

# In Good Hands

100 Letters and Talks  
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson  
on Bitachon: Trusting in G-d



בס"ד

הועתק והוכנס לאינטרנט

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ע"י חיים תשס"ז

# In Good Hands

100 Letters and Talks of  
the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson  
on Bitachon: Trusting in G-d

Compiled and Translated by  
Uri Kaploun



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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

### Groping for Direction

At glad and sunny times, it is as clear as daylight that “G-d is my Shepherd; I’ll not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me by still waters.”<sup>1</sup> He leads me by the hand, so to speak. But when confronted by long and gloomy hours, people sometimes feel alone; in this world, G-d seems to be hiding His Face.<sup>2</sup> And “today, the further we proceed, the thicker is the darkness around us.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus it was that in the course of the years thousands of forlorn strugglers, groping in the dark for the Hand of the Divine Shepherd, poured out their hearts to the Rebbe,<sup>4</sup> face to face or in writing, with the request that he help them find their bearings. Indeed, browsing through the Rebbe’s letters, a reader sometimes senses that he is listening in to a confidential *yeichidus* — an encounter of souls — between a chassid who has been honest enough to bare his heart in the Rebbe’s study, and the Rebbe. The responses are candid, but compassionate. Above all, in this

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1. *Tehillim* 23:1-2.
  2. In the Holy Tongue, in fact, the very word for “world” (*olam*) stems from the word that means “obscurity” (*he’elem*). See *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Shlach*, p. 37d.
  3. *Yalkut Shimoni* (on *Yeshayahu, remez* 473), quoted in Item 100(e) below.
  4. Throughout the footnotes and explanatory material in this volume, any unqualified reference to “the Rebbe” relates to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

In his letters and talks translated below, any unqualified reference to “the Rebbe” relates to his father-in-law and predecessor as Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, often known by his acronym as “the Rebbe Rayatz.”

sampling of over seventy letters, the Rebbe empowers his correspondents with a rock-solid trust — even at such times they are *in good hands*.

Some of the letters are simplistic, others are erudite and philosophical, but all are beamed to their various recipients individually, “for their minds are all different from one another,”<sup>5</sup> in our day as in days gone by. Indeed, Yehoshua was appointed the leader of his generation precisely because he was “a man in whom there is spirit”;<sup>6</sup> in the words of *Sifri*, “He was able to meet the spirit of every individual.”<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, in response to the identical question (“How can I cultivate the attribute of trust?”), one correspondent is advised to say and ponder over the words of the above-quoted psalm (“G-d is my Shepherd; I’ll not want...”); another is urged to study the expositions of *Shaar HaBitachon* in *Chovos HaLevavos*; while yet another is encouraged in quite a different direction: “I hope, too, that you will participate in the *farbrengens*<sup>8</sup> that take place [in Kfar Chabad] from time to time, which heal and strengthen and raise the spirits of those who are downfallen and of those whose hearts are bruised — downfallen and bruised in the battle of the [good and evil] inclinations, the battle of Form over Matter, and of spirituality over physicality.” In this way, the replies “meet the spirit of every individual,” especially since many of them are one-

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5. *Berachos* 58a.

6. *Bamidbar* 27:18. See also the Compiler’s Foreword to *Likkutei Amarim* — *Tanya* (in *Lessons In Tanya* (Kehot, N.Y., 1982), Vol. 1, p. 18).

7. And the spirit he met was often troubled. Accordingly, a number of letters speak of how a solid trust can calm turbulence, even if the problem at hand is not yet being visibly solved. In one reply, for example, the Rebbe writes: “Is G-d really in need of your worry as to how He is going to run your affairs and solve your problems? Or will He succeed in finding good solutions even without your worrying?”

8. In the present context, a *farbrengen* is a comradely gathering at which chassidim encourage each other’s efforts at upgrading their own spiritual sensitivity.



on-one responses to the private doubts and quandaries that correspondents around the world shared with the Rebbe.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in the absence of physical *yechidus*, the letters remain an inexhaustible conduit of communication, instruction and inspiration.

### Choosing the Letters

In the year 5747 (1987) a team of scholars headed by R. Sholom Ber Levin, Head Librarian of the Library of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, New York, undertook a mammoth challenge — the publication of an annotated selection from among the tens of thousands of letters written by the Rebbe over the years.<sup>10</sup> The resultant long shelf of volumes, entitled *Igros Kodesh*,<sup>11</sup> is the source from which the present volume made its chronological selection, from among hundreds of letters on the subject of *bitachon*.

The parent series, however, despite its impressive strides, still has a long road ahead. Accordingly, almost all the letters below date from the 1950s and 1960s, while the many thousands of letters that were written in the following two decades are virtually unrepresented.

This modest sampling of the Rebbe's letters on *bitachon* should thus be viewed as a mere prism — to diffract a variety of colors from among the broad spectrum of approaches presented in the letters at large.

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9. This explains why so very few names of addressees appear in the present selection.

10. The earliest extant manuscript letter, penned in Riga on 21 Adar, 5688 (1928), is the only surviving link in a halachic correspondence between the Rebbe and the Gaon of Rogatchov on the astronomical calculations in the *Talmud*.

11. Kehot Publication Society (N.Y., 5747/1987ff.).

## From Reverent Eloquence to Readability

In keeping with the literary conventions of Rabbinic circles, every mention of the name of the Rebbe Rayatz is embellished by reverential phrases; for example, “Our master, mentor, and Rebbe,” “May his merit protect us,” and “May the memory of the holy *tzaddik* be a blessing, for the life of the World to Come.” These phrases are so prolific that even in the Holy Tongue they are invariably abbreviated to clusters of acronyms. In the present translation, they have been further telescoped to “my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, of saintly memory,” or the like.

Likewise, every name mentioned is followed by the cordial blessing *Sheyichyeh!* (lit., “May he live!”). Since this impedes the ready flow of any English sentence, it is omitted.

The same applies to another time-honored convention of Rabbinic correspondence: the salutations that head some of these letters in the Holy Tongue are replete with honorific appellations of esteem. For example, if the salutation that precedes the name of the recipient of Letter 3 (הרה"ח הווי"ח אי"א נוי"מ וכו' — *harav hechassid, havasik vechassid, ish yerei Elokim, navon umaskil, vechulei*) were to be translated literally, it would read: “The rabbi and chassid, the eminent and veteran G-d-fearing chassid, a man of understanding and intelligence, etc.” In the present translation, a salutation such as this is foreshortened to “the [esteemed] chassid,” or the like.

Finally: The Holy Tongue considers it impolite to address a respected individual directly in the second person. Some languages deflect the frontal encounter by using the *plural* form of the second person instead of the singular; classical Hebrew goes further and addresses such an individual in the *third* person. To translate this literally, however, would be confusing. Accordingly, “I was happy to hear *his* good news” is rendered here as “I was happy to hear *your* good news.”

## Recurring Themes in the Talks

Side by side with his written responses to individuals, the Rebbe often threw light on the subject of *bitachon* — placing one's trust in G-d — in public talks delivered in the course of *farbrengens*. Many of these talks were later annotated and published, whether in Yiddish (the language in which they were delivered) or in the Holy Tongue, and representative passages from them appear below in English translation.

As an example of a theme that recurs in these talks: If, instead of passively awaiting supernatural intervention, one endeavors to create a natural conduit for the downward flow of Divine blessings, does this not contradict the concept of completely placing one's trust in G-d? This question presents itself in a variety of guises: If, in principle, one's living is provided from Above, how is it that working for a living does not compromise one's reliance on that principle? If G-d is the ultimate Healer, how can the Sages approve of consultation with doctors? And if a mere mortal down here is expected to provide a natural medium for a required salvation to take place, why was Joseph punished for placing his trust in Pharaoh's butler?

In other discussions, the Rebbe explains how trusting in G-d does not contradict the belief that everything is for the good; how when one has trust in the One on High, he also has trust in his fellow Jews; and how the familiar imprint *In G-d We Trust* means that one regards G-d as his trustee: one hands everything over into His Hands and relies on Him in all one's affairs. Another talk conveys the Rebbe's assurance that "when a child is born, his sustenance is born together with him. Indeed, the birth of an additional child increases the sustenance of the entire household." Yet another talk raises the question, How can a person honestly trust that he will be granted manifest good, when he knows that he is not sinless? In response to this question, the Rebbe offers a number of assurances for those who are deserving and for those who are perhaps less so.

## Hope, Faith, Trust

One final example of a recurring theme is the difference between hope (*tikvah*), faith (*emunah*), and trust (*bitachon*). For a start, to cite one of several distinctions drawn in this volume, the root of the very word *bitachon* means “certainty.” In this connection, the Rebbe once relayed<sup>12</sup> a remark of his revered father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz, on the difference between hope and trust: “True, in the former case, one hopes that things will be good — but one is not certain of this. Having trust, by contrast, means that one is *certain* about the subject under discussion.”

If we look back over the generations, we can trace the early roots of this remark.

The Rebbe Rayatz once cited a tradition that he had heard from his father, the Rebbe Rashab<sup>13</sup> — that “the Baal Shem Tov<sup>14</sup> implanted *faith* in *trust*.”

The Rebbe Rayatz continued: “This means that one is *certain* that what one *believes* will actually materialize down here.”

One of his listeners asked: “Does this then resemble *hope*?”

The Rebbe Rayatz replied: “Trust (*bitachon*) is more than hope. A person who has *trust* believes that what he hoped for will certainly eventuate. In fact, it is already present. The obstacle exists only in the person himself.”<sup>15</sup>

The Rebbe Maharash<sup>16</sup> spelled this out in plain and practical terms: “People are not lacking a *livelihood*; they are lacking *trust*.”

12. In a *sichah* delivered after the *Seder* on the first night of Pesach, 5712 (1952), and published in *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, Vol. 5, p. 114.

A *sichah* (pl., *sichos*) is a talk that is less formal and intense — in content, structure and delivery — than the kind of scholarly and mystical discourse known as a *maamar* (pl., *maamarim*).

13. Acronym of R. Shalom DovBer Schneersohn (1860-1920), the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

14. Lit., “Master of the Good Name”; i.e., R. Yisrael ben R. Eliezer (1698-1760), founder of Chassidism.

15. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702/1942, p. 91.

16. Acronym for R. Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Every individual is indeed provided with a livelihood. It's only that by lacking trust, a person sometimes turns off the tap...."<sup>17</sup>

### Choosing the Talks from the Variety of Material...

The massive range of the Rebbe's teachings on the subject of *bitachon* is mind-boggling, and the inescapable task of making choices from the wealth available is daunting indeed. This is true both with regard to the variety of material and to the variety of available versions.

Firstly, with regard to the variety of material: Over the decades, any one particular theme may appear and reappear in a variety of presentations. Its first appearance may perhaps be a major, scholarly treatment; it may next appear as a colorful passing allusion; and at its next appearance it may serve as background to a novel interpretation of *Rashi* on a seemingly unrelated subject. In cases such as this, choices must be made.

Moreover, not every relevant exposition, no matter how illuminating, can be represented in an anthology. For example, a major discourse delivered in 5712 (1952),<sup>18</sup> and couched in mystical terminology, provides extensive analyses of the various levels of *bitachon* as they derive from their respective sources in the Divine emanations known as *Sefiros*. Furthermore, it relates each of those levels to its corresponding conceptual framework in the Kabbalistic blueprint of the cosmos. Obviously, sources such as that *maamar* do not lend themselves to being summarized, nor to being exemplified by adroitly spliced excerpts.

Omissions, where made, are indicated by [...]. Sometimes this signifies a personal reference; sometimes, an entire Talmudic *pilpul* or a documented critique of a recent learned publication; and sometimes it signifies a reference to a current event in the

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17. See Item 82 below.

18. I.e., the *maamar* entitled *Mi Manah* 5712, which appears in *Hisvaaduyos* 5712, Vol. 3, p. 26ff.

Jewish world that was meaningful to readers or listeners at the time, but that does not throw light on the theme of this anthology, which is *bitachon*.

### ...and the Variety of Versions

Unlike the letters, each of which has a fixed and indisputable text, the Rebbe's talks have been preserved in a variety of versions, some complementary, some diverse. Many weekday talks were taped and their typed verbatim transcripts were published informally. Many entire *farbrengens*, especially those that took place on *Shabbos or Yom-Tov*, were preserved in the memories of gifted listeners, known as *chozrim*,<sup>19</sup> and then committed to writing in draft versions known in Lubavitch parlance as *hanachos*.

It is at this stage, during the preparation of a particular talk for its first publication, that its diversified presentation becomes apparent, both in content and structure. Some edited versions interweave related discussions that were delivered on earlier occasions; some versions omit local or topical allusions; some versions add sources and cross-references, summaries and subheadings; and when a draft version had been submitted to him, the Rebbe would often enrich the text or the footnotes by supplementary material. (A text whose wording the Rebbe edited and approved for publication is described in Lubavitch usage by the adjective *mugah*.) Moreover, since the Rebbe's listeners and readers include some who are brilliant scholars and others who are not, many hundreds of his talks have been adapted and translated over the years so that they can be beamed at specific audiences. The passages chosen for the present volume are

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19. Lit., "repeaters"; singular: *chozer*.

mainly taken from the three major series — *Sichos Kodesh*, *Toras Menachem* — *Hisvaaduyos*, and *Likkutei Sichos*.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the footnotes to this volume were translated or summarized from those published sources; most were composed for the present volume. And throughout, the translation and annotation of the texts was finetuned by the input of R. Yonah Avtzon, Director of *Sichos In English*, and their attractive presentation was designed by Yosef Yitzchok Turner.

### Optimistic Trust in Days of Crisis

These lines are being written during critical days in Jewish history. This is especially clear to those readers whose ears still echo with the Rebbe's cry from the heart, week after week, decade after decade — that ceding territory to our enemies not only provides no peace: it actively whets their appetite for greater, life-threatening concessions. Week after week, the Rebbe warned of the security risks entailed by unabashed capitulation to terrorist threats and world opinion. Speaking of a similar predicament, the Rebbe once told of how a national leader *armed with trust*, King Chizkiyahu (Hezekiah) of Judah, rejected outright the blandishments of a seemingly generous peace offer that was attainable, but at a price — submission to the Assyrian invader and deportation from the Land of Israel.<sup>21</sup>

May He Who heard the plea of Chizkiyahu in his era hear today the anguished plea of our idealistic brother and sister Jews who have been deported from their warm homes and flourishing

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20. In addition, the publisher and translator are indebted to: Heichal Menachem, Jerusalem, publishers of *Shaarei Emunah* (ed. R. Yosef Yitzchak Havlin), for the use of several annotated adaptations in the Holy Tongue; R. Menachem Mendel Mellul, for the use of his selections of talks that are partly based on the indices of the voluminous *Sichos Kodesh* prepared by R. Michael Aharon Seligson; and the booklet of letters on *bitachon* published in honor of the wedding in the families of R. Menachem Mendel Wechter and R. Shlomo Bluming.

21. See Item 90 below.

*yeshivos* and thriving farms in the Holy Land. May their eyes and ours behold the Coming of *Mashiach*, soon.

In the meantime, Jews in *Eretz Yisrael* and all around the world are echoing the ancient entreaty: *Chusah, HaShem, al amecha...* — “G-d, have pity on Your people, and do not let Your heritage be an object of contempt for nations to rule over.”<sup>22</sup> For, as the Rebbe teaches repeatedly throughout these letters and talks, *G-d transforms reality* in response to a Jew’s insistence, regardless of what his fleshly eyes may see, on trusting G-d’s promises — and foremost among these is the Divine promise of Redemption. This long-awaited transformation of reality is the Divine response to the Jew who insists on cultivating positive thinking and (the Rebbe uses the English word) *optimism*.

Uri Kaploun

Jerusalem,  
20 Menachem Av, 5765 (2005)

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22. Yoel 2:17, cited in the *Tachanun* prayers; *Siddur Tehillat HaShem* (Annotated Edition; Kehot Publication Society, N.Y., 5763/2002), p. 57.



Part A

Letters



1.  
“A guide for all the troops  
under your influence...”

[By the Grace of G-d  
Winter, 5704 [1944]  
Brooklyn]

Greetings and Blessings!

You<sup>1</sup> have no doubt duly received all the printed matter that we mailed you.<sup>2</sup> We are certain that it is proving to be helpful, especially in fortifying the spirit of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*<sup>3</sup> among the troops, in lending them courage, and in buttressing their trust in G-d.

It goes without saying that at all times we are ready to be of assistance in these matters to the best of our ability, and you will no doubt let us know if an appropriate opportunity presents itself.

You have been granted the sacred task of serving as the spiritual leader and guide for all the troops under your influence — both by raising their spirits so that they will be firm in their trust that there will be a complete victory and so that they will not stand in dread of the enemy, and arousing them to be firm in their religious belief and to make staunch efforts to observe the Torah and its *mitzvos*<sup>4</sup> to the best of their capacity and possibility. For G-d, the L-rd of Hosts, abides among them and constantly watches over

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1. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 1, p. 220, Letter 124.

2. The Rebbe originally wrote this letter in the Holy Tongue at the height of World War II. It was sent — in English translation — by Machne Israel, the pioneering Lubavitch outreach organization, to all the Jewish chaplains serving in the US armed forces. Every contactable Jewish soldier was also sent a Message written by the Rebbe Rayatz, together with a copy of the English-language *Pocket Encyclopedia*.

3. Lit. (Yid.), “Jewishness” — the Torah way of life.

4. I.e. (pl. of *mitzvah*), the commandments.

them and scrutinizes all their actions. Their camp should therefore be holy.

As it is written in the Torah of Moshe (*Devarim* 23:10-15): “When you go out to encamp against your enemies, be on your guard against anything evil.... For G-d, your L-rd, moves about in the midst of your camp to save you, and to deliver your enemies to you. Let your camp therefore be holy.” [...]

[...]

## 2.

**“Endeavors to create a medium  
within the natural order  
do not contradict the concept of *bitachon*...”**

By the Grace of G-d  
2 Kislev, 5707 [1946]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>5</sup> response to your questions:

1. With regard to the concept of *bitachon*, and the question of whether it is necessary to create a medium<sup>6</sup> [for Divine blessings]: [You write that] you have heard it said that righteous men do not require a medium. Accordingly, [you raise] the question why Avraham found it necessary to employ a tactic, [telling Sarah],<sup>7</sup> “Please say that you are my sister.”

In resolution: It is obvious that as a rule, apart from having *bitachon*, one must also create a medium. Indeed, the entire *Tanach*<sup>8</sup> and the teachings of the Talmudic Sages are filled with

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5. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 2, p. 179, Letter 256, addressed to a young chassid by the name of Rabbi Y. Partovitch.
  6. In the original, *keli* (lit., “a vessel”) — i.e., a conduit for the downward flow of Divine blessings.
  7. *Bereishis* 12:13.
  8. Acronym for Torah (i.e., the *Chumash*, the Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and *Kesuvim* (i.e., the Hagiographa).

[illustrations of] this concept. Endeavors to create a medium within the natural order do not contradict the concept of *bitachon*, since [every Jew] has been told by G-d, the L-rd in Whom he trusts, that He will bless him in all that he *does*,<sup>9</sup> and not when he sits idly (*Sifri, Devarim 15:18*).

From this one can conclude two things:

- (a) Employing a vessel, and the reason for making the vessel, must be dictated only by the fact that we were thus commanded. If, however, one considers [the vessel and its rationale] to be beneficial or harmful in their own right, he is debasing the attribute of *bitachon*.
- (b) One is commanded to do only what he is capable of doing, for<sup>10</sup> “the Holy One, blessed be He, does not confront His created beings with unfair demands.” Accordingly, if [at some point] one is incapable of making a vessel, that itself is a sign that the Merciful One has exempted him<sup>11</sup> from [the responsibility in this instance]. And this [should] not weaken his *bitachon* that his request will be fulfilled.

Two questions remain unresolved:

- (i) Why were we commanded to create a vessel, when it appears that the vessel in its own right neither helps nor harms?
- (ii) What will happen if one does not create a vessel?

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9. Paraphrase of *Devarim 15:18*: “G-d your L-rd will bless you in all that you *do*” — implying that one must initiate appropriate activity on the worldly plane that will serve to elicit and contain the blessings anticipated from Above. (See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 37b, et al.)

10. *Avodah Zarah 3a*.

11. Cf. *Bava Kama 28b*.

With regard to question (i), the reason [for making a vessel] is given in *Chassidus*<sup>12</sup> (*Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Tiglachas Metzora KesheYit'har*, sec. 3), as follows: By reason of a profound Divine intent, the benevolent influence from Above that is designated for the World of *Asiyah*<sup>13</sup> must be drawn down by natural means.<sup>14</sup> Man,<sup>15</sup> therefore, reflecting the image of G-d,<sup>16</sup> must likewise create a garment and an occupation for his livelihood. (See *Kuntreis U'Maayan*, Discourse 25, at length. See also *Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaBitachon*, ch. 3, which is cited in the *maamar* entitled *VeLo Zachar Sar HaMashkim* 5677 with a different thrust, but the two stances can be bridged. This is not the place [for further discussion of the issue].)

With regard to question (ii), concerning one who does not create a vessel even though he is able to do so, the Sages (*Shabbos* 32a) teach: “[In a dangerous situation] a person should never say that a miracle will be performed for him, for perhaps a miracle will not be performed for him.” In such a case, not only will his trust not have been vindicated, but he will certainly be punished for this, for he is “robbing his soul.” (See *Derech Mitzvosecha, loc. cit.*; *Chovos HaLevavos, loc. cit.*, ch. 4.) And “if a miracle is performed for him, his merits are reduced” (*Shabbos, loc. cit.*), and he (so to speak) is troubling his Creator (*Ramban, Shaar HaGmul*, cited in the above-mentioned *maamar* entitled *VeLo Zachar*).

[Let us first consider] the case of *tzaddikim*,<sup>17</sup> even those whose souls are [of the World] of *Atzilus*<sup>18</sup> — i.e., the soul that is vested in their physical bodies is actually at the level of *Atzilus* (*Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim*, the *maamar* entitled *Od Biur al pasuk Yonasi*,

12. The teachings and philosophy of the chassidic movement (and, in this context, of the *Chabad-Lubavitch* school of thought in particular).

13. The lowest of the Four Worlds.

14. In the original, *al-yedei levush hateva* (lit., “by means of the garment of nature”) — i.e., vested in nature.

15. In the original, *adam atem* (cf. *Yevamos* 61a).

16. In the original, *bedugma shelemaadah*.

17. I.e., (pl. of *tzaddik*), the righteous.

18. Lit., “even those who are souls [of the World] of *Atzilus*.”

end of sec. 1). Notwithstanding [their stature], if they are still distracted by the [mundane] affairs and bothersome troubles of the World of *Asiyah* — and in the World of *Asiyah*, as explained above, the downward flow of Divine blessings is elicited by natural conduits<sup>19</sup> — such *tzaddikim*, too, [are obliged to] endeavor to create a worldly medium, for the above reason.

This is not the case with regard to those *tzaddikim* whose attachment to G-d<sup>20</sup> is not at all disturbed by the world's troublesome stresses, [and] even while they are strenuously involved in worldly matters they still cleave as truly to G-d as they do on the Heavenly plane. Since even when they are involved in worldly matters the world counts for nothing, they have no need to make a vessel.

As explained at length in *Toras Chayim*, in the *maamar* entitled *Ben Poras Yosef*, and also in the *maamar* entitled *VaYe'esor Yosef* 5656, the Patriarchs were at the former level. This is why they were shepherds, isolated from worldly matters. Hence Avraham, as mentioned above, and likewise Yaakov when confronted by Esav, employed various tactics. Yosef, by contrast, living at the latter level, had no need to create a vessel. Indeed, he was even punished when he did do so.<sup>21</sup>

At first glance, the above point raises a query. The question is asked (in *Toras Chayim*, *loc. cit.*, sec. 13, and in the *maamar* entitled *VeLo Zachar...* 5677): Why was Yosef punished for employing tactics to secure his release? After all, Yaakov employed various tactics and was not punished. In those sources, the answer is given that Yosef's spiritual stature transcended the spiritual cosmos,<sup>22</sup>

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19. In the original, *al-yedei levush* (lit., “by means of a garment”); cf. footnote 14 above.

20. In the original, *dveikus*.

21. Yosef, seeking to be released from Pharaoh's dungeon, pinned his hopes on the chief butler. And “because Yosef made himself dependent on [the butler's] memory, he was obliged to remain imprisoned for two years, as it is written, ‘Happy is the man who places his trust in G-d and does not turn to [the Egyptians]’” (*Rashi* on *Bereishis* 40:23, quoting *Tehillim* 40:5).

See also Items 78, 86(d), and 94, below.

22. In the original, *lemaalah miseder hishtalshehus*.

higher than the realms of *Tohu* and *Tikkun*. Those sources do not spell out the reason presented above in the present letter. Yet this is not at all problematic, because those sources are also addressing another question: Why was Yosef not anxious “lest sin [incriminate him]”<sup>23</sup> — unlike Yaakov, who was afraid? The answer there adds to what was already explained in previous chapters [of *Toras Chayim*] — that Yosef was not distracted by the bothersome troubles of this world, since he transcended all adversaries.

A point to note (from the *maamar* entitled *U’veVoah Lifnei HaMelech* 5654): “I saw it stated in the name of one of the men of stature that a person who is confronted by a distressful crisis, Heaven forbid, should place his trust in G-d. This means that he should not pray concerning this matter nor should he do anything, such as immersing in the *mikveh*. He should only place his trust in G-d. This is like remaining silent in a way that expresses awesome self-effacement.”<sup>24</sup> This is a wondrous statement.

Another point to note: There is sustenance that comes as “bread from the earth” and there is sustenance that comes as “bread from Heaven.” However, this distinction is only marginally related to the concept discussed above. (See also the beginning of the *maamar* entitled *Ki Savo* 5666. [The apparent contradiction] from the beginning of the second *maamar* entitled *Ani LeDodi* in *Sefer HaMaamarim* can be easily resolved.)

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2. [You write that] on the verse, “Please say that you are my sister,” the *Midrash* comments: “From this [we derive] that one may slaughter [an animal] on *Shabbos* for the sake of a sick person.” [You add that] certain sources interpret that statement simply: From the fact that Avraham followed a path of tactics, and did not merely rely on his trust in G-d, we learn that with regard to a sick

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23. *Berachos* 4a.

24. In the original Heb./Yid., *bittul gadol* (a *shtarker avek-leig*).



person, too, “one does not rely on miracles.”<sup>25</sup> You ask for further explanation.

