weaken its essential nature.

This is also my answer in regard to genealogy, Hebrew language, and similar aspects, which some presume, in all good conscience, to be important or fundamental, yet do not in themselves touch upon the real core of Judaism.

However, inasmuch as Jews are by nature optimistic - which, incidentally, is a basic tenet in our Torah, Toras Chayim - I venture to carry my optimism so far (and perhaps not so far, after all) as to feel confident that our exchange of correspondence will be conducive to a greater measure of adherence to the Mitzvos than heretofore, with growing momentum, in keeping with the saying of our Sages that "one Mitzva leads to another."

With esteem and blessing,

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Shmittah, Shabbos, And Their Benefits

By the Grace of G-d
20 Iyar, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
Conn.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . , in which you outline your concept of Shemittah, and refer to the day of Shabbos by way of analogy. As you see it, the Torah teaches us that the land must rest (in the seventh year) in order to recoup its mineral losses and be refreshed for the labors of the subsequent six years, much in the way as Shabbos refreshes not only the soul but the body so that it too can recoup its losses for the labors that are sure to come.

Since you asked me to comment on your said thesis, I will begin with an illustration.

When one observes a human being giving food to a hungry person and attempts to analyze this action, the explanation will surely not be limited to the physical hand that gives the food, for this is but the last in a chain of actions and reactions going back to the human soul, which possesses the quality of kindness and compassion that has its roots in the Divine quality of kindness with which the soul has been endowed. To say that all that is involved in the said action is a simple act of kindness to a hungry person, or that this is the main explanation of it, would obviously be taking a most narrow, limited and, indeed, misconceived view.

Similarly in regard to the totality of the Torah and Mitzvos. Certainly, the Torah is the G-d-given "Good Doctrine" (כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתי אל תעזבו) for man's benefit, both spiritual and material. However, all its precepts must be observed as Divine imperatives, whether they are obviously beneficial or not. From the actual compliance with the Divine imperatives evolve their consequences in terms of benefits, not only spiritually, the primary benefit, but also physically and materially, since we live in a physical and material world. Such benefits would include, in the case of Shabbos observance, physical and mental recuperation, and in the case of Kashrus, wholesome nutrition, and so on; but the utilitarian aspect of Mitzvos is certainly not everything, nor is it the primary and essential aspect.

Nothing makes this point clearer than the text of the benediction recited before doing a Mitzvah - ". . . who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to. . .". This plainly means that every Mitzvah has to be fulfilled as a sacred act of obedience to G-d, whereby a Jew partakes of G-d's holiness and sanctifies every aspect of his everyday life. . .

Incidentally, in the case of Shemittah, you surely know that modern science has dispensed with the necessity to keep the soil fallow for a season in order to maintain its fertility, and certainly there was never any necessity to keep the soil completely uncultivated for a whole year. Rotation of crops and fertilization can do more for the soil than by idling it, and there would be no need to lose a whole year's harvest. Besides, the prohibition to cultivate orchards and vineyards during Shemittah cannot be explained on the basis of utility.

The same is largely true in the case of Shabbos observance. Physical and mental recuperation does not necessarily call for complete inactivity; one may benefit also from merely changing the kind of activity, and people often engage in strenuous recreational exercises by way of change and rest. Clearly, therefore, the cessation from all manner of work on Shabbos is not intended to provide physical recuperation. The Halachah itself provides proof of this. For, as you know, striking a match on Shabbos is strictly prohibited as a desecration of the holiness of Shabbos, whereas moving about heavy furniture inside the home is not prohibited on Shabbos. There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above.

While on this subject, it is worth noting the cardinal difference between the Jewish and non-Jewish concept of the "day of rest." The ancient Romans considered the Jewish people "indolent" for not working a whole day in the week. When the nations of the world eventually adopted the idea of a day of rest (on Sunday or Friday), it was more in the nature of a concession to human weakness, recognizing that the human body needed physical rest. But the Jewish concept of Shabbos as a day of rest is completely positive, as is eloquently brought out in the Midrash, where our Sages observe that after G-d completed the work of Creation in six days and found that everything was "very good," the world was still lacking something, namely Menuchah, "rest," and only when Shabbos came and brought Menuchah did the whole Creation attain perfection.

At first glance, the institution of Shabbos, as well as of Shemittah, may appear at variance with the rule that "man to toil is born." But the truth of the matter, as explained in our sacred sources, is that G-d gave us the Shabbos not for physical rest per se, but for spiritual rejuvenation, through increased Torah study and prayer without distraction of the normal weekday routine. The same basic concept characterizes the year of Shemittah, which, though it does not call for cessation of all the 39 types of "work" as on Shabbos, does call for cessation of all agricultural activity (the principal occupation in olden days), leaving ample free time to devote

to the affairs of the soul, and strengthening our bond with our Creator. This is also why the Torah designates the year of Shemittah as "a Shabbos unto G-d".

With blessing,

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Bible Criticism

By the Grace of G-d
20 of Teves, 5724
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
New York

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of the . . . , as well as the previous one, and enclosure, including the brochures which you use as teaching material, and which has not been acknowledged before, owing to a regrettable oversight.

I was pleased to read about your schedule of study periods in Gemoro, and your desire to increase them. I trust that, although you do not mention it, you have study periods also in the practical Dinim relating to daily life, which is a must for everybody, as explained in the Hilchos Talmud Torah everywhere, particularly in the Shulchan Aruch of the Alter Rebbe, whose 150th Yahrzeit Anniversary we are observing this year. This is even more important for those who were recently married, and have yet to establish themselves firmly in married life, especially those who in addition have a position in Chinuch, and have to teach not only by word, but also by example.

With reference to your writing about your studies in other areas, I do not fully approve your devoting so much time to discussing questions of Jewish philosophy, and apparently also comparative religion, etc. also the study of Tanach on the basis of so-called Bible criticism. I trust you know where and by whom Bible criticism originated, and that their criticism was not motivated by pure scholarship. Of course, I am certain that your professors do not share the motivations of the originators of Bible criticism, but, after all, it is not a question of the personality of the teacher, but rather of the approach of the system and ideology. The fact is that in all fields of art and creativity, it is inevitable that the artist's character and sentiments should not be expressed in some way in his artistic work, whether it be painting, sculpture or philosophy. It is well known that, insofar as Bible criticism is concerned, it expressed the character and prejudices of those who gave birth to this school, and who have expanded it, and it was their disciples and followers who brought about the terrible holocaust against the People of the Book only a few years ago.

You need not be taken aback by this harsh expression, and, as already mentioned, does not intend, G-d forbid, to cast any personal reflection upon those who are your teachers at present, especially as I do not even know them, and we are duty bound to judge everyone in the scale of merit. However, I happen to have lived in Germany for a number of years, and I have had occasion to meet with and talk to the disciples of the disciples of the founders of the Bible criticism including Jewish followers of this school, and I have seen the spiritual devastation which it has caused.

I will not attempt here to refute Bible criticism, which has been done by others, and which does not even merit the dignity of refutation. However, I will only mention one point by way of illustration. The fact that there may be a similarity between a narrative in the Torah and some legend or myth among other peoples, this surely is no proof and there are no grounds to believe that the Jews necessarily copied the narratives of the Torah from the mythology of other ancient

people, but rather the reverse. For, it is well known, that among Jews the commandment of "And thou shalt teach it diligently to thy children" is a positive commandment in the Torah which is stated twice in the Shema, and repeated by all Jews twice daily. Even the most extreme Bible critics admit that this has been dated thousands of years ago. At the same time, as recently as only several centuries ago, at the time of the ancestors of the founders of the Bible criticism, any formal education was limited to very narrow circles, and the vast majority of the peoples and nations of the world were illiterate, not so much by accident, as by design of those who were determined to keep the masses in darkness. There can, therefore, be no question as to what nation in the world was the most advanced, and the one to contribute most, in every field of knowledge, to the world at large.

I do not wish to elaborate further on this subject, as I do not wish to jeopardize your relationship with those who are your teachers, especially as I wish to give them the full benefit of doubt and believe that their intentions are good. However, I considered it necessary to make the above observations out of a sense of obligation when seeing someone in a precarious situation, to try to save him from being hurt.

At any rate, it is self-evident that, in view of the fact that time is generally very precious and limited, there can be no doubt as to where the choice should be between trying to trace the date of a certain Biblical sentence, or the fraction of a sentence, on the one hand, or to enrich one's knowledge of the great and eternal heritage of our people, for which our people have suffered martyrdom in every generation. The Torah, both the Torah Shebiktav and the Torah Shebe'al'peh, is, to us, not a museum piece, but a living Torah in our daily life.

... I trust that both you and your wife have participated in the Encounters with Chabad, and may G-d grant that you should derive from them the maximum benefit.

Hoping to hear good news from you

With blessing

By

★

Significance Of Number Seven

By the grace of G-d
Lag B'omer, 5724
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss _____
Mass.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter of the . . . , in which you write that you have noticed that in the Torah and in Yiddishkeit in general the number 7 occupies a special place and you ask why. You surely know that there are other numbers which are similarly significant and prominent, such as the numbers 10 and 3.

As a matter of fact there is hardly any justification in questioning G-d's ways, why He has chosen certain numbers for special significance. For, as you will readily understand G-d's wisdom is beyond human understanding.

The question may be asked however, after G-d has chosen a certain number of days in which to create the world, namely the number 7, what can we learn from this?

Approaching the question from this point of view, it is possible to say that inasmuch as certain categories of things and creatures were created on separate days, each category stands out separately in importance and in the scale of Creation, as also explained in the various

commentaries on the Chumash. Man, who was created last, on the 6th day of Creation, is the most important creature. But the whole of Creation was crowned with the 7th day, the holy day of Shabbos, which is a source of life and blessing for all the creatures, inasmuch as the Shabbos is the "soul", so to speak, of the whole world.

And, because G-d in His infinite wisdom, chose to create the world on the basis of this figure of 7 days, there are many matters of Torah and Mitzvoth which reflect this number 7, such as the 7 weeks of the Counting of the Omer, the 7 years of Shemittah, the 7 Shemitos of Yovel, etc.

In a similar manner we must approach your question why a girl becomes Bas Mitzvah at 12 while a boy at 13, and why not sooner or later? As you can well understand, duties and obligations must come together with sufficient maturity and understanding of their importance and why they should be cherished and observed with love and devotion. According to G-d's scheme of Creation such maturity is attained by a Jewish girl at the age of 12, and by Jewish boys at the age of 13. Of course, you might ask, G-d surely could have speeded up or slowed down the age of maturity, so that the obligation to fulfill the Mitzvoth would also fall sooner or later than the said 12 and 13 years. But in that case the question could still be asked whatever the Bar Mitzvah and Bas Mitzvah age would have been. Clearly G-d, who is the Creator, created the best possible order in Nature and in human development.

Judging by your thoughtfulness and interest in Jewish matters, I am confident that you are learning with proper devotion and dedication to the Torah, Toras Chaim. And the study of the Torah with the proper devotion and dedication, means the kind of study that leads to the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth in the everyday life. I hope that you are a good influence on your friends in this direction.

With blessing

By

★

A Lesson From Economics

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Elul, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
New York, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . , with enclosures.

As you surely know, the problem of inflation, as the science of economics in general, is not in my domain. However, I readily agree with your conclusion that excessive materialism and the "massive decline in religion" is the cause of many ills of our present era.

I trust you know that one of the basic principles of our Torah called Toras Chayim, because it teaches the true way of life - is that the essential thing is action, namely, the actual practice of the Mitzvos in the everyday life. In practical terms, therefore, what you mean by "massive decline in religion" insofar as the Jewish religion is concerned, surely refers to the neglect of observance of the Mitzvos, the actual experience of Yiddishkeit as a way of life. For, no amount of contemplation on, or comprehension of, various aspects of the religious truths can substitute for the practice of the Mitzvos, and if the latter is missing, the most essential aspect is missing.

