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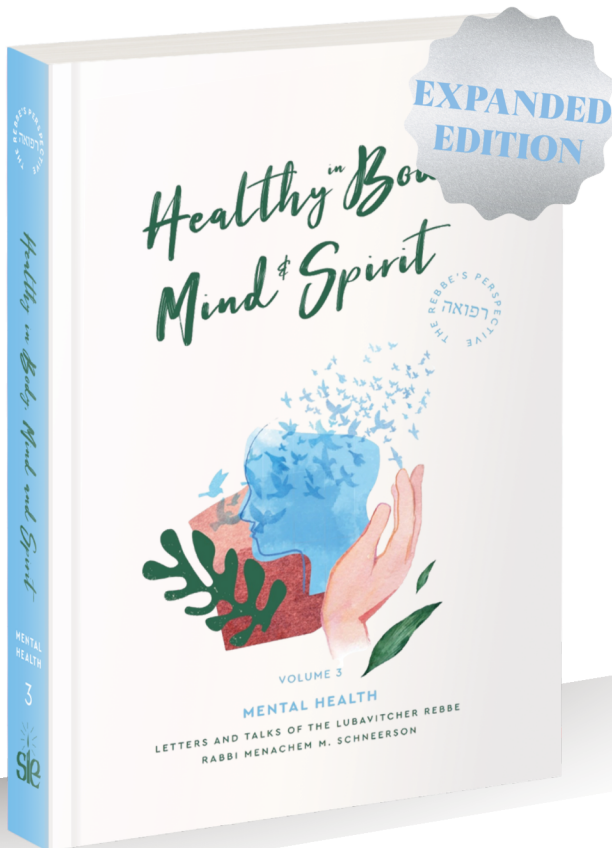


MENTAL HEALTH

LETTERS AND TALKS OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE
RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

YOUR SOURCE OF GUIDANCE

A wide-ranging collection of letters and talks of the Rebbe's guidance on physical, mental, and emotional well-being.



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A GUIDE TO GOOD HEALTH

Healthyⁱⁿ Body Mind & Spirit

VOLUME III

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SICHOS IN ENGLISH

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SICHOS IN ENGLISH

HEALTHY IN BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT
VOLUME III — MENTAL HEALTH
- EXCERPT -

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chapter 2

COMBATING SADNESS, DESPONDENCY,
DEPRESSION, AND DESPAIR

A Life for Others

The following series of letters from the Rebbe ultimately saved the individual to whom they were addressed from committing suicide:

Your letter of August 22 reached me with some delay. In it you present a fairly clear picture of yourself, your background, education, spiritual vicissitudes, and present state of mind which you describe in rather dismal colors, and you conclude with the hope that I may be of some help to you.

Permit me then to make an observation, which is strikingly evident from the general tenor of your letter, and which I believe also holds the clue to the solution.

Your whole letter — two and half closely typewritten pages — is full of your own expectations and disappointments, as if everybody owes you everything, but no one has a claim on you.

Yet even a brief reflection will clearly reveal that the universe we live in is ordered in a system of give and take, and the personal universe of the individual (the microcosm) must likewise conform to this system of reciprocal relationship. Consequently, when one disrupts or distorts this system, it must necessarily bring about a distortion in one's immediate surroundings, and especially in one's inner life.

Now, judging by your own description, Divine Providence and the society in general have been quite generous to you. You have been gifted with more than the average measure of intelligence and mental capacities; you have been given opportunities of education, etc. In other words, you have been on the receiving end, but — forgive me for being so blunt — it did not occur to you, judging from your letter, that you might owe something to the society; that you might have obligations to participate in it actively and help to better it by putting to

good use some or all of the mental gifts and capacities with which you have been endowed. Heaven knows that our society is far from perfect and that there is much to be done in the way of raising its standards of justice and morality. It is the basic duty of everyone to contribute one's share towards this end.

So far, I have been speaking in general terms. When the individual in question happens to have the good fortune of being a Jew, his duties and obligations go infinitely higher, especially in this day and age, after one third of our people (quantitatively, and much more so qualitatively) have been annihilated. For, everyone who has been spared that fate must now contribute not only his normal share, but also make up the terrible gap that has been created in the life of our tortured people. One must now work for at least two, towards the preservation of our people and fulfillment of its destiny.

As for the question, wherein lies the preservation of our people, and what is its historic destiny? — the answer is not difficult to find if we examine the pages of our history throughout the many centuries of our sojourn among the nations of the world. It is neither power, nor country, nor even a common language that preserved us in the past, but our Jewish way of life in accordance with the Torah, *Toras Chaim* (the Law of Life) and *mitzvos*, whereby Jews live. Those who sought new ways, or staked the future of our people on other factors — and there were such groups who made such attempts, viz. Kuthites, Saducees, Hellenists, Karaites, etc. — disappeared without trace. Only the eternal Torah and *mitzvos*, the true Jewish way of life, preserved us in the past, as will preserve us in the future. This is the golden thread that runs throughout our long history.