Now, you did not cite the source of the *Midrash* or of the works that explain it. [This is regrettable, for] “letters make one wise.”<sup>26</sup> Now, the explanation you cite is problematic, for if [it were to be accepted], the *Midrash* should have stated, “From this [we derive] that one does not rely on miracles.” Yet, quite to the contrary, we see from the *Zohar* (I, 82a) that Avraham did rely on a miracle and therefore went down to Egypt. This is explained in the *Zohar* (III, 52a) as follows: Avraham saw an angel proceeding before Sarah but not before himself, and said, “Behold, she is protected, but I am not protected.” And this was why he said, “Please say that you are my sister.”<sup>27</sup>

At first glance, the *Midrash* would appear to indicate the following: From the fact that Avraham asked Sarah to say that she was his sister in order to save Avraham, we derive that a person may transgress in order to save his fellow.

However, this explanation, too, is unsatisfactory. According to this, the statement should have said: “From this we derive that one may desecrate the *Shabbos* for the sake of a sick person.” Why does it single out the case of slaughtering an animal?

In resolution: There is a well-known question that is posed [only] for the sake of intellectual acuity.<sup>28</sup> How did Avraham know that the Egyptians would kill him, transgressing the prohibition against murder in order to avert the prohibition against adultery, and so he said, “Please say...”?

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25. *Pesachim* 64b.

26. In the original, *Osiyos machkimos* (*Shelah*, *Maseches Shavuos*, p. 191b; *Migdal Oz*, *Hilchos Ishus* 4:9).

27. This is discussed in *Shem MiShmuel* (*Parshas Vayeira*) by R. Shmuel of Sochatchov.

28. For according to the straightforward meaning (the *pshat*), the intent of the verse is: “They will say, ‘This is his wife,’ and they will kill me” (*Bereishis* 12:12) — “because they will not anticipate that I will give you to them,” as explained by Sforno.

One of the answers proposed is that if they killed Avraham, they would violate a prohibition only once. If instead they took Sarah while he was alive, every act of intimacy would be a violation of the prohibition against adultery.

The *Midrash* applies this principle to the case of a sick person. We slaughter an animal on *Shabbos* for the sake of a sick person. We do not say, “Let us rather feed him meat from an animal that was not ritually slaughtered.”<sup>29</sup> The rationale is similar. If [one partakes of the meat of] an animal that was not slaughtered ritually, each *kazayis*<sup>30</sup> that one eats constitutes a transgression. By contrast, slaughtering [an animal on *Shabbos*] violates a single prohibition. (See Rabbeinu Nissim, as quoted in the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Shabbos* 328:16.)

Another question may well be asked. We have yet to understand how the *Midrash* can derive the permission to slaughter [an animal on *Shabbos*] for the sake of a sick person (a one-time violation that is punishable by death) instead of feeding him the meat of a *neveilah* (an oft-repeated violation that is merely a prohibitive commandment<sup>31</sup>) — from the incident involving Avraham. In the latter instance *both* transgressions, murder and adultery, are punishable by death.

The rationale underlying this derivation may be understood from [the request made by] Avraham. How could Avraham have known that [the Egyptians] would kill him and thereby violate the capital offense of murder once, in order to spare themselves the repeated violation of the prohibition against adultery, which is also a capital offense? [At this point the letter reviews a battery of halachic sources, and concludes that] the Egyptians would certainly kill him, because it is preferable to violate a severe prohibition once, in order to avert the repeated violation of a lesser prohibition. Thus [this is an appropriate source] from which to derive [the principle] that [an animal] may be slaughtered [on *Shabbos*] for a sick person.

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29. In the original, *neveilah*.

30. A piece the size of an olive.

31. And hence punishable not by death but by lashes.

An alternative resolution: If the Egyptians had abducted [Sarah] and [Avraham] was unable to restrain them, this would constitute despair [on his part], which in the case of robbers dissolves one's claim to ownership (*Bava Kama* 144a). It could be argued that in such circumstances, [Sarah] would be considered divorced, for Noahides<sup>32</sup> are not required to have a formal bill of divorce, only to separate (*Rambam*,<sup>33</sup> *Hilchos Melachim* 9:8). If so, [Sarah] would no longer be considered a married woman. Nevertheless, since this would be a reprehensible course of action, [the Egyptians would certainly have opted to kill Avraham].

With blessings of "Immediate *teshuvah*:"<sup>34</sup> immediate Redemption,"<sup>35</sup>

(...)

Chairman of the Executive Committee

Just now I saw that *Torah Shleimah* (*Parshas Lech Lecha*, sec. 145) cites the above Midrashic teaching in the name of *Midrash Peliiah* and interprets it as above according to the rationale enunciated by Rabbeinu Nissim.<sup>36</sup> However, that source does not discuss the disparity between the case of Avraham, where the two prohibitions are of equal weight, and the case of *Shabbos*, where the options of *shechitah* and *neveilah* are prohibitions of unequal weight.

[...]

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32. In the original, *bnei Noach* (lit., "the descendants of Noah"). This was the halachic status of Avraham and Sarah at the time of the incident discussed above.

33. I.e., Maimonides.

34. I.e., repentance.

35. In the original, *LeAltar LiTeshuvah: LeAltar LiGeulah* — the slogan publicized by the Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak in the 1940s.

36. That it is preferable to violate a severe prohibition once than a lesser prohibition repeatedly.

## 3.

**“One should not be too dejected or doubtful,  
for this, too, is exploited by the [Evil] Inclination.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
3 Menachem Av, 5710 [1950]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] As<sup>37</sup> to your prayerful wish that you [and your colleagues] should be vessels appropriate for the fulfillment of what is desired [of you by the Rebbe]: One should not be too dejected or doubtful, for this, too, is exploited by the [Evil] Inclination.

As was recently discussed here at a *farbrengen*,<sup>38</sup> it should not be forgotten that the entire subject of creation [...] springs from the fact that “it is in the nature of One Who is benevolent to act benevolently.”<sup>39</sup> And it goes without saying that [this] reason influences the created universe and is discernible in it. [...]

After all the above, one should approach his tasks with joy and with complete trust that G-d will show compassion and will offer help, and we [will be] greatly sanctified from Above<sup>40</sup> — provided only that we keep a firm grasp of the bond of *hiskashrus*<sup>41</sup> with the *tzaddik* who is now more accessible in this World of Action, too.<sup>42</sup>

With blessings to all the members of the brotherhood,

[...]

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37. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 3, p. 353, Letter 655, addressed to R. Yehoshua Shneur Zalman Serebryanski, a distinguished *shaliach* of the Rebbe Rayatz who had arrived in Australia on the invitation of Reb Moshe Feiglin in 1949.

38. In the present context, an assemblage of chassidim addressed by the Rebbe.

39. In the original, *teva hatov leheitiv* (*Emek HaMelech*, beginning of *Shaar Alef*).

40. Cf. *Yoma* 39b.

41. Usually refers to the bond between chassid and Rebbe.

42. A reference to the Rebbe Rayatz, the date of whose physical passing was Yud Shvat, only six months earlier.

The Rebbe's concluding proviso paraphrases a teaching of the *Zohar* (III, 71b), as explained by the Alter Rebbe in *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 27.

## 4.

**“I do not know where you stand  
with regard to *bitachon*.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
14 Menachem Av, 5710 [1950]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[A<sup>43</sup> certain chassid had written to the Rebbe that the location of his workplace did not allow him to fully discharge some of his spiritual obligations. After discussing the halachic leniencies proposed by various authorities for such a predicament, the Rebbe concludes as follows:]

All the above was written because I do not know where you stand with regard to the attribute of *bitachon*, your trust in G-d. However, if you are strong in this (see *Biurei Zohar*, beginning of *Parshas Vaeira*) with simple faith, and if you seek an [alternative] medium<sup>6</sup> for your livelihood (see *Kuntreis U'Maayan*, sec. 25), G-d will grant you your livelihood in a place where there is a *minyan*<sup>44</sup> and so on, and you will be able to carry out all your obligations in the above-mentioned areas.

[...]

## 5.

**“If this blessing is sometimes delayed...”**

By the Grace of G-d  
21 Menachem Av, 5710 [1950]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

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43. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 3, p. 372, Letter 674.

44. A quorum of ten men for congregational prayer.

In<sup>45</sup> reply to your letter of 16 Menachem Av concerning your wife's health: You write of reasons for which she cannot conceive. However, this appears to be incomprehensible, because the beginning of your letter mentions that in the month of Elul 5709 she was pregnant. If so, this can certainly be the case now, too.

It therefore seems to me that your wife should not undertake anything that would — according to what you write — be risky. Let her once again consult a medical specialist as to what she should do and he will no doubt find a moderate course of action. Through the agency of a particular doctor and a particular medication everything will pass, and the blessing of my revered father-in-law [the Rebbe Rayatz] (*May I serve as an atonement for his resting-place!*)<sup>46</sup> will be fulfilled — that G-d will gladden your hearts with healthy and viable offspring.

You write further that from this whole situation your wife has become nervous, and so on.

It should be explained to her that the A-lmighty directs the world in the manner that is best. He knows what is best, and He wrote in the Torah that children are a blessing. Jews are therefore deserving of it. And if this blessing is sometimes delayed, it should be known that we all have a great Rebbe, my revered father-in-law, and in due course he will make all his blessings materialize for all those who are bound to him.

However, one must hold tightly on to the bonds of *hiskashrus* with him. If, instead, one begins to be apprehensive about the fulfillment of his blessings, and this makes one become nervous, this is an indication of weakness, G-d forbid, in one's trust and in one's *hiskashrus*. In particular, if it also affects one's health, it is certainly nothing more than the counsel of the [Evil] Inclination.

She and you yourself must be strong in your trust "in G-d and in Moshe, His servant,"<sup>47</sup> of our generation — that is, my revered father-in-law — and this in itself will help expedite and actualize

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45. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 3, p. 386, Letter 688.

46. This phrase is used during the first eleven months of mourning.

47. *Shmos* 14:31.

his holy blessing for healthy and viable offspring and for all good things.

Before candle-lighting, your wife no doubt makes a donation *bli neder*<sup>48</sup> to the charity that carries the name of Rabbeinu Meir Baal HaNess, and every day you no doubt recite *bli neder* the Rebbe's chapter<sup>49</sup> of *Tehillim*, which is currently chapter 71.

When your wife becomes pregnant, in a good and auspicious hour, you will presumably not publicize the fact at the early stages,<sup>50</sup> but you will immediately notify the Rebbe [Rayatz] at the holy resting-place.

With blessings,

[...]

## 6.

**“In words that are appropriate  
to her present state of mind...”**

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Elul, 5710 [1950]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>51</sup> undated letter states that the doctor has told your wife that she should be hospitalized for a few days of tests, and you add that your wife is afraid of the hospital for various (unfounded) reasons.

This is what you should explain to her, in words that are appropriate to her present state of mind:

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48. I.e., without intending that this regular practice should assume the binding force of a formal vow.

49. I.e., continuing the custom whereby every day, after the morning prayers, before one recites the psalm that corresponds to one's own age (e.g., ch. 21 for a person 20 years old), one does the same for the psalm that corresponds to the Rebbe's age.

50. See *Igros Kodesh* of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 9, pp. 284, 290, and 451.

51. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 3, p. 441, Letter 734.

G-d created the world and it is He Who conducts it, both in the lower hemisphere, where we are situated, and in the upper hemisphere,<sup>52</sup> where [...] and you are situated. “He spoke, and it came into being; He commanded, and it endured.”<sup>53</sup> Hence, nothing takes place in the world without Him, and everything that He desires takes place. However, G-d wants us to make a medium<sup>6</sup> in nature; He wants things to happen in a natural way.

When a Jew or Jewess doesn’t feel well and a doctor has to be called, this does not mean that the doctor is going to do whatever he feels like doing. What is really happening is that G-d has chosen this doctor to be His emissary and to carry out His mission.

When a person has *bitachon*, trusting without any doubt that G-d conducts the world, he is then granted the privilege of seeing this with his fleshly eyes, too, at every single step; he sees how G-d takes each of us by the hand and leads us in the way that is best for us, both materially and spiritually.

Therefore, when your wife goes to hospital on the doctor’s orders, she is still under G-d’s surveillance. And He will watch over her and see to it that things should work out in the way that is best for both her physical and mental health.

\* \* \*

Your wife needs only to be strong in her faith and trust that she will assuredly see the fulfillment of the blessing that my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], gave her, gives her, and will continue to give her — that she will be healed, and may you and she soon be able to convey the glad tidings that she feels well.

Your wife presumably places some coins for *tzedakah* in the charity box of Rabbeinu Meir Baal HaNess before candle-lighting on the eve of *Shabbos* and *Yom-Tov*, and you no doubt read the chapter of *Tehillim* (which is currently Psalm 71) that relates to the age of the Rebbe [Rayatz], at least until *Yud Shvat*, 5711 [1951].

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52. This division of the globe obviously differs from the more familiar division by Western cartographers into northern and southern hemispheres.

53. *Tehillim* 33:9.



All the above should of course be undertaken without the stringency of a formal vow.<sup>54</sup>

May you be inscribed — and may that inscription be sealed — for a good year.

Looking forward to good news,

[...]

## 7.

**“One must have appropriate vessels  
to accommodate all these blessings.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
7 Adar I, 5711 [1951]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>55</sup> response to your letter dated Monday of the week of *Parshas Mishpatim* and the *pidyon nefesh*:<sup>56</sup>

One must be strong in his trust in G-d, Who conducts the whole world without exception. He will watch over you and protect you, and will ultimately settle your affairs well for you, both materially and spiritually.

In addition, one must have appropriate vessels to accommodate all these blessings. These vessels are Torah study and the observance of *mitzvos*. Specifically: reciting *Tehillim*<sup>57</sup> every day according to the division of the monthly cycle; studying a *parshah* of *Chumash* every day from the weekly *sidrah*, together with the commentary of *Rashi* (on Sunday until *Sheni*, on Monday until *Shlishi*, and so on); and studying the daily reading of *Tanya* as

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54. In the original, *bli neder*.

55. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 4, p. 172, Letter 916.

56. Often abbreviated in the original to *pan* (lit., “redemption of the soul”): a note requesting a *tzaddik* to intercede in prayer for the writer, who signs with his own name and his mother’s name.

57. [Passages from] the Book of Psalms.

divided into an annual cycle by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz].

Why do you make no mention of plans for marriage?<sup>58</sup>

May G-d help you to give glad tidings in the near future.

With blessings,

[...]

## 8.

**“Consider: Is G-d really in need of your worry...? Or will He succeed in finding good solutions even without your worrying?”**

By the Grace of G-d  
13 Nissan, 5711 [1951]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>59</sup> letter duly arrived, but numerous preoccupations did not allow me to reply until now. As a matter of fact you don't need my reply, because you received a reply from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], when you were here.

Nevertheless, I would like to reiterate something that I have already said a few times:

One ought to know, once and for all, that faith is not something that is meant to remain only in one's thoughts; it must permeate the whole of one's life.

You are, without any doubt, a believer. So, the very first point of belief is that G-d directs the world. And if He is capable of directing one-and-a-half billion people, then your own affairs will certainly see the fulfillment of the verse,<sup>60</sup> “I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you *and deliver you.*”

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58. In the original, *a shidduch*.

59. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 4, p. 255, Letter 984.

60. *Yeshayahu* 46:4.

Now, think this over. G-d promises, “I will sustain and deliver you.” So think: Can a gentile from this or that land disturb G-d from fulfilling His promise (G-d forbid)? Having thought that, now consider: Is G-d really in need of your worry as to how He is going to run your affairs and solve your problems? Or will He succeed in finding good solutions even without your worrying?

After all is said and done, you must remember that the Rebbe — that is, my revered father-in-law, of saintly memory — gave you his blessing, and the blessing of a *tzaddik* is certainly fulfilled. So the blessing you received will also be fulfilled.

However, *until* you see the fulfillment of the blessing, you have been given two options:

Either (a) you will walk around worried in case (G-d forbid) the blessing won’t be fulfilled. And then, when the blessing is fulfilled, you will have a fresh worry: Why did you have to waste so much vital energy in vain?

Or (b) you will be staunch in your trust and faith in G-d — that He will lead you along the right path and will fulfill all the blessings that you have been given. And then, when you see them being fulfilled in actual fact, you will be able to tell yourself: “Just look how well I handled this deal! I didn’t worry about things that were no cause for concern.”

This is one of the meanings of my father-in-law’s blessings to you, and not only as a blessing but also as a directive. Be happy, because — with G-d’s help — the problems that you imagine to be so serious will be solved. You have nothing to worry about. You can be happy, and you can fulfill the directive of the verse,<sup>61</sup> “Serve G-d with joy.”

I wish you a kosher and joyful Pesach and a healthy and joyful always,<sup>62</sup> and look forward to hearing good news from you in the near future.

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61. *Tehillim* 100:2.

62. In this colloquial Yid./Heb. blessing (*a freilichn tamid*), the word “always” serves informally as a noun.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the *sichah*<sup>63</sup> of Pesach, 5703 [1943], which you will no doubt find of interest.

[...]

9.

**“I saw in a little book — it’s called the *Tanach*...”**

By the Grace of G-d

22 Iyar, 5711 [1951]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>64</sup> response to the *pidyon nefesh*<sup>56</sup> that you sent me: When I visited the holy resting-place of my revered father-in-law [the Rebbe Rayatz] I mentioned your name in connection with your needs. He no doubt intercedes and arouses Divine compassion upon yourself and your wife — that you enjoy robust health, with peace of mind and body — particularly since, as you write, you have a letter from him with his holy blessing that you settle into a good life.

You *write* that you suffer from an ailment, though without saying what it is, and that at any moment you are likely to undergo a serious heart attack, etc., G-d forbid. (It appears to me that this is not the case, and that — begging your pardon — this is an extreme exaggeration.) You write further that a partition of iron is separating [you from your Father in Heaven] and that your prayers and charitable contributions have had no effect, and so on.

Without a doubt, you yourself also understand that all this is no more than fantasies. For even if there were a partition of iron, the Sages assure us in plain words that “even a partition of iron

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63. In Lubavitch usage, a *sichah* (pl., *sichos*) is a talk delivered by one of the Rebbeim, that is less formal and intense — in content, structure and delivery — than the kind of scholarly and mystical discourse known as a *maamar* (pl., *maamarim*).

64. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 4, p. 292, Letter 1019.

cannot separate the Children of Israel from their Father in Heaven.”<sup>65</sup>

The same applies to what you write about how your prayers and especially the *tzedakah*<sup>66</sup> you distribute have had no effect. I saw in a little book — it’s called the *Tanach*<sup>8</sup> — where it is written (*Malachi* 3:10) that the Holy One, blessed be He, says: “Test Me, please, in this,” in the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* — that if only people will give *tzedakah*, “I will pour down blessings upon you,” and so on. The same applies to prayer, as is explained in many sources in the teachings of the Sages.

Above all, as is clarified in the works of *Chassidus*,<sup>12</sup> this is one of the counsels by means of which the Evil Inclination topples a man into melancholy. And if melancholy stemming from spiritual reasons gives good cause for vigilance, how much more wary must one be of melancholy that comes from some other source, for there is nothing worse than that.

You should insistently fortify your trust in what even the most lightminded of Jews believe — that the Holy One, blessed be He, is not only the Creator of the world but that He also conducts it, and not only long ago, but also presently, every day and at every hour. Moreover, He conducts not only the big world but also all the affairs of the microcosm, man, and He is the ultimate good. Without a doubt, you will then finally see, even with fleshly eyes, that everything will be for the best, even in the kind of good that is manifest. For this, however, one must strengthen one’s bonds of *hiskashrus* with the G-d of Life — by setting aside fixed times to study the Torah of Life;<sup>67</sup> by serving Him through the *avodah*<sup>68</sup> of prayer, through which you are benevolent toward your Soul of Life; and by fortifying your observance of the *mitzvos*, and of the com-

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65. *Pesachim* 85b.

66. I.e., charity.

67. In the original, *Toras chayim* (from the last blessing of *Shemoneh Esreh*).

68. Divine service, particularly through prayer and (in chassidic usage) the labor of self-refinement.

prehensive *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, for “the truth of *tzedakah* is for life.”<sup>69</sup>

I hope that in the near future you will let me know of an improvement in your material situation and likewise of an improvement of your spiritual situation — namely, the disappearance of thoughts about a separating partition etc. etc. — and that you will make strenuous endeavors to fulfill the command of the Holy One, blessed be He: “Serve G-d with joy.”<sup>61</sup>

Enclosed is a copy of the *sichah* of Lag BaOmer that was recently published. You should ponder over it deeply.

In anticipation of glad tidings,

[...]

# 10.

**“...a weakness in your trust, and  
the remedy for this is to study *Shaar HaBitachon*.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
9 Sivan, 5711 [1951]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>70</sup> letter of 25 Iyar reached me just now. You no doubt have long since received the booklet and the *sichah* together with my letter, and at auspicious times I mention your name and your wife’s name at the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law with reference to your needs.

As I wrote you long ago, I have one thing to say: I do not understand your bitterness and melancholy at all. Since<sup>71</sup> “even the superintendent of a well is appointed in Heaven,” it is certainly obvious that the rabbi of a Jewish community should be aware of the responsibility that rests upon him. It is even more obvious that

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69. *Mishlei* 19:21.

70. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 4, p. 318, Letter 1042.

71. *Bava Kama* 27b.

if notions such as those [of which you write] bring you to bitterness and melancholy, they certainly stem from “the Opposite Side”<sup>72</sup> — or, to borrow the phrase of my revered father-in-law, “that smart little guy.”<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, every time and every moment that you think such thoughts, these are thoughts that come from the chambers of “the Opposite Side” — and concerning a thought of this kind it is written<sup>74</sup> that “as soon as it rises there (i.e., to the mind), one thrusts it aside with both hands and averts his mind from it [...], and refuses to accept it.”

Now, this is speaking of every man, for<sup>75</sup> “the rank of *Beinoni* is one that is attainable by every man, and every man should strive after it.” (This is not contradicted by the statement in *Tanya*<sup>76</sup> that the *Beinoni* “has never committed any transgression,” whereas chapter 14 states that “every person can, at any time or hour, be a *Beinoni*.” The meaning [of the former statement] is that the *Beinoni*’s present spiritual state is such that transgressing has no place in his life, neither in the future nor in the past.<sup>77</sup> This will suffice for the present.)

From all the above it will be clear that I am not at all comfortable to read in your letter that you are seeking a different position. You ought to remain in your present post, and to trust firmly that G-d will lead you in the path of truth<sup>78</sup> and bless your holy work with success. If doubts on this enter your mind, this does not indicate a doubt as to your ability, but a weakness in your trust. The remedy for this is to study *Shaar HaBitachon* in *Chovos HaLevavos*,<sup>79</sup>

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72. In the Aram. original, *sitra dile’umas zeh* (from *Koheles* 7:14: “G-d created this [side] opposite that [side]”): the evil counterpart to the holy aspect of the universe; a chassidic euphemism for the forces of evil.

73. In the original Yid., *dem kluginken*; i.e., the wily Evil Inclination.

74. *Tanya*, ch. 12 (see *Lessons In Tanya* (Kehot, N.Y., 5742/1982), Vol. 1, p. 182).

75. *Op. cit.*, ch. 14 (see *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. 1, p. 203).

76. Ch. 12 (see *op. cit.*, pp. 170-171).

77. I.e., from the perspective of his present state he has never sinned.

78. Cf. *Bereishis* 24:48.

79. A medieval classic (in Eng. translation: *Duties of the Heart*) by Rabbeinu Bachaye.

and, more broadly, to be bound to the Tree of Life, i.e., the study of *Chassidus*,<sup>12</sup> and to participate frequently in a chassidic *farbrengen*<sup>80</sup> with genuine chassidic joy — to be happy and to make others happy.

Now, since you have moved into your new apartment, the thing to do would be to organize a chassidic *farbrengen* there, truly and properly — to recall the good old days, when a chassid at a *farbrengen* would speak [candidly], without hesitating to consider what this one or that one would say, or what his own left side or right side<sup>81</sup> would say. A chassid only knew that a chassidic *farbrengen* — listening to a discourse of *Chassidus*, a chassidic *vort*,<sup>82</sup> or an anecdote about one of our Rebbeim — lights a man up, and<sup>83</sup> “a little light dispels a great deal of darkness.”

Furthermore: Why should one think about darkness? Let’s think more about light — especially now, when we are at the time at which the first Tablets of the Law were given.<sup>84</sup> And, [interpreting] the phrase<sup>85</sup> “engraved (*charus*) on the Tablets” [on the non-literal level called *derush*], the Sages taught:<sup>86</sup> “Do not read *charus* (‘engraved’); read *cheirus* (‘freedom’).”<sup>87</sup>

May it be G-d’s Will that your new apartment exemplify the adage<sup>88</sup> that “he who changes his place changes his fortune” — in a good direction. May your home be a warm home and a happy home, filled with<sup>89</sup> “a commandment [that] is a lamp and the Torah [that] is light.” May it be filled with the luminary within the Torah, i.e., the teachings of *Chassidus*, and the spiritual lifestyle of

80. In the present context, a comradely gathering at which chassidim encourage each other’s efforts at finetuning their own spiritual sensitivity.

81. I.e., his own Evil Inclination or Good Inclination, respectively (see *Tanya*, ch. 9).

82. Lit., “word” (Yid.): a teaching that is brief, quotable and insightful.

83. *Tzeidah LaDerech*, ch. 12.

84. This letter is dated two days after Shavuot.

85. *Shmos* 32:16.

86. *Avos* 6:2.

87. I.e., studying Torah liberates a man.

88. In the original, *Meshaneh makom meshaneh mazal*; cf. *Rosh HaShanah* 16b.

89. *Mishlei* 6:23.



*Chassidus*, and the customs of chassidim. And you should hold a chassidic *farbrengen* there from time to time.

I look forward to hearing glad tidings regarding an improvement in your frame of mind, and to hearing that at long last — even if only as an [unenthusiastic] assumption of responsibility<sup>90</sup> — you have undertaken that henceforth you will fulfill the Torah's command that one should serve G-d "with joy and with a glad-some heart."<sup>91</sup>

[...]

# 11.

**"And when a person is strong in his trust...,  
he then sees [the result] with his fleshly eyes."**

By the Grace of G-d  
5 Tammuz, 5711 [1951]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>92</sup>

I<sup>93</sup> received your *pidyon nefesh*,<sup>94</sup> which I will read when I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], of blessed memory. He will no doubt intercede<sup>94</sup> on your behalf, that you should have a complete recovery.