Hence, seeing how concerned you are with remedying the situation around us, and on the basis of the principle that "the poor of your city come first," I trust that you are doing all you can,

and will continue even more vigorously, to spread Torah-true Yiddishkeit in your environment, both by example and by words coming from the heart, with emphasis on the essential thing, namely the actual practice of the Mitzvos.

Our Sages assure us that "nothing stands in the way of the will." This is understandable, since every human being is endowed with immense potential powers. If material things have tremendous atomic powers, how much greater is the "atomic" power of the soul which, as the Torah defines it, is "truly a part of G-dliness Above." It is only necessary to actualize it; and this is a matter of the individual's own will and determination.

Moreover, a person who has acquired knowledge and special standing in any field, has the additional capability, as well as obligation, to utilize it in accordance with the imperative, "Know Him in all your ways," namely, to use his knowledge, profession, etc. to attain a higher degree of appreciation of G-d's works and wonders in nature, as King David, the "Sweet Psalmist of Israel," expressed it, "How manifold are Your works, O G-d!" "How great are Your works!" - with the corollary of carrying out G-d's commandments, Mitzvos, in the best possible way.

To relate the above to the subject matter of your letter, at any rate in a lighter vein, I refer specifically to your remark as to how much the dollar has depreciated in value in recent years. I have in mind an even more serious devaluation. Every human being, certainly every Jew, has been given by the Creator a certain "face value," by virtue of having been created "in the image of G-d." Consider therefore how much this "face value" had been devaluated by unseemly human conduct, or the conduct of a Jew who fails to live up to G-d's Will as set forth in the Torah and Shulchan Aruch!

Yet it is within the capacity of every person, and every Jew to upgrade and even restore his real worth, and help others do likewise. For a Jew this is a Divine imperative of the highest order, in keeping with the Great Principle of the Torah, v'ahavto l're'acha komocha.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above, especially as the purpose of this letter is not to sermonize or admonish, but to point out how much every Jew can actually accomplish if he is truly determined to spread and strengthen Yiddishkeit in his surroundings.

Wishing you and yours a Kesivo vachasimo toivo for a good and sweet year, particularly a year of Hatzlocho in all above.

With blessing,

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Mitzvos With Kavana

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Cheshvan, 5733
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss _____
Monsey, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I duly received your letter of . . . May G-d grant that the problems which you mention in your letter should resolve themselves satisfactorily.

With regard to your writing about the question of performing the Mitzvos with Kavana, you are certainly right, for it reflects the well known saying that, "A Mitzva without Kavana is like a body without a Neshoma." However, is important to bear in mind that the Kavana of Mitzvos must not be a prior condition of fulfilling them. In other words, it is not right to postpone the fulfillment of Mitzvos until such time as the person will become knowledgeable and will be able

to perform the Mitzvos with Kavana. As a matter of fact, if for some reason the Kavana is lacking, the performance of the Mitzvos (even without due Kavana) itself goes a long way to open the intuitive and inborn channels of the soul, making the attainment of Kavana easier and more certain. Certainly, since you write that you feel the need of Kavana, this should leave you without a doubt that, with your proper effort, you will eventually attain also the proper Kavana.

As you surely know, Chasidus, especially Chabad, places a great deal of emphasis on Kavana, vitality and inspiration in prayer and Mitzvos. This is clearly evident in the basic and classical work of Chabad, the Tanya, by the Alter Rebbe, Founder of Chabad. There we will also find the citation of the above mentioned saying ("A Mitzva without Kavana is like a body without a Neshama"). At the same time, however, the author explains at great length that the essential thing is the actual performance of the Mitzva so much so that the very purpose of the descent of the Neshama to this mundane world is essentially for the actual performance. One of the simplest proofs of that in that before the soul's descent to earth, it was in an infinitely better position insofar as Ruchnius is concerned, for it was not subject there to the distractions and limitations imposed upon the soul during its sojourn on earth in a physical body, even under the best of circumstances. What it lacked in the world of the spirit Above was actual performance of Mitzvos for, as it is written, "The Torah is not in Heaven," but it was given precisely to be observed and practiced here on earth. All this is explained at great length in Chabad, but even the few lines above should suffice to see how important the actual performance of the Mitzvos is. But since you write that you spent three years in Eretz Yisroel, you are no doubt able to read the Tanya in the original, and in any case there is also an English translation available. I requested the office to send you the Tanya in English, in case you have not got it, and knowing of your family background and tradition, I am confident that you will take time to study it properly. The important thing is that it should be the kind of study that leads to action, as our Sages pointed out, and as the Tanya itself emphasizes at length, as mentioned above.

Please convey my regards to your parents, as well as my prayerful wishes that they should have true Yiddish Torah Nachas from you.

With blessing,

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Shechita And Korbanos

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Tishrei, 5737
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter,

Needless to say, I was sorry to read at the beginning of your letter that instead of consecrating your time for the study of G-d's Torah, you spent some time away from Torah studying, and, if what you write is correct, it was not merely "away from Torah," but actually contrary to G-d's Torah.

The reason I make the above observation - although you write that you are now determined to resume your study of Torah - is that having lost such valuable time, you will surely make a special effort to study the Torah with increased devotion and diligence, to compensate for it. In addition, I suggest that you say at least one extra chapter of Tehillim to help you clear away the mental contamination resulting from that study.

With regard to your questions about Shechita in general, and Korbanos in particular - I do not think that this should be the first topic of your interest at this time when you have to sit down and concentrate on the study of Torah, including the practical Halachos and Dinim pertaining to the daily life and conduct. Nor is a letter the proper medium to discuss these subjects, especially as any orthodox Rabbi could adequately explain it to you orally.

However, inasmuch as you have already mentioned the said subject, I will outline here a few pertinent and basic points.

As is well known, the so-called Four Worlds - minerals, vegetables, living creatures and mankind, have been so created that the vegetation is nourished by various elements of the mineral world, primarily from the soil, fertilizers, etc. It is no denigration for the vegetable world to be sustained by the mineral world, since this is in the order of nature created by G-d. On the contrary, as it is also understandable, it is an "elevation" for the mineral world, whereby the mineral is turned into vegetable, as it were, so that the benefit is for both. In a similar way, when an animal feeds on grass, the vegetation becomes part of the flesh and blood of the animal, and is also "elevated," provided that the grazing is not done in a wrongful way (trespassing on other property and the like). Similarly, when a human being eats the flesh of animals - again in the way that G-d has ordained in His Torah (observing the laws of Shechita, with minimum pain for the animal, and with the idea not merely to satisfy a craving for meat, but in order to keep one's body healthy and use the energy to conduct the daily life in a humanly manner, in accordance with G-d's Will) - then this is also an "elevation" for the animal. This is why a Bracha is recited before Shechita.

As for the question how does one Bracha recited at the beginning of Shechita of many animals fulfill its function in regard to the animals that are slaughtered hours later, since it does not hear the Bracha - it is surely unnecessary to explain to you that the Bracha is not recited for the benefit of the physical ear of the animal, that it should hear it and understand it. The Bracha has to do with the vital principle of the animal, that is, its "soul," that this vital principle should be elevated into holiness. Clearly, in this case the time element is of no importance, so long as there has been no interruption in the Shechita process (through engaging in other work, and the like), in which case the Bracha covers all the animals that are slaughtered without interruption.

Needless to say, in speaking of the laws of Shechita in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch, these include not only that the animal should be a Kosher one, and that the Shechita should be carried out meticulously in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch, but also that the flesh should be properly soaked and salted, and should be eaten with a Bracha, etc.

Furthermore, continuing the line of ascendancy, as mentioned above - from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, from animal to man this process must not stop with man. Man, too, must elevate himself to a higher level of spirituality and holiness, by using his time and energy for the study of the holy Torah and doing the holy Mitzvos.

What has been said above about Shechita, generally applies also to the Korbanos, though there are many additional aspects.

Your question with regard to our prayer for the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash instead of The Tabernacle as was used in the Desert - you surely know that the Tabernacle and Sanctuary at that time was a "tent," made of curtains and boards, which was a temporary and portable one. However, after the first Bais Hamikdash was built in Jerusalem, as a permanent structure, this was to be the final form of the Bais Hamikdash, as was also the second one that was built seventy years after the destruction of the first. And so will be the third and last Bais Hamikdash, for which we pray and hope to be built by our righteous Moshiach.

I trust that this letter will achieve its main purpose, which is to stimulate you to dedicate yourself to the study of G-d's Torah with all your devotion and diligence, the kind of study that leads to action, namely the fulfillment of the Mitzvos in the daily life.

With blessing,

Physical And Spiritual Health

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Adar II, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____
Jerusalem

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . May G-d grant the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good, particularly to be successful in treating your patients and bringing them relief and cure.

There is surely no need to emphasize to you how important it is for patients to see the personal interest and heartfelt attitude of their physician, since it is evident from your letter that this is precisely what you are actually practicing.

I trust it is also unnecessary to emphasize to you that insofar as our Jewish people are concerned, physical health is closely intertwined with spiritual health, and the spiritual health of a Jew is, of course, dependent on conducting the everyday life in accordance with the Torah, called Toras Chaim, because it is the Jew's guide in the everyday life and also the source of life. Indeed, there is the well known analogy which our Sages often emphasized, namely that what water is for a fish, the Torah is for a Jew. But although a fish cannot long survive out of its vital element, G-d, in His mercy, gives a straying Jew time to return to his vital element, namely to a life of Torah and Mitzvoth. It is inevitable, however, that until he does, he would feel ill at ease and frustrated, subconsciously at any rate. And this is where a Jewish physician can be of great help to his or her patients, by helping them find their way back to a wholesome life both spiritually and physically.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above. I will therefore conclude by wishing you and yours a happy and inspiring Purim and, in the words of the Megillah, "Light, Joy, Gladness and Honor." It is significant that in this connection, too, our Sages emphasize the dependence of the physical upon the spiritual, by interpreting these words of the Megillah: "Light - this is Torah...Honor - this is Tefillin."

With blessing,

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Influencing Another Person

By the Grace of G-d
14 Tammuz, 5746
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____
Monsey, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . If you will let me know your full Jewish name, together with your mother's Jewish name, as is customary, and the same in regard to all your family, I will remember you all in prayer, as requested.

With regard to the question how to influence people around you to be more observant - the proper approach depends, of course, on the psychological makeup of all concerned as well as on circumstances, etc. One general rule is always applicable, namely, that words coming from the heart, accompanied by a living example are usually effective, sooner or later.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

It is also well to remember that in many cases non-relatives can be more successful in achieving the desired response than relatives, for in the case of a husband or parent there is sometimes the psychological suspicion that he is domineering or bossy.

I trust you know that in the matter of Yiddishkeit there is the assurance of Torah yogaato umotzoso, namely when a Jew is determined and makes the necessary effort, he is bound to succeed even beyond expectation.

May you have good news to report in all above.

With blessing,

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Concept Of Yarmulka

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Menachem Av, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I duly received your letter of the . . . in which you write about your manufacturing Yarmulkes, etc.

No doubt you know that it is explained in the teachings of Chasidus, and is also a matter of common sense which can be easily understood through a little reflection, that the world in which we live has a Creator and Master, Who created everything as needed, without waste or deficiency. Hence: when a person engages in something which is superfluous, it is bound to create a deficiency in another area: in terms of time and energy.

No doubt you also know that it is written in our Holy Scriptures 'שונא מתנות יחי' ("One who is averse to gifts, enjoys life"). Thus, although your thought of making two Yarmulkas for me is certainly appreciated; it would not be appropriate in the present case for the two reasons mentioned above.