If the person turning to me with such a problem as you

describe were a gentile, I would say to him: You are too much wrapped up with yourself, with your own emotions and feelings and aspirations. Stop being concerned with your own problems. The way to cope with such an emotionally charged situation is to stop trying to cope with it. You must get away from yourself, and begin to think of others. It is time to begin an active participation in the society; to give, and give generously. The opportunities are many, and the need is great. You have your choices: social work, charitable, or even scientific.

But you are a Jew, and your obligations go beyond the above. You must **live** like a Jew in your daily life, the Jewish way of life, the way of the Torah and *mitzvos*, and you must use your influence with others in the same direction. Some people think the Torah and the Jewish way is “old fashioned,” but they are both misguided and unscientific. Truth never gets “too old,” can never get stale. Only falsehood, half truth and compromise can not last long; but truth is enduring and timeless.

It may require courage and resolution to change one’s way of life. But these are qualities with which youth is generously endowed, and you are a young man, nineteen, as you write. You are capable of facing this challenge boldly.

We are now in the very auspicious days of Elul, when the old year is about to give way to the new. This is the time of *teshuvah*. “*Teshuvah*” is usually translated as “repentance,” the turning over of a new leaf. It is this and more, for the real meaning of *teshuvah* is “return” — return to the source, the source of truth, purity and holiness, the very essence of the Jew, whose soul is truly a part of the Divine above.

Wishing you a *kesivah vachasimah tovah*,

(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 27 Elul, 5721)

I received your letter of June 2nd with some delay. You describe your moods and feelings, but I trust you will not take it amiss if I reiterate what, I believe, I told you several times during our conversation, namely, that there is nothing really wrong with you.

The trouble with you is that you are too self-centered, to the exclusion of the rest of the world. It would be well for you to make yourself useful to the environment, and instead of thinking about yourself you would begin to think what you can do for others around you in the great universe wherein you live and of which you are a part. And, as I emphasized before, the important thing is action.

Needless to say, when I speak of the “environment” and “world at large,” I refer primarily to the Jewish people, since you are a Jew and your first loyalty is to your people. I do not have to tell you what our people went through in recent years, and the tremendous gap which has been left, and which has to be made good by all of us whom Divine Providence has spared. No thinking Jew can delude himself today that it is “business as usual”. At your age and with your capacities, it is **imperative** that you should dedicate at least a couple of years for the good of our people. But you must first recognize that you are a son of the eternal people, bound by the eternal Torah, and bring your life in harmony with it, disregarding ideas and ideologies which are as transient as the wind and as changeable.

I do not wish to extend this discussion lest it serve you as material for introspection and brooding, while in your case especially action is the important thing.

The suggestion that you complete your course and get your B.A. is a good one, in view of the fact that you have

invested in it so much time and energy which should not go to waste, and which you could put to good use along the lines suggested above.

I hope to hear good news from you,

(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 16 Sivan, 5722)

Your letter was duly received some time ago, and I have been waiting to hear further news from you. I trust that your silence is an indication that everything is in good order and, as our Sages said, “The only real good is the good of the Torah”. This is not something purely theoretical, for Torah means instruction and guidance, namely the observance of the *mitzvos* in the daily life.

On the occasion of the forthcoming *yom tov* Pesach, I send you my prayerful wishes that the Festival of Our Freedom bring you and yours true freedom, freedom from anxiety material and spiritual, from anything which might distract from serving G-d wholeheartedly and with joy, and to carry over this freedom and joy into the whole year.

Wishing you a Kosher and happy Pesach.

With blessing

(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 10 Nissan, 5724)

I duly received your letter of April 14th, although it reached me with some delay.

I trust that your mood has considerably improved since writing that letter, and that you made a conscious effort to attain an improvement in the various matters about which you write, insofar as it is within your power to do so. May G-d grant that you should have good news to report.

This time, before the festival of *Matan Torah*, is particularly auspicious to receive G-d's blessings, inasmuch as the Torah

is the source of Divine blessings. As there is always room for improvement in all matters of goodness and holiness, every additional effort to live the daily life in accordance with the Torah and *mitzvos*, in addition to it being a must for its own sake, will also bring additional Divine blessings in all one's needs, materially and spiritually.

Hoping to hear good news from you and wishing you a happy and inspiring festival of *Matan Torah*. With blessing

I hope you remember the advice I ventured to give you (**concentration** on helping others, etc.), even if, apparently, you have not followed it at all.

(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 3 Sivan, 5724)

After not hearing from you for a very long time, I received your letter of July 3rd, which reached me with some delay.