You no doubt have a doctor who instructs you as to how to conduct yourself and whose instructions you follow.

Chassidim — both men and women — should always know, as my revered father-in-law once wrote in a letter, that chassidim are *never alone*.<sup>95</sup> You should therefore be strong in your trust. And by being bound up with chassidim and the spiritual lifestyle of chassi-

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90. In the original, *bekabbalas ol*.

91. In the original, *besimchah uvetuv leivav* (Devarim 28:47).

92. The usual salutation of *Shalom U'Verachah* is traditionally reversed (*Berachah VeShalom*) when addressed to a woman.

93. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 4, p. 361, Letter 1080.

94. Lit., "arouse great Divine compassion."

95. See *HaYom Yom*, entry for 22 Iyar.

dim one is also bound up with the Tree of Life — the Fountain-head of Life. One should therefore not be worried. One should be strong in one's trust that G-d will lead you and provide you with everything you need. And when a person is strong in his trust, the effect of this is that he then sees [the result] with his fleshly eyes in his daily life.

I hope that you will be able to give me good news about your improved health, and I conclude with blessings for a speedy recovery.

[...]

## 12.

**“People study, and study — but when it comes  
to practical application, where's the trust?”**

By the Grace of G-d  
15 Menachem Av, 5711 [1951]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Just<sup>96</sup> now I dispatched a telegram to you: “Am most surprised at your low spirits. You should follow the directives of two medical specialists, and muster strength in your trust in G-d, Who will no doubt restore your former health. With blessings for a speedy recovery. My signature.”

People study, and study — but when it comes to practical application, where's the trust?<sup>97</sup>

You should study, three or four times over, *Shaar HaBitachon*<sup>98</sup> in *Chovos HaLevavos*. It goes without saying that I do not mean that you should study it all at once, but in the course of a few weeks.

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96. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 21, p. 131, Letter 7887.

97. This sentence alone is written in familiar and direct Yiddish.

98. Lit., “The Gate of Trust” — a section of *Chovos HaLevavos*.

With blessings for a speedy recovery, and awaiting good news of your physical and spiritual health,

[...]

13.

**“Just as He has a say in the big world,  
He certainly has a say likewise  
in our little personal world.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
5 Kislev, 5712 [1951]  
Brooklyn

...I<sup>99</sup> am not pleased. It appears from your letter that the trust in G-d that should be expected of a Jewish woman in general and of a chassidic wife in particular is not present in yourself in appropriate measure. Accordingly, this affects your health and your household.

Every Jew, man or woman, should constantly keep in mind that G-d, Who conducts the world at large, no doubt also conducts the microcosm of each of us. And just as He has a say in the big world, He certainly has a say likewise in our little personal world. One should depend on Him, trusting that He no doubt leads things in a good direction. Moreover, one should not interfere with this by one's uncertain trust in Him, or by factors that do not accord with the Torah — and one of these is [a lack of] marital harmony.<sup>100</sup>

Until after the arrival of *Mashiach*, there is no person without a fault. Hence, just as one person has a fault, it is certain that so, too, the other has a fault. And just as one does not want to uncover and highlight one's own fault, one should also not highlight and magnify another's fault. This is how things should be between Jews

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99. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 61, Letter 1276.

100. In the original (as popularly pronounced), *shalom bayis*; lit., “peace in the home,” i.e., domestic (= marital) harmony. The words bracketed in the above translation are euphemistically omitted in the Yid. original.

in general; how much more so when the person under discussion is your husband and the father of your child.

My aim here is not to rebuke, but to make you aware that your situation is not as harsh as you perceive it to be, nor is it exceptional, as you imagine it to be. Each of you should overlook things, preferring to find ways of establishing domestic harmony. And once domestic harmony reigns, this is the vessel into which G-d pours blessing, and success, and good health, and a livelihood, and blissful contentment<sup>101</sup> from one's children.

In my opinion, you would do well to ask your doctor for directives regarding your food and beverages and home management, and to act accordingly. And G-d will no doubt help you, so that everything will come about at the proper time, in a positive way, and successfully.

With blessings,

[...]

#### 14.

**“This very thought — as to what will happen if,  
G-d forbid, a misfortune occurs —  
is itself a misfortune.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
10 Kislev, 5712 [1951]  
Brooklyn

To my relative, [...],

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>102</sup>

I<sup>102</sup> received your undated letter of a few lines, and, as you request, I will mention your name when I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], of blessed memory.

I was surprised to read in your letter that “if, G-d forbid, an unpleasant incident were to occur, and so on....” There is no need

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101. In the original, *nachas*.

102. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 69, Letter 1284.

for lengthy explanations as to how vital is the attribute of placing one's trust in G-d. This is especially true today, when all of us, the surviving remnant,<sup>103</sup> are living testimony to manifest miracles by the very fact that we are alive. But [this does need to be said]: This very thought — as to what will happen if, G-d forbid, a misfortune occurs — is itself a misfortune.

In our days, when there is such broad scope for great work in every single field, and when one can clearly see that there is much work to be done and the time is short,<sup>104</sup> it is a pity that mental energy and vigor are used and wasted on such thoughts, when they are so desperately needed for the labors of foundation and construction. In particular does this apply to all those who have been invested with capacities bequeathed to them by many generations of men of stature. For them, every moment during which they do not exploit those capacities for the above goal is a grievous sin. And if this is true of people of advanced years, how much more is it true of those [young] people who have only recently set up their Jewish homes. Clearly, they have no license to calculate “what will be if...,” and so on, when the Master is pressing. True, “you are not obligated to complete the work”; at the same time, “nor are you free to desist from it.”<sup>105</sup>

You no doubt participate in an appropriate manner in the work of kosher education in the Holy Land (*May it be built up!*), for this is a field whose situation is severe, extremely dangerous, and in vital need.

I conclude with regards to your husband, though I do not know him, and with blessings that you should actively fulfill [the verse<sup>61</sup> which serves as] the motto of the Baal Shem Tov — “Serve G-d with joy” — in accordance with the requirement of our faith, that every moment of life is a moment of Divine service.

[...]

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103. I.e., of the Holocaust.

104. Cf. *Avos* 2:15.

105. *Op. cit.*, 2:16.

## 15.

**“Medical matters are not your Divinely-ordained  
mission in this world.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
27 Teves, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>106</sup> received your letter of 24 Teves in which you describe your situation — how you saw the doctor’s report, how it affected you, how you imagine the future, and how you therefore recite *Tehillim*<sup>57</sup> and make your requests of G-d. You then ask for my view of the subject.

In reply: The fact that you say *Tehillim* and make your requests of G-d is certainly a good thing, for He is the master<sup>107</sup> over the whole world and over every single person in all his particulars. However, with regard to your description of how you became absorbed in the doctor’s report and how you envisage the future, I do not share your approach, because this is not your affair at all. Not for this were you created.

As the learned R. Dov Yehudah Schochet writes to me, you are a person who is committed to the Torah and its commandments. It is therefore certain that you believe that G-d is the L-rd of the universe, the master of the world. We observe that even in the administration of a mortal undertaking, a good manager has everything departmentalized so that no factor interferes with another, and every component serves its intended purpose. If this is true of management by a mortal, who is finite in every respect and accordingly can sometimes err, it is most certainly true with regard to G-d’s management: everything, wherever it may be, must

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106. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 156, Letter 1362.

107. In the original, *baal habayis* (or in Yid., which is the language of the original text: *der baalebos*) — lit., “the master of the household”; by extension, also the manager of a concern.

find its aim and its consummation in *its* mission. If a person grasps and tackles something else, this entails two drawbacks: (a) since he is not suited to that task he can only do damage, and (b) this involvement diverts him from fulfilling the mission for which he is in fact designated.

All of the above is applicable to your case, because of a number of circumstances that are certainly determined by Divine Providence: your profession is not that of a doctor, and you were brought up as an observer of the Torah and its *mitzvos*. From this we learn two things: (a) medical matters are not your Divinely-ordained mission in this world, and (b) your goal, the mission for which you were created, is the observance of the Torah and its commandments. This includes the commandment that<sup>108</sup> “you shall love your fellow as yourself” and that<sup>109</sup> “you shall surely rebuke [your colleague].” It also includes the interpretation appearing in *Tanna dvei Eliyahu*<sup>110</sup> on the verse,<sup>111</sup> “If you see a naked man, clothe him.” On this verse the Sages teach: “If you see a fellow Jew who is naked of Torah and its *mitzvos*, endeavor to clothe him with Torah and its *mitzvos*.”

From the above it is clear that when you express your evaluations and opinions in matters of medical science, first of all this deflects you from the fulfillment of the mission for which *you* were designated. Secondly, as to your medical treatment, you can only (G-d forbid) cause harm, but on no account improve things. The harm here can be brought about (G-d forbid) because, as a result of aggravation, you imagine things that *will not be*. This weakens [the conduit of your blessings]<sup>112</sup> and also your trust in G-d, when you are engrossed in the contemplation of what this doctor said, and what that other specialist thought up, and so forth.

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108. *Vayikra* 19:18.

109. *Loc. cit.*, v. 17.

110. *Tanna dvei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 27.

111. *Yeshayahu* 58:7.

112. In the original, “your *maʿal*.” A person’s *maʿal* is his individual soul-root Above.

Since you ask my view, I am telling you: You should conduct yourself as the holy Torah requires you to do, and in the spirit of what the Torah states — that it has given permission to *heal*.<sup>113</sup> This means that the Torah has given people permission to consult doctors, and has granted doctors the permission and the possibility only to heal and rectify them. This is why people commonly consult doctors and then follow their instructions. There is nothing more for you to do in this matter: you should leave it all to the doctor. What you should do is to place your certain trust in G-d that you will be blessed with many long years.

It is written,<sup>114</sup> “The awe of G-d [leads] to life.” Accordingly, the stronger your trust in G-d, and the fewer your doubts in that trust, and the more you devote yourself to fulfilling your above-stated mission in this world of observing the Torah and its *mitzvos* and also of influencing others to do likewise, the more long years will you be granted. This is to be understood literally, without resorting to any ingenious interpretations.<sup>115</sup>

Completely forget about the report and about what you have been reading in medical books, because that is not your mission and is altogether not your affair. Accordingly, it cannot improve things for you; generally, doing this only achieves the opposite, G-d forbid.

See to it that every morning, after *davenen*,<sup>116</sup> you read the daily portion of *Tehillim* (as it is divided up for the days of the month), and study *Chumash* with the commentary of *Rashi* every day. You should also participate in the local group sessions of Torah study, with at least one of those sessions being devoted to the study of *Chassidus*.<sup>12</sup> And it goes without saying that you should set yourself the goal — as the Baal Shem Tov expected of chassidim — of fulfilling the command of the verse,<sup>61</sup> “Serve G-d with joy.” The obligation to “serve G-d” applies not only to praying and studying

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113. *Bava Kama* 85a, on *Shmos* 21:19.

114. *Mishlei* 21:21.

115. In the original whimsical Heb./Yid., “without *pshetlach*.”

116. I.e. (Yid.): praying; the prayers.



Torah but also to eating and drinking and whatever else a person does (including even sleeping), as *Rambam* writes in *Hilchos De'os*.<sup>117</sup> If you act in this way, you will begin to feel better and better and will become healthier and healthier, and will be able to give me good news about this.

It would be appropriate to donate a few pennies to *tzedakah* before the morning and afternoon prayers every day (excepting, of course, on *Shabbos* and *Yom-Tov*).

I hope, and I am certain, that you will accept my above suggestion and directives, and that you will keep me informed as soon as possible.

With blessings for good health and a speedy recovery — and for many long and goodly years may you fulfill your mission in this world with a peaceful mind and a restful body, and may you be a real chassid.

[...]

P.S. You no doubt participate in the *chassidishe farbrengens*<sup>80</sup> that are held [...] in your city.<sup>118</sup>

## 16.

**“The income that G-d fixed for you [on Rosh HaShanah], which I am sure is generous, no one can lessen and certainly no one can take away.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
4 Shvat, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Yesterday<sup>119</sup> R. Hodakov<sup>120</sup> told me of your telephone conversation, and just now your special delivery letter arrived with its newspaper cuttings.

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117. Cf. sec. 5:1.

118. See also Letter 10 above.

You write that you are worried because it appears to you that another businessman can possibly cramp your orders and lessen your income (G-d forbid), and you ask for my opinion.

In accordance with your request, I shall mention your name again when I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], of saintly memory.

At any rate, like all Jews, who are “believers, the descendants of believers,”<sup>121</sup> you should rest assured that “a man’s livelihood is budgeted for him from Rosh HaShanah to Yom Kippur.”<sup>122</sup> The income that G-d has fixed for you, which I am sure is generous, no one can lessen and certainly no one can take away.

One thing only: One must be firm in one’s trust, and one must do so joyfully. For it is taught in the *Zohar*, *Parshas Tetzaveh* (page 184b): This lowly world of ours receives its entire flow of beneficence from Above. If down here [people live their lives] with joy and with light, then the world Above reciprocates in kind, with light and with joy. Moreover, it is written that one must<sup>61</sup> “serve G-d with joy.” Hence, if a Jew is joyful, this joyfulness down here calls down upon him a corresponding joy from Above.

This is especially relevant in your case, since you have the merit of having brought benefit upon the public by enabling the publication of one of the works of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], of saintly memory. This merit will no doubt stand you in good stead so that you will be blessed with an ample income and, even more importantly, so that you will use it successfully for healthy purposes and disburse it generously for matters of Torah and *mitzvos*.

I hope to hear good news from you.

In connection with the [forthcoming] anniversary of the passing of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], of saintly

119. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 204, Letter 1405.

120. The Rebbe’s longtime senior secretary.

121. In the original, *maaminim bnei maaminim* (*Shabbos* 97a; *Bereishis Rabbah* 7:5).

122. *Beitzah* 16a.

memory, I enclose my suggestions for the customs to be practiced on that day.<sup>123</sup>

With blessings,

[...]

17.

**“If you occasionally feel that this certain trust is  
wavering..., you should avert your attention from  
this weakness, for it is no doubt only imagined.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
7 Shvat, 5712 [1952]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>124</sup> was told by one of your acquaintances that your health is not in such a good state. Accordingly, I would like to point out to you, even though this is doubtless not new to you, that every single one of us is under the specific surveillance of the Creator's Providence. It follows that if you imagine that someone is able to harm you, this is a fantasy, for it is impossible.

You should therefore be strong in your trust that just as G-d directs the entire world, He likewise directs yourself and your body, for a man is called “a small world” (*Tanchuma*, beg. of *Parshas Pekudei*; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 69, p. 117b). If you occasionally feel that this certain trust is wavering, it is not advisable to become engrossed in the matter. Instead, you should avert your attention from this weakness, for it is no doubt only imagined, and then very soon you, too, will see that just as all Jews are “believers, [being] the descendants of believers,”<sup>125</sup> you, too, are firm in your trust.

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123. The customs for Yud Shvat had been compiled one year earlier; see *Sefer HaMinhagin Chabad: The Book of Chabad-Lubavitch Customs* (Kehot, N.Y., 5751/1991), pp. 164-168.

124. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 208, Letter 1409.

125. See footnote 121 above.

You will no doubt obey the doctor's orders, for the Torah has given the doctor permission — which also means the power — to heal.<sup>113</sup>

And may G-d grant that you will soon give me good tidings about your constantly improving health.

It would be appropriate that every day you recite a number of psalms from the Book of *Tehillim*. As is well known,<sup>126</sup> King David requested of G-d that the recitation of *Tehillim* be regarded as equivalent to the study of [challenging Talmudic tractates such as] *Nega'im* and *Ohalos*. Accordingly, the recitation of *Tehillim* comprises both an element of prayer (see *Berachos* 4b) and an element of Torah study.

With blessings for a speedy recovery and sound health, and in anticipation of good news,

[...]

# 18.

**“Since you place your trust in G-d in questions  
of materiality and your livelihood, surely that  
trust should be firm when it comes to one’s  
children and their conduct!”**

By the Grace of G-d

1st day of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5712 [1952]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>127</sup> letter dated Monday of the week of *Parshas Yisro* reached me on time, but my reply has been delayed because of the *yahrzeit* of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] — the preparations for that date, and the matters connected with it and arising out of it. May G-d help every one of us to fulfill his mission along the path that my saintly father-in-law pointed out and laid

126. *Midrash Tehillim* (ed. Shlomo Buber) on *Tehillim* 1:1, sec. [8], s.v. *Ashrei ha'ish*.

127. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 237, Letter 1437.

down. This also includes guidance along the path of Torah and *mitzvos* itself, because even within that path itself, the Evil Inclination finds ways of weakening and hindering a person's endeavors to climb ever higher.

I was happy to read in your letter that you are firm in your trust in G-d, and I hope that you will soon be enabled to see that trust materialize in your business affairs.

One thing, however, I find surprising. Since you place your trust in G-d in questions of materiality and your livelihood, surely that trust should be firm when it comes to one's children and their conduct! After all, this is what really matters to a Jew, much more than material concerns. But in your case, when you come to that subject, you write that you console yourself with the thought that at least they are in a better state than some others, and so on.

On the phrase, *בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת* — “in the Heavens *above*, and on the earth *below*”<sup>128</sup> — there is a [popular] interpretation which is cited in many books and which you have no doubt heard: When it comes to matters of *Heaven*, i.e., Divine and holy matters, one should gaze upward towards those who are standing on a rung that is *above* one's own and try to climb up there; when it comes to *earthly* matters, one should lower one's glance and consider the predicament of those whose status is *below* one's own.

The latter perspective enables a man to become a *sameiach bechelko* — “one who is happy with his lot.” And such a man is truly rich. As the Sages teach,<sup>129</sup> “Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot.”

Now, there is no need for me to emphasize that Lubavitch in general, and I personally, are not in the habit of offering pointless rebuke. The above lines, then, express a dual intent: (a) to contribute whatever I can to the strength of your trust that G-d will grant you a livelihood and sound health, and (b) to recapitulate what I spoke of when you were here — not to grow weary of

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128. *Devarim* 4:39, quoted in the *Aleinu* prayer.

129. *Avos* 4:1.

speaking with your children concerning their conduct in matters of Torah and *mitzvos*. And “the words of the wise,” especially when they are expressed “tranquilly, are heeded.”<sup>130</sup>

With a blessing that you write me good tidings,

[...]

### 19.

**“Several well-known incidents testify that  
with staunch *bitachon* one can accomplish  
whatever is needed.”**

By the Grace of G-d

1st day of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5712 [1952]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>131</sup> letters of 22 and 29 Teves and 4 and 7 Shvat were duly received.

From what you write about the *mikveh*, it appears that the other party would not be influenced by halachic proofs and legalistic argumentation and disputation. I am afraid that [their opposition] is nothing other than a willful insistence to win the tussle. For otherwise, it is utterly incomprehensible how anyone could raise objections to the construction of a *mikveh* in a manner prescribed by the outstanding scholars of various circles in past generations.<sup>132</sup> They, too, were undoubtedly well versed in the

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130. Paraphrase of *Koheles* 9:17: *Divrei chachamim benachas nishma'im*.

131. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 241, Letter 1441.

132. The name of the recipient of this letter has never been made public. It is clear from internal evidence, however, that it was addressed to a Lubavitcher *rav* who had been ambivalent in his responses to the local *misnagdim* who were making every effort to prevent him from constructing a *mikveh* modeled after the two-tiered *mikveh* in Rostov-on-Don. The technical specifications of that *mikveh* (uncovered intact in 1999 and now in daily use) had been dictated in minute detail by the Rebbe Rashab to cover every possible halachic requirement.

study of the *Talmud*,<sup>133</sup> the works of the *Rishonim*<sup>134</sup> and the *Acharonim*,<sup>135</sup> and of our people's [later] luminaries, and they handed down their halachic rulings accordingly. What a pity that within our own chassidic brotherhood<sup>136</sup> there is no comparable resoluteness whatever, even after a directive on this very subject — on the resolute [loyalty] that should characterize a Jew who has come close to a man whom he regards favorably, and how much more so when that man (of blessed memory) is his Rebbe and *nasi*.

You can plainly see, even with fleshly eyes, how those people stop at nothing in order that the view of a man in whom they perceive mortal qualities should materialize. Yet in spite of that, you do not do whatever can be done in order that another view should materialize — the view of a man who was, as clearly as daylight, a G-dly man. I.e., his mind was G-dly, and he was accepted by tens of thousands of Jews as their guide in every detail of Torah and *mitzvos*. The analog with regard to the subject under discussion<sup>137</sup> is self-explanatory.

You ask whether you should show [your colleagues] my telegram etc. Several well-known incidents testify that with staunch *bitachon* one can accomplish whatever is needed. The same applies here, too. I am certain that if, when you received the telegram, you had proceeded confidently, without being overwhelmed by the supposed awe of mortals, the directive of the Rebbe Rashab would have overcome all [obstacles] and would have materialized. But since [your colleagues] advised the opposite, and as a result you too fall into doubt and the subject requires support and questions and clarification, I am extremely doubtful as to whether you will

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133. In the original, *Shas* (acronym for *Shishah Sidrei [Mishnah]*): the *Talmud* in its entirety.

134. Lit., “the former [scholars]”: the medieval commentators on the *Talmud* up to the sixteenth century.

135. Lit., “the latter [scholars].”

136. In the original, *Anash* (אנשי): an acronym for *anshei shlomeinu* (lit., “the men of our peace”; cf. *Yirmeyahu* 38:22, *Ovadiah* 1:7), a cordial term signifying the chassidic fraternity.

137. I.e., the construction of the current *mikveh*.

[now] be able to proceed unflinchingly — and consequently, such steps would probably harm the cause. For, as is well known, a person who “hops between one opinion and the other”<sup>138</sup> can do even more harm, even in matters of great import, than a person who leans to the opposite side.

My intention is not, G-d forbid, to rebuke, but my heart is pained. Each one of us, with our mortal eyes, has seen so many miraculous things that were wrought by our Rebbeim, and has relied on them even in life-threatening situations, both materially and spiritually. Yet despite all that, it happens that at times (and I regret to say that in some cases this is at relatively frequent times), when put to the test by the opposition raised by the other side, [some chassidim] lose their self-assurance and begin to seek out ways and means and counsels and whatnot, and become diplomats and so on.

Moreover, this attitude provides additional proof that much is still lacking in the task of disseminating the wellsprings [of the teachings of *Chassidus*<sup>12</sup>] outward. For, as is explained at length in the literature of *Chassidus*, if there is to be even a little [chassidic light] outside, there must be an abundance of it within.

May G-d grant every one of us an ample environment and help each of to fulfill his mission in this world, and may He draw us out of the straits to a truly unbounded spiritual freedom [...].

With blessings,

[...]

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138. *I Melachim* 18:21.



## 20.

**“David HaMelech says, ‘I will fear no evil,  
for You are with me.’ And ‘for You are with me’  
relates to every single Jew.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
1st day of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

I<sup>139</sup> duly received the *pidyon nefesh*<sup>56</sup> written on your behalf by the esteemed R. Yehudah Zvi Fogelman, who mentions that you suffer from a certain dread.

In these lines I would like to stress once more that every Jew, woman or man, should be strong in his trust in G-d. Just as every Jew believes with perfect faith that the Holy One, blessed be He, is the master of the universe, so too is He the master over the life of every individual Jew, whether man or woman. And since it is certain that He is good, He will certainly lead things in a good direction.

When one is under His specific supervision, under Divine Providence,<sup>140</sup> there is nothing to be afraid of. As David HaMelech says in *Tehillim*,<sup>141</sup> “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” And “for You are with me” relates to every single Jew.

I hope that G-d will clearly show you, too, an improvement in your situation, and that you will be able to give me good news.

With blessings,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

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139. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 242, Letter 1442.

140. In the original, *hashgachah peratis* — lit., “detailed [and proactive] supervision.”

141. 23:4.

## 21.

“Even when one does not see how this operates  
within the realm of nature,  
G-d will carry out His [Will].”

By the Grace of G-d  
Erev Pesach, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>142</sup>

With<sup>142</sup> the approach of the Pesach festival that we, as part of the entire Jewish people, are about to celebrate, I wish you a kosher and happy — a truly happy — Pesach festival.

As you no doubt know, the *Midrash* teaches that it was in the merit of the righteous women of that generation that the Jewish people were taken out of Egypt.

One aspect of their righteousness was the fact that regardless of the difficulties and darkness of that exile, particularly in its last decades, they constantly retained their firm trust in G-d — that He would fulfill His promise of redemption. They did not know when it would arrive. Moreover, as time went on, Pharaoh's decrees increased in harshness and severity, especially those against Jewish children, culminating in the decree that all newborn sons were to be thrown into the Nile. Yet despite all that, the hope of those women did not wane. Furthermore, they undertook the responsibility of setting up a new generation, ignoring the decrees, and disregarding the fact that they could [see] no way in which the infants to be born would be saved nor how they would escape Pharaoh's decree that the newborn sons were to be hurled into the Nile.

Through that trust and fortitude — not to be overawed by mortal understanding, because G-d is the master of the entire universe and no one can defy Him — they brought up a whole generation of children in their tens and hundreds of thousands. It was

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142. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 318, Letter 1515. See also Items 70, 97 and 98 below.

those very children who were the first to recognize G-d at the Splitting of the Red Sea, who later received the Torah at Mount Sinai, and who perpetuated the Jewish people.

From everything in the Torah, a lesson must be derived for every Jew. This also applies to us and to yourself. One must be firm in his trust that G-d alone is the sole master of the universe and that no one can act in defiance of Him. Even when one does not see how this operates within the realm of nature, G-d will carry out His [Will], so that He will fulfill the needs — in every particular — of all those who are bound to Him through their trust in Him and who live a life of Torah and *mitzvos*, especially with regard to the blessings of healthy, viable and long-lived children.

This trust resembles the situation in Egypt, where those [women] maintained their trust in G-d even though they could not foresee any natural means by which the redemption could transpire. Nevertheless, this did not weaken their trust that they should have children and raise them, and that those children would be blessed with long life. It is to be hoped that in our days, too, through our firm trust in G-d, we, too, will all be found worthy of witnessing the true and complete Redemption through our Righteous *Mashiach*.

With blessings for a kosher and happy Pesach, and abundant *nachas* and good health for many long days and good years,

[...]