However, since you had the good intention, it should not be allowed to go by without something practical. I therefore want to take this opportunity to dwell briefly on the concept of covering the head, which is connected with Yiras Shomayim. By covering the head, we express in a symbolic way that while the highest thing of a human being is the intellect which is housed in the head, we cover it to express our complete submission to a still higher, and infinitely so, Intellect, namely G-d's, and are prepared and willing to accept G-d's directives without question. This, indeed, is the great principle of Naaseh (we will do), before v'Nishma (we will understand), with which we accepted the Torah and Mitzvoth at Mt. Sinai.

In light of the above, I hope and trust that your above mentioned intention will be expressed in a growing effort to influence Jews in matters of Yiras Shomayim, both by words coming from the heart, as well as by a shining example - in addition to what you are promoting indirectly through the making of Yarmulkes.

Wishing you Hatzlocho in all above,

With blessing,

*

“From My Flesh I See G-d”

By the Grace of G-d
2nd of Marcheshvan, 5725
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Prof. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

Thank you for your letter of . . .

I have instructed the office to put you on the mailing list, in accordance with your request.

I would also welcome an opportunity to meet with you, when you are in New York, as I feel we would have come topics of mutual interest to discuss, especially in view of the fact that your field is that of psychology. For as you may be aware, there is a close affinity between the teachings of Chassidus and the study of the psyche, more specifically the study of the soul. As a matter of fact, one of the basic doctrines of Chabad Chassidus is derived from the concept that the understanding of G-d as revealed in nature and even beyond, can best be attained by the study of the essence and functions of the human soul. This is based on the Biblical verse, "From my flesh I see G-d" (Job 19:26). And while our mind is limited, and no created being could possibly understand the Creator, it is by means of our soul, which is "truly apart of G-dliness Above," that we can grasp those relatively infinitesimal aspects of G-dliness which come within our limitations.

I have requested the office to send you a copy of the Tanya translated into English by our Dr. Nissan Mindel, which I trust you will find of interest.

Hoping to hear good news from you,

*

Positive Outlook Helps Cure

By the Grace of G-d
5712
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____
N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I have received your letter. While I am pleased to read in your letter a quotation about G-d being the Creator of the world who also guides its destinies, etc., this very good impression is weakened by the further tone of your letter, where you state that you want to be 'realistic,' based on the prognosis of physicians regarding your condition.

I want to tell you, first, that even from the realistic point of view, we must recognize the fact that very many times the greatest physicians have made mistakes in diagnosis. Moreover, in recent times we see that new discoveries are made daily in the medical field, with new "wonder" drugs and methods, which have revolutionized medical treatment.

Secondly, observing life in general, we see so many things that are strange and unbelievable, that to be truly realistic one cannot consider anything as impossible.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

In a condition which is, to a large extent, bound up with the nervous system and the resistance of the organism, even medical opinion agrees that the stronger the patient's faith in cure, and the stronger his will to get better, the stronger becomes his ability to recover.

Needless to say, this is not said in the way of an admonition. But, inasmuch as by individual Divine Providence, you have learned of me, and I of you, I think I am entitled to convey to you the above thoughts, which I was privileged to hear from my father-in-law of saintly memory in similar cases.

May the Almighty help you to fulfill your promise to work for Torah-true movements, and to bring up your children in the way of true Yiddishkeit.

With blessing, and hoping to hear good news from you,
Sincerely,

*

Reluctance To Seek Medical Advice

By the Grace of G-d
21st of Teves, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Toronto, Ont. Canada

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . and, as requested, will remember your son in prayer.

With regard to the problem of having him seek medical advice, it often happens that grown-up children are less responsive to parental influence than to influence coming from friends. I trust you can find some suitable friends who could talk to him, preferably without his knowing that they have been requested to do so.

I would also like to add that a reluctance to seek or follow medical advice is a common occurrence, and doctors usually know how to deal with such a situation. One way is to prescribe a colorless and tasteless drug that could be dissolved in milk or juice without arousing suspicion.

Inasmuch as all blessings come from G-d, it is well to remember what is often overlooked, that all members of a Jewish family are considered as one entity, one body, where a benefit to one part of it is a benefit to all. Therefore, every additional effort in matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvoth, especially on the part of parents, widens the channels for G-d's blessings to all the members of the family, particularly to the one who needs it most, although this is a must in any case, in accordance with the rule that all matters of holiness should be on the ascendancy. And knowing the tradition of your family, there is surely no need to elaborate to you on this.

May G-d grant that you should have good news to report in all above.

With blessing,

*

A Living Example Influences Others

By the Grace of G-d
Isru-Chag, 24th of Tishrei,
5738
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Calif.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter . . . in which you ask as to how much the Chabad movement has succeeded in counteracting the work of the various freak movements that alienate Jews from Yiddishkeit, etc.

Needless to say, to save Jews from such perils is not the exclusive duty of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, or any particular Jewish group, but it is the duty of every Jew who is concerned about Jewish survival. However, I can assure you that by doing this work with the proper approach of true sincerity and affection, while at the same time showing a living example of what Jewish commitment to Yiddishkeit means, has proven highly successful.

Moreover, even those who, for one reason or another, are not in a position to undertake direct action to counteract the dangerous influences of which you speak in your letter can, nevertheless, do a great deal by the very fact of showing a living and shining example of Yiddishkeit. People do not live in a vacuum, and one is bound to have an influence on others in the environment.

Needless to say, there is always room for advancement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvoth, which are infinite, being derived from the infinite.

I need hardly add that the purpose of this letter is not just to sermonize, but simply to encourage you and those on whom you can have an influence, to strengthen your own commitment to Yiddishkeit in the daily life, which is something that does not depend on others, and is assured of Hatzlacha, provided there is a firm will and determination. And considering that all Jews constitute one organism, one body, where a benefit to any part of it is a benefit to the whole, every additional effort in matters of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvoth, on your part, and by others, is bound to strengthen indirectly the general wellbeing of the Jewish people as a whole, in addition to the direct influence that such daily conduct has on all around.

With blessing,

*

Confidence And Trust In Hashem

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Elul, 5738
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . , and will remember you in prayer for the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good.

With regard to the problems about which you write, and your general state of mind. I trust it is surely unnecessary to explain to you at length that one of the basic tenets of our Torah, called Toras Chaim and Toras Emes, because it is every Jew's true guide in life, is to have complete trust in G-d, as King David expressed in his sacred Psalms, "G-d is my shepherd, I shall not be short of anything," "G-d is with me, I shall not fear," etc. In practical terms this means that although it is necessary to do what must in the natural order of things in matters of Parnosso, a house, health, etc. - it must be done without worry and anxiety, in complete confidence that G-d will send His blessings for Hatzlocho in all these efforts.

There is reason to believe that what you write about your not feeling well, etc., is probably due to anxiety and nervousness, rather than any organic disorder, G-d forbid. No doubt you can check this out with a doctor-friend.

With regard to the question what to do with your house, you ought to discuss it with knowledgeable local friends, especially as it seems that the time is not suitable at this moment to sell it. At any rate, you should not do anything radical until after receiving a Kesivo vaChasimo Tovo for the new year, in other words, until after Yom Kippur. In the meantime, every additional effort in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, though a must for its own sake, will also widen the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all needs.

Wishing you and yours a Kesivo vaChasimo Tovo, for a good and sweet year,
With blessing,

*

Overcoming An Undesirable Habit

Mr. _____
Baltimore, Md.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter, in which you write about an undesirable habit.

The way to overcome this habit is to completely divert the mind from it. This means that one should not attempt to wrestle with the problem in his mind and try to convince himself that it is a bad thing, or a sin, and the like, but to dismiss it entirely from the mind. But, in order to be able to disengage the mind from one thing, it is necessary to engage it immediately in something else, which has no relation whatever to the other thoughts. The best thing, of course, is to engage the mind in a matter of Torah, because the Torah is called "Light" and even a little light dispels a lot of darkness. However, if it is impossible to engage the mind in Torah, at the moment when that thought occurs, it should be engaged in anything, as long as it is completely unrelated.

In accordance with the above, it is also clear that every addition in the degree of devotion and diligence in the study of the Torah and the observance of the Mitzvoth, in addition to being a must for its own sake, will also help to overcome the problem.

If your Tefillin have not been checked within the last twelve months, it would be a good idea to have them checked now, and every weekday morning, before putting them on, to put aside a small coin for Tzedaka, 'Bli-Neder'. I also suggest that you should be careful to observe the Shiur in Tehillim every day, as it is divided according to the days of the month.

With blessing,

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Helping The Wounded In Eretz Yisroel

Miss _____
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive your letter.

As I already mentioned in my previous letter, I was pleased to see you, in passing, looking well, and may G-d grant that you should feel even better henceforth. Especially as we are approaching the bright days of Chanukah, with their message of increasing light of Torah and Mitzvoth and good deeds in a steadily growing measure.

You write that you would like to do something useful and ask for a suggestion. I would therefore suggest to you the following:

As you surely know, recent events in the Holy Land resulted, unfortunately, in a considerable number of casualties of wounded and injured young people. You could do something in a personal way that would bring these special young people joy and a great spiritual uplift, seeing that there are persons in distant lands who take a personal interest in them. I do not mean financial help, but something which is more important than that, namely raising their spirits and morale. And the way you can do it is by starting a knitting and/or sewing project, to make such things as sweaters and the like, to send to them as personal gifts. Perhaps you could even organize a knitting and sewing circle among your friends for this purpose.

In addition to the above sentiments, it would provide a further opportunity to express in the message that would accompany such gifts, that they are not merely an expression of solidarity with them, but that it expresses also the great principle of Jewish unity, based on the fact that Jews, however scattered they may be, and however diversified in education and background, etc., are by their very nature one people. And what truly unifies all Jews is the fact that they received one Torah from the One G-d, a Torah and way of life that transcends all limitations of time and place. This unity and uniqueness of our people is always present, regardless of whether one is aware of it or not. But any intelligent, sensitive and honest person must feel it more strongly. However, it is not enough just to feel it, for it must be expressed in a tangible way through personal commitment to the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life.

At this time before Chanukah, I send you my good wishes for a bright and inspiring Chanukah, and may it also bring a growing measure of brightness in your life, in every respect.

With blessing,

*

Hashgacha Protis, For You To Improve The Situation

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Adar 1, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
c/o Dr. _____
Kanazawa, Japan

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your letter of the . . . , and many thanks for writing me about the situation of Yiddishkeit as you found at any rate at first glance, in Tokyo and Kobe.

I trust that in accordance with our conversation before your departure, you view the situation in its true light, namely, that it is not G-d forbid a case for discouragement or despair, but, on the contrary, a challenge. Indeed, the fact that Divine Providence has taken you there at this very time when the situation needs to be strengthened, is in itself a clear sign that you have been given capacities to improve the situation, both directly as well as indirectly, through your influence on fellow Jews whom you have found there, including those you mention in your letter. Needless to say, the Zechus Horabim will help you.

May G-d grant that you should carry out your responsibilities, which are also a great Zechus, with joy, especially as we are now in the days of Adar - the month which calls for an increased measure of Simcha. And inasmuch as this year, a leap year, has two months of Adar, they surely bring a double measure of joy in all matters which have to be fulfilled with joy, particularly the spreading of Torah and Mitzvoth. Incidentally, as this has also been mentioned before, one of the lessons of the Jewish leap year, which makes up the deficiency between the Lunar Year and the Solar Year, as you know, is also to remind us about the need to make up any possible deficiency in the past. Clearly if today is as good as yesterday, but no more, it does not make up any deficiency, nor is it in keeping with the principle of all things of holiness having to be on the ascendancy, which for a Jew means steady advancement in the ascendancy of form over matter, and the spiritual over the physical.