With regard to the thought which you express in your letter, I believe I have already written to you before, or spoken to you, that there are many problems and states of mind which are best dealt with by dismissing them from the mind completely, at any rate for a period of time. It is then possible to return to those problems with a fresh mind, and in a more objective state, so as to evaluate the problems in their true perspective and reality, and it is then easier to find the proper solution. In the vast majority of such cases the individual himself can decide how long this period of dismissal from attention should be, judging by the degree of objectivity which he can attain as time goes on.

Needless to say, also, that it is not an easy thing to dismiss a problem from the mind, especially one that involves one's own self. This would be almost impossible unless one can engage one's thought and attention in a completely unrelated

subject. For, man's process of thinking is constantly in a state of flux, and has a tendency, consciously or subconsciously, to revert to the subject matter which one wishes to dismiss from the mind. Therefore, when resolving to dismiss the matter from one's mind, it is necessary immediately to find some other subject, unrelated to the first, in which to engage one's attention.

Another point which is also almost universally true is that it is not easy for the person involved to find the proper subject in which to engage one's mind. But here it is possible to receive help from friends who would know you and your psychological make-up. Undoubtedly you have such friends within reach.

With reference to sins, etc., generally there is the teaching of our Sages that "Nothing stands in the way of repentance." Here too the principle enunciated above may be applied, namely, that although it is necessary to end the sin immediately, whether it is a sin of commission or omission, it is also often necessary to end immediately any self recrimination, or brooding, etc., in regard to the sins of the past.

One of the obvious reasons for this is that brooding over past failures is bound to be depressing and discouraging, and would undermine one's confidence in the future, and even one's confidence in the efficacy of *teshuvah*. Therefore it is advisable to dismiss such thoughts for the time being, and leave them for more propitious times.

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

Finally, I want to make one further observation, which is one of those things which although they go without saying,

are better said. I want to say that there is no need for you to be embarrassed in expressing your attitude towards me, whether you have any trust or lack of trust, etc. Such feelings are best to be expressed openly, rather than concealed, when there is a danger of developing a distorted relationship altogether.

I trust that you know of the history and significance of the 12-13th of Tammuz which we have just observed, and that the inspiration of these days will be with you throughout the year. The essential message is, of course, that when a Jew does not permit himself to be discouraged by any obstacles, but resolves to go along the way of the Torah, he can even single handedly overcome all difficulties, and accomplish extraordinary and wonderful things. And while none of us can compare to my father-in-law of saintly memory, we must also remember that the obstacles and difficulties we may be facing are almost quite insignificant by comparison with those which he faced. Furthermore, he has already trodden out the path of *mesirus nefesh* for us, which makes it easier for all who wish to follow in his footsteps, all the more since his *zechus* stands everyone in good stead.

(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 20 Tammuz, 5725)



לעילוי נשמת אבינו אוד מוצל מאש
ר' יוסף בנימין ז"ל ב"ר מנשה הי"ד קאלטמאנן
נפטר ביום ח"י אדר שני תשע"ו
העמיד דורות לשם ולתפארת עוסקים בתורה ובמצוות
ובשליחות כ"ק אדמו"ר



ולזכות
זוגתו - תבלח"ט - מרת שולמית חנה תחי'



נדפס ע"י ולזכות בנו
הרה"ת אריה זוגתו מרת אסתר נחמה דינה
וילדיהם
הרה"ת יצחק נתן דוד זוגתו מרת שרה
וילדיהם יוכבד מרים, יוסף בנימין, גרשון, מנחם מענדל, וחיים חנוך
שיחיו

מרת חיה מושקא ובעלה הרה"ת דניאל יעקב
וילדיהם יוסף בנימין, מנחם מענדל, נתן חיים, ושמואל
שיחיו נניביש

הרה"ת מנחם מענדל זוגתו מרת דבורה לאה
וילדיהם מיכאל חיים, אורה חיה, ויוסף בנימין שיחיו
הרה"ת יהושע מנשה זוגתו מרת שרה שיחיו
רחל, שמחה ברכה, רבקה ומרים פעסיל
שיחיו לאורך ימים ושנים טובות

קאלטמאנן
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר קולומבוס, אוהיו

Excerpt From the original letter of the Rebbe

(Appears on pages 6-7 above)

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Dated 27 Elul 5721



Since one is only human, it is not unusual to relapse occasionally into a mood of discouragement. But, as has been explained in the Tanya and in other sources, such a relapse should only serve as a challenge to bring forth additional inner reserves and energy to overcome the tactics of the Yetzer Hara, and to do even better than before.

I trust that since you wrote your letter, your mood and outlook have considerably improved, and that this letter will find you in a completely different frame of mind. Nevertheless, I am sending you this letter, since one is only human and subject to changes of mood, as mentioned above.

Finally, I want to say that the above should not be understood to mean that if you do find yourself in such a frame of mind, you should try to conceal it and not write about it. For our Sages have said "When a person has an anxiety, he should relate it to others," for getting something off one's chest is in itself already a relief.

With blessing,

Excerpt from a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 28 teves 5721

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