## 22.

**“It is disappointing and painful to encounter  
certain dispensable expressions in your letter.  
Why do you do this?”**

By the Grace of G-d  
1 Sivan, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>143</sup> was very happy to receive your letter of 21 Iyar. I was already concerned that for a long time I had not heard about the health of yourself and your wife. Thank G-d, you are already walking outdoors and going to *shul*, and as I understand from your letter, your wife's health is also far better than it was previously. Since even fleshly eyes can see that G-d has healed you and that your wife's health is also improving, one ought to be strong in one's trust that things will continue to improve more and more, until you yourself will also be happy.

It is disappointing and painful to encounter certain dispensable expressions in your letter. Why do you do this? — particularly in the case of a Jew who is a believer, who can even influence others by being weak in his trust in G-d. Firstly, using such expressions is damaging both spiritually and healthwise; and secondly, it weakens one's own will and desire to infuse others with liveliness and high spirits.

I hope that by the time you receive my letter your mood will improve, and that you will make a point of heeding the directive of our holy Torah, to “serve G-d with joy.”<sup>61</sup> As is taught in our sacred books, one should — and one can — serve G-d not only through praying and studying Torah, but also while eating and drinking and the like, and by living joyfully. When a person does that, he observes that he is plainly and simply healthier and more optimistic, and he accomplishes far more for himself and for others.

Let me conclude with the wish that your attribute of *bitachon* will be fortified, the earlier the better, and that you will have a Shavuot festival of tranquility and joy, which you will then extend throughout the entire year.

With festive greetings,

[...]

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143. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 81, Letter 1599.

## 23.

**“If a person thinks that his livelihood is meager,  
he should donate more *tzedakah* than previously.**

**In that way he shows G-d that his charitable  
needs are greater than heretofore..., and He will  
then provide a greater income.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
2 Sivan, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>144</sup> letters of 9/4 and 2/5 reached me after having been delayed on their way here, and I was very happy to read that your wife’s confinement went well and that she gave birth to a son who is named [...].

May G-d grant that you, together with your wife, should raise him and your older son to the study of Torah, to the marriage canopy, and to the practice of good deeds,<sup>145</sup> and may you be granted an ample livelihood.

Your letter mentions your anxiety about your income. You ought to keep in mind something that is written in the holy books — that when a son is born, this is an auspicious sign of blessing in the household. That includes one’s livelihood. In order to accelerate this, one needs to be strong in one’s trust in G-d, for it is He Who “provides nourishment and sustenance for all,”<sup>146</sup> and seeks to do so “from His full hand.”<sup>147</sup>

Another thing to keep in mind is that one has to fashion vessels that will contain G-d’s blessings. In general terms, this means studying Torah and observing the *mitzvos*; in particular, it means

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144. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 85, Letter 1604.

145. The last three phrases translate the classic blessing — *leTorah u’lechuppah u’lemaasim tovim* — that is borrowed from the circumcision ceremony and that is traditionally offered at other times, too, to the parents of newborn boys and girls.

146. From the first blessing of the Grace after a Meal.

147. Cf. the third blessing of the Grace after a Meal.

contributing *tzedakah*. If a person thinks that his livelihood is meager, he should donate more than previously. In that way he shows G-d that his charitable needs are greater [than heretofore], and as a matter of course He will then provide a greater income than heretofore.

May G-d grant that you and your wife both be firm in your trust, and that you will soon see the fulfillment of G-d's blessing for an ample livelihood.

With blessings for sound health for yourself and your wife and children, and for a happy Shavuot festival,

[...]

## 24.

**“At the same time, one must create a vessel on the natural plane and follow the doctor's orders.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
3 Sivan, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>148</sup> reply to the letter in which you ask my opinion as to whether you should continue consulting doctors or place your trust in G-d:

It goes without saying that you should [both] be strong in your trust in G-d, Who “heals all flesh and performs wonders.”<sup>149</sup> At the same time, one must create a vessel on the natural plane and follow the doctor's orders. May G-d bring the desire of your hearts to a good fulfillment, so that you and your wife will be blessed with healthy and viable offspring.

Your *pidyon nefesh*<sup>36</sup> was duly read at the holy resting place [of the Rebbe Rayatz].

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148. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 91, Letter 1612.

149. From the Morning Blessings.

With blessings that the Torah be received joyfully and internalized,<sup>150</sup>

[...]

## 25.

### “A man’s trust is the measuring-stick...”

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Sivan, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>151</sup> received your letter dated Wednesday, the 34th day of the *Omer*, in which you describe the state of your business affairs, your considerable debts, etc. etc. You write further that you have a possibility of selling some of your properties, but that you find yourself unable to decide alone what you should do. Above all, it appears from your letter that you are dispirited, so that as a matter of course your trust in G-d has weakened.

The phrase I just used was “above all.” As is stated in our holy sources in general and in the literature of *Chassidus*<sup>12</sup> in particular, everything depends on *bitachon*, the attribute of trust. A man’s trust is the measuring stick of the extent to which his material affairs are bound and fused with the Creator. If this fusion is complete, it is certainly impossible for anything to be lacking, because in the worlds Above, the concept of *lacking* is utterly non-existent.

In accordance with your request, I mentioned your name in connection with the fulfillment of your needs when I visited the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]. That said, since you asked for my advice, I hold that you should focus on toiling on yourself — to fortify your trust in G-d to the greatest extent possible.

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150. The greeting traditionally exchanged in *Chabad* circles with the approach of Shavuot, the festival of the Giving of the Torah.

151. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 147, Letter 1663.

In truth, having the attribute of trust means that even if according to the laws of nature one sees no way out, in one's mind it is beyond all doubt that everything will be good, in a way that is actually visible and manifest<sup>152</sup> to fleshly eyes, with regard to having an ample livelihood, sound health, and so on. From the perspective of the world Above, considerations of nature are quite immaterial. Accordingly, once a person raises himself up and adopts a stance that is even slightly above the ground — that is, he brings himself to the realization that since he is a believing Jew, [he is] utterly certain that there is no master over him but G-d alone — he can draw down [and actualize this certainty] here, too, so that in this physical world, too, considerations of nature will not affect him adversely (G-d forbid).

I firmly hope to G-d that if you will only fortify your trust to the utmost, you will immediately see a change in the Providence which governs your material business affairs and that your situation will begin to improve, and to proceed from good to even better.

In addition, it would be appropriate to immediately begin giving *tzedakah* as you used to do, and to increase your accustomed donations at least slightly. I look forward to hearing good news from you on all the above.

With blessings for material success, and may the teaching of the Alter Rebbe<sup>153</sup> be fulfilled in your life — that the Holy One, blessed be He, grants Jews materiality, and they transform materiality into spirituality.<sup>154</sup>

[...]

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152. "Good... that is... visible and manifest:" This phrase, recurring throughout these letters, reads in the original as *batov hanireh vehanigleh*; i.e., the kind of good that is readily recognizable as such, without resort to theological explanations.

153. I.e., R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of *Chabad Chassidus* and author of the *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*.

154. In the original, "*gashmiyus* into *ruchniyus*."



## 26.

**“The tzitz was worn on the forehead, and thus represents a trust that transcends mortal reason.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
2 Tammuz, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>155</sup> was happy to be informed that your daughter [...] has entered the fifth month of pregnancy. May it be G-d's Will that the days of her pregnancy be carried through to completion, properly and easily. Your daughter no doubt follows the orders of the doctor who checks her periodically, according to the local custom. May the delivery be timely and easy, and may you derive an abundance of joyful satisfaction — Jewish *naches*, chassidic *naches* — from her and from your other children.

It is no doubt superfluous for me to make you eagerly aware of the necessity for you to continue your correspondence with your son-in-law, Rabbi [...], the husband of your above-named daughter, and to explain him in detail what a great merit and responsibility he has — to bring Jewish hearts close to their Father in Heaven. And “no one among us knows until where.”<sup>156</sup> Sometimes, by bringing one fellow Jew closer, one establishes generations of sons and daughters who stand in awe of the Word of G-d. It is thus worthwhile to invest every endeavor and toil and exertion, exertion of the soul and exertion of the flesh, for the sake of even one fellow Jew. For this individual is “an entire world”<sup>157</sup> not only on his own account, but also on account of his offspring, and the offspring of his offspring, *until the end of the whole world*.

This last phrase, by the way, has a well-known non-literal interpretation in the literature of *Chassidus*.<sup>12</sup> [Since *olam*, which

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155. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 161, Letter 1676.

156. Cf. *Tehillim* 74:9.

157. An allusion to the Talmudic teaching, “If someone saved the life of a single Jew, it is as if he saved an entire world” (*Sanhedrin* 37a).

means “world,” comes from the root that means “obscurity,” doing one’s *avodah*<sup>158</sup> “until the end of the *olam*” also means “until the obscurity and concealment [of Divinity] is brought to an end.”

May G-d grant us the privilege of literally witnessing this with fleshly eyes.<sup>158</sup> And this state comes about through having trust that *transcends* mortal reason.

Transcendence of mortal reason is alluded to in the various meanings of the words *tzitz*<sup>159</sup> and *tzitzis*.<sup>160</sup> The noun *tzitz* shares a root with the verb *meitzitz* in the verse [that speaks of the imminent arrival of *Mashiach*],<sup>161</sup> “Here he stands behind our wall, watching through the windows, peering (*meitzitz*) through the crevices.” (See *Likkutei Torah* on *Devarim*, p. 91c.) This verse alludes to the [current] era of exile. The *tzitz* was worn on the forehead,<sup>162</sup> and thus represents a trust that *transcends* mortal reason. (On the [esoteric] meanings of the forehead, see *Likkutei Torah* on *Shir HaShirim*, p. 23c, drawing on the *Zohar*.)

In a second interpretation, the word *tzitz* signifies brightness and radiance, being related to the verbs in the phrases, “the pomegranates have bloomed (*heineitzu*),”<sup>163</sup> and “his diadem shall sparkle (*yatzitz*).”<sup>164</sup>

See also *Torah Or* and *Toras Chayim* on *Parshas Tetzaveh*, s.v. *VeAsisa Tzitz*, where all three above-quoted verses are cited, and linked with the era of *Mashiach*. Those two sources also speak of the connection that [the *tzitz*] shares with *tzitzis* and the forehead.

With blessings for success in both public and private matters,

[...]

158. I.e., witnessing how the Divine life-force, which is presently submerged in the physicality of the world (*olam* = obscurity), will ultimately surface and become manifest.

159. The *tzitz* was the gold platelet, inscribed with the Name of G-d, that the High Priest wore on his forehead (*Shmos* 28:36-38).

160. *Bamidbar* 15:37-41.

161. *Shir HaShirim* 2:9.

162. I.e., outside and beyond the finite mortal brain.

163. *Shir HaShirim* 6:11.

164. *Tehillim* 132:18.

## 27.

**“Not merely pushing through  
one day after another...”**

By the Grace of G-d  
13 Menachem Av, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

It<sup>165</sup> pained me to be told that you are still downhearted, and I understand that this is also the spirit in your home.<sup>166</sup>

I have no desire to become involved in a lengthy discussion as to whether the claims that have been made are justified or not. Obviously it takes no great effort to understand why your spirits are as they are, after the calamity that took place (*May no one know of such things!*).

Nevertheless, Jews in general, being believers,<sup>167</sup> and chassidim in particular, should cleave to G-d, our L-rd, steadfastly and overtly — as it is written,<sup>168</sup> “And you who cleave to G-d, your L-rd, are all alive today.”

Now, being truly alive means not merely pushing through one day after another. Being truly alive means that one’s life should lack nothing of whatever you and your wife need materially and spiritually. However, it can happen (G-d forbid) that perhaps one does not deserve to receive such blessings from the Holy One, blessed be He. Concerning such a situation it is written in the holy *Zohar*:<sup>169</sup> “If, from down here below, a person shows a luminous countenance, in the same way does a luminous Countenance shine

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165. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 266, Letter 1773.

166. In Rabbinic usage, a man’s wife is often politely referred to as his home, in the spirit of the teaching that “‘his home’ — this means ‘his wife’” (*beiso zo ishto*; *Yoma* 1:1, in explanation of *Vayikra* 16:17).

167. Cf. *Shabbos* 97a (*maaminim bnei maaminim* — “believers, the descendants of believers”).

168. *Devarim* 4:4.

169. II, 184b.

upon him from Above [...<sup>170</sup>]. In this spirit it is written,<sup>61</sup> ‘Serve G-d with joy’: the joy of a mortal elicits upon himself another, Supernal joy. Similarly the world below, being thus crowned, draws down [blessings upon itself] from Above.”

In brief: When one fortifies his trust that G-d will provide reasons to make him happy, in good spirits, and cheerful, and when one is so strong in this trust that it influences his daily life, he thereby draws down [these reasons for being happy] from Above. Moreover, even one’s fleshly eyes can then see that the trust was vindicated.

May G-d grant that you and your wife and all your family should witness this, palpably, as soon as possible.

Looking forward to good news,

[...]

## 28.

**“You are already wealthy but do not know it.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
13 Menachem Av, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Just<sup>171</sup> now I received your letter of *erev Shabbos*, and it appears that once again your spirits have fallen!

Why should you weaken your state of mind by thinking up all kinds of thoughts and lines of argument that are (G-d forbid) not positive? I have alerted you concerning this a few times in the past, yet it seems that this message has not yet *reached* you — or, as that word<sup>172</sup> [in the Holy Tongue] is interpreted in *Likkutei Torah* at the beginning of *Parshas Shemini*, this message has not yet *touched* you.

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170. Characteristically, the Rebbe omits the continuation of this teaching from the *Zohar*: “...and if he is melancholy, strict justice is mirrored back at him.”

171. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 276, Letter 1782.

172. The root of the verb נגע allows of both meanings.

Be strong in your trust that you will be wealthy. Indeed, it is not out of the question that because of your unorganized mode of life, you are already wealthy but do not know it. At any rate, this will no doubt come about in its own good time, provided that you commit yourself to the content of the Alter Rebbe's teaching that we heard from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] — that the Holy One, blessed be He, grants Jews materiality, and they transform materiality into spirituality.

With regard to your upcoming trip in particular, let your mind not lose sight of the trip's spiritual aspect, i.e., my request to you concerning a certain visit and a *chassidisher farbrengen*<sup>80</sup> [...].

With blessings for success,

[...]

## 29.

**“One should not initiate — and introduce into the world — depressing lines of thought.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
27 Menachem Av, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>173</sup> comes in response to your letter, from which it appears that I have not yet managed to raise your spirits.

I think I have already told you a few times something that is explained in the sacred classics, and not necessarily in chassidic works: One should not initiate — and introduce into the world — depressing lines of thought. Vigilance in this area provides a spiritual assurance<sup>174</sup> that the matter in question will not become actualized.

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173. This letter was not at hand in time for publication in *Igros Kodesh*.

174. In the original, “This is a *segulah*.”

[This teaching] not only warns against initiating such thoughts in the realm of speech. (It is cited in the literature of *Chassidus*<sup>175</sup> — and I think it is appended to *Siddur Meah She'arim* — concerning the Maggid of Mezritch, that whenever an [original] line of reasoning fell into his mind, he would articulate it in speech, in order to draw it down into this world.) A depressing concept should not be initiated [not only in the realm of speech, but] even in the realm of thought, for the reason stated above. This also follows naturally from the teaching of our Rebbeim of earlier generations that was handed down to us by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]: “Think positively, and things will *be* positive.”<sup>175</sup>

It no doubt *appears* to you that it is very difficult to discipline the power of thought in the above direction. Hence, in the absence of another option, you should invest your power of thought in a Torah concept. And this spiritual good will also generate a material good.

From all the above it follows that the more you strengthen your trust in G-d, until it also impacts your thoughts and words and actions, the more will that trust materialize palpably, bringing enhanced prosperity materially, and also spiritually. [...]

[...]

### 30.

**“Especially in the present month of Elul, the month of Divine mercy, each of you — or you together with your wife — should talk for at least a few minutes on the subject of trusting in G-d.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
1 Elul, 5712 [1952]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

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175. In the original Yiddish, *Tracht gut, vet zain gut*.

I<sup>176</sup> received your letter that was written on the day concerning which the Torah repeats the phrase, “[And G-d saw] that it was good.”<sup>177</sup> You write there about yourself and your wife and ask for my opinion on this matter, and you also request a blessing.

When I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], I will mention you both in prayer — that G-d grant you sound health and an ample livelihood, and that He speedily gladden your hearts by granting you healthy and viable children.

In order to receive G-d’s blessings one must have appropriate vessels, namely, matters of Torah and *mitzvos*. Accordingly, I was happy to hear from the esteemed emissary, R. BenZion Shemtov, that you conduct your lives as one ought to do. I would only like to suggest that every morning before *davenen*<sup>178</sup> you donate a few pennies for *tzedakah*, and that your wife should always make a contribution to *tzedakah* before candle-lighting on *erev Shabbos* and *erev Yom-Tov*.

You should also convey to your wife that she should muster strength in her trust in G-d, Who created and conducts such a big world — so for sure His specific Providence watches over each of you, leading you in the way that is best. Let her place her reliance on the Torah and the *Shulchan Aruch*,<sup>178</sup> not undertaking stringencies<sup>179</sup> beyond what is required by the *Shulchan Aruch*, but also not acting more leniently<sup>180</sup> (G-d forbid) than what is required by the *Shulchan Aruch*. And when one conducts oneself according to what is written in the *Shulchan Aruch*, such conduct constitutes good vessels to contain G-d’s blessings for every individual according to his needs.

You should also see to it that the *mezuzos* in your home are kosher. Another point: Especially in the present month of Elul, the

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176. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 6, p. 300, Letter 1808.

177. *Bereishis* 1:10 and 12, with reference to the third day of Creation.

178. The Code of Jewish Law.

179. In the original Heb./Yid., *nit machmir-zain*.

180. In the original Yid., *nit gringer-machm*.

month of Divine mercy, each of you — or you together with your wife — should talk for at least a few minutes on the subject of trusting in G-d. And I hope that you will soon be able to give me the good news that you and your wife feel well, that you have fortified your trust in G-d, and that you observe the workings of Divine Providence — that G-d is leading you in a good direction both materially and spiritually.

With blessings that you be inscribed and sealed for a good year, and in anticipation of glad tidings,

[...]

### 31.

**“It seems to me that this is the only organization  
within the precincts of Lubavitch  
that is conducted in this way.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
27 Nissan, 5713 [1953]  
Brooklyn

To the Administration of the Students’  
Provident Fund<sup>181</sup> of the Lubavitch  
Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah:

Greetings and Blessings!

It<sup>182</sup> was a pleasure to receive your letter with its description and report of your work, and may G-d grant it material success together with spiritual success.

What is amazing is that an organization connected with my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], should limit its outlay to such an extent, so that it should not exceed its income. It seems to me that this is the only organization within the precincts<sup>183</sup> of

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181. In the original, *Kupas Bachurim*.

182. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 7, p. 229, Letter 2090.

183. In the original, “within the *daled amos*” (i.e., the four cubits) — a familiar halachic idiom.



Lubavitch that is conducted in this way. I would not intervene in this matter if not for my concern that due to [this] policy, you limit your activity even where it is very much needed.

There is surely no need for me to remind you of the attribute of *bitachon* in general. My present remarks are intended only to suggest that it would be a good idea to draw on this attribute in this particular matter, too, and to observe that if you make a relative increase in your outlay, you will certainly be provided with greater sources of income. In fact, it could well be that this is the path [in that direction]. This may be seen in the distinction drawn in the teachings of *Chassidus*<sup>12</sup> between [living] organs and [inanimate] vessels — for organs not only *receive* their vitality: they elicit it. From this it is self-evident that when you expand the conduits [that supply] the organs, you call forth increased animating force.

In the spirit of all the above, in order that you should have the necessary means in the event of a deficit, enclosed you will find a loan<sup>184</sup> from one of the funds administered by me in the sum of \$200.<sup>185</sup> So now you will immediately be able to increase your outlay — at least to the extent of \$200 — beyond your income.

Let me conclude with a blessing to all those who work for this fund, and to the [donors] whose participation assists them: May G-d grant that the entire house of *Chabad* be found worthy of being compelled to give loans not by material need, but only in order to become thereby a vehicle<sup>186</sup> for the *Sefirah* of *Chessed* of the World of *Atzilus* — as in the episode related in a *sichah*<sup>63</sup> of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], in the year 5701 [1941].<sup>187</sup>

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184. In the original, *gnach* (acronym of *gemilus chessed* — lit., “a kindly deed”); often used to signify an [interest-free] loan.

185. In the Old World original, “two hundred shekels.”

186. In the original, *merkavah* (lit., “a chariot”) — i.e., like a vehicle, which has no will other than that of its driver.

187. The Rebbe recounts this episode in another letter (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 7, p. 164):

“My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], once described the stature of the *mitzvah* of *gemilus chassadim*, as it was grasped by a storekeeper from Polotzk — Reb Yisrael, a chassid of the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

With blessings for success and all manner of good,

[...]

32.

**“In the course of the year one only does  
accounting that will certainly not weaken  
one’s *avodah*, and — obviously — that will  
leave no room for the faintest trace of despair.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
24 Kislev, 5714 [1953]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] You<sup>188</sup> write that you are taking stock of the period since your arrival in town. Generally speaking, the month of stocktaking is the month of Elul. In the course of the year, one only does accounting that will certainly not weaken one’s *avodah*,<sup>68</sup> and —

“One *Shabbos* (it was *Parshas Vayeira*) when Reb Yisrael was visiting Lubavitch, he heard a *maamar* in which the *Tzemach Tzedek* spoke of how Avraham Avinu was generous with his body, with his money, and with his soul. The *Tzemach Tzedek* went on to explain that though Avraham Avinu was down here in This World, by means of his physical acts of kindness he took the place of the *Sefirah* of *Chessed* of the World of *Atzilus*. From this it follows, concluded the *Tzemach Tzedek*, that Avraham Avinu was superior to that attribute, and so on.

“Now, the whole *maamar* was over Reb Yisrael’s head — but those few words captivated him. As soon as he came home he repeated them at a chassidic *farbrengen*, and then went off to his store. Though he was not short of money, he dropped in to see a fellow storekeeper called Nachman and asked him for a loan — only because he wanted him to earn the merit of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *gemilus chassadim*. Other storekeepers, hearing about this lofty *mitzvah*, also began to take loans from each other, day after day.

“On his next visit to Lubavitch, the *Tzemach Tzedek* invited him to his study and inquired about this custom of his. The *Tzemach Tzedek*’s son, later known as the Rebbe Maharash, asked his father afterwards what was it about Reb Yisrael that he had seen. And the *Tzemach Tzedek* replied that over the head of Reb Yisrael the storekeeper he had beheld a pillar of light — the light of *Chessed* of the World of *Atzilus*.”

188. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 72, Letter 2317.

obviously — that will leave no room for the faintest trace of despair.<sup>189</sup> To quote the classic witticism, *Yiush — shelo midaas!*<sup>190</sup> [I.e., “When can there be despair? Only when there is no understanding...”]

[...]

### 33.

**“A descent ought to arouse... greater powers of faith and trust, whose external manifestation is a courageous spirit and a lack of emotional reaction to an unpleasant phenomenon.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
28 Teves, 5714 [1953]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

This<sup>191</sup> is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 22 Kislev, in which you relate the sequence of events connected with your position at [...] and write that you are now left without a position.

A person's life does not always proceed smoothly, and since one has the will and the capacity to ascend, this very fact also creates the possibility of descent. Accordingly, one should not become overwrought or dispirited (G-d forbid) when one observes a descent, especially when that descent relates only to material things, and especially since it happened independently of yourself.

Indeed, a descent ought to arouse — from deep within oneself — greater powers of faith and trust, whose external manifestation

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189. I.e., the antithesis of optimistic trust. Cf. “the loss outweighs the gain,” in the last paragraph of Letter 45 below, which was addressed to the wife of the present recipient.

190. This is a play on the Talmudic term *yiush shelo midaas* (lit., “despair without knowledge”; *Bava Metzia* 21b), which signifies a person's presumed despair of ever retrieving an object once he becomes aware that he has lost it.

191. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 128, Letter 2372.

is a courageous spirit and a lack of emotional reaction to an unpleasant phenomenon, particularly when it lasts only very briefly.

I have written to people who are active in the educational field, and hope that within a short time they will be able to attend to your affairs, too — provided, of course, that you for your part will also cooperate with them.

With blessings for success in the sacred work, namely, kosher education,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

### 34.

**“When you are firm in your trust and actually perceive the situation [as a trial], the trial will cease to exist, and you will return to your former standing.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
11 Adar I, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>192</sup> was pained to hear from the esteemed Rabbi [...] about the distressing straits of your business. You must be strong in your trust in the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, “Who performs wonders”<sup>149</sup> — that this is only a trial, and for a short time. And when you are firm in your trust and actually perceive the situation in this way, the trial will cease to exist, you will return to your former standing, and later you will even improve on it.

There is a well-known teaching of the Alter Rebbe, author of the *Tanya* (i.e., an authoritative decisor in the mystical dimension of the Torah<sup>193</sup>) and of the *Shulchan Aruch* (i.e., an authoritative decisor in the revealed dimension of the Torah<sup>194</sup>), that “G-d gives

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192. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 216, Letter 2461.

193. In the original, *posek benistar deTorah*.

194. In the original, *posek benigleh deTorah*.

the Jewish people materiality, and the Jewish people transform the materiality into spirituality.”<sup>195</sup>

May G-d prosper your way so that you will be blessed with both *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*, in quantitative abundance and in qualitative abundance.

With blessings for success, and awaiting good tidings,

[...]

### 35.

**“The Splitting of the Red Sea was actualized by  
[Nachshon’s] strong trust and faith in G-d.  
From this we learn the approach to be followed  
in finding one’s match.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
12 Adar I, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>196</sup> letter comes as a response to your letter of 6 Adar I. There you write that though you have arrived at a marriageable age you have not yet found a matching proposal, and this causes you distress.

There is a well-known teaching of the Sages that “making matches for them is as difficult [for G-d, as it were,] as splitting the Red Sea.”<sup>197</sup> It is also well known that the Splitting of the Red Sea was actualized by a strong trust and faith in G-d.<sup>198</sup> From this we learn the approach to be followed in finding one’s match: the stronger your trust (and it goes without saying that together with this you also have to search in an appropriate manner), the sooner will this actualize.

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195. The terms in the original are *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*.

196. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 219, Letter 2465.

197. *Sanhedrin* 22a.

198. An allusion to Nachshon ben Aminadav, whose trust in G-d was so perfect that he leaped into the Red Sea, and only then did its waters part (*Sotah* 37a).