With blessing,



A Village For Special Teens And Adults

By the Grace of G-d
21st of Shevat, 5747
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Jerusalem

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the . . . , in which you write about the project of a village for special adolescents and adults, etc.

Since you sign your letter a "Volunteer," it is not quite clear in what capacity you have written this letter. However, considering the importance of the matter, I am replying to your letter without waiting for a clarification, especially as this is not really material in this case. The point is as follows:

Judging by your description of the purpose and scope of the project, it is my considered opinion that such a project should be undertaken as a general (universal) cause, on its own merits. By this I mean that it should not be made an adjunct to, or part of, other projects or programs; nor should it be identified with any particular organization, or party, political or otherwise, or any movement, whether Chassidim or Misnagdim, etc. - for obvious reasons. The most obvious one is that if it were so identified, it would immediately limit its appeal to those who are in sympathy with a particular organization, but it would lose support of others, even though the project in itself would be quite appealing to them on universal considerations.

A further point, which I believe should be considered, is the matter of location. In addition to the limitation that a location such as . . . would impose, since it would immediately be identified with a project of . . . , etc., the people for whom the village is intended have enough problems without the additional complications of being located in the . . . area.

I trust there is no need for further elaboration, as I am sure you can well understand my personal position in regard to the said project.

With blessing,

*

Beis Refuah, Not Beis Cholim

B. H.
25 Adar Sheni, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Flushing, N.Y.

Sholom uBrocho:

I received your letter and was sorry to note that you required hospitalization.

(Incidentally, you use the term "Beis Cholim," which is, of course, in common usage, but, as I have had occasion to point out, I prefer the term "Beis Refuo" for several reasons, including the simple reason that this corresponds to the function of a medical facility).

Inasmuch as in the month of Adar the Mazel of every Jew is בריא, may G-d grant you a Refuo Shleimo and Refuo Kroivo, and since the month of Adar leads directly into the month of Nissan, the Month of Geulo, may it also bring you, in the midst of all our people, a Geulo from all distracting things, so as to serve G-d wholeheartedly and with complete joy.

Your Pidyon will be remembered at the holy resting Place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, and the Zechus of your Tzedoko, for which receipt is enclosed, will additionally stand you and yours in good stead.

Wishing you and all yours a kosher and joyous Pesach,

With blessing,

P. S. You do not mention anything about your daughter, and I trust you will have good news to report also about her.

*

Duration Of A Day In Chumash Breishis

By the Grace of G-d
6th of Cheshvan, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

France

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the . . . Since we have no facilities in our office to write in French, the reply comes in English. However, you may continue to write to us in French.

With regard to your question about the duration of a day in the narrative of Creation in the beginning of the Book of Genesis, I do not quite understand why there should be any question about it, inasmuch as the Torah states it explicitly and emphasizes it in connection with the seventh day of Sabbath as a Day of Rest. To mention but two well known passages, may I refer you to the fourth of the Ten Commandments, where the Torah states clearly: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the L-rd, your G-d ... for in six days the L-rd made heaven and earth...and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the L-rd blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exod. 20:8-11).

Again: "And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever that in six days the L-rd made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested" (Ibid 31:16-17).

Of course, we also have a Sabbatical year, but there the Torah speaks clearly in terms of years, namely working the fields and orchards for six years, and resting the earth during the seventh year, which is designated as a "Sabbath unto G-d."

Noting your interest in the Torah, I trust that you are active also in disseminating the study and teachings of the Torah and its eternal values, particularly with emphasis on the actual performance of the Mitzvoth in the everyday life, in accordance with the basic Torah-rule that "the essential thing is the deed." And since G-d would obviously not request of a person to do anything beyond his or her capacity, it is certain that the Mitzvoth and obligations which He has commanded and expects every Jew to fulfill are within the capacity of every Jew to fulfill, and it is ultimately mainly a matter of one's own will and determination.

With blessing,

*

Descendents Of The Alter Rebbe

B.H.
3rd of Cheshvan, 5734
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Sholom uBrocho:

I was pleased to receive your letter of . . . , with reference to the newly formed Association of Descendants of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Ladi, the Alter Rebbe.

Needless to say, it is gratifying to see the interest which this Association has stimulated. If any Jewish association is of course, to be welcomed for its benefits to the members as well as to others,

benefits as the Alter Rebbe understood the term, namely, both materially and spiritually, with preponderance of the spiritual over the material, how much more is to be welcomed an association such as the above, which will make the members more deeply conscious of their great spiritual heritage and family ties, going back to the Alter Rebbe, who, as all recognize exemplified in his life all that he taught in his sacred books, especially his basic monumental works, the Shulchan Aruch and Tanya.

It is self-understood that he hoped - as he does now, since the soul is eternal - that all his descendants will follow in his footsteps.

Moreover, if even in the realm of the material and physical, which are inherently limited, heredity plays such an important part, how much more so in the realm of the spirit, which is essentially limitless. It is only a matter of bringing the spiritual qualities to the surface, and in the fullest measure. One should bear in mind that making the fullest use of these qualities is not a personal matter, merely to utilize ones powers to the full. It also means utilizing the powers transmitted by the Alter Rebbe to his descendants - a sacred trust. There is no need to elaborate to you on all this.

May G-d grant that your concerted efforts will bring fruits and fruits of fruits to all the associated members and their families and offspring, especially for the sake of the children and grandchildren, for whom parents and grandparents desire nothing less than the very best and in the fullest measure.

With blessing,

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Staying In Eretz Yisroel In A Time Of Crisis

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Sivan, 5727
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
London England

Greeting and Blessing:

At this time, on the eve of Shovuos, I extend to you and yours my prayerful wishes for a happy and inspiring Yom Tov Shovuos, with true Nachas from your children, in good health and ample sustenance.

I take this opportunity also to acknowledge receipt of your cable in regard to your son... Surely by now you realize the extent of the shame which those boys feel who, at the insistence of their parents, fled from Eretz Yisroel in the time of crisis. These boys feel greatly hurt that their parents should have taken them away from the Holy Land where they were in the midst of some 2 million Jews (may their number multiply), to flee like cowards from the land of which it is written in the Torah, "G-d's Eyes are upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." The indictment with which they will saddle their parents will not be easily forgotten by them, and it may take them not days and not weeks to overcome and forget it, but many months and perhaps years. I do not wish to elaborate on something which is far from a credit to some of our brethren who unfortunately lost their nerve under the stress of circumstances. You ought to feel very happy that your son did not flee from there, and remained in Kfar Chabad to continue his Torah learning, and by his very presence gave further encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land in the time of need.

May G-d grant that you should be truly and consistently proud of him and of his conduct from now and forever more.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

With prayerful wishes to you and yours in the traditional blessing of my father-in-law of saintly memory - to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness,
With blessing,

*

A Meaningful Life

By the Grace of G-d
10th of Tammuz, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Johannesburg, So. Africa

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your (undated) note, in which you write that your life is meaningless, etc.

Needless to say, it is most surprising that you should entertain any such thought. Surely you have heard our Torah, called Toras Chaim and Toras Emes, meaning that it is the Jew's true guide in life, and reveals the truth in everything, declares that "a person to toil is born." This means that the purpose of life on this earth is to make it a fitting abode for the Divine Presence, which requires that it should be a world where justice, decency and benevolence reign supreme. And everyone is expected to work for the realization of these ideals in the maximum degree - first and foremost in one's own personal life, and through influencing the environment in this direction. For a Jew the purpose in life is clearly spelled out in the Torah and is realized through the everyday life and conduct in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch. And such a life is meaningful and worthy, good, secure and harmonious.

Moreover, since this is what G-d requires of every Jew, it is certain that He provides the capacity to live up to His Will, for He would not require anything that is beyond human capacity.

For a person to think otherwise and disregard the great Divine task, which is both a privilege and obligation, is like a soldier who decides that he is worthless and useless and therefore will abandon his position at the front.

All the above is so obvious that there is no need to elaborate on it, but only to emphasize again that the essential thing is action, namely an active and full life in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch, and to dismiss altogether any thoughts and notions which are only the work of the Yetzer.

I trust that your next letter will be in keeping with the above, and may G-d grant you Hatzlocho.

With blessing,

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Lesson From Stamp Collecting

By the Grace of G-d
2nd of Iyar, 5742
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . in which you write that you are an avid collector of stamps and would like to have some enclosed first-day envelopes (herewith returned) signed, etc. I regret that I cannot comply with your request.

On the other hand, since everything is by Divine Providence, and you have taken the trouble to write to me, I take it as an indication that I should use this opportunity of calling your attention to a matter which is related to your hobby. This is that every Jew is duty bound to be an "avid collector" of Mitzvos and good deeds in the everyday life, and, these are indeed the most valuable and precious things that a Jew can collect, so much so, that our Sages declared that "one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come" (Pirkei Avos 4:17) .

Moreover, this is the kind of a collection which a Jew can constantly enrich day after day without recourse to special postal issues and signatures etc. It is only a matter of one's own personal will and determination.

I trust, therefore, that you, too, are an avid collector of Mitzvoth and good deeds, and that, in compliance with the Great Principle of the Torah, "Love your fellow Jew as yourself," you are using your good influence to inspire others in this direction by example and precept.

I am enclosing also a copy of the recent Pesach message, which has a bearing on the above.
With blessing,

*

Now, We Can Accomplish More, In Less Time

By the Grace of G-d
13th of Cheshvan, 5734
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Cleveland, Ohio

Greeting and Blessing:

With further reference to our correspondence, I wish to emphasize here another point about the urgency and speed that should propel every activity for the strengthening of Yiddishkeit in general, and Torah Chinuch in particular.

In normal times, steady, albeit slow, progress might be satisfactory, and sometimes steady progress and speed may not even be compatible. However, we live in abnormal times, when things move with whirlwind speed, and we must not lag behind the times in our method of tackling problems in the vital area of Torah and Chinuch. Indeed, in light of the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that a person must learn from everything around him how better to fulfill his purpose in life, especially in fundamental matters, the present jet age and supersonic speed should inspire the idea of time-saving in the spiritual realm. A distance that not so very long ago took days and weeks to cover, can now be spanned in a matter of hours, and a message that took as long to communicate

can now be transmitted instantly. If this could be accomplished in the physical and material world, surely the same should be true in the spiritual realm, whether in the area of personal achievement, or in the area of effecting a change in the environment. To be satisfied with less in the realm of the spirit would be like arguing to return to the era of the horse and buggy on the ground that this was satisfactory in olden days, all the more so since spiritual matters have never been subject to the limitations of time and space.

If anyone may entertain any doubt about his ability to meet a challenge which Divine Providence has thrown into his lap, suffice it to remember that G-d does not act despotically or capriciously, and most certainly provides the necessary capacity to meet the challenge, and to do so joyously, which is the way of all Divine service, as it is written, "serve G-d with joy," and which, incidentally, is a basic tenet of the Chasidic approach to all matters.

With all good wishes, and with blessing,

*

Devote Your Energy And Time To Torah And Mitzvos

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Kislev, 5735
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Jerusalem

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter reached me with considerable delay, and this is the first opportunity for me to acknowledge it.

In your letter you write that you have read the book . . . , and you ask my opinion about it.

I remember having seen the book when it appeared. There is much that is debatable concerning its contents, but these are hardly the proper topics for a discussion in a letter.

The important thing, however, is that judging by your letter and background, this is hardly the time for you to devote your attention to problems which are not immediately relevant to you in the present stage of your life, when the most important thing for you is to concentrate in the maximum degree on the study of our Torah, giving it all the time and attention you can muster. Considering that the Torah is described as being "longer than the earth and wider than the sea", one can never give overly much attention and time to it. It follows, therefore, that if you will take time out from your Torah studies to inquire about a subject which is not relevant to you, at any rate not at this time, you would deprive yourself of that much time and attention to the Torah, which would be an irretrievable loss. For one must remember that one of the basic principles of our religion is that "G-d has not created any single thing in His world in vain" (which is based on the fundamental belief that G-d is the Creator of the world and the Essence of perfection). This applies also to the amount of energy and time that every Jew has to devote to Torah and Mitzvoth, and any infringement upon it would be a wasteful loss that would be irretrievable. Needless to say, the study of the Torah has to be in a way that leads to the practice of the Mitzvoth, which requires even greater concentration on the Torah - "Torah" in the sense of Hora'ah, namely instruction and guidance.

With blessing,

For the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By,

*

Strengthening One's Own Yiddishkeit, Helps Others

By the Grace of G-d
Chanukah, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter. . . , enclosing an article in which it is mentioned how Jewish children have fallen under most undesirable influence. You ask if there is anything you can do in this connection.

It is one of the basic tenets of our Torah, called Toras Emes, that everything is by Divine Providence. Hence, since the said article came to your attention, there is some purpose to it, and it is certain that there is something that you can do.

Actually the doing can be carried out in two ways: firstly, to strength on Yiddishkeit in the immediate environment and in a direct way, by example and precept. Secondly, to reach out to a faraway place, and to benefit fellow Jews whom one does not even know. This can also be done indirectly, inasmuch as all Jews constitute one entity, one organism. We see that in connection with the health of the physical body, if it is necessary to strengthen any organ or part of the body, this is done in a direct way if that part is accessible. But if it is not accessible, the affected part is treated indirectly by strengthening the general health of the body, since a benefit to any part of the body is a benefit to the whole.

Similarly in connection with the Jewish people. When a Jew strengthens his own adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth, and that of his family, especially also those around him – this benefits all Jews everywhere, and also strengthens their identity and involvement with Yiddishkeit.

The concept expressed above is not an exaggeration or fantasy, but it is what our Toras Emes tells us. We also see it in connection with Chanukah, which recalls an extraordinary and apparently contradictory state of affairs. The Jewish people, in those days, were “weak and few” in a physical sense and faced the “mighty and many”. It would seem that if they relied on a miracle, then they should have simply sat back and prayed, but should not have gone out to battle against such overwhelming odds. Obviously it made absolutely no sense to fight under such conditions. However, Chanukah teaches us that we cannot always follow a course that seems reasonable to us. A Jew must do all he can in the natural order, even though the chances seem to be remote to accomplish anything thereby. But at the same time he must put his faith in G-d that He will bless the effort with Hatzlocho. And as long as the Jews are dedicated to G-d's Torah and Mitzvoth, they can be quite certain that G-d's blessing will be with them.

With blessing,

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My Duty To Inform You To Check Your Tefillin

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Tammuz, 5737
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of . . . reached me with considerable delay. I hasten to reply to it because of the purpose of this letter as will be pointed out later.

Needless to say, I was very much surprised, to say the least, at the unbridled expressions and adjectives contained in your letter in regard to a person whom you have never met and do not know.

But the purpose of this letter is not to take you to task for it, which would probably be useless in any case.

What prompts me to reply to your letter at all is that in trying to find some explanation for it, the only conclusion I can come up with is that your Tefillin are most likely not kosher, or your Mezuzos are not kosher, or both. I therefore consider it my duty to call your attention to it with a view to having them checked and rectified. And though this, too, may prove - to use your expression - "counter-productive." I will at least have done my duty.

It is possible that at some future time you will reflect on the subject matter and reconsider your position. If you do, it will be helpful to you to note, and look up, the following source-reference in the Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah, sec. 285, end of par. 1. Should you wish to do something about it, you will be well advised to inform yourself on the authority of the author of the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Yosef Caro (by means of an encyclopedia and the like) and then apologize to him in a suitable manner. On my part the matter is closed.

With blessing,

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Disagreement About Resettling In Eretz Yisroel

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Av, 5738
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessings

I am in receipt of your letter of . . .

Replying to the main point of your letter, namely about your desire to return and settle in Eretz Yisroel, but your wife is opposed to the idea - it is my opinion that since you were already there before, and your wife has firsthand knowledge of the conditions there, and considering that to settle in a new country involves a considerable change and adjustment in the daily life in many aspects - it would not be advisable to undertake such a thing so long as it is not with the full consent of the Akeres Habayis. And even if you could get her to agree by pressuring her, I do not think it advisable to extract such a consent, since it is a matter that would affect the daily life in many details.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

Not knowing you personally, I do not know to what extent the following may apply to you, but I want to take this opportunity to reiterate my well known view that every Jew, especially one who has an extra measure of influence in his community, is duty bound to utilize all his capacities to spread and strengthen Yiddishkeit in his environment, community and city. Moreover, it is plain to see that one can achieve a great deal more in this area in Chutz LaAretz than in Eretz Yisroel for the benefit of many fellow Jews. The essential point is that in Chutz LaAretz such influence is very often truly a matter of Pikuach Nefesh, saving Jews and/or the children from mixed marriages and assimilation, G-d forbid, whereas in Eretz Yisroel there is no such problem, though it has many other problems, including spiritual ones, but not to the same extent. There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above.

With blessing,

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Knowledge Is Good, Must Be Naaseh V'Nishma

By the Grace of G-d
22nd of Sivan, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your (undated) letter, in which you write that you want to know more about HaShem, etc.

The desire for such knowledge is, of course, commendable, and so King David instructed his son Shlomo, "Know the G-d of your father and serve Him wholeheartedly and eagerly" (I Chron. 28:9). However, there is a time for everything, and at this time the most important thing for you is to concentrate on the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth and your Torah studies, and in due course, you will speak to your Hebrew teacher or Rabbi in your community in connection with the questions you may have. There is surely no need to point out to you that in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, Naaseh (we will do) comes before v'Nishma (we will understand), and it is through Naaseh that a Jew attains v'Nishma in the fullest possible measure.

With blessing,

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Not To Mix Shidduch, And Chinuch Of Others

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 5730
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss _____

Blessing and Greeting:

Your letter of . . . reached me with some delay and my reply was also unavoidably delayed.

You write about your background, and also in the matter of a Shidduch: that you met a boy about whom you have some reservations in regard to his attitude and commitment to Yiddishkeit, and you seek my advice.

First of all, I want to say that I am gratified to note in your letter that you are doing everything possible to advance and to go from strength to strength in your own commitment to, and practice of, Yiddishkeit. With such resolve you can be sure of Hatzlocho, for our sages have assured us that "He who is determined to purify himself, receives help from On High."

As for the question of a Shidduch, my viewpoint is well known, namely to separate the matter of Chinuch from that of a shidduch. In other words, while one must try to influence other people and bring them closer to Yiddishkeit, this should not be a consideration in the matter of a Shidduch. Particularly in your case where you yourself have yet to strengthen your adherence to the Jewish way and continue your steady advancement, it is important that you find a partner in life who is already firmly rooted in the Torah, Taros Chaim, and the Mitzvoth whereby Jews live. It would be rather risky to think that while trying to advance yourself, you will be able to help another person to similarly advance in the right direction, especially after that person has at one time learned in a Yeshiva and was fully committed, but for various reasons had turned away completely, and then has made a partial return, with some reservations, etc. One may, and should, have every confidence that that person will come back completely, but it would be folly to add confusion to confusion and, in any case, this is not the purpose of a shidduch.

May G-d whose benevolent Providence extends to each and everyone individually, lead you in the way that is truly good for you, especially in regard to the serious aspects of life. The Zechus of your resolve to strengthen your commitment to Yiddishkeit, particularly in a practical way in the day to day life, since the important thing is the deed, will surely stand you in good stead.

With blessing,
By,

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Advice

By the Grace of G-d
18 Adar, 5745
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of . . . has just reached me, and is answered ahead of its turn because of its urgency.

Let me assure you, first of all, that among Jews there is none who is - to use your expression - a persona non grata.

As for receiving no answer to some letters, of course every human being has physical limitations; sometimes a letter goes astray. It is also understandable that the answer can only be according to my best knowledge and judgment.

Now, with regard to your immediate problem, namely, your having to vacate your apartment, but you do not know where to, and you are looking for a solution, not advice -

The only answer I can give you is as follows: (1) In all such and similar situations, a Jew is expected to do what is necessary in the natural order to find a solution, by talking to knowledgeable friends locally, and to more than one, as it is written, "Help comes through abundant counsel," (2) In every situation, especially yours, one needs help from HaShem, and the channels and vessels to receive it are widened through the everyday life and conduct according to HaShem's Will, since He is the Source of all Blessings. This is not my advice, but what the Torah, Toras Chayim teaches explicitly. (3) - and this too, is what our Torah teaches -

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

however difficult the situation may appear, or be, a Jew must never despair of HaShem's help; and the stronger one's trust in HaShem, the greater the Hatzlocho in finding the proper solution.

No doubt you know that the entire month of Adar is a Mazeldik one for Jews, particularly for those who have the Zechus of being in the Holy Land, of which the Torah says that "G-d's Eyes are upon it constantly, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year," and especially when the channels are kept wide open. May you have good news to report.

With blessing,

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Vessel For Hashem's Blessing

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5745
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____
CA

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter requesting a blessing for yourself and your sons ... and... I will remember you in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory in accordance with the contents of your letter.

While a Jew must always have complete trust in HaShem, one is expected to do what is necessary in the natural order. In matters of health this means getting professional help, which, I see from your letter, is being done. It would also be well to consult with Chabad activists in your area to find out what programs they offer.

Since all blessings come from HaShem, and the channel to receive them is through the everyday life and conduct in accordance with His Will, every additional effort in matters of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvos, widens these channels. In this connection, Mitzvos performed by any member of the family, especially parents and children, have a mutually beneficial effect on all members of the family, since a Jewish family is like one organism.

Judging by your writing, I trust there would be no problem in urging your sons to be extra careful in observing Kashrus of foods and beverages, as well as putting on, every weekday morning, Tefillin that have been checked for Kashrus. These Mitzvos are particularly related to physical and mental health.

May you have good news to report in all above, especially as we have now entered in the auspicious month of Adar, highlighted by Purim - in which Jewish women had a very significant role, as emphasized by the name of the Megillah, which is not called after Mordechai, nor after Mordechai and Esther or Esther and Mordechai, jointly, but solely after Esther - Megillas Esther!

Wishing you and all, yours a joyous and inspiring Purim,

With blessing,

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Allocations For Youth Education

By the Grace of G-d
Chanukah, 5734
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
New York, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Thank you very much for your kind letter of . . . and enclosure.

Your donation was earmarked towards the funding of the special Chanukah Campaign which has been launched by our Chabad people in different parts of the world, to bring to the attention of our fellow Jews, especially the children, the significance of Chanukah and its practical observance. The efforts concentrated particularly on children of pre-Bar (Bas) Mitzvo age, to whom Chanukah lamps and candles and other gifts were distributed.

The slogan "The children of today are the parents of tomorrow," may sound as a platitude, but it does not detract from its importance, if it is expressed in practical and tangible terms. I have in mind the vital need of Jewish education, but, unfortunately, allocations towards real education of our youth are deplorable and completely out of proportion. I mention this not for the purpose of criticism, but in view of the fact that you have influence in certain circles where the said negligence could be rectified. I trust, therefore, that you will do your utmost in this direction, and the Zechus of the many children who will benefit from it, will surely stand you and yours in good stead.

In these auspicious days of Chanukah, I wish you and yours a growing measure of light in all your affairs.