A familiar teaching in the holy *Zohar*<sup>199</sup> states that “the Holy One, blessed be He, looked into the Torah [as a blueprint] and created the world.” This teaching applies not only to the world, literally, but also to every detail in the life of every man, who is known as a microcosm, “a miniature world.”<sup>200</sup> Accordingly, you should increase your endeavors in the study of both the revealed dimension of the Torah and the teachings of *Chassidus* — and may G-d grant you success.

With blessings,

On behalf of the Rebbe,  
[Signed by a secretary]

### 36.

**“As I read there, you are worried about your children’s health, and you conclude by asking what you can do apart from weeping and lamenting. First of all, one should stop weeping etc.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Adar II, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

After<sup>201</sup> a long break I was happy to receive your letter. Not that I was gladdened by its content, for, as I read there, you are worried about your children’s health, and you conclude by asking what you can do apart from weeping and lamenting.

First of all, one should stop weeping etc. On many occasions my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], citing our people’s great scholars of former generations, demanded that one should fulfill the verse,<sup>61</sup> “Serve G-d with joy.” And the holy *Zohar* explains that when a person is joyful and his trust is firm, this is

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199. I, 161b.

200. *Midrash HaNe’elam, Parshas Vayeitzei* 28:16.

201. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 280, Letter 2529.

also a spiritual means of securing<sup>202</sup> that from Above he be given more and more reasons to be happy and contented, both with regard to himself and with regard to his entire family.

This applies especially in your case, since your children have had the good fortune to study in a school for the sake of which my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], sacrificed himself. This fact alone makes it certain that this [schooling] is the path by which they will be healthy and happy, both materially and spiritually. One ought not pressure one's husband unduly into moving immediately. In due course, this too will come; one has to wait for the good and successful time.

Regarding your question as to what can you do: As said above, you should bring joy into your house, and continue your work in disseminating *Yiddishkeit*<sup>3</sup> among your friends. Doing so will hasten the arrival of increased blessing and success in your personal affairs, too.

Enclosed you will find a copy of a public letter of mine in connection with the days of Purim, which you will no doubt make use of in your above-mentioned activities.

I wish you an abundance of joy and contentment — Jewish and chassidic *nachas* — from your children, and may you receive it healthily and joyfully.

[...]

### 37.

**“There is a well-known teaching of the Sages  
that ‘a son can bring merit upon his father’ —  
and upon his mother, too.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Adar II, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

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202. The words “this is also a spiritual means of securing” translate “this is also a *segulah*” in the original.

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>203</sup> response to your letter requesting a blessing for your mother, when I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], at an auspicious time, I will mention her name in prayer with regard to her needs. You ought to write to her that she should muster strength in her trust in G-d, “Who performs wonders”<sup>149</sup> and Who is the essence of goodness and kindness — that He will bless her according to the needs of herself and her family, and she should not at all worry, or the like. However, she should have the *mezuzos* in her apartment checked, likewise the *tefillin* that are in use, and whatever items require replacing should be replaced by valid ones.

There is a well-known teaching of the Sages<sup>204</sup> that “a son can bring merit upon his father” — and upon his mother, too. Accordingly, you for your part should intensify your study of the revealed dimension of the Torah, and of the teachings of *Chasidus*, dedicating yourself to this with devotion and nullifying your own desires. For the study of the Torah is our life, and in particular when it is studied in a state of purity, one thereby elicits blessings and success for oneself and for one’s family. And “there is nothing that stands in the way of one’s will.”<sup>205</sup>

With blessings for Torah study with a fear of Heaven,

On behalf of the Rebbe,

[Signed by a secretary]

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203. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 303, Letter 2554.

204. *Sanhedrin* 104a.

205. Popular paraphrase of *Zohar* II, 162b.



38.

**“This is ‘something concerning which none of  
us knows’ — determining a specific time,  
and not later, by which G-d,  
Who makes matches, should do so.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
3 Nissan, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>206</sup> response to your letter of 20 Adar II, when I visit the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], I will mention your name in prayer for the goodly fulfillment of your heart's requests, particularly that you be happily settled in a match that you will find suitable.

You write that though you have endeavored to better your ways — for, as the Sages affirm, a second match is granted according to one's deeds — you have not yet found your match. This is “something concerning which none of us knows”<sup>207</sup> — determining a specific time, and not later, by which G-d, Who makes matches, should do so. This is especially so when one considers, as you yourself write, that in bettering one's deeds there is always room for further improvement.

At any rate, you should be strong in your trust in G-d, “Who performs wonders,”<sup>149</sup> and together with that you ought to intensify your endeavors in matters of the Torah and its commandments. And then, even if for some reason the fulfillment of your request is delayed, there is no doubt a reason for this, too.

It goes without saying that since, as you write, a complete forgiveness has not yet been forthcoming from your divorcee, you should make every effort to secure this in all appropriate ways. May G-d grant you success so that you will give glad tidings concerning

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206. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 315, Letter 2568.

207. Cf. *Tehillim* 74:9.

all the above, both in the spiritual matters and in the matters that pertain to the spirituality that is within materiality.<sup>208</sup>

With blessings for a happy and kosher Pesach,

[...]

### 39.

**“These days of Pesach are days of faith and trust, when the Jews of those times went out with their wives and children to a wilderness of venomous serpents and scorpions, relying only on a word from G-d.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
18 Nissan, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] And<sup>209</sup> may G-d grant success in every individual's endeavors to create ample vessels that will be able to contain all the good that He wishes to give, both spiritually and materially.

This applies especially in these days of Pesach. These are days of faith and trust, as with the Jews of those times, when they went out with their wives and children to a wilderness of venomous serpents and scorpions,<sup>210</sup> relying only on a word from G-d, that they should go out there. It was then that they saw that in time of need there was manna to eat, drinking water from Miriam's Well, the [blessing] that “your garment upon you did not become tattered,”<sup>211</sup> and so on.

In the same way, “in every generation and every day, a person is obligated to regard himself as if he went out of Egypt.”<sup>212</sup> When one proceeds with that faith and trust, or at least with part of that

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208. In the original, *ruchniyus shebagashmiyus*.

209. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 340, Letter 2597.

210. Cf. *Devarim* 8:15.

211. *Loc. cit.*, v. 4.

212. Cf. *Pesachim* 10:5, as paraphrased in *Tanya*, ch. 47.

faith and trust, it is certain that G-d will provide him with his material and spiritual needs. May G-d grant that this be seen — and seen soon.

With blessings for a kosher and happy Pesach,

Due to the sanctity of the Intermediate Days of the festival, the Rebbe did not sign personally and I am signing in his name.

[...]

Secretary

40.

**“Divine Providence applies in particular... to a person whose position enables him to influence a certain circle. After all, ‘even the superintendent of the local irrigation well is appointed in Heaven.’”**

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Nissan, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>213</sup> response to your letter of the first day of Chol HaMoed Pesach which included a *pidyon nefesh*<sup>56</sup> concerning the state of your health, I will mention your name at an auspicious time, as requested, at the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], with regard to a speedy recovery.

It is no doubt redundant to draw your attention to the necessity of fortifying one's faith and trust. This applies at all times, but especially during these days,<sup>214</sup> when we have just journeyed out of the days of the Festival of *Matzos* — “the food that fortifies faith”<sup>215</sup>

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213. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 8, p. 354, Letter 2613.

214. I.e., between Pesach and Shavuot.

215. In the original, *meichla dimeheimnusa* (cf. *Zohar* II, 41a).

and “the food that brings healing”<sup>216</sup> — and are on our way toward the Festival of the Giving of our Torah, [whose commandments] the Prophet Chavakuk based on one [principle], which is faith.<sup>217</sup>

There is a widely-known fundamental concept disseminated by the Baal Shem Tov — that every matter and every incident in the world comes about by Divine Providence.<sup>218</sup> This applies in particular to a Jew, and even more particularly to a person whose position enables him to influence a certain circle. After all, the Sages teach that “even the superintendent of the local irrigation well is appointed in Heaven.”<sup>218</sup> So since G-d is the very essence of good, and “it is the nature of One Who is benevolent to act benevolently,”<sup>39</sup> there is absolutely no room whatever for undesirable thoughts and the like.

It goes without saying that my aim here is not to rebuke and sermonize,<sup>219</sup> G-d forbid. I am simply studying one of the subjects in the fundamentals of our faith — for studying even the simple subjects in the Torah also counts as part of the *mitzvah* of Torah study.

I look forward to hearing glad tidings from you in the near future as to how you are tackling your Torah study and your Divine service<sup>220</sup> with renewed energy, especially with regard to your profession — that is, with regard to influencing your environment, both near and far, in the spirit of our age-old traditions.<sup>221</sup> And may G-d grant you success.

Looking forward to good news,

[...]

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216. In the original, *meichla de'avvasa* (*op. cit.*, p. 183b); cf. *HaYom Yom*, entry for 15 Nissan.

217. *Makkos* 24a, citing *Chavakuk* 2:4: “A *tzaddik* lives by his faith.”

218. *Berachos* 58a.

219. In the original, “to say *Mussar*.”

220. In the original, *avodah*.

221. The idiom in the original reads, *beruach Yisrael Sava* — lit., “in the spirit of our old Patriarch Yaakov.” (The last phrase is borrowed from *Bereishis Rabbah* 74:11, and *Rashi* on *Taanis* 5b, s.v. *Af hu bachayim*.)

## 41.

**“We have seen it proved in practice that the  
greater a man’s *trust*, and the more he looks  
toward his future with *joy*,  
the faster do these things materialize.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
3 Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>222</sup> letter is a response to the undated letter in which you write that though you<sup>223</sup> are pleased that you moved to [...], at the moment your salary does not quite suffice to meet your needs, and this is affecting your mood.

This is most surprising. After having palpably witnessed G-d’s kindness toward you, do you really not have enough faith in His absolutely certain ability to guide you with His acts of lovingkindness in the future, too, and to free you from your straits? And even if, for reasons not understood by us, this is delayed, it is only the Creator of the universe, Who knows the future and Who knows what is truly good, that is able to decide in what manner — the manner that is best for a man and his household — He should bring them to their true happiness both materially and spiritually.

If the above applies even with regard to people whose present situation is less positive than it was previously, and also less positive by comparison with their environment and their acquaintances, how much more obviously does it apply with regard to people whose situation has improved from what it was. And in these difficult months, your situation is certainly better than that of quite a number of people around you, who nevertheless are not despairing, G-d forbid. Most certainly, therefore, neither you nor

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222. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 9, p. 223, Letter 2843.

223. Some of the terms used in this (Heb.) letter are plural, as here, addressing both the recipient and his wife, and some of them address the recipient in the singular.

your wife ought to be dispirited or saddened, G-d forbid. We have seen it proved in practice that the greater a man's *trust*, and the more he looks toward his future with *joy*, the faster do these things materialize on a practical level.

I hope that you will soon gladden me with good news concerning all of the above, both in relation to yourself and in relation to your wife.

With blessings,

[...]

42.

**“Let him take G-d as a partner, by pledging to contribute for *tzedakah* a little more than a tenth of the profit, and preferably close to a fifth. His Partner will then undoubtedly bring him blessings and success.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
12 Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

To the esteemed chassid,

R. [Nissan Nemenov],

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] With<sup>224</sup> regard to what you write about a certain young man who trimmed his beard:<sup>225</sup> His friends should speak to him, especially since his older brother conducts himself as he ought.

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224. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 9, p. 235, Letter 2856. Until his passing in 1984, this widely-revered chassid was the *mashpia* of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah in Brunoy, France.

225. In the euphemistic original, “who touched [i.e., tampered with] his beard.”

To summarize the concept explained in the letter above: Chassidic tradition staunchly upholds the Kabbalistic teaching that in the physical realm here below, the untrimmed beard of a mortal mirrors — and elicits — the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy.

It should also be explained to him — in accordance with what is cited in the second part of *Derech Mitzvosecha* on the verse beginning *VeHu Rachum*<sup>226</sup> — that the thirteen [mystical aspects] of the beard<sup>227</sup> correspond to the Thirteen Divine Attributes of Mercy. Accordingly, all those who are not in a position to demand that G-d grant them all their needs on the strength of their legal entitlement, but whose demand must necessarily depend upon His attributes of lovingkindness and compassion, should correspondingly leave the thirteen [mystical aspects] of their beards intact. See there at length. It thus follows that a young man who needs to settle his affairs with a livelihood and a good match and so on, and all in all is in need of Heaven's *mercy*, should be warmly vigilant with regard to the thirteen [mystical aspects] of his beard. You will no doubt find the appropriate words with which to convey this concept.

With regard to your acquaintance [...]: Since there is a doctor who holds that there is no need for surgery and that your acquaintance need only be watchful with his diet and so on, let him conduct himself in accordance with that directive, and let him strengthen his trust in G-d, "Who heals all flesh and performs wonders."<sup>149</sup> For peace of mind is one of the most effective remedies for ailments such as his.

In this vein, too, with regard to the same individual's query concerning the fact that no buyers are forthcoming for the house that he bought for the purpose of profit: Let him take G-d as a partner, by pledging to contribute for *tzedakah* a little more than a tenth of the profit, and preferably close to a fifth. The above Partner will then undoubtedly bring him blessings and success, in accordance with the ruling of the Sages, "Tithe in order that you grow rich."<sup>228</sup>

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226. "And He, being compassionate, pardons iniquity..." (*Tehillim* 78:38).

227. In the original, *yud-gimmel tikkunei dikna*.

228. In the original, *aser bishvil shetis'asher* (*Taanis* 9a). This is a teaching of the Sages — on the non-literal level of interpretation known as *derush* — on the words, *aser te'aser* (lit., "you shall surely tithe"; *Devarim* 14:22).

And when your acquaintance sees the hand of Divine Providence in this, he would be well advised to invest effort in similarly buying another house for the purpose of profit, in addition to continuing with his present work — without undue impetus, and with rest breaks according to need.

With blessings,

[...]

### 43.

**“The end of your letter, about your lack of joy,  
contradicts the beginning of your letter.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
12 Menachem Av, 5714 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>229</sup> response to your letter dated Wednesday of the week of *Parshas Matos*, in which you write that the state of your livelihood is not as it ought to be and that you have many debts, etc. etc.:

The end of your letter, about your lack of joy, contradicts the beginning of your letter that describes what you have been through. To use your words: by means of miracles, literally, you remained among the surviving refugees and built a family, and so on.

Make yourself a calculation.<sup>230</sup> If G-d was able to save you from the events of past years and enabled you to succeed in building a Jewish home based on the foundations of the Torah and the *mitzvos*, how much more certainly can He, Who “provides nourishment and sustenance for all,”<sup>146</sup> see to your livelihood and that of your family. This depends only on *bitachon* and on the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, for *vis-à-vis* Heaven, perfect trust — that G-d will

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229. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 9, p. 236, Letter 2857.

230. In the original, *kal vachomer* — a Talmudic argument that draws a conclusion from a lenient premise to a stricter one.



provide for your needs and the needs of your household — is effective. This is particularly so when this trust is accompanied by contributing to *tzedakah*. For concerning *tzedakah* it is written, “Put Me to the test, please, in this,”<sup>231</sup> in fulfillment of the teaching, “Tithe in order that you grow rich.”<sup>232</sup>

May G-d enable you to give good tidings concerning all the above [...].

[...]

#### 44.

**“One states as a fact, and regards as certain  
(G-d forbid), that in a month’s time his father’s  
health will not be as it ought to be?!”**

By the Grace of G-d

5 Elul, 5714 [1954]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] With<sup>233</sup> blessings [...] that you convey good news concerning an improvement in your father’s health,

[...]

P.S. You write that it there is reason to argue that you should be at home during Rosh HaShanah (*May it come to us favorably!*), even though a number of [your fellow] students will remain within the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah during those auspicious days. And the reason given is that your father’s health is not as it should be.

I was amazed and shocked by such a lack of trust in G-d — that late in the month of Menachem Av<sup>234</sup> one states as a fact, and

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231. *Malachi* 3:10. In this verse, uniquely, G-d asks that His promise be put to the test — “whether,” in response to the giving of charitable tithes, “I will not open for you the windows of Heaven and pour out for you blessing immeasurable.”

232. In the original, *aser bishvil shetis’asher* (*Taanis* 9a). This is a teaching of the Sages — on the non-literal level of interpretation known as *derush* — on the words, *aser te’aser* (lit., “you shall surely tithe”; *Devarim* 14:22).

233. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 9, p. 281, Letter 2913.

regards as certain (G-d forbid), that in a month's time his father's health will not be as it ought to be, and that one therefore accepts the argument that he should invest less time in the *avodah* of *davenen*,<sup>68</sup> and so on. It would have been preferable — and more in the spirit of the teaching of our holy Rebbeim, “Think positively, and things will *be* positive”<sup>175</sup> — to be certain that your father's health will improve, and that you will certainly be able to increase your Divine service, “the service of the heart,”<sup>235</sup> as fully as required.

#### 45.

#### **“The instances in which doctors are mistaken in such matters are innumerable.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
28 Tishrei, 5715 [1954]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>92</sup>

This<sup>236</sup> is to acknowledge receipt of your undated letter. I am replying ahead of its turn, as you requested, even before letters received by express mail, and in the order of the topics in your letter.

The beginning of your letter is surprising — that the last spark is extinguished, etc. How can a *mortal* know things like this? It seems that you base yourself entirely on the consideration of your age. This proves nothing, for, as is stated in the teachings of the Sages and as may clearly be seen, women older than yourself do give birth to sons and daughters.

Moreover, whoever observes G-d's world sees that because (in the words of the *Tanach*<sup>8</sup>) “Your works, O G-d, are manifold”<sup>237</sup> and “Your works, O G-d, are mighty,”<sup>238</sup> no single individual can

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234. I.e., the student's letter was written about five weeks before Rosh HaShanah.

235. In the original, *avodah shebalev* — i.e., prayer (*Taanis* 2a).

236. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 10, p. 21, Letter 2985.

237. *Tehillim* 104:24.

238. *Op. cit.*, 92:6.

encompass and grasp all subjects. Indeed, no individual can grasp even a significant part of them, nor even most of the matters that are in his immediate vicinity<sup>239</sup> and that affect his own life. This is why there is a diversity of specialists in the various disciplines, and no honest man will express a definite opinion except within his own field, while in other fields he relies on their respective experts.

With regard to our subject: It is true that the Torah takes into account the opinions of doctors, which determine certain rulings in the *Shulchan Aruch*, and that every man and woman is obligated to follow doctors' orders when it comes to actual *practice*. At the same time, however, every individual must know *clearly* in his heart that it is G-d Who is the Healer of all flesh, and it is He Who literally conducts the world — that is, in the daily life of every man and woman, down to the last detail, and obviously in more basic matters.

From what you write it appears that no medical specialist's opinion was involved in the above instance. But even if someone had been in this situation, the instances in which doctors are mistaken in such matters are innumerable, and the matter depends only on the strength of a person's trust and his bond with the Creator of the Universe.

(This is attained by living a life of trust day by day, which as a matter of course arouses joy. There is also the joy that comes from one's ability to do something for those in one's environment, the merit of which is beyond measure. As the Baal Shem Tov used to say, a soul can come down to This World for 70 or 80 years — in order to do a single favor to a fellow Jew, materially or spiritually. And who more than the Baal Shem Tov could appreciate the enormity of the soul's descent as it arrives in This World, "from a lofty height to a lowly pit."<sup>240</sup> Yet notwithstanding this, he made the above statement and handed it down to the succeeding generations, the generations of those who live in this ever-intensifying

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239. In the original, "within his *daled amos*" (lit., "his four cubits") — a familiar halachic idiom.

240. Lit., "from a high roof..." (*Chagigah* 5b).

exile. [The challenge articulated by the Baal Shem Tov] surely applies particularly to a young woman who has not yet fully maximized her capabilities in influencing those around her, arousing within them the good that is in their souls and fortifying it with Torah — and “*good* signifies nothing other than the Torah”<sup>241</sup> and its commandments. [And the obligation to do so] applies not only on *Shabbos* and on the Days of Awe and in exceptional circumstances, but especially and specifically in one’s everyday life, the days that some people mistakenly call “the gray days.”<sup>242</sup>)

In fact there is no need for any lengthy exposition to explain such a simple point. One thought suffices: Every man and woman of the Jewish people, being descended from Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov, is part of the link that bonds the Creator and Creation — by living his life *as it is*, and especially by activities such as those described above. And this link is the ultimate purpose of the entire Creation.

It is *surely* superfluous for me to add that in the above words I do not intend to minimize (G-d forbid) the subject of having a son and daughter. My only purpose is to point out the *absolute* truth — that there is no justification for melancholy, and certainly not (to borrow your word) for despair. Quite the contrary.

You ask about changing your place of residence, and secondly, more importantly, about taking a child into your home and raising him. This depends on the way it will influence yourself and your husband. If doing this will make you happier and will fortify your trust in G-d that He will fulfill your request by granting you healthy and viable offspring, it is certainly a sound idea.

I believe that I once wrote to you,<sup>243</sup> basing myself on one of the talks of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], that even though one must do a spiritual stocktaking, one must also not do it except at certain times. Otherwise, the loss outweighs the gain. Refrain from taking stock every day or even once a week.

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241. Avos 6:3.

242. The Heb. idiom signifies a dull, humdrum routine.

243. See Letter 32 above.

Better to invest your gifts in positive activities directed towards influencing your environment — and the Holy One, blessed be He, recompenses “measure for measure,”<sup>244</sup> but many times multiplied.

With blessings for joy and for good news regarding all the above,

[...]

46.

**“And G-d, Who since the Six Days of Creation  
has been ‘arranging matrimonial matches,’ will  
no doubt make available to you, too, the match  
that will be suitable for you, materially and  
spiritually in unison.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
23 Teves, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>245</sup> reply to your letter of *Motzaei Shabbos*: There is doubtless no need to alert you to the fact that the luminaries of Israel held melancholy and depression in *extreme* disfavor. This is also discussed in *Tanya*, ch. 26, and in many other places. In addition, one can plainly observe that not only does such an attitude fail to correct any situation, but in fact it does quite the opposite. This is also true with regard to the matters with which you are occupied. It is especially true in this country, where a happy approach strikes a responsive chord in people’s hearts, whereas its opposite does not.

Above all, there is no basis for your melancholy, for it is written that “a wise wife comes from G-d.”<sup>246</sup> And the way to arrive at this is to follow the advice of the Sages — to seek and seek, as one

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244. *Nedarim* 32a.

245. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 10, p. 258, Letter 3220.

246. *Mishlei* 19:14.

does when looking for lost property.<sup>247</sup> In such a case, this is obviously done energetically, albeit in accordance with the custom of upstanding Jews<sup>248</sup> to do so through intermediaries. You should continue to engage in this, with *firm trust*.

And G-d, Who since the Six Days of Creation has been “arranging matrimonial matches,” as the Sages teach in *Bereishis Rabbah*,<sup>249</sup> will no doubt make available to you, too, the match that will be suitable for you, materially and spiritually in unison. [After all, you are] involved in bringing the hearts of the Children of Israel close to our Father in Heaven through the study of the inner dimension of the Torah,<sup>250</sup> and through a lifestyle directed by the inner dimension of the Torah — and the inner dimension of the Torah brings about the marriage<sup>251</sup> (and not only the betrothal<sup>252</sup>) of the Community of Israel with the Holy One, blessed be He. Accordingly, may the merit of this involvement help you speedily find that which is lost. May you soon find a match that is good in every particular and build — in a spirit of joy — a chassidic<sup>253</sup> home, “an everlasting edifice....”<sup>254</sup> [...]

As to the participants in the study circles, concerning whom you wrote, I mentioned them each by name at the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]. A holy and righteous man [even after his physical passing] is called “alive”<sup>255</sup>

247. Cf. *Kiddushin* 2b.

248. In the original, *keminhag Bnei Yisrael haksheirim*.

249. Sec. 68:4.

250. In the original, *pninivus haTorah* — i.e., the teachings of *Chassidus*.

251. In the original, *nisuin*.

252. In the original, *erusin*.

253. Though this is a precise translation, the Yiddish original of this adjective (*chassidish*) means more than simply “pertaining to Chassidism”: it embraces all the positive qualities of character that distinguish a person (and his home) when he is imbued with the teachings of *Chassidus* and is refined by them.

254. In the original, *binyan adei-ad* — from the Seven Blessings intoned at the wedding ceremony (*Kesubbos* 8a).

255. Cf. the interpretation in *Berachos* 18a-b of the phrase describing Benayahu as *ben ish chai* (“the son of a living man”; see *Il Shmuel* 23:20), even though his father Yehoyada was no longer alive.

— and, as *Ramban* writes (on *Bamidbar* 1:45; see there), “If a person comes before [Moshe and before Aharon,] the holy man of G-d, and is known to them by name, this will accord him merit and life.”

With blessings for success in the near future,

[...]

47.

**“You ask whether the gates of Heaven  
have been closed (G-d forbid)  
and why the way of the worthless prospers.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
25 Shvat, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>256</sup> reply relates to your letter of 12 Shvat. There you write of the financial state of your family and of your difficulties in earning a living, particularly since you have to support other family members, and hence you ask whether the gates of Heaven have been closed (G-d forbid) and why the way of the worthless<sup>257</sup> prospers.

There is surely no need to explain at length that the question of not only why the way of the worthless prospers, but even the way of the wicked,<sup>258</sup> was already asked by Moshe Rabbeinu (see *Berachos* 7a).<sup>259</sup> Now, since that time a few thousand years have passed. During this time the Jewish people have been following the path of the Torah and its commandments, and specifically for that reason our nation has survived. As it is written, “And you who cleave to

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256. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 10, p. 346, Letter 3303.

257. In the original, *reikim*.

258. In the original, *resha'im*.

259. This is the source for Moshe Rabbeinu's question; the source for the *wording* (“Why does the way of the wicked prosper?”) is *Yirmeyahu* 12:1.

the L-rd your G-d” — specifically for this reason and only for this reason — “are all alive today.”<sup>260</sup>

The same applies to every one of us, man or woman. If there are things that are achieved with difficulty, especially with regard to making a living, this is not (G-d forbid) because one observes the Torah and its commandments. Quite the contrary. By fortifying one’s trust in G-d, Who “provides nourishment and sustenance for all,” “with lovingkindness and with mercy,”<sup>146</sup> one lessens these difficulties, and ultimately the state of one’s livelihood also improves. The spiritual remedy<sup>261</sup> to secure this is likewise an increase in one’s Torah study and in one’s observance of the *mitzvos*. As it is written, “If you walk in the ways of My statutes and observe My commandments...,” then “I will grant [your rains in their season, and the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit].”<sup>262</sup>

You no doubt know of the practice instituted by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] — a daily reading from the Book of *Tehillim*,<sup>57</sup> as apportioned for the days of the month. From now on, at least, you should observe this practice, and may it be G-d’s Will that this, too, will bring about a speedier improvement in your situation.