With blessing,

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Jewish Community In Bombay

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Teves, 5730
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
England

Greeting and Blessing:

It has been brought to my attention that the Jewish community in Bombay is facing a serious crisis. According to the information, which apparently comes from a reliable source; there are at present about 450 Bagdadi Jews, and the Bnei Israel community numbers about a couple of thousand spread over the whole of India.

Of three existing Jewish schools, two are expected to close in May, 1970, for lack of funds; and partly also because the number of students has fallen off. The biggest Jewish school is the Jacob Sassoon School, where about 400 children, including Bnei Israels receive more or less free education and free meals. However, because of lack of funds, free meals might be stopped soon, and only snacks will be given to poor children.

I am further informed that poor orphans and widows, and the aged, face increased hardships because of the cuts in the monthly allowances, etc. A case in point is the recently

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

widowed wife of the . . . of the Magen David Synagogue, left with eight children, and unfortunately unable to maintain the middle-class family life that they have been used to.

Knowing your personal interest in the Jewish community of India, especially Bombay, and how much your ancestors have done to provide the vital educational and social services for our brethren there, I am confident that you will look into the present situation, and do all you can in the great tradition of your family.

Hoping this letter finds you in the best of health,
With blessing,

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Clarification About אחד

By the Grace of G-d
5th of Teves, 5745
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Texas

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of . . . , in Hebrew, in which you write that you listened to the Farbrengen of the 19th of Kislev, and ask clarification about the word אחד in the Shema, which was discussed at the Farbrengen.

Since it appears from your letter that it would be easier for you to receive the answer in English, this letter is written in English.

It is not clear from your letter what exactly you want to clarify. But in general, the discussion was about the word אחד, as opposed to רבים. The word אחד in reference to HaShem means that HaShem is One and Unique and there is no one like Him, and since He revealed this truth first to our Jewish people and gave us the privilege to serve Him, it is the duty of every Jew to love HaShem "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might". This love is expressed particularly through observing His Mitzvoth in our everyday life and conduct.

To know and remember and appreciate the above is so important that we say the Shema twice in the morning and twice in the evening; in other words, first thing in the morning when we get up, and also before going to bed at night.

It is impossible to say more on this subject in a letter, but if there is anything further you want to know, then you should talk to a Rav in your community, or to one of our Lubavitch Sheluchim.

Whether one knows more or less about each particular Mitzvo, the important thing is to keep them all, because they have been commanded by HaShem.

It is also well to bear in mind that HaShem gives every Jew, young or old, the capability to carry out His Mitzvoth in the fullest measure.

Wishing you Hatzlocho in all above,
With blessing,

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Granting Yechidus

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5745
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
N. J.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . .

I do not know if you are aware of the fact that for reasons beyond my control (doctors' orders, etc.), it is now several years since all private audiences have been suspended. Consequently, many prominent people who had requested an audience during this time, could not be accommodated, much to my regret. This, of course, precludes me from making any exception, since it would be unfair to those who had been refused in the past.

I am, therefore, profoundly sorry at not being able to accede to your suggestion, especially as it concerns a person for whom I not only have the highest regard, but to whom I also feel a sense of gratitude for his kind support to our Lubavitch institutions in your State, particularly the . . .

I might add that I am bound also by another basic tenet of our Torah, which requires us to be extra careful in showing respect to all persons, including those who are less privileged in terms of stature and the like, and they too would be embarrassed if they had the feeling that they have been discriminated against.

I am sure you will understand my predicament and will be able to convey my profound regrets.

With esteem and blessing,

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Gimatrias And The Mitzvah Campaigns

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Tammuz,
5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 26 Sivan and previous correspondence.

In reply to your suggestion after a brief introduction:

You surely know the word of the Mishnah, "I was created to serve my Master." as well as the Mishnah, "All your actions should be l'Shem Shomayim," both of which are already alluded to in the verse, "Know Him in all your ways." These basic teachings are also the basis of the familiar Mitzvah campaigns, to which you refer also in your letter.

As for your suggestion about the Gimatria - however significant it may be, and though it may appeal to certain segments - I cannot see how it can contribute to the Mitzvah campaigns, or serve as a basis for an additional campaign. One must also reckon with the possibility that to affirm a proposition on the basis of a Gimatria might weaken and detract from the obvious and solid foundations on which the Mitzvah campaigns rest. Even if the Gimatria is to serve as an

adjunct to the Shulchan Aruch, there are those who would grasp at the weakest point as an excuse for their attitude. There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above.

Seeing your interest and concern for the dissemination of Torah and Mitzvos, I am confident that you are doing all you can to spread Torah-true Yiddishkeit, with emphasis on the essential thing, namely, action; that is, the actual observance of the Mitzvos in the everyday life and conduct, using the appropriate approach to reach out to fellow Jews that would elicit their best responses.

With blessing,

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People Of Prominence Have A Moral Obligation

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Nissan, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your regards through our mutual friend, . . . , together with the reprints of your scientific papers in ...

Inasmuch as everything is by Divine Providence, and your valuable research work has come to my attention, though entirely out of my field, I am impelled to make a general remark, being confident that you will not take it amiss.

It is human nature to be highly impressed by persons achieving distinction in various fields, particularly in medical science, and especially in cardiology, since physical health is everybody's primary concern. Thus, people tend to be influenced by the personal life and views of the people they admire or feel indebted to, far beyond the immediate area in which they excel. This imposes a moral obligation on the latter to use their influence for the benefit of the many, in terms of promoting the higher values in life for a better and nobler society.

All the more so in the case of Jews and the Jewish people. Being a tiny minority in a hostile world, Jews have always had to work for their very survival, and this task has become even more urgent after the Holocaust which has decimated our people both physically and spiritually. Unfortunately, the attitude of the world towards us has not changed much, if at all, for the heirs and followers of the Nazis and their ilk are still rampant. Hence the greater obligation and urgency for every Jew, particularly Jews of prominence, to do all one can for the preservation of our people through fostering Jewish identity and commitment, in an active form, in the everyday life; for, as our Sages emphasize, "the essential thing is the deed," or, to put it in another way, the test of a theory is in its practical application - a principle which is not foreign to a scientist.

I therefore wish to express my confident hope that you are endeavoring to be a source of ever-growing inspiration to your fellow-Jews by example and precept, and may G-d bless you with Hazlocho in this and in all your endeavors.

With esteem and blessing and best wishes for a kosher and inspiring Pesach,

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No Jew Should Be Despondent

By the Grace of G-d
14th of Elul, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dr. _____

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your (undated) letter.

I trust it is unnecessary to emphasize to you at length that no human being, certainly no Jew, must ever be despondent, even under the most trying circumstances, such as you experienced.

Our Divine Torah, called Toras Emes, because it speaks the real truth and is not just a tranquilizer, declares that a person is never alone, and must have absolute trust in G-d and in His benevolent Providence that extends to everyone individually. It may be difficult to reconcile this with a misfortune, G-d forbid, that befalls a person, but it should not be surprising that a human being cannot understand the ways of G-d. If it is not surprising that a small child cannot understand the ways of a Sage or scientist, even though the difference between them is only relative in terms of age and knowledge, and some day that child may even surpass the Sage or scientist, it should certainly not be surprising that a created human being cannot understand the ways of the Creator, where the difference is absolute and incomparable.

In your case, it is particularly important to strengthen your trust in G-d, so that you could take care of your ... small children which He blessed you with, and entrusted to you. There is surely no need to emphasize to you how most important it is for the upbringing of children to have a confident and optimistic approach in regard to the future, both yours and theirs, in order to bring them up in full accord with the traditional blessing - to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds.

There is surely also no need to emphasize to you at length that since all blessings come from G-d, and the channels to receive them is through adherence to His Will, namely to the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth in the everyday life, every additional effort in this direction widens the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all needs.

Wishing you and yours,
With blessing,

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Boys Held "Against Their Will"

By the Grace of G-d
14th of Elul, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of the . . . reached me with some delay. Thank you for your good wishes, which I reciprocate in the words of our Sages כל המברך מתברך בברכתו של הקב"ה שתוספתו מרובה על העיקר.

With regard to your writing about your encounter with several teenage boys who told you that they "are being held against their will," etc. - I am rather surprised that you should have taken it seriously, especially as you yourself indicate that it was incredible. Apart from the fact

that such an idea is preposterous, especially in the United States, you saw for yourself that the boys whom you met in the street were obviously quite free to come and go as they pleased.

The only explanation I can think of, which fills me with profound sadness, is that unfortunately those who concern themselves with Jewish youngsters from overseas are by and large not Jewish Askonim, but missionary organizations who spare no effort and money to entice Jewish refugees and newcomers in every possible way, including the sending of missionaries who are well trained in Biblical and Talmudic quotations, and are even dressed in the disguise of frum Jews, who know where to come to find these unsuspecting victims.

On the other hand, it is even more dismaying that Jewish organizations and leaders, who should truly be concerned with the fate of Jewish refugees, pay very little attention to them, even in terms of funding activities conducted by a few sincere Jewish workers and institutions that are helping them to remain in the Jewish fold.

However, I do not wish to dwell on a situation which reflects no credit or honor on fellow Jews.

Wishing you and yours כתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה,
With blessing,



Fighting The Yetzer

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Av, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. & Mrs. _____
Holland

Greeting and Blessing:

After the long interval, your respective letters of . . . were received. And may G-d grant that henceforth you should have only good news to report.

Needless to say, if a person has had difficulty in coping with the Yetzer in the past, it must by no means, G-d forbid, cause discouragement in the future. Indeed, it is one of the tricks of the Yetzer to persuade a person that he, or she, is a "proven" failure. For this is the way of the Yetzer - first to gain a small victory and then use it for further and greater victories. Therefore, the sooner a person gets wise to the Yetzer's tricks, the sooner he will learn to beat the Yetzer at his own game, and a past failure becomes a jumping board for greater advancement in the future.

A case in point is the period of the "Three Weeks", culminating with the "Nine Days", which we have just observed, reminding us of the most serious failures which have led to the present Golus. Yet their essential purpose is to inspire us to redouble our efforts to rectify the cause ("Because of our sins we have been exiled from our land") and hasten the true and complete Geulo. And so confident are we of this, that even during those saddest days of the year we say in the Morning Amidah, "May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy." And later on, in the afternoon, seeing that Moshiach has not come yet, we repeat it again at Minchah, and so also during Maariv, and each time with the same fervor and confidence.

Much more could be said on this subject, but it is surely unnecessary to elaborate to you.

In conclusion let me just say: Strengthen your trust in G-d, and feel secure in His trustworthiness, as it is written, "Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d, and G-d will be his security" (Jer. 17:7); follow this path with confidence, and bring up each and all of your children in accordance with the traditional blessing - to a life Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds, with joy and gladness of heart.

With blessing,

Lesson From 12 Tammuz

By the Grace of G-d
21 Tammuz, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Rehovot

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your letter of . . . , and may G-d grant the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good.

Especially as your letter was written on the 15th of the month, "when the moon is at its fullest," symbolizing fulfillment and completeness. And in the current month it includes fulfillment of all that is connected with this month's highlight - the anniversary of the Geulo of my saintly father-in-law on the 12-13th of Tammuz.

In practical terms, the anniversary is a source of inspiration and encouragement to everyone of us not to be dismayed by any obstacles in the way of adherence to the Torah and Mitzvos, for we have the assurance that when a Jew is determined to live up to the Will of G-d without compromise, he receives special Divine help to overcome all obstacles, as the Chag Hageulo attests. This is also conveyed in the message the Baal Hageulo wrote for the first anniversary of his Geulo (1928): "it was not myself alone that G-d liberated on the 12th of Tammuz (last year), but also all lovers of Torah and observers of the Mitzvos, including every Jew who responds to his Jewish name."

And Geulo means that the obstacles disappears completely, so that there is no need to have Mesiras Nefesh for Yiddishkeit, only Mesiras hoRotzon, surrendering one's personal will to the Will of G-d, as explained more fully at the recent Farbrengen.

May G-d grant that everyone should experience such personal Geulo in the fullest measure, as the forerunner for the true and complete Geulo of our Jewish people, when the current period of the Three Weeks will be transformed into days of rejoicing and festivity, with the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, may it be soon in our time.

With blessing,

*

Taking Care Of One's Health

By the Grace of G-d
1st day of Elul, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
L.A., Cal.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is in reply to your Mailgram about the doctor's opinion regarding your state of health.

I am pleased to note that the doctor advised you to avoid aggravation - which he surely had in mind the kind of aggravation, G-d forbid, that is normally reasonable, not to mention aggravation that has no basis in fact.

I trust you will follow this and the other instructions of your doctor, as is required also by the Torah. For although G-d is the true Healer Who works wondrously, He requires a person to take care of his health and do what is necessary in the natural order.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

With regard to losing weight, no doubt you have been told not to attempt to do it drastically, but gradually. You should also be active in your business affairs as much as possible.

May G-d grant you many long and good years to continue your good work with joy and gladness of heart, especially in connection with the . . . , that it justify its name as a "center" of Torah and Mitzvos, with a wide periphery permeated with its influence and inspiration.

Significantly, your communication came in proximity to, and the answer is written on, the first day of Elul, the month of special Divine grace and benevolence, as explained by the Alter Rebbe WITH THE PARABLE OF "THE KING IN THE FIELD," which you surely know.

With blessing for good tidings in all above and for a Kesivo vachasimo toivo for a good and sweet year to you and all yours materially and spiritually,

*

Battling The Yetzer. Women Learning Torah

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Marcheshvan, 5726
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Miss _____
Canada

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter, in which you write about the difficulty of battling with the Yetzer.

I believe I wrote to you before that in addition to the direct resistance which it is necessary to put up to all temptations of the Yetzer, it is even more important to dismiss the Yetzer from your mind, without entering into any argumentation, but by directing your attention and concentration on another thing, totally unrelated, and preferably a thing connected with a Mitzvo.

You also ask if a girl is not supposed to learn Torah how can she properly fulfill the Mitzvoth? The answer is that girls and women are not obliged to learn Torah as a Mitzvo in itself, that is to learn Torah for the sake of learning. However, they are obliged to learn all aspects of Torah which are connected with the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth which are incumbent upon Jewish women, in order simply to know what they have to do and how they have to conduct themselves in the daily life. In the laws of Talmud Torah by the Alter Rebbe, at the end of chapter one, the Mitzvoth which are incumbent upon Jewish women are specified. And inasmuch as these also include the Mitzvoth of Ahavas HaShem and Yiras HaShem, Jewish women are also obliged to engage in such Torah studies as would be conducive to fostering the love and fear of G-d. This is the reason why my father-in-law of saintly memory established study circles for Jewish women and girls, to study selected Torah subjects in Chassidus which help to cultivate Ahavas HaShem and Yiras HaShem and Good Middos, etc.

With blessing

By

P.S. Enclosed is a copy of my Rosh Hashonah message, which is timely throughout the year.

Each Jew Can Help Jews Everywhere

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Elul, 5735
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Jerusalem

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to confirm receipt of your letter of . . . with the enclosed clipping.

Noting your interest in Jewish affairs, I trust that you will accept the following observations in the proper spirit.

It is clear that the subject matter of the clipping has to do with a small group who are not very likely to be influenced by anybody, including some such persons as you mention in your letter. But there is something that each and every one of us can do for the benefit of our fellow Jews everywhere. This is based on the clear and unequivocal text of the Torah: "If you will walk in My statutes..." with all the blessings that are assured thereby, including the blessing of "I will give peace in the land," etc. But the Torah also continues at some length about the consequences of not walking in the way of G-d, G-d forbid. It follows immediately that every Jew who conducts his daily life in accordance with the Torah and Mitzvoth contributes to the security and well-being of our whole people, since every Jew is a part of it. Similarly, every effort to encourage Jews to observe the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life is a sure way of helping our Jewish people everywhere, and eliminate undesired phenomena, including that which you so strongly condemn in your letter.

Considering how much can be accomplished through such efforts, it should not be difficult to carry them out in the face of all possible difficulties, for what are such difficulties by comparison with the goal. One must not be discouraged by scoffers who are ready to pour cold water on such efforts by saying, "When we have global problems, what has the Torah and Mitzvoth to do with them?" Nor should one allow oneself to be handicapped by becoming accustomed to a situation and become apathetic to it, especially a situation that concerns the well-being of many.

Although I do not know you personally, and I do not know how much you can accomplish, but, as mentioned above, this is an area where everyone can accomplish something, and, indeed, usually a great deal more than anticipated. The present days of Elul are certainly auspicious for such activity in a growing measure.

Wishing you and yours a Kesivo vaChasimo Tovo,

With blessing, For the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By,

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Not To Extend Period Of Mourning, The Soul Is Eternal

By the Grace of G-d
28th of Shevat, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your (undated) letter.

After describing your background, it is certainly rather surprising to read about your state of mind as you mention it in your letter, which is completely at variance with it, as if it were necessary to explain to you about the eternity of the soul. Surely you know that every Jew has a Divine soul, which is truly a part of G-dliness Above, especially a Jew of the caliber whom you mention that you feel so lost without his physical presence.

Of course, one does not hear the objection of the soul to such an attitude. But not only is the soul eternal, but having become released from the limitations of the physical body, it knows and hears and sees even better than before. It is therefore certain that the soul maintains its contact and influence with those left behind on this earth, but the latter must keep the channels open through all the things that matter, namely the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life. It follows also that there is no other period of mourning except that prescribed by the Shulchan Aruch and an extension of it, or any other excessive sorrow, only causes pain to the departed soul, since it is indirectly responsible for a conduct not in keeping with the Shulchan Aruch.

I trust you will reflect on the above and go from strength to strength in all matters of Yiddishkeit in the daily life, since there is always room for improvement in all matters of goodness and holiness.

It would be advisable in your situation to have the Mezuzoth checked to make sure they are Kosher, and to be more meticulous in the observance of Kashruth in regard to food and beverages, including Cholov Yisroel, Kosher Jewish bakery, etc.

With blessing,

*

Quoting Non-Jewish Sources

By the Grace of G-d
29th of Tishrei, 5747
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rabbi _____
N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . , and previous correspondence.

First of all, I wish to express my pleasure at seeing you in Shul wrapped in a Tallis with an Attara, etc.

As for the subject matter of your present letter, and in answer to your questions:

My remark about the saying of our Sages, "Accept the truth from whoever said it," a well known saying which has been mentioned also in regard to Aristotle, who has been quoted many times, although his personal life is well known (and the same in regard to Plato) - there is certainly to need to emphasize to you the viewpoint of our Torah, Toras Chaim, as to the

importance of knowing the kind of personal life an author has conducted before reading and studying his books.

2) Notwithstanding the above saying, I do not think it proper to have a saying of Chazal quoted on one page with a quotation from a non-Jewish source, which creates the impression that both are equally authoritative, etc.

I trust you will also accept the following remark. Inasmuch as non-Jews often suspect Jewish colleagues, and Jews in general, of various things, one of them is that the Jews have a tendency to curry favor by quoting non-Jewish sources, and consequently are prepared to compromise, etc. As a result, when they hear or read a Jewish scholar quoting a non-Jewish source, it diminishes their respect for whatever follows that quotation. This is all the more regrettable since many a non-Jew would readily understand why such quotations should be on separate pages. Indeed, many of them would also not quote from the Bible alongside a secular source, and certainly would not expect this from a Jew who wears a Tallis, etc. There is surely no need to amplify this.

To conclude on a point that has been emphasized recently, namely a transition from Tishrei which is מרובה במועדים to Cheshvan and the mundane routine and atmosphere - may we all take with us ample reserves of the atmosphere and inspiration of Tishrei to last us throughout the year and to be expressed in concrete terms of Torah and Mitzvoth, since "action is the essential thing".

With all good wishes,
With blessing,

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Procedures For Infertility

By the Grace of G-d
10th of Kislev, 5747
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____

Blessing and Greeting:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . , and may HaShem grant the fulfillment of your heart's desires for good.

Judging by your writing, there is surely no need to emphasize to you that there is always room for advancement in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth in the everyday life and conduct. Although this is a "must" for its own sake, this is also the way to widen the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all needs.

With reference to the latter part of your letter, in which you write about new methods of dealing with infertility - one must bear in mind, in addition to the essential aspect, namely that of the Halacha, that generally it has often been shown that methods which are not natural, particularly such that have not been practiced and proven over a long period of time, cannot be considered fully effective, nor can one be quite certain of the outcome. Even if it does produce a child, one cannot be certain how that child will develop, if it will develop naturally, or otherwise, G-d forbid.

To be sure, a Jew is expected to do what is necessary in the natural order of things, as it is written, "HaShem your G-d will bless you in all that you do." But this does not include doing things which are contrary to the natural order, and, as mentioned before, something that cannot be foreseen for the long period over a lifetime. Therefore, if it is my advice that you seek, I am not in favor of resorting to this new procedure you mention, nor to invitro and other procedures you mention.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

At this time, before Chanukah, I extend to you and all yours prayerful wishes for a bright and inspiring Chanukah, to illuminate and permeate all days ahead.

With blessing,

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Nichum Aveilim

28th of Nissan, 5712
Brooklyn, New York

Mr. _____
and the bereaved _____ Family,
My dear Mr. _____

I was deeply grieved to hear of the passing of your father and I take this means of extending to you, your sisters and all the bereaved family my heartfelt sympathy -

May G-d comfort you among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem.

It is the sacred custom of our people, in comforting the mourners at Shivah, to say the above blessing of Nihum Avelim. This is not just a manner of phrase, but a true message of comfort which is contained in the significant inclusion of the mourners among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem.

Here we find the answer to a seemingly difficult question:

Inasmuch as the blessing of Nihum Avelim is given only during the period of Shivah how can one comfort the mourner at a time when the grief is so fresh and acute? The consolation is to be found in the similitude between the mourner for a close departed and the mourners for Zion and Jerusalem.

For in mourning for the loss of the Beth Hamikdosh and the glory of Jerusalem the Holy City, Jews have derived consolation from two sources. First, the Divine assurance through the medium of all our prophets that the Beth Hamikdosh will be rebuilt again, and its glory will surpass anything in the past. Second, the fact that spiritually the Beth Hamikdosh was never destroyed and is still in existence through its influence and inspiration in our daily life. That is why the mention of Zion and Jerusalem is so frequent in all our prayers daily and on Shabbos and Yomtov.

The same is true in the case of a mourner for a dear departed. Here, too, the consolation is twofold: First, the Divine assurance through all our prophets that the dead will rise to a life infinitely more glorious than formerly. Second, the memory of the departed is everlasting through their good deeds and especially through the upbringing, influence and inspiration left with children to carry on the sacred traditions of the Torah and Old Israel in every day life. Here is a continuous and everlasting bond between the departed and those left behind which no outside force can destroy.

I cannot forego this occasion without mentioning the great and eternal memorial which you set up for your parents during their lifetime through the publication of the . . . which is so widely studied and disseminated, rendering a public service of the highest order, thus meriting "Zechus Horabim."

May you not know of any sorrow in the future.

With blessing,

Importance Of Taharas Hamishpacha

By the Grace of G-d
22nd of Cheshvan, 5736
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____
N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

Your letter and enclosure reached me with some delay, and I regret that my acknowledgment has further been delayed for reasons beyond my control.

Let me at once come to the cardinal point of your letter, namely the matter of Taharas Hamishpacha, the laws and regulations connected with having children in Jewish life.