With blessing,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

48.

**“There can be nothing that is not good,  
for in that place no one has any dominion  
apart from G-d alone.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
17 Adar, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

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260. *Devarim* 4:4.

261. In the original, *segulah*.

262. *Vayikra* 26:3.



Greetings and Blessings!

[...] When<sup>263</sup> one is in the immediate presence of the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He,<sup>264</sup> it is clear — when one keeps this in mind — that there can be nothing that is not good, for in that place no one has any dominion apart from G-d alone. And if there sometimes arises a situation whose inner good one does not understand, this is only because one has not sufficiently meditated upon it in an endeavor to discover that hidden good. Then ultimately one sees that “whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the good.”<sup>265</sup> [...]

[...]

#### 49.

“This [mood] itself will increase the good tidings.”

By the Grace of G-d  
11 Iyar, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] This<sup>266</sup> is a reply to your letter of 4 Iyar. This is the first time that a letter of yours has been written — as demanded by our *nasi*<sup>267</sup> — in a mood of *bitachon*. Indeed, this is the true attribute of *bitachon*. As is explained in many sources, this means that one trusts that G-d will supply all needs, literally and materially, regardless, even if sometimes an accounting would show that this has not been deserved.

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263. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 10, p. 389, Letter 3351.

264. Earlier in this letter, the Rebbe had reminded his reader of how the Alter Rebbe likens G-d's acts of kindness to the magnanimity of a mighty mortal king, who raises a wretched outcast from the dungheap and escorts him to the innermost chambers of his palace. See *Tanya*, ch. 46.

265. *Berachos* 60b.

266. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 11, p. 84, Letter 3468.

267. I.e., the Rebbe Rayatz.

May G-d grant that you continue always to write in such a mood. This itself will increase the good tidings, with visible and manifest good in the matters of which you write. [...]

[...]

50.

**“And may G-d grant that my trust in the ultimate  
victory of good and truth will be vindicated —  
even with regard to political parties.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
24 Iyar, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Further<sup>268</sup> to our conversation concerning a united religious front [...]:<sup>269</sup>

One of the directives given by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], concerns what the world calls optimism,<sup>270</sup> and what *Chassidus*<sup>12</sup> calls trust — trust that ultimately the true good will prevail, and not only in the distant future and for the community at large, but also for the individual and for the immediate future. [...]

The Sages teach that “a man is not be judged harshly when he is pained.”<sup>271</sup> Accordingly, you will no doubt not be disturbed by a few of the above expressions that are perhaps a little sharp, and let

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268. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 11, p. 118, Letter 3503.

269. This is a brief extract from a long and unusually pungent letter, one of many similar ones written at the time. It urges and encourages a prominent unnamed religious political figure to exert strenuous last-ditch endeavors to persuade the four warring and [hence] ineffectual religious parties to join their scant forces in a united religious front, that would make its presence felt in the imminent elections to the Knesset. Only the paragraphs that directly speak of *bitachon* are quoted here.

270. The Rebbe here uses the English word.

271. *Bava Basra* 16b.

me thank you in advance if you will give me good news on the central issue.

And may G-d grant that my trust in the ultimate victory of good and truth will be vindicated — even with regard to political parties.

With respectful greetings,

[...]

### 51.

**“Despairing, and seeking miracles especially for one’s battles with the [Evil] Inclination — these are simply the wiles and the incitement initiated by the [Evil] Inclination.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
5 Menachem Av, 5715 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>272</sup> your letter of 28 Tammuz you write that after receiving my letter you were spiritually aroused; for a period you maintained that arousal in your study and prayer and conduct, but this later weakened; and since then there have been ups and downs, resulting in a growing despair, and so on.

As I have written to a number of young men in a similar situation, their answer is provided in a number of places in *Tanya*. One of those places is ch. 27 and the following chapters. All in all: despairing, and seeking miracles especially for one’s battles with the [Evil] Inclination — these are simply the wiles and the incitement initiated by the [Evil] Inclination. As is the case with all the tactics it employs, the most effective strategy from the very outset is not to become involved in any debates or discussions with it. Instead, one should muster strength, extensively and energetically,

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272. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 11, p. 310, Letter 3696.

with regard to “the three pillars [on which the world stands]”<sup>273</sup> — Torah study, *avodah*<sup>68</sup> (and the observance of *mitzvos* in general), and the practice of kindly deeds.

If one acts in this way, he may rest assured that the darkness will be lessened and banished. What a pity that people waste time on *discussing* the issue!

In addition, if you utilize the influence you have on people younger than yourself to bring them, too, close to the service of G-d, you yourself will be granted increased help from Heaven.<sup>274</sup> [...] <sup>275</sup>

With blessings,

[...]

## 52.

**“It is self-understood that one cannot point out  
to G-d on the calendar that this must happen at  
the time that appears right to oneself.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
2 Kislev, 5716 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

This<sup>276</sup> is a reply to the letter in which you write of your mood, your hope, and your request of G-d that you should bear healthy children.

Since this is one of the most important *mitzvos* in our holy Torah, the Torah of Life,<sup>67</sup> one must be firm in one’s trust in the Creator of the world, that He will make it possible for you and your

273. *Avos* 1:2.

274. In the original, the phrase “help from Heaven” appears in Aram. as *sayata diSh-maya*.

275. The letter continues with a reminder to study *Chitas* daily (see footnote 401 below) and to donate “a penny or two” for charity before every weekday’s *davenen*, and concludes with a blessing for success.

276. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 12, p. 109, Letter 3921.

husband to fulfill it. However, it is self-understood that one cannot point out to G-d on the calendar that this must happen at the time that appears right to oneself. For since G-d is the wellspring of good, it is certain that He knows what time is good, and that is when He will fulfill your hearts' desires in a positive way. One can only — with a strong trust in the fulfillment of one's request — pray that this should come about as soon as possible.

As to what you write about losing hope, G-d forbid, a daughter of Israel must not say this, because G-d is omnipotent, and He desires that things should be good for every Jew not only spiritually, but also on the actual material level.

With blessings that your prayer on the above subject will be fulfilled soon and that we should hear glad tidings from you,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

### 53.

**“Bitachon is the conduit through which one receives outstanding success from Above.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
24 Kislev, 5716 [1955]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>277</sup> the course of the *farbrengen*<sup>38</sup> that took place on the luminous date of *Yud-Tes Kislev*,<sup>278</sup> the festival on which — to quote the well-known letter of the Rebbe Rashab<sup>279</sup> — “He redeemed our soul in peace and our soul’s light and vitality was granted to us,” I was informed of what happened to yourself and your wife (*May neither you nor we know of such things!*).

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277. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 12, p. 170, Letter 3979.

278. Anniversary of the liberation from incarceration and capital sentence of the Alter Rebbe (see footnote 153 above) in Petersburg in 1798.

279. See the letter dated 16 Kislev, 5662 (1901), that introduces the entry for *Yud-Tes Kislev* in *HaYom Yom*. The opening phrase in the above quotation paraphrases *Tehillim* 55:19.

This news was conveyed at an auspicious time. Now, there is a teaching of the Alter Rebbe (in *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 23<sup>280</sup>) which he received from his mentors,<sup>281</sup> that “if one angel were to stand in the presence of a gathering of ten Jews, even if there were no words of Torah between them, [...he would become utterly nullified].” How much more must this apply to a gathering of numerous tens of Jews who are exuberantly celebrating [the liberation of] the head of the Jewish people [viz., the Alter Rebbe]. Accordingly, I am certain that your condition will improve speedily, in the spirit of the explanation given in *Likkutei Torah*, *Parshas Korach*, of the verse,<sup>282</sup> “His word runs most swiftly.”

Your trust in G-d will no doubt not be diminished at all (Heaven forbid), for *bitachon* is the conduit<sup>6</sup> through which one receives outstanding success from Above. I hope to hear good news from you soon on this subject — especially since now is the eve of the days of Chanukah, which are governed by the law that one must constantly increase [the number of] lights and increase the presence of holiness even outside [one’s dwelling]. In particular, this is accomplished by disseminating the wellsprings [of the teachings of *Chassidus*] outward<sup>283</sup> — until “night will be as light as day,”<sup>284</sup> with the coming of our Righteous *Mashiach*, speedily, and in our own days, Amen.

[...]

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280. See *Lessons In Tanya* (Kehot, N.Y.), Vol. 5, p. 55.

281. I.e., the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch.

282. *Tehillim* 147:15.

283. In the original, *hafatzas hamaayanos chutzah*; paraphrase of *Mishlei* 5:16.

284. *Op. cit.*, 139:12.

## 54.

**“They’re cutting him up! He’s groaning in pain,  
but he can’t free himself from  
these kidnappers and murderers!”**

By the Grace of G-d  
13 Sivan, 5716 [1956]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

I<sup>285</sup> received the letter in which you briefly describe what you have been through in the course of your life — the wanderings, the experiences and the anxieties — until recently, when you arrived in [...]. In addition, your letter points out things that are incomprehensible.

Since the secretariat has no Russian typewriter I am replying in Yiddish, but obviously you can continue writing to me in the language in which you are most at ease.<sup>286</sup>

According to what you write, you find it strange that you can see no explanation for the incidents that have taken place in your family and in your home.

Now, if you ponder on this a little, you won’t have to find it strange, because a mortal sees only a limited part of what goes on in his life and in his surroundings, and that is why he cannot correctly assess the meaning of what he sees.

To make this concept transparently clear, let me offer an analogy. Imagine someone walking into an operating theater. He sees a man on the operating table surrounded by people with a variety of scalpels, who ignore his groans and continue cutting away. Not knowing the patient’s full medical history, this chance observer will no doubt run out and raise an alarm: “They’ve taken hold of

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285. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 13, p. 170, Letter 4444.

286. With this in mind, the Rebbe’s present letter — most unusually — is sprinkled with some 30 Russian words in Yiddish transliteration. On odd occasions these words are given a familiar introduction: “As we say in Russian,....”

someone! They're cutting him up! He's groaning in pain, but he can't free himself from these kidnappers and murderers!"

Suppose, however, that someone explains to the chance observer that this very operation is necessary in order to enable the patient to survive for decades ahead, and that is why the surgeons are disregarding his several hours of pain. In such a case the bypasser will heartily agree not only that these scalpel-wielders are neither kidnappers nor murderers, but that they are in fact the patient's greatest benefactors. This is true even when one does not consider that these surgeons cannot give a hundred percent guarantee that the operation will be successful, nor can they guarantee how long the patient is going to live after the operation, even if it is successful.

From this we can understand that in the course of a man's life in this world something may happen that for a period may entail pain — real pain, not imagined. And nevertheless he knows, and also perceives, Divine Providence.<sup>140</sup> This means that he knows that the world is not random. It is conducted with a certain order, which encompasses not only himself but also his family. And *far* beyond this, one's plain healthy sense dictates that these incidents are certainly in no contradiction to the order that reigns in the world all around. It is only that we don't hear an explanation from the Surgical Specialist of the great benefit that one receives though the temporary pain.

There are people who raise questions or who say that they are in doubt as to whether there is order and purpose in the world. However, everyone knows — from physics, chemistry, astronomy, and so on (and this is recognized not only by Jews, and not only by believers in G-d, but even by nonbelievers) — that every tiniest atom in the universe has its precise laws, and everything transpires according to those laws that have been discovered to date. So, too, the earth and its stones and the vegetative and animal kingdoms, and likewise whatever surrounds us, all have fixed laws and established characteristics — even though all of this is of immensely wider scope than one man and his family.



Now, picture someone walking through an immense building with thousands of rooms. He observes that every item in every room is arranged in an orderly manner; in fact, even he can tell that there is order everywhere. There is only one little room about which he has his doubts as to whether here, too, all the furnishings and other objects are correctly placed. At this point every straightforward person would no doubt consider: Since the thousands of rooms in this huge edifice are all in the best of order, then also this solitary room — whose orderliness he has not yet grasped, but it is, after all, part of the edifice at large — surely has a planned order to it, even though he does not understand it.

It would be superfluous, I believe, to further analyze and explain the analog, but I would like to add one more detail.

If every one of us, and that includes you yourself, would ponder upon the way in which his years have passed, the places he has been, and the things that have happened, and if one would think about this objectively, he would see tens and thousands of instances in which he has been led in a certain direction — starting from ten years ago, and since then everything is moving in one direction, from left to right.<sup>287</sup>

However, since G-d wants a man to do things by his own free will, every individual — and that includes yourself — is permitted and enabled to choose his path for himself. It is therefore not surprising that since a human being is no more than a human being, one sometimes makes mistakes and strays off the path, and instead of following a uniformly straight path, one sometimes zigzags. But if one then thinks deeply into all the above, and if one does not want to delude oneself, one sets one's heart on making the zigzags smaller and less frequent. By doing this one arrives at the goal that G-d has set for every human being, and especially for every Jew — that he should be truly happy with his family, in this world, too. One can arrive at this when one conducts himself in the way that

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287. In the Kabbalah, the left signifies the Divine attribute of *Gevurah*, stern justice, while the right signifies the Divine attribute of *Chessed*, lovingkindness.

we are taught by the Torah, which is called *Toras chayim* — a living Torah.

One only has to preempt the argument often used by the Evil Inclination. He points to a person who is held to be devout and to conduct himself according to the Torah, and he also points out this person's faults. Proceeding from this, the Evil Inclination seeks to convince his debating partner that since the said individual conducts himself according to the Torah and nevertheless has these faults, this proves that the Torah (G-d forbid) is at fault — for look, he has done this wrong and that wrong and yet another wrong.

The falsehood here lies in the fact that the Evil Inclination shows only part of this person, and not the whole picture. Let me throw light on this by using an analogy.

Walking down the street one sees a man on crutches coming out of the office of a medical specialist. The bypasser may think, or even say, "That specialist isn't worth much! This man just visited him and paid him well, and he follows his orders exactly. Yet he's using crutches and can't take a step without them!"

Suppose, however, that someone explained the bypasser that before this patient ever visited the specialist, he was completely paralyzed and couldn't even move his feet. The specialist not only mitigated the paralysis, but also strengthened the patient. Now, not only can he move his feet: he can even walk, and is gradually walking better and more easily, though he still needs his crutches. It is thus possible that as he continues to follow the specialist's orders, he will eventually be able to dispense with the crutches and will be completely healed.

In the same way, people have various qualities from birth. Some have more good ones, some have more negative ones. However, as a result of education at the hands of good teachers, and above all as a result of self-education — if it is done correctly — then even the innate negative attributes become ever weaker and less influential. Now, since a man has to teach himself and train himself throughout his entire lifetime, it is no wonder that one may

encounter a particular person in the *midst* of his labors of self-education. It is no wonder if one finds in him part of his ungood,<sup>288</sup> too (and the reason is not that in his self-education he does not obey the directives of the Specialist) — but on the other hand, the extent of his faults is now much weaker than it was earlier.

I would like to conclude by spelling out the intent underlying this letter of mine. It was written not for the sake of philosophizing, but in order to present you with the thought — that if you want to make use of objective and healthy reason, it should bring you to strengthen your trust in G-d. It should bring you to look with a kindly eye upon the people around you in general, and upon the townsmen of [...] in particular. It should bring you to see their positive qualities, which were mostly attained by toil, and to consider their faults, if they exist, in the spirit of the above analogy of the temporary crutches. Above all, what should be known is that *you* ought to do *your* part to light up your environment, and not only your family's environment, but also a wider circle of people. This can be achieved by being steeped in *ahavas Yisrael*, a love of fellow Jews, and by a desire to benefit them. And this is *certainly* good and does good for yourself, too, and for your family.

I hope that you will read this letter with all due attentiveness. It goes without saying that if you have any questions or if something is not clear enough, I would be happy if you would write me about this. I will make a point of replying, to whatever extent is possible, even if numerous preoccupations should delay the reply somewhat.

It appears to me that such delays are also an indication that you are being given more time, so that of your own free will you will change the way you perceive the people around you, and so that one's conduct will grow ever better. And may G-d bless you with success.

With blessings,

[...]

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288. In the original, *zain nit-guttes* — a characteristic circumlocution.

## 55.

**“You write that it appears to you that your lot does not bring you success, and so forth. Avert your attention from all of that, because it is not true.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
22 Menachem Av, 5717 [1957]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

In<sup>289</sup> response to the letter in which you write that it appears to you that your lot<sup>290</sup> does not bring you success, and so forth:

Avert your attention from all of that, because it is not true. The Holy One, blessed be He, Who creates and conducts the world and Who is the essence of good, watches over the affairs of every man and woman among the Children of Israel. When they construct the appropriate vessels that can receive the Creator's blessings — those vessels being [obedience to] the Torah and its commandments — they call forth the blessings and receive them and succeed in their lives. Moreover, the stronger their trust in G-d's acts of lovingkindness, the greater will the blessing be and the sooner will it come.

You should therefore organize your life in such a way that it should accord with the directives of our Torah, the Torah of Life,<sup>67</sup> and should continue working in your present occupation, or in the occupation that preceded it, so that it will be easier for you to settle into your work. And may G-d grant you success.

It would be appropriate for you to have your *tefillin* checked to ensure that they are valid according to the requirements of the law, and every morning after the morning prayers you should recite a few chapters of *Tehillim*,<sup>57</sup> or at least one.

With blessings,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

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289. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 15, p. 336, Letter 5660.

290. In the original, *goral*.

## 56.

**“When there is a full measure of firm trust —  
without learned debates or explanations —  
that He is ‘my light and my salvation,’  
then ‘whom shall I fear?’”**

By the Grace of G-d

1 Elul, 5717 [1957]

Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

After<sup>291</sup> a break I was pleased to receive your letter of 22 Menachem Av, and even more pleased to read there that numerous particulars have been settled and set in order. This fact alone will no doubt prove even further that there is no substance in the other particulars, either. The less one thinks about them and the less one takes notice of them, the sooner do they pass, because they have no real existence at all.

This is highlighted during these days<sup>292</sup> on which we say, twice daily, “G-d is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”<sup>293</sup> When there is a full measure of firm trust — without discussions or learned debates or explanations, but simply a trust that G-d is the master of the whole world and everything in the world depends on Him — that He is “my light and my salvation,” then “whom shall I fear?” There is then nothing to fear and nothing to worry about.

Finally, since the *Mishnah* rules that peace is a vessel that contains G-d’s blessings,<sup>294</sup> and since marital harmony<sup>295</sup> is one of the highest forms of peace, I hope that the harmony in your home

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291. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 15, p. 375, Letter 5701.

292. In the month of Elul.

293. *Tehillim* 27:1.

294. Cf. *Uktzin* 3:12: “The Holy One, blessed be He, found no vessel to contain blessings for Israel other than peace.”

295. In the original, *shlom bayis* (popularly pronounced *shalom bayis*) — lit., “peace in the home.”

is in order — and “there is nothing that stands in the way of the will.”<sup>296</sup>

With blessings for good news every day and always, and that you be inscribed and sealed for a good year,

[...]

### 57.

**“With regard to the temporary inadequacy in your income, it is a pity that you are taking it so hard.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
22 Teves, 5718 [1958]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

In<sup>297</sup> reply to your letter of *erev Shabbos*:

With regard to the temporary inadequacy in your income, it is a pity that you are taking it so hard, even though you no doubt know that in our times this [is] unfortunately a common phenomenon, and even though one sees palpably what is written in several holy sources — that the stronger a person’s trust in Him Who creates and conducts the world with particular Divine Providence, the sooner does the improvement come, and in generous measure. And no doubt this is what will also happen in your case. [...]

Though you do not mention this, I hope that you participate in the work of the *Chabad* women’s and girls’ organization in your present locality. This doubtless gives you an opportunity to utilize your talents for the good of the public, and may “the merit of the multitude”<sup>298</sup> stand you in good stead.

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296. This translates the universally-cited Heb. paraphrase of a teaching in *Zohar* II, 162b.

297. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 16, p. 223, Letter 5999.

298. In the original, *zechus harabim* (*Avos* 5:18).

In addition to the above, it would be advisable to make inquiries about teaching the Holy Tongue to the children of the members of the chassidic community.<sup>299</sup>

Strengthening your *bitachon* and ruling out despair, G-d forbid, will increase the success of all your private and communal affairs.

With blessings,

[...]

58.

**“In the spirit of *lechat’chilah ariber*, it could be suggested that rejoicing over the improvement in one’s health should be advanced ahead of time, even though the improvement is not yet manifest.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
1 Shvat, 5718 [1958]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

Just<sup>300</sup> now I received your letter of 23 Teves — eve of the anniversary of the passing of the Alter Rebbe, author of the *Tanya* and the *Shulchan Aruch* — in which you write of your present condition.

You have no doubt heard the teaching of the Rebbe Maharash,<sup>301</sup> the grandfather of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]: “People say that if you can’t make your way from

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299. In the cordial original, the members of the chassidic community are referred to as *Anash* — an acronym for *anshei shlomeinu*, lit., “the men of our peace” (cf. *Yirmeyahu* 38:22).

300. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 16, p. 252, Letter 6026, addressed to R. Ze’ev Dov Alter Meir, Tel Aviv.

301. Acronym for R. Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

below, you should climb over the top — but *I* hold that right from the outset you should leap over the top.”<sup>302</sup>

Now, this approach applies to the present subject. At first sight it would appear that manifest joy should wait until one’s health improves in actual fact. However, in the spirit of the above teaching, it could be suggested that rejoicing over this improvement should be advanced ahead of time, even though the improvement is not yet manifest.

Indeed, this itself will hasten the process. As has been repeatedly cited in the name of the [earlier] Rebbeim of *Chabad*, “Think positively, and things will *be* positive.”<sup>175</sup> And how much more does this assurance apply when one translates positive *thoughts* into joyful *words* and joyful *actions*. This is especially relevant to yourself, whose literary skills equip you to influence many people in this direction — and the reward of those who gladden people’s hearts is well known (*Taanis* 22a).<sup>303</sup>

[...] With blessings for good news,

[...]

## 59.

**“When there arrives a moment  
that is not as one would have liked it to be...”**

By the Grace of G-d

11 Iyar, 5718 [1958]

Brooklyn

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302. The last ten words correspond to the classic Heb./Yid. phrase coined by the Rebbe Maharash, *Lechat’chilah ariber!*

303. The *Gemara* there describes an encounter between Eliyahu HaNavi (Elijah the Prophet) and one of the Sages. Two strangers arrive on the scene, and Eliyahu declares that they are assured of a place in the World to Come.

The Sage then takes them aside and asks them, “What do you do with yourselves?”

They reply, “We are merrymakers who cheer up those who are sad. And when we see two people quarrelling, we joke around until we make peace between them.”



Greetings and Blessings!

Your<sup>304</sup> letter of *Motzaei Shabbos* arrived after a long break. There you write about the state of affairs in your business, and say that you are worried about what the annual balance will look like.

There is certainly no need for me to expound at length on the subject of the attribute of *bitachon*. To have *bitachon* does not mean being content with studying about it in the holy books: it means trusting, *actually and practically*. It means that when there arrives a moment that is not as one would have liked it to be, one should firmly trust that it is no more than a passing thing. As the Torah writes, “For the L-rd your G-d is putting you to the test.”<sup>305</sup> And when G-d sees that one has withstood this trial,<sup>306</sup> one then sees even with fleshly eyes that it was all no more than a trial — a disguise without any substance. [...]

[...]

60.

**“If so, what room is left for worry?”**

By the Grace of G-d  
15 Iyar, 5718 [1958]  
Brooklyn

To the [esteemed] chassid,  
R. Menachem [Feldman],  
[Atlanta]

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] You<sup>307</sup> write about your health and about having been unwell in the past, and of your doctor’s directive that you must

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304. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 17, p. 91, Letter 6239.

305. *Devarim* 13:4.

306. In the original, *nisayon* (pl., *nisyonos*).

307. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 17, p. 99, Letter 6247.

keep yourself under control and free yourself of worries and stress and the like.

As is well known, the classic counsel for being free of worries is to [cultivate] the attribute of *bitachon*. The way in which you can explain this subject to yourself is explained at length in many works, including *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaar HaBitachon*. In fact, trust is a direct corollary of the *fundamentals* of the faith of the Jewish people, all of whom are “believers, the descendants of believers.”<sup>308</sup> And this belief is that G-d supervises every single person with individual Divine Providence, and that He is the essence of good — in the words of the Sages, “All that the Merciful One does is for the good.”<sup>265</sup>

If so, what room is left for worry? Worry can arise only if one forgets the *fundamentals* of the faith.

In light of this, the above applies to matters that are in the hands of Heaven. As the Sages teach, “Everything is in the hands of Heaven apart from the fear of Heaven.”<sup>309</sup> In matters of Torah and *mitzvos*, therefore, a person *should* worry — about how to improve his ways so that they will accord with the purpose for which he was created. In the words of the *Mishnah*,<sup>310</sup> “I was created to serve my Maker.”

Though you do not mention this, I hope that you have fixed study sessions in the revealed plane of the Torah<sup>311</sup> and also in the teachings of *Chassidus*,<sup>12</sup> and that from time to time you add to these sessions — for in matters of holiness we are commanded to increase.<sup>312</sup>

With blessings for good news in all the above matters,

[...]

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308. See footnote 121 above.

309. *Berachos* 33b.

310. *Kiddushin* 4:14.

311. In the original, *nigleh*.

312. Cf. *maalin bakodesh* (*Berachos* 28a).

P.S. My English secretary is not in town at the moment, hence the reply in the Holy Tongue, but you can continue to write in English.

61.

**“It is my unequivocal opinion that [involvement in the Chabad institution in your locality] is also the conduit through which the local members of the chassidic brotherhood will receive their material livelihood.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
5 Teves, 5719 [1958]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

[...] Nor<sup>313</sup> was it my intention to tell anyone that he should live frugally, because that, too, is not my function at all — especially in view of the well-known teaching that the world would not have been worthy of using gold if not for the necessity of using it in the construction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.<sup>314</sup> For a similar principle applies to the homes of Jews at large. Of them it is written,<sup>315</sup> “They shall build Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them,” and the latter phrase implies, “within every individual Jew.”<sup>316</sup> Prosperity exists in the world only by virtue of the fact that it is appropriate in every Jewish home. At the same time, it goes without saying that there must be no pursuit after materiality or material prosperity. The principle, however, remains — in the spirit of the words of *Rambam* at the end of *Hilchos Teshuvah* and at the end of *Hilchos Melachim*, when speaking of how people will relate to materiality in the Days of *Mashiach*.

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313. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 18, p. 124, Letter 6626.

314. Cf. *Shmos Rabbah* 35:1.

315. *Shmos* 25:8.

316. *Reishis Chochmah*, *Shaar HaAhavah*, beg. of sec. 6; *Shelah*, *Shaar HaOsiyos*, s.v. *Lamed*.

What I did intend to do was to encourage [you] to become involved in the *Chabad* institution in your locality.<sup>317</sup> It is my unequivocal opinion that this involvement is also the conduit through which the local members of the chassidic brotherhood will receive their material livelihood. At the same time, such endeavors will be [effective] in the necessary function of lessening your anxiety about your livelihood. Though one obviously has to make efforts in this direction, this must be done without worrying. Indeed, the efforts should be made in a firm spirit of trust in G-d, “Who, in His goodness, provides sustenance for the entire world with grace, with kindness and with mercy.”<sup>146</sup> If this is the case, the efforts will be more active and more successful. Moreover, they will bring an improvement in the body’s health, and in its response to the situation in which it finds itself, particularly with regard to the endeavors invested in making a living. These results are very different when there is anxiety about one’s livelihood, in a manner that etc.<sup>318</sup>

May it be G-d’s Will that from now, at least, things will be done in the spirit taught to us by the recent days of Chanukah, whose lights increase from day to day.<sup>319</sup> May this be the case with both your communal and your private affairs, and may your news be good — of the kind of good that is visible and manifest.<sup>152</sup>

With blessings for glad tidings in all the above matters,

[...]

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317. The original (of “your locality”) uses a warm phrase that traditionally describes a Jewish community: *machanaim hatahor* — lit., “your pure encampment.”

The word for “your” appears here in its plural form: the letter proceeds to address not only the woman who had written to the Rebbe, but her husband as well.

318. In the original, too, the sentence comes to an intentionally abrupt end — evidently as an understated reminder of the negative attitude that had been expressed in the recipient’s letter.

319. Cf. *Shabbos* 21b.

## 62.

**“I hope, too, that you will participate in the  
*farbrengens*..., which heal and strengthen and  
 raise the spirits of those who are downfallen and  
 of those whose hearts are bruised.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
 First day of Adar II, 5719 [1959]  
 Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>320</sup> is a reply to your letter of 25 Adar I, with its enclosures.

At an auspicious time I will mention your name and the name of your cousin at the holy resting place of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], in connection with the needs of which you write.

Certainly as far as you are concerned — for you are “the man who has seen affliction”<sup>321</sup> as well as G-d’s acts of kindness in your rescue from distress and from numerous hardships — there is no need to explain at length that trusting in G-d, the Creator of the universe and its Master, is justified not only with regard to life in the World to Come, but also with regard to matters in This World. This is so even though This World is physical and material, and “the affairs of This World are severe and evil,” as is also stated towards the end of chapter 6 in the Alter Rebbe’s *Tanya*.

According to medical science likewise, the stronger a man’s attribute of trust, the more energetic he is, and this also influences his physical health and his mood, which in turn promotes the success of his activities and endeavors.

As far as the subject of your letter is concerned, the practical conclusion to be drawn from all the above is self-evident. The Sages assure us that a person who has been the recipient of acts of kindness will continue thus for many long days and years.

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320. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 18, p. 236, Letter 6737.

321. *Eichah* 3:1.

Accordingly, I earnestly hope that in the course of time you will be able to let me know that the situation has improved in the particulars of which you write, and may it be G-d's Will that this improvement continue to increase.

I hope that after your visit to Kfar Chabad to heal the sick, you will also visit there for happy reasons — to visit those who are healthy. I hope, too, that you will participate in the *farbrengens*<sup>80</sup> that take place there from time to time, which heal and strengthen and raise the spirits of those who are downfallen and of those whose hearts are bruised — downfallen and bruised in the battle of the [good and evil] inclinations, the battle of Form over Matter, and of spirituality over physicality. And all of this is a result of the battle waged by the Divine soul over the animal soul.

With respectful blessings for good news in all the above,

[...]

### 63.

**“When a person is weighing in his mind what he should decide and how he should act, at that time, too, G-d is watching over him and helping him.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Sivan, 5719 [1959]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>92</sup>

You<sup>322</sup> write of your state of mind, in which you find it difficult to make decisions on any matter and remain in doubt as to whether you are doing as you ought, and so on.

In view of your upbringing, of which you write, there is certainly no need for me to emphasize the subject of Divine Providence, a fundamental principle in our faith and in our Torah, the Torah of Life.<sup>67</sup> The meaning of this concept, *hashgachah pera-tis*, is straightforward — that G-d, Who created and directs the

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322. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 18, p. 408, Letter 6893.

world, watches over every man and woman, not only in public matters, but also in his private affairs. This concept enables us to understand the principle of trusting in the One Who conducts the world and Who is the essence of good, for accordingly, everything is also for the good, plainly and simply.

Every believer's mind, too, understands that the first direct result of this trust is that there is no worry and no confusion. For when a person is weighing in his mind what he should decide and how he should act, at that time, too, G-d is watching over him and helping him, helping all those who desire what is good and upright. And when one conducts himself according to the directives of the Torah, this is the good path, and such conduct in itself helps a person to go ahead with all his affairs in a way that is good for him.

As in all matters of faith, the above-mentioned principle likewise requires neither intellectual argumentation nor profound and complex philosophical proofs. For every individual of the Children of Israel, man or woman, senses in his soul that he truly has faith — even when he is not thinking about whether this principle is correct or whether it is a rational imperative. As the Sages affirm, all Jews are “believers, the descendants of believers.”<sup>323</sup> This means that the faith that is within them, both in their own right and as a heritage from their forebears who were believers, and all the spiritual properties that became theirs in their own right and also as a heritage, — this faith and these spiritual properties are utterly strong within them all. This is self-explanatory.

I hope that these lines of mine, limited as they are in quantity, will suffice to rouse your thoughts and to guide you toward the truest and innermost point within your own self — that in your innermost soul you most definitely trust that G-d watches over you. All you need to do is to bring forth this thought from within your soul to your day-to-day life. After all, “there is nothing that stands in the way of the will.”<sup>324</sup>

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323. See footnote 121 above.

324. See footnote 296 above.

As was said above, the way to accomplish this is not by profound intellectual debate, but by relying on your inner feeling that you place your trust in G-d — not by seeking out doubts, nor by creating problematic queries that are not at all problematic and in fact do not trouble you. Averting your attention from all of this will no doubt help you to rid yourself easily of all the confusing factors that have been spoken of.

It would be advisable that before the morning prayers on weekdays, a few times a week, you set aside a few cents to be donated for *tzedakah* — preferably on Mondays and Thursdays and on the eve of *Shabbos*. And it goes without saying that such an undertaking should be made without a formal vow.<sup>325</sup>

With blessings for a strengthening of your *bitachon* and for good news regarding all the above,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]

#### 64.

**“When one realizes that this is only a test, it utterly ceases to exist, and what is revealed is the inner meaning of that phrase: ‘For the L-rd your G-d is *elevating* you’ — over all the obstacles that veil and obscure [His Countenance].”**

By the Grace of G-d  
Eve of 14 Tishrei, 5720 [1959]  
Brooklyn

Fortify<sup>326</sup> peace.<sup>327</sup> Bring the hearts of all the individuals near to each other, in unity. Muster strength in your trust that all this is

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325. In the original, *bli neder*.

326. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 18, Letter 7048.

327. In the original, this letter is made up of extremely concise allusions to chassidic concepts. It was the Rebbe's response to a request written collectively by the settlers of Kfar Chabad concerning the disharmony that they were then experiencing.



certainly no more than an instance of what is written,<sup>328</sup> “For the L-rd your G-d is putting you to the test.”

When one realizes that this is only a test, it *utterly* ceases to exist, and what is revealed is the inner meaning of that phrase: “For the L-rd your G-d is *elevating* you,”<sup>329</sup> raising you up over all the obstacles that veil and obscure [His Countenance]. This He does in order that you may come to *know* His revelation face to Face, and become *connected* with Him with a strong and mighty bond (see *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Re’eh*, p. 19b ff.).<sup>330</sup>

The good on High then becomes good that is visible and manifest<sup>152</sup> down here to us, too — materially and spiritually, in unison, in the spirit of the phrase, “[the season of] *our* joy,”<sup>331</sup> in the plural.

[...]

## 65.

**“If people had made a habit of sharing [their]  
good news and writing about it frequently, they  
would have had less — or no — need to set up  
bonds of communication by writing about things  
that are the *opposite* of good news.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
3 Kislev, 5720 [1959]  
Brooklyn

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328. *Devarim* 13:4.

329. The root of the verb *menaseh*, translated above as “putting you to the test,” is here understood, on the non-literal level of interpretation known as *derush*, as being related to the word *nes* — “a banner,” something that is held aloft. (Cf. the reference to *Likkutei Torah* at the end of the above paragraph, p. 19c.)

330. In the teachings of *Chassidus*, the stage in the meditative process at which an individual becomes bonded with Divinity is called *Daas*. This word is perceived as being cognate with the verb *yada* in the verse, “And Adam knew (*yada*) Chavah, his wife” (*Bereishis* 4:1), where the verb signifies their marital union. (See *Likkutei Amarim* — *Tanya*, end of ch. 3.)

331. An allusion to the festival of Sukkos that is so called in the prayers, and that was to begin two days later.

Greetings and Blessings!

After<sup>332</sup> a long break your letter of 2 Kislev arrived, in which you write of your financial straits.

As I have written in the past to a number of people, if they had made a habit of sharing [their] good news and writing about it frequently, they would have had less — or no — need to set up bonds of communication by writing about things that are the *opposite* of good news.<sup>333</sup> This is self-evident.

At any rate, the classic counsel [for the subject of your letter] is to contribute generously to *tzedakah*. No matter how difficult this may be, one ought to donate at least a few cents<sup>334</sup> more than one was formerly accustomed to giving. One of the propitious times for doing this is every weekday before the morning prayers.

Moreover — and this is the essence — one should strengthen oneself in one's trust in G-d, "Who provides nourishment and sustenance for all," "with grace, with kindness and with mercy."<sup>146</sup> [Trusting in this provision] is particularly linked to the concept of Divine Providence which, as is explained in the teachings of *Chasidus*,<sup>12</sup> applies to the life of every man and woman, down to the finest detail. As expressed in the wonderful teaching of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], which appears in *HaYom Yom*, in the entry for 28 Cheshvan, this [Divine Providence relating to every detail] "brings to completion G-d's grand design [in the mystery of all Creation]." See there. And firmly placing one's trust in Him intensifies all of this.

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332. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 74, Letter 7103.

333. A typical instance of the euphemistic circumlocutions that season these letters.

334. In the original, *perutos* — coins of the Talmudic era.

Especially since we are now in the month of Kislev,<sup>335</sup> and this year is the two-hundredth anniversary of the passing<sup>336</sup> of the Baal Shem Tov,<sup>337</sup> much more will be added by increasing, in particular, one's study of the inner dimension of the Torah,<sup>338</sup> which in our era has been revealed in the teachings of *Chassidus* — the “Tree of Life, where there is no problematic query,”<sup>339</sup> nor any obscuring and concealment [of the Divine Countenance].

With blessings for good news in all the above,

[...]

## 66.

**“When a soldier sets out to the battlefield,  
he strides forth to the joyful rhythm  
of a triumphal march.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
29 Kislev, 5720 [1959]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

[...] As<sup>340</sup> we heard from my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], when a soldier sets out to the battlefield, he strides forth

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335. The Rebbe Rayatz used to call it “the chassidic month.” Its prominent anniversaries include *Tes* (9) Kislev, the date of the Mittlerer Rebbe's birth (1773) and passing (1827); *Yud* (10) Kislev, the date of his release from incarceration (1826); *Yud-Tes* (19) Kislev, the date of the Alter Rebbe's liberation from incarceration and capital sentence (1798) — and, more recently, *Yud-Daled* (14) Kislev, the day of the Rebbe's marriage (1928).

336. In the original Heb./Aram., *histalkus hillula* — lit., “celebration of an ascent,” alluding to the bliss which a saintly soul attains as it ascends every year on the anniversary of its departure from This World.

337. Lit., “Master of the Good Name” — R. Yisrael ben R. Eliezer (1698-1760), founder of Chassidism.

338. In the original, *pnimiyus haTorah*.

339. *Zohar* III, 124b; cited and discussed in *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, beginning of Epistle 26. See *Lessons In Tanya* (by R. Yosef Wineberg; Kehot, N.Y. 1993), Vol. 5, p. 116.

340. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 107, Letter 7132.

to the joyful rhythm of a triumphal march. This makes it possible for the victory to be greater and speedier.

The same applies to the subject mentioned above.<sup>341</sup> If you, and all those who are active together with you, step out with a joyful certainty that your efforts will be victorious, that victory will be easier, sooner, and greater. [...]

Above all, one must strengthen one's trust — that *Chassidus* will hold its ground everywhere, including [your hometown]. Accordingly, happy is your lot that you are involved in this task, a task that should be carried out “with joy and with a gladsome heart,”<sup>91</sup> in the spirit that our forebears, the Rebbeim, expect of every individual.

With blessings for good news in all the above,

[...]

## 67.

**“And as it becomes increasingly engraved in one’s understanding that one is standing before the King of kings, ...there will be a corresponding decrease in one’s anxiety about what others will say about the manner of one’s speech.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
27 Teves, 5720 [1960]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

This<sup>342</sup> is in reply to your letter of 22 Teves, in which you write that you are bothered by a stammer and that you have consulted a doctor but this did not help.

This is a little surprising, for specialists in this field have a variety of techniques for treatment, and they will no doubt also find one that will be suitable for you.

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341. The addressee and her husband had described the challenges confronting their endeavors at disseminating *Yiddishkeit* in general and *Chassidus* in particular.

342. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 161, Letter 7173.

Let me add an essential point. This matter generally depends, at least to a great extent, on one's self-confidence and on the state of one's nerves. The classic counsel in any case, even when treatments are undertaken, is therefore to fortify oneself in the attribute of *bitachon*. This is the foundation of our faith — trust in G-d, Who is the Creator of the world and directs it, and Who focuses His supervision upon every single individual.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, He is the very essence of good. From this it follows, in the words of the “sweet singer of Israel,”<sup>343</sup> that “G-d is with me; I shall not fear.”<sup>344</sup> This rules out bashfulness in the presence of others, and [lends] a strong hope that G-d will guide the person in question along a good path before Him. And as it becomes increasingly engraved in one's understanding that one is standing before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, there will be a corresponding decrease in one's anxiety about what others will say about the manner of one's speech. Your speech will then show an automatic improvement, particularly when accompanied by treatment.

Another point: When you come to a word and doubt whether you will be able to articulate it properly, don't battle with yourself in an endeavor to say that word specifically: replace it by some other expression.

And since for everything one needs help from Above,<sup>345</sup> it goes without saying that you should increase your diligence and assiduity in Torah study and your conscientiousness in the fulfillment of its *mitzvos* — and “nothing stands in the way of the will.”<sup>346</sup>

With blessings for good news in all the above,

[Signed by a secretary on behalf of the Rebbe]<sup>347</sup>

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343. I.e., King David (*II Shmuel* 23:1).

344. *Tehillim* 118:6.

345. In the original, *sayata diShmaya* — lit., “help from Heaven.”

346. Common paraphrase of *Zohar* II, 162b.

347. The letter concludes with a postscript encouraging a modest daily contribution to *tzedakah* and a daily reading of *Tehillim*.

68.

**Through the *Zohar*, G-d opened up a new  
wellspring that provides a profounder G-dly  
understanding, and faith, and trust.**

By the Grace of G-d  
Lag BaOmer, 5720 (1960)

...Lag BaOmer<sup>348</sup> is also the day on which one of the most eminent disciples of R. Akiva, the holy sage<sup>349</sup> R. Shimon ben Yochai,<sup>350</sup> completed his mission in this world — to reveal the inner light and mystical secrets of the Torah. Through his holy work, the *Zohar*, G-d opened up a new wellspring that provides a profounder G-dly understanding, and faith, and trust — in order to revive and invigorate the Jewish people in a grievous era of exile.

[...]

69.

**“Repentance, too, must be done out of a firm trust  
in G-d, and not (G-d forbid) out of despair.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
4 Teves, 5722 [1961]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>92</sup>

This<sup>351</sup> comes as a reply to your letter of Rosh Chodesh Teves, in which you write that you are worried and so on, and you request advice.

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348. Excerpt from a Yiddish letter that was addressed to the Women's Organization (Agudas Nashim) of Brownsville and East New York, and that appears in *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 299.

349. In the original, *tanna* — i.e., one of the Sages cited in the *Mishnah*.

350. More commonly known as R. Shimon bar Yochai; both forms appear in the sources.

351. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 22, p. 81, Letter 8294.

The advice that is offered is simple — strengthening oneself in one's trust in G-d, Who is the Creator of the world and directs it, and Who focuses His supervision upon every man and woman with His *hashgachah peratis*. One should also meditate upon the words of “the sweet singer of Israel,”<sup>343</sup> in the name of every member of the Jewish people: “The L-rd is my shepherd,”<sup>352</sup> and “G-d is with me; I shall not fear.”<sup>344</sup> You should also study the above psalm (ch. 23) until you are thoroughly familiar with its content, and from time to time you should ponder over it. For the enemy mentioned in that psalm<sup>353</sup> includes the Evil Inclination and his affairs, which are the inner enemies of a Jewish man or woman.

This subject is especially understandable in light of what is explained in the teachings of *Chassidus* — that G-d is the very essence of good, and “it is in the nature of One Who is benevolent to act benevolently,”<sup>39</sup> and He supervises every man and woman with individual Providence.

As to what you write about the past, “There is nothing that stands in the way of repentance.”<sup>354</sup> However, repentance, too, must be done out of a firm trust in G-d, and not (G-d forbid) out of despair.

You no doubt participate in the activities of the Chabad Women's Organization.

With blessings for good news in all the above,

[...]

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352. *Tehillim* 23:1.

353. “You prepare a table for me before my enemies” (verse 5).

354. In the original, *teshuvah*. See *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Pe'ah* 1:5; *Rambam*, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:14.

## 70.

**“You write that you would like to have more children, but that there is a financial question.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
11 Teves, 5724 [1963]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>192</sup>

[...] You<sup>355</sup> write of a lack of joy. This is surprising, because both you and your husband surely know that trusting in G-d, Who is the Creator of the world and Who directs it now, too, is one of the fundamentals of our Torah, the Torah of Life<sup>67</sup> [...].

However: The conduct of one's daily life must accord with the directives of our Torah, the Torah of Life, and with the fulfillment of its *mitzvos*, concerning which it is written,<sup>356</sup> “to live by them” — for the command to do so was issued by the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

You write that you would like to have more children, but that there is a financial question. It would appear that this statement, too, results from a lack in the attribute of trust, even though from time to time you no doubt say the words that have been received and transmitted from generation to generation — that it is G-d “Who, in His goodness, provides sustenance for the entire world with grace, with kindness and with mercy.”<sup>146</sup> This is particularly relevant to the subject of which you write. According to the *first* commandment in the Torah<sup>357</sup> (and the sequence of statements within the Torah is itself Torah) you should have [more children]. This is G-d's command and His request. Yet when He makes a

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355. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 23, p. 71, Letter 8739.

See also Items 21, 97 and 98 below.

356. *Vayikra* 18:5.

357. I.e., the commandment to “be fruitful and multiply” (*Bereishis* 1:28).



request (to cite the phrase of the Sages<sup>358</sup>), “I request only according to their ability.”<sup>359</sup>

I hope that these few lines of mine will suffice to clarify the situation as it is, to the point that with a little reflection you will come to a decision to conduct yourself in the said direction — “with joy and with a gladsome heart.”<sup>361</sup> [...]

With blessings for good news in all the above,

[...]

### 71.

**“There were a few reasons for my not answering  
your previous letters. One of them was that  
I wanted to see how Divine Providence would  
guide you in the course of the summer.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
Chai Elul, 5725 [1965]  
Brooklyn

Blessings and Greetings!<sup>362</sup>

This<sup>360</sup> is a reply to your letter of 29/8 and also to its predecessors, in which you outline what you have undergone in the meantime. There were a few reasons for my not answering your previous letters. One of them was that I wanted to see how Divine Providence would guide you in the course of the summer [...].

The essential point, as was also spoken of here,<sup>361</sup> is that you should perceive all of this not as a reason (G-d forbid) to be downhearted or the like because your hopes have not yet materialized — because who of us knows the ways of G-d? Hence it is self-understood that no man can be certain of his estimation as to what is truly for his good. Indeed, a complete trust in G-d — in the

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358. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 21:22.

359. I.e., the fact that there is a request means that the addressees have been endowed with the financial capacity to fulfill it.

360. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 23, p. 446, Letter 9022, addressed to Ms. BatSheva Lipsker.

361. I.e., when the recipient of this letter had met the Rebbe at *yechidus*.

words of the Sages, “This, too, is for the good”<sup>362</sup> — reveals the truth that [what was perceived] was good, to the point that even with the eyes of mortal understanding, and even with one’s fleshly eyes, one can see that it is visibly and manifestly good. As I have known you for a long time, I hope that any lengthier explanation would be superfluous.

Since we are now in the midst of the month of Elul, the month of abundant Divine mercy, and particularly on this luminous day of *Chai Elul*,<sup>363</sup> may it be G-d’s Will that you be blessed by Him in all that you need, including a good resolution in the above matter — and above all, with a good match in the near future, and good news regarding all the above.

With blessings that you be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, materially and spiritually,

[...]

## 72.

**“My intent [in writing of Divine Providence]  
is not to act as defense counsel (G-d forbid)  
for the above-mentioned [medical] situation.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
16 Tammuz, 5726 [1966]  
Brooklyn

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] From<sup>364</sup> the above [exposition of the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching concerning the Divine Providence that relates even to a mere leaf], we can appreciate the extent to which Divine Providence relates to the innermost concerns of the sons and daughters of Israel, “the people who are close to Him.”<sup>365</sup>

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362. In the original, *gan zu letovah* (*Taanis* 21a).

363. I.e., the 18th of Elul, birthday of the Baal Shem Tov (in 1698) and of the Alter Rebbe (in 1745).

364. *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 24, p. 167, Letter 9167.

365. *Tehillim* 148:14.

[Allow me to offer my] blessings for good news concerning the content of your letter.<sup>366</sup> It goes without saying that my earlier comments are addressed to each of you, including in particular the reference in your letter<sup>367</sup> to the state of your health, and so on.

My intent [in writing of Divine Providence] is not to act as defense counsel (G-d forbid) for the above-mentioned situation. On the contrary: My intent is to suggest that perhaps the meaning of this situation is that it is a test<sup>368</sup> (and this is applicable only to something that is incomprehensible). In that case, as is common with tests, when a person recognizes that this is only an instance in which “the L-rd your G-d is putting you to the test in order to know whether you love the L-rd your G-d with all [your heart and all your soul],”<sup>369</sup> and when he withstands that trial, the situation ceases (because it has already served its “function”), and that individual regains his health.

With blessings for a full and speedy recovery, for a more ample livelihood, and for good tidings,

[...]

P.S. The proposal of a match<sup>370</sup> for your daughter with [...] is, all in all, sound. However, since you<sup>371</sup> mention that at first your daughter had some reservations, and so on, it would not be advisable for you to involve yourselves any more in this matter. Let your daughter proceed according to how she sees fit, according to the direction in which her heart is drawn and so on. After all, as written above, G-d’s Providence supervises every particular.

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366. In the original, “your” in this phrase is feminine.

367. In the original, “your” in this phrase is masculine.

368. In the original, *nisayon* (pl., *nisyonos*).

369. *Devarim* 13:4.

370. In the original, *nichbados* (lit., “honorable subjects”) — a polite circumlocution for a matrimonial proposition.

371. In the original, the word “you” in this phrase is feminine.

## 73.

**“The stronger and more disproportionate is one’s trust, the more disproportionately will one’s trust be manifestly vindicated — by the bestowal of G-d’s blessings, both material and spiritual.”**

By the Grace of G-d  
The Days of *Selichos*,<sup>372</sup> 5734 [1974]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the sons and daughters of Israel  
Wherever they may be:<sup>373</sup>  
May G-d’s blessings for life be with you.

Greetings and Blessings!

[...] The<sup>374</sup> question arises: How can every Jew be expected to attain such a level,<sup>375</sup> and to do so not only truthfully but happily as well? This question is accentuated when one realizes that on the one hand, the Divine dwelling place among the nether beings<sup>376</sup> is to be built in a world that is spiritually lowly<sup>377</sup> and that is physical and materialistic, in a world in which Jews are — physically — “the least among the nations”<sup>378</sup>; and on the other hand, this task is demanded of every Jew, placed as he is in a predicament in which his indispensable needs (such as eating, drinking, sleeping and

372. I.e., late in the month of Elul, in the days before Rosh HaShanah during which the regular morning service is preceded by *Selichos*, the penitential prayers.

373. The Rebbe would often cast a specific spotlight on a significant forthcoming date in the Jewish calendar by issuing a *michtav klali*. This was an open letter whose inspirational message, always addressed as above “to the sons and daughters of Israel wherever they may be,” was published in a variety of languages and media.

The foregoing passage translates the latter part of such a letter.

374. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 9, pp. 491-493.

375. The preceding paragraphs had explained that the task of every Jew on Rosh HaShanah is to crown G-d as King of the Universe, to stand before Him in awe, to rejoice as one builds Him a dwelling place in This World, and so on.

376. In the original, *dirah betachtonim* (*Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Naso*, sec. 16).

377. Cf. *Tanya*, ch. 36: “There is none lower than it.” See also *op. cit.*, end of ch. 6, citing *Etz Chayim*.

378. *Devarim* 7:7.

working) occupy a great part of his time and exertion, leaving little time for holy and spiritual matters. How, then, can a Jew be expected to attain such a level?

The answer to this question, which can be understood by every man and woman, lies in the attribute of *bitachon*, placing one's trust in G-d. This attribute is fundamental<sup>379</sup> to the Torah, which is called *Toras chayim* ("the Torah of Life"). And since in the Holy Tongue the word "Torah" is cognate with *horaah* (which means "teaching" or "instruction"),<sup>380</sup> the phrase *Toras chayim* signifies "a guidepost for one's daily life."