As I have had occasion to point out before, and it is also stressed in various sources, it is clear that Jewish parents are prepared to do anything to ensure their children's well-being, and no sacrifice is too big to attain this end. Moreover, they will not be discouraged by difficulties, even if such exist and are real, and leave nothing to chance, even a remote chance, if they can help it. If this is so in regard to their physical and material well-being, how much more so should it be in regard to their mental and spiritual well-being, and in an area which is vital not only to the children themselves, but also to their children and all future generations. Even more so if it is taken into consideration that the difficulties are not as serious as might be imagined, and are more than not comparatively speaking, quite negligible.

All the above would have been quite valid even if the laws of Taharas Hamishpocho had just been given. Certainly when our people had the experience of nearly 3500 years behind us, and we therefore know also from personal experience how vital these laws and regulations have been for the Jewish family and the Jewish people as a whole.

To sum it up in a few words: On the one hand, our G-d-given Torah declares clearly and unequivocally that the observance of the laws of Taharas Hamishpocho are vitally important for the parents as well as for the children and future generations. To be sure, these laws impose certain restrictions, but they are truly minimal and trivial by comparison with what is at stake. On the other hand, one might raise the question whether one should take upon oneself these even minor restrictions, if one is not 100% convinced that this is necessary. To put it differently, on the one hand we have the absolute assurance of the Torah plus almost 3500 years of experience to the effect that the observance of these laws are a must, and that the reward is not only in the world to come, but also in this world, in the other side of the scale is a personal feeling that maybe since one is after all not fully convinced, is it worth taking upon oneself the restrictions involved? The decision should not be difficult.

Now with regard to the other matter which you mention in the letter, namely whether to postpone having children because of financial and similar reasons - I am, of course, of the opinion that here again one should put one's trust in G-d, who is not only the Creator of the world, but also the Master of it, and whose benevolent Providence extends to each and everyone, individually. It is not for a human being to interfere with G-d's management of the world, but to conduct a normal life in accordance with the said laws and regulations, with the general framework of adherence to the Jewish way of life, and to feel certain that when G-d will bless the parents with healthy offspring, He will also provide for the economic and material needs of the child, as well as for his spiritual upbringing in accordance with the traditional blessing to bring up the children to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds.

I trust that for a person of your background, no further elaboration is necessary.

With blessing,

Not To Participate In Comparative Religion

By the Grace of G-d
4th of Shevat, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Calif.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . If you will let me know your full Hebrew name, together with your mother's Hebrew name, as is customary, I will remember you in prayer.

With regard to the project about which you write, and whether Chabad-Lubavitch would participate in some way - I trust you know the position of the Halacha in regard to comparative religion and interfaith in whatever form this may be. You will, therefore, understand that in my opinion it is not proper to involve anything connected with Yiddishkeit and our Torah, Toras Chaim, in a project such as you describe in your letter.

Even if the intention would be to present a contrast, it would not be proper, inasmuch as two contracting things suggest some connection or something that may be mutual, whereas in this case it would be completely out of place and only cause confusion and misunderstanding. Therefore, if you would take my advice, I see no benefit whatever in such a project, and whatever benefit may be expected it would be incomparable to ignoring it altogether.

I do not wish to elaborate further on this matter for various reasons, but the central point is that it is clear that one should not contribute in any way whatever to any negative phenomena, and most certainly in the area of religion.

I suggest that you should have your Tefillin, as well as Mezuzoth checked, to make sure they are Kosher, within the general framework of advancement in all matters of Yiddishkeit in the everyday life, which, though a must for its own sake, also widens the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all needs.

With blessing,

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Brief Meeting Has Limitless Benefits

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Shevat, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of . . . , in which you refer to our meeting last Succos. And although the meeting was necessarily brief, the benefits can be limitless, as I have often pointed out, and I believe mentioned also to you, that a relatively small effort can result in unlimited benefits. An example of it can be found in planting, where the planting of a small seed results in the growth of a splendid fruit-bearing tree, bearing also the seeds for further fruits and the fruits of fruits. And this is because G-d's blessings is infinite.

תשורה מחגיגת הבר-מצוה של הת' מנחם מענדל שלי ווענגער, ז' סיון, יום ב' דחג השבועות ה'תשע"א

Thus, I am confident that our brief meeting will be a source of lasting inspiration to you, and through you also to others, in all matters of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvoth, which are "our life and the length of our days."

Inasmuch as everything is by Divine Providence, it is significant that your letter was received in proximity to the New Year for Trees, and the reply is written on the day after, in light of the Torah's saying that a human being is like a living tree.

My wife joins me in expressing our sincere appreciation of your good wishes on the occasion of our 50th wedding anniversary, which we heartily reciprocate. And, since our Sages say, "Whoever blesses others is blessed from G-d Himself, the Source of all blessings," may you and all yours be blessed from "His full, open, holy and ample Hand" in a generous measure, materially and spiritually.

With blessing,

*

Importance Of Growing A Full Beard

By the Grace of G-d
12 Teves, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____

Sholom uBrocho:

Your letter of . . . reached me with some delay. In it you write that you stopped shaving, with the intention to grow a beard.

I trust you have seen the Sefer "Hadrass Ponim Zokon , " whose author is a Talmid of the Mirer Yeshiva, which was published recently, with Haskomos by prominent Rabbonim, on the great significance and importance of growing a full beard. The Sefer includes also Teshuvos by Gdolei Yisroel who had been asked for an opinion in this matter.

May Hashem Yisborach grant you Hatzlocho that in addition to preserving the sanctity of Hadrass Ponim you should go from strength to strength in Torah learning and the observance of its Mitzvos with Hiddur, which is also one of the teachings of Ner Chanukah, kindled in growing numbers and brightness from day to day, reflecting Ner Mitzva v'Torah Or, and may you be a source of true Nachas-ruach to your Roshei-Yeshiva and Mashpiim.

With blessing,

P, S. Since you have written to me on this matter, it is my duty and Zchus to refer you also to the Tshuvo of the "Tzemach Tzedek" (Yore Deah, par. 93), as well as to his Sefer "Yahel Or" on Tehillim (in the Miluim, on the verse "Vehu Rachum," p. 628).

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Creating Sholom Bayis

By the Grace of G-d
6 Teves, 5737
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mrs. _____
N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter, in which you describe highlights of your family life. I trust you will forgive me if I point out to you that in my opinion the priorities in your situation are not in the way you describe them. The first consideration in your case is that you have a son aged . . . , that is, in the formative years of preparation for family life, etc., when the first duty of parents is to do all they can toward the realization of the blessing "to bring up their children to a life of Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds," as the traditional expression of it goes. This should set the stage for all other aspects of the home.

Needless to say, this does not mean that the difficulties you describe are of no importance, or of minor importance; nevertheless, they do not affect the question of priority.

A further point comes from your mentioning the fact that you have been married for ... years, and despite the situation you describe, you yourself mention the fine qualities of your husband. I believe therefore that the seriousness with which you describe the difficulties is, partly at least, due to your being overly sensitive, and the like, as witness the fact that you have been married for . . . years. No doubt this also increases the gap in the proper atmosphere required for your son's benefit, as above, as also in your mutual relationship with your husband.

As to the question, how to deal with the difficulties in your mutual relationship, it is well known (indeed, it is found in the Torah) that generally the way to go about it is from the simple to the complex, by easy steps. There is the well known rule by our Sages, "A person should always be as soft (flexible) as a reed, and not as hard as a cedar". This has been said even in a case where there is reason to be hard as a cedar, yet the rule is otherwise.

I believe, therefore, that if you will talk things over with your husband in a pleasant manner, without demanding major changes in his ways - and no doubt he has also some reservations about your attitudes - and with goodwill on both sides to begin with minor adjustments, in order to foster the right atmosphere for your son in terms of "Torah, Chuppah and Good Deeds" as mentioned above, it will be a good beginning for a steady improvement in the relationship until it is fully mended.

It is surely unnecessary to emphasize that the more goodwill each of you will put into the situation, and the less either of you will stand on pride and the like, as to who should make the first step, and who is right, etc., the sooner you will achieve the desired result.

A further general remark which applies in all situations: All blessings come from G-d; therefore every additional effort to live up to His will, is bound to bring forth additional Divine blessings. And there is always room for improvement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvos, which are infinite, being derived from the Infinite.

This point is even more significant in the case of yourself and your husband, for, as I see from your letter, you have opportunities to set an example to others, so that every advancement in your family life is likely to be reflected and multiplied in others, and the benefit of the many will additionally stand you and yours in good stead.

It is customary in similar situations to have the Mezuzos of the home checked, as well as the Tefillin of the men-folk of the household.

If you will let me know the full Hebrew names of yourself, your husband, and son, together with the mother's Hebrew name in each case, I will remember you all in prayer.

With blessing.

P. S. In view of the fact that what has been said above equally concerns you and your husband, and since you mentioned in your letter that you showed it to your husband, I take the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to your husband.

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Building In Eretz Yisroel

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Tammuz, 5732
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. _____
Canada

Greeting and Blessing:

I have just received your letter of the . . . , in which you write about the project of building Kiryat Canada in Eretz Yisroel and the unforeseen difficulties which have developed, to the extent that the suggestion has been made that you should withdraw from the whole project, and you ask my advice in this matter.

My opinion, of course, is that you should continue with it, especially since, as you indicate in your letter, there is no question of loss, G-d forbid, but only a possible reduction in the anticipated profits with perhaps more effort.

I wrote "of course," for you can well understand the importance of new housing construction in the Holy Land and moreover, since you are the leading initiator and moving spirit behind this project, you will certainly try to see to it that it should make the maximum contribution to matters of Torah Yiddishkeit. A further consideration is also the fact that you are not alone in this project, but a whole group is involved in it.

Needless to say, every effort should be made to reduce the difficulties, but I certainly think that the project should be continued.

I would like to add a technical point, in which you are undoubtedly more of an expert. I have in mind that considering the general position there, especially in matters of construction and the like, it is quite possible a way may be found to cut corners through negotiations with the local authorities that is the city officials, which might be even more productive than negotiations with government people in the top echelon. Indeed, it may be possible to combine the two. My impression from your letter is that through quiet diplomacy with the leadership of the city and or district administrative officials may be more important in this case.

I trust that the auspicious days of the 12-13th of Tammuz, the anniversary of the liberation of my father-in-law of saintly memory, did not pass unnoticed by you. As you are no doubt familiar with the historic background and significance of these days, it was his unrelenting struggle for the preservation of the Torah and Jewish way of life that had led to his arrest, etc. His work extended to all levels, from those who wished to study Pnimius HaTorah, down to facilities for small children to begin the Aleph-Beis. He has thus shown the way for each and every one of us to do our utmost for the strengthening and spreading of Torah and Mitzvoth, likewise on all levels, from the most advanced Torah and Chasidus studies, to the most elementary Jewish education of small children, including also those who are "children" in knowledge of Yiddishkeit.

With prayerful wishes for Hatzlocho and good tidings in all above, including also the subject matter of our previous correspondence,

With blessing,

נדפס לזכות

הת' **מנחם מענדל שי' ווענגער**
לרגל הגיעו לגיל מצוות בשעטו"מ

אחיו ואחיותיו

צבי'ה, ניסן, שמחה, שניאור זלמן, שמואל, יעקב, חנה שיחיו

הוריהם

הרה"ת **מרדכי** וזוגתו **רבקה שיחיו**

זקניהם

הרה"ח הרה"ת **שלום דובער** וזוגתו **פרידא חוה שיחיו**

שפירא

מרת **רייצל לאה שתחי' ווענגער**

מרת **ביילא שתחי' הייז**

*

ולע"נ

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרב **אליעזר בן הרב מרדכי ע"ה ווענגער**