The attribute of *bitachon* is also highlighted in the psalm that is read twice daily throughout Elul, the month of self-preparation for the new year, and also at the beginning of the year, during most of the month of Tishrei: "A Psalm of David. G-d is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?"<sup>381</sup>

This trust in G-d, this utter reliance on His help, which David HaMelech expresses here on behalf of every Jew, embraces both the material and the spiritual aspects of one's life. It extends to the highest reaches of one's Divine service. This may be seen in the later verses of the above psalm, culminating in the final verse: "Place your hope in G-d; be strong and let your heart be valiant, and place your hope in G-d."<sup>382</sup>

\* \* \*

Having trust in G-d means that one feels a certainty and a conviction that G-d will help overcome all of life's difficulties, whether material or spiritual,<sup>383</sup> since He is "my light and my salvation." Every man and woman will certainly be able to fulfill their mission<sup>384</sup> in This World — and with joy, *great* joy — when they

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379. See *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaar HaBitachon*.

380. Cf. *Zohar* III, 53b.

381. See *Tehillim* 27:1ff.

382. *Loc. cit.*, v. 14; see also *Berachos* 32b.

383. See: *Sukkah* 52b; *Tanya*, ch. 13b.

384. See *Or Torah* (by the Maggid of Mezritch) on *Tehillim*, s.v. *Baruch HaGever*, p. 80d.

consider that it is G-d Himself Who chose them to be His emissary in the world, to build Him “a dwelling place among the nether beings.” Moreover, they have G-d’s assurance that as they carry out His mission, He is their light, help, and strength.

One’s joy in executing this mission is heightened when one recalls that G-d grants His help in the spirit of the verse,<sup>385</sup> “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine” — and His love is extraordinary, G-dly.

This love, as our Sages teach, becomes mainly manifest in the period from Rosh Chodesh Elul through Yom Kippur.<sup>386</sup>

At this time, therefore, and indeed throughout the year, this love ought to elicit in response a boundless love for G-d, a love that finds expression in the verses,<sup>387</sup> “Whom [else] have I in Heaven? And aside from You, I desire nothing on earth. My life and my heart expire [to You, G-d].”

These verses, too, focus on one’s love for G-d and one’s trust in Him, both in spiritual matters (“in Heaven”) and in material matters (“on earth”).

Every Jew’s innate trust in G-d is a heritage bequeathed to him by our Patriarchs. Of them it is written,<sup>388</sup> “Our forefathers trusted in You; they trusted and You saved them.”<sup>389</sup> All that is required is

385. *Shir HaShirim* 6:3.

386. See *Bayis Chadash* on the *Tur*, *Orach Chayim* 581, s.v. *VeHaaviru*. As pointed out in the writings of the *AriZal*, et al., the initial letters of the phrase אני לדודי ודודי לי (“I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine”) spell the word אֵלּוּל (Elul). In the same phrase, moreover, the numerical value of the four final letters *yud* totals 40, alluding to the 40 days from Rosh Chodesh Elul to Yom Kippur.

387. *Tehillim* 73:25-26. See also: the concluding passages of both the first and second *maamar* beginning *Mosh’cheini*, 5630 (1870); *Sefer HaMitzvos: Derech Mitzvosecha* by the *Tzemach Tzedek*, s.v. *Shoresh Mitzvas HaTefillah*, end of ch. 40.

388. *Tehillim* 22:5.

389. Cf. *Keser Shem Tov*, sec. 230 (and see also *Or Torah*, by the Maggid of Mezritch, on *Tehillim*, p. 68c), on the verse, “And he who places his trust in G-d, loving-kindness will surround him” (*Tehillim* 32:10). On these words the Baal Shem Tov teaches: “Whatever place a man thinks of, there he cleaves [...]. And when he places his trust in [G-d’s] *Chessed*, there his soul cleaves, and G-d’s loving-

that one should allow this trust to surface and materialize, enabling it to permeate every detail of one's daily life.

There is a principle taught by the Sages, of blessed memory: "By the same measure with which a man measures, his due is meted out to him."<sup>390</sup> Accordingly, the stronger and more disproportionate is one's trust,<sup>391</sup> the more disproportionately will one's trust be manifestly vindicated and fulfilled<sup>392</sup> — by the bestowal of G-d's blessings, both material and spiritual.

\* \* \*

May G-d grant that all the above — fulfilling the G-d-given mission of building Him a dwelling place down here below, placing one's trust in Him, and receiving His material and spiritual blessings — be true of every Jew in the fullest measure.

And this in turn will hasten the fulfillment of the most comprehensive blessing for the entire House of Israel — the true and complete Redemption through our Righteous *Mashiach*.

With blessings that you be inscribed and sealed for a good and a sweet year, in both material and spiritual matters together,

[...]

#### 74.

**All the above [regarding responses to the Gulf War] relates to *action*. As to how one should *feel*, I have made my position clear on several occasions.**

[8 Shvat, 5791/Jan. 23, 1991]

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kindness will surround him. One should constantly conceal oneself completely in the Divine Name."

390. *Sotah* 1:7. It will be noted that *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaar HaBitachon* enumerates ten distinct levels of trust. See also: *Biurei Zohar*, *Parshas Vaeira*; *Or HaTorah* by the *Tzemach Tzedek* on *Yeshayahu*, p. 207ff.

391. I.e., the more it is out of proportion to seeming reality.

392. Cf. *Or HaMeir*, *Parshas Behaalos'cha*.

There<sup>393</sup> is a law stated in the *Shulchan Aruch*:<sup>394</sup> “Do not separate yourself from the community.” This applies especially in a situation in which rabbis have also made public statements on this subject.

Note the directive of Yaakov Avinu: “Why make yourselves conspicuous?”<sup>395</sup>

All the above relates to *action*.

As to how one should *feel*, I have made my position clear on several occasions.<sup>396</sup>

Moreover, this is an auspicious time — the week of *Shabbos Shirah*, the week preceding the day on which we read the Song of the Sea.<sup>397</sup>

How much more so when concerning every situation, the *luminous Torah*<sup>398</sup> states that “he who trusts in G-d — kindness will surround him.”<sup>399</sup>

[...]

393. From a letter written in response to a question addressed to the Rebbe from Eretz Yisrael in connection with the Iraqi missile attacks during the Gulf War. The Rebbe’s correspondent had asked: “Is there a need to comply with the directives of Haga [i.e., the civil defense authorities], sealing off rooms and wearing gas-masks and so on, during siren blasts? — Because according to the Torah, ‘the Holy Land is the safest place in the world.’ [These were the words of the Rebbe’s assurance at the time.] On the other hand, some people claim that they feel afraid (because, nevertheless, ‘missiles have fallen’).”

This question and the Rebbe’s reply above appear in the Appendices to *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 36, pp. 234-235.

See: *I Will Show You Wonders*, a reprint of public statements of the Rebbe before and during the Gulf Crisis of 5751/1990-91 (*Sichos In English*, N.Y., 5763/2003).

394. *Orach Chayim*, end of sec. 574 (citing *Avos* 2:4, and see also *Taanis* 11a).

395. *Bereishis* 42:1, translated above as paraphrased by *Rashi*. Urging his sons to go down to Egypt and buy food during the famine in Canaan, Yaakov said: “Why should you attract puzzled attention by not seeking food before your supplies are exhausted?”

396. See *I Will Show You Wonders*, referred to in footnote 393 above.

397. *Shmos* 15:1-18 (*Az yashir...*), which tells of the supernatural salvation of the Jews from the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

398. In the original, *Torah Or* (*Mishlei* 6:23).

399. *Tehillim* 32:10. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 36, p. 2.



## 75.

**“You will then have less time to think the opposite of the directive to *think only good*.”**

[undated *tzetl*]<sup>400</sup>

Your *pidyon nefesh*<sup>56</sup> was received.

When you will be punctilious in observing *Chitas*,<sup>401</sup> you will have less time to think the opposite of the directive given by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] — to think only good.<sup>402</sup>

I will mention your name in prayer at [his] holy resting place.<sup>403</sup>

## 76.

**“You see miracles..., yet you insist on *seeking out* depressing subjects.”**

[undated *tzetl*]<sup>400</sup>

You see miracles that are patently manifest, yet you insist — contrary to the simple sense of even the animal soul — on *seeking out* depressing subjects. You have already seen that this has not brought you success; indeed, quite the contrary. And therefore... you *add* to the above obstinacy?!

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400. One of thousands of brief handwritten responses that were issued over the years, usually on the margins of the addressee's query or request, and relayed to him or her via the Rebbe's secretariat. These succinct responses were popularly known (in Yiddish) as *tzetlach* — lit., “notes.”

401. Heb. acronym (in Ashkenazic pronunciation) for *Chumash*, *Tehillim*, *Tanya* — the three daily study sessions instituted by the Rebbe Rayatz. By regularly following these cycles, one completes the study of the current Torah reading with the commentary of *Rashi* every week, the recital of the entire Book of *Tehillim* every month, and the study of the entire *Tanya* every year.

402. An allusion to the teaching quoted in Letter 45 above.

403. In the familiar original (Heb.), *Azkir al hatziyun*. See the final paragraph of Letter 46 above.

## 77.

**“You have been *promised*  
that G-d is your guardian.”**

[undated *tzetl*]<sup>400</sup>

[In response to a woman who (i) requested “a blessing for protection” and (ii) sought “an increased trust in G-d,” the Rebbe wrote:]

You have been *promised* that (i) “G-d is your guardian; [G-d is your protective shade at your right hand]”<sup>404</sup> — especially since you no doubt have a valid<sup>405</sup> *mezuzah* in your room. [You have also been *promised* that] (ii) “if someone comes to be purified,”<sup>406</sup> *the Holy One, blessed be He*, helps him. And the more you increase your trust in the L-rd G-d of Israel, the more will there be an increase in His blessings in all the above and in His help.

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404. *Tehillim* 121:5.

405. In the original, *kosher*.

406. *Yoma* 38b.

Part B

Talks



## 78.

### Why was Yosef punished for placing his trust in the royal butler, for preparing a natural means through which he could be released from the dungeon?

Why<sup>407</sup> was Yosef the Righteous<sup>408</sup> punished for placing his trust in the royal butler?<sup>409</sup>

Yosef was distinguished by a quality in which he was superior to the Patriarchs and to his brothers: the Divinity that shone within him was of a level that transcends worldliness. And for that reason, G-d related to him in a manner that transcended the natural world — namely, at the level of Divinity that is called *Sovev Kol Almin*.

This also explains<sup>410</sup> why Yosef was punished<sup>411</sup> for having asked the Chief Butler to mention him to Pharaoh, for not having *completely* trusted that G-d alone would redeem him from prison — and for this he was punished by having to remain there for an additional two years.

The question has been asked: What exactly was Yosef's sin? After all, it is well known that one should fashion a *keli* — a vessel or a conduit on the natural plane — as a receptor for G-d's blessings. Moreover, fashioning a natural vessel does not conflict with one's trust in G-d. In this spirit, there is a verse that speaks of making a livelihood: "And the L-rd your G-d will bless you in all that *you do*."<sup>412</sup> This means that one ought to make a natural vessel

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407. Excerpted from *sichos* delivered on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5712 (1951), and on the last day of Pesach, 5721 (1961). See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 3, pp. 836-837.

For further discussion of the above question see Item 86 below, under subheading (d), and Item 94 below.

408. In the original, *Yosef HaTzaddik*.

409. *Bereishis* 40:14.

410. *Toras Chayim*, *Parshas Vayechi*, p. 107a; the *maamar* beginning *VeLo Zachar Sar HaMashkim* 5688 (1928).

411. *Bereishis Rabbah* 89:3, cited by *Rashi* at the end of *Parshas Vayeishev*.

412. *Devarim* 15:18; see also *Kuntreis U'Maayon*, *maamar* 25.

through which to receive G-d's blessings, and to rely on Him to dispatch His blessing via that vessel.

This approach we find exemplified by Yaakov Avinu when he was afraid of Eisav, "lest he come and smite me, mothers and children alike."<sup>413</sup> Side by side with his prayers and his trust in G-d, he prepared natural vessels — by offering Eisav a gift and by being ready for battle with him — through which his salvation should come. Why, then, was Yosef punished for preparing a vessel, a natural means, through which he could be released from the dungeon?

The answer lies in the spiritual rung that he had attained. As mentioned above, Yosef accessed the level of Divinity which is called *Sovev*, and which transcends the level of Divinity that is the source of created beings. Living at that level, he ought not have needed preparations and vessels on the natural plane. What was expected of him was a loftier level of trust, a trust that can dispense with mediation by the workings of nature.

The Alter Rebbe perceives an allusion to this supernatural level of trust in a verse whose plain meaning<sup>414</sup> is, "Better to rely on G-d<sup>415</sup> than to trust in man."<sup>416</sup> In a mystical mode of interpretation,<sup>417</sup> the Alter Rebbe teaches:<sup>418</sup> "Better to rely on *Havayah* [i.e., on the Four-Letter Name of G-d that signifies the transcendent level of Divinity known as *Sovev*] than to trust in *Adam* [in allusion to *Adam HaElyon* (lit., 'the Supernal Man'), a Name for G-d which in the Kabbalah signifies the immanent level of Divinity known as *Memaleh*]."<sup>419</sup>

413. *Bereishis* 32:12.

414. I.e., *pshat*.

415. Lit., "to take refuge in G-d."

416. *Tehillim* 118:8.

417. I.e., *sod*.

418. *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 91b.

419. At this point, the Rebbe illustrated his point by remarking on the manner in which his father-in-law and predecessor, the Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak, fearlessly defied the workings of the natural order. Time after time, he shattered the vicious machinations of the Stalinist regime that hounded his underground

## 79.

**Regardless of everything, Yaakov Avinu went  
on his way with a light heart and in high spirits,  
because he had trust in the One Above.**

This<sup>420</sup> week's Torah reading tells of how one solitary Jew made his way to a foreign land. When he set out he had thought that he would arrive with his possessions, but by the time he arrived he saw that he was left with nothing. As he later said, "With my staff [alone] I crossed the Jordan."<sup>421</sup> Regardless of that, he went on his way with a light heart and in high spirits,<sup>422</sup> because he had trust in the One Above.

Arriving in Haran, he saw that he could rely on no one, even his relatives. Even his uncle, Lavan, cheated him. Yet despite all that, his trust in G-d remained intact.

What was the outcome? True, he toiled for long and arduous years in Haran: "Scorching heat ravaged me by day and frost by night."<sup>423</sup> But ultimately, having toiled with trust in the One Above, he left that place with considerable wealth. More importantly, "his bed was perfect"<sup>424</sup> — all of his children grew up properly and perfectly.

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schooling system, even when they incarcerated and tortured him and sentenced him to death.

In a footnote the Rebbe refers his readers to the first-person account of the above epic that was published in the Holy Tongue in *Likkutei Dibburim*. Its English translation may be found in *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. 4 (Kehot, N.Y., 1997), pp. 141-218, or in a separate volume entitled *A Prince in Prison* (Sichos In English, N.Y., 1997).

420. Excerpt from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei*, 7 Kislev 5712 (1951), and appearing in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 1, p. 63.

421. *Bereishis* 32:11.

422. *Bereishis Rabbah*, *Parshas Vayeitzei*, sec. 1, cited in *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 29:1.

423. *Bereishis* 31:40.

424. Cf. *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 47:31.

## 80.

Even if until that moment such a person  
was tainted by idolatry, or perhaps a tinge of it,  
when Pesach eve arrives he can have complete  
trust that “now the Omnipresent has brought us  
near to His service.”

[The<sup>425</sup> Rebbe opened by quoting a passage from the *Haggadah*:] “In the beginning our forefathers were idolaters, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.”

[The *Mishnah* directs that when recounting the story of the Exodus,] “one begins by telling of [our forefathers’] disgrace.”<sup>426</sup> In the words of the *Haggadah*, “In the beginning our forefathers were idolaters.” Now, why should we speak of their disgrace? Have we not been taught that the Torah does not speak of the disgrace of even an unclean animal?<sup>427</sup>

Seeking an answer to this question, we may observe that this account of our people’s past disgrace relates to every individual’s Divine service on “this night.”<sup>428</sup>

The Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya* that “a person who violates G-d’s Will,”<sup>429</sup> “even if he commits a minor sin,”<sup>430</sup> “is greatly inferior to and more debased than the *sitra achara* and *kelipah* which are called *avodah zarah*<sup>431</sup> and ‘other gods.’ He is separated completely from G-d’s unity and oneness even more than they are, as though denying His unity even more radically than they, G-d forbid.”<sup>432</sup>

425. Excerpt from a *sichah* delivered on the first night of Pesach, 5712 (1952), and published in *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos 5712* (1952), Vol. 2, pp. 113-114.

426. *Pesachim* 9:4.

427. *Sanhedrin* 54b, commenting on *Vayikra* 20:15.

428. I.e., the first night of Pesach, so called in the Four Questions beginning *Mah Nishtanah*.

429. See ch. 24 in *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. 1 (Kehot, N.Y., 5742/1982), p. 315.

430. *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

431. Lit., “alien worship”; i.e., idolatry.

432. *Op. cit.*, p. 315.



Looking inside himself, everyone knows what his spiritual state really is. Not only may he have stumbled with regard to matters that are permitted but dispensable;<sup>433</sup> occasionally he may also have stumbled with regard to forbidden matters (whether unintentionally<sup>434</sup> or even intentionally<sup>435</sup>) — and this is related to the sin of idolatry, as explained above. Considering this, a person may become disheartened.

At this point the *Haggadah* assures him: “In the beginning our forefathers were idolaters, but now the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.” That is to say: Even if a moment ago (“in the beginning”) such a person was in a state in which he was subtly linked to idolatry, in one single moment he can transform himself from one pole to the other, from being an utter *rasha* to becoming a consummate *tzaddik*.<sup>17</sup> In the words of the *Haggadah*, “but now” — that is, at this very moment — “the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.”

The possibility for such an absolute change is highlighted by the events of “this night” of Pesach.

The Children of Israel had fallen so low while in Egypt that they had become idolaters. Indeed, the *Midrash* teaches [that when G-d announced in Heaven that He planned to release them from bondage, the Accusing Angels protested]: “These [i.e., the Egyptians] are idolaters, but so, too, these [i.e., the Children of Israel] are idolaters!” Yet despite their lowly spiritual status until that time, they were granted a revelation of *Atzmus*, the very Essence of Divinity — the ultimate expression of “the Omnipresent [bringing] near to His service.”

An echo of this dynamic reverberates every year. Even if until that moment (“in the beginning”) such a person was tainted by idolatry, or perhaps a tinge of it, when “this night” arrives he can have complete trust that “*now* the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service.” This trust surpasses mere hope. (As explained

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433. In the original, *mosaros*.

434. In the original, *beshogeg*.

435. In the original, *bemeizid*.

by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], a person with trust<sup>436</sup> not only *hopes* for a certain eventuality; he is *certain*<sup>437</sup> that it will materialize.) He trusts that “*now* the Omnipresent has brought us near to His service,” for by virtue of this night’s revelation of *Atzmus*, the very Essence of Divinity, he can about-face and become a completely different person.

## 81.

**So long as the Yeshivah is their home,  
students should immerse themselves in their  
Torah studies and not be concerned with questions  
as to how they will eventually earn a living.**

It<sup>438</sup> was said at the previous *farbrengen*<sup>38</sup> that the students of the Yeshivah<sup>439</sup> should immerse themselves in their Torah studies and not be concerned with questions as to how they will eventually earn a living.<sup>440</sup> Such calculations derive from the Evil Inclination. Following that discussion, a few comments were heard to the effect that I don’t really care about the students’ material situation, only that they should be scholarly and G-d-fearing....

Let it be perfectly clear, then, that this is absolutely untrue. I am concerned and anxious about the material situation of every single student, about every detail of how he will find his way through life in a material sense. [...]

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], cared in the past, and he cares today, too, about every little detail in the life of every individual student. He takes care of every individual stu-

436. In the original, *bitachon*.

437. In the original, *batuach*.

438. An excerpt from the *farbrengen* of Yud Shvat, 5713 (1953); see *Toras Menachem* — *Hisvaaduyos*, Vol. 7, p. 335.

439. I.e., the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah, which was originally founded in the White Russian village of Lubavitch in 1897 and had since been transplanted in Brooklyn and in many other sites around the world.

440. In the informal Heb./Yid. original, “without calculations regarding *tachlis*.”

dent's matrimonial match,<sup>441</sup> and of every individual's livelihood<sup>442</sup> — and I mean an ample livelihood.

The Rebbe used to say that “bodily strength enables spiritual strength,”<sup>443</sup> that is, that one needs a strong body in order to have a strong soul. Nevertheless, he expected that as long as the Yeshivah was their home, the students should not think about how they would ultimately earn a living.

So, to remove any possible mistake, let me repeat: The way in which every single student will settle, in the material sphere, certainly matters to me.

At the same time, one must not forget the teaching of the Sages that “a person's livelihood<sup>444</sup> is budgeted for him from Rosh HaShanah....” A person's livelihood is not what he himself makes, but what the Holy One, blessed be He, gives him. The nations of the world are subject to the rule of nature, whereas G-d's conduct toward the Jewish people transcends nature. With the Jewish people in general, with chassidim in particular, and especially with the Yeshivah students, material blessings are drawn down to this world by means of Torah study. Accordingly, for the students to think about ultimate practicalities while they are still in the Yeshivah is unproductive. Indeed, if they now devote themselves utterly to Torah study and to Divine service, an ample livelihood will be elicited for them in due course, without the bothersome worries that confuse one's Divine service.

May G-d grant that the distractions aroused by the “many thoughts in the heart”<sup>445</sup> of each of us should fall away, so that everyone will be enabled to fulfill his life-task<sup>446</sup> with a tranquil

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441. In the original, *shidduch*.

442. In the original, *parnassah*.

443. One of two classical stances. Cf. *Zohar* I, 180b and 105b; see also the *maamar* beginning *VaYomer Moshe* 5709 (1949), sec. 12 (in *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5709, p. 63), and the *maamar* beginning *Basi LeGani* 5713 (1953), sec. 6.

444. In the original, “his food” (*Beitzah* 16a).

445. *Mishlei* 19:21.

446. In the original, *shlichus*.

mind, with a happy heart (in the spirit of the verse, “Serve G-d with joy”<sup>61</sup>), and with great success.

## 82.

The Rebbe Maharash answers his own question:

**“People are not lacking a *livelihood*; they are lacking *trust*. Every individual is indeed provided with a livelihood. It’s only that by lacking trust, a person sometimes turns off the tap....”**

It<sup>447</sup> is written that “your people are all righteous.”<sup>448</sup> To whom does this refer? The *Zohar*<sup>449</sup> explains that “whoever is circumcised is called a *tzaddik*.”<sup>17</sup>

“Accordingly,” states the Rebbe Maharash in a *maamar*,<sup>450</sup> “the promise that ‘He will not let a *tzaddik* collapse’<sup>451</sup> applies to all Jews, who are called *tzaddikim* because they are circumcised. [...] Why, then, do we see that so many Jews are in dire financial straits? Why are they not all provided for liberally?”

And the Rebbe Maharash answers his own question: “People are not lacking a *livelihood*; they are lacking *trust*. Every individual is indeed provided with a livelihood, for ‘He will not let a *tzaddik* collapse.’ It’s only that by lacking trust, a person sometimes turns off the tap.... If instead he were to place his trust in G-d, he would earn far more. He would then see the fulfillment of the beginning of the above verse: ‘Cast your burden on G-d and He will sustain you.’”<sup>452</sup> [...]

The blessings that flow down to this world via my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] are forthcoming not only when

447. From the *farbrengen* of Shabbos, *Parshas Eikev*, Chaf Menachem Av, 5713 (1953); see *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, Vol. 9, p. 125ff.

448. *Yeshayahu* 60:21.

449. II, 23a; see also I, 93a and 95b.

450. *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5626 (1866), pp. 168-170.

451. *Tehillim* 55:23.

452. Or, in a broader sense, “and He will bear it” (*Rashi*).

he was present as a soul vested in a body and could be seen with fleshly eyes. They are forthcoming now, too, when he cannot be seen with fleshly eyes. Indeed, after his passing<sup>453</sup> the flow of blessings is more sublime, because corporeal limitations have ceased to exist. Moreover, those blessings are not only spiritual but also material.

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To consider this concept from close up:

An institution of the Rebbe should be conducted with an open hand, as in the verse,<sup>454</sup> “I will walk about at ease.” In this spirit, the Sages speak of how G-d reassures a person who is contemplating his forthcoming expenses for *Shabbos* and *Yom-Tov*: “Borrow on My account..., and I will repay the debt.”<sup>455</sup> The same principle applies to one’s anticipated expenses for his children’s Torah tuition — and also, by extension, for one’s students, who are also called his children.<sup>456</sup> (The source for the application of this principle to tuition fees is a statement in *Sifri* by R. Shimon bar Yochai, who is the source for the innermost, mystical dimension of the Torah<sup>457</sup> — but [in addition] *Rambam* states it as a halachic ruling in the revealed dimension of the Torah.<sup>458</sup>) This, then, should be the guiding principle for the Yeshivah administration — to “walk about at ease,” spending generously according to need. As the Sages express the Divine reassurance, “Borrow on My account..., and I will repay the debt.”

(True, one of the administrators of the Yeshivah in fact “walks about at ease” and spares no expense. The only trouble is that he thinks that the possibility to be generous is his own doing, whereas one should know that in fact it is a blessing elicited by the Rebbe.)

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453. In the original, “after the *histalkus*.”

454. *Tehillim* 119:45.

455. *Beitzah* 15b.

456. *Yoma* 19b.

457. In the original, “the *pnimiyus* of the Torah.”

458. In the original, “the *nigleh* of the Torah.”

Accordingly, when a prospective student arrives he should be accepted without any thought as to where one is going to find the money to pay for another mattress. Even the accountant's warning that the balance is negative is no cause for alarm. Instead, one should "walk about at ease," sparing no expense. And then the Holy One, blessed be He, says: "I will repay the debt." [...]

As to buying an additional building, let them write out a check of four or five digits, or let it even be six, and the Rebbe will cover it. Such things have in fact already happened. People have seen that when they followed this path, they have met with success. [...] And I do not mean that the Rebbe will cover the checks in a spiritual sense, but actually and materially. As has already been said, one cannot discharge one's [charitable] obligations with spiritual silver and gold, with the kind of silver and gold that serve respectively as mystical allusions to the love and fear of G-d. The silver and gold that are needed are real and material. And not in the fullness of time, but within these two days — before the bank reopens on Monday morning.

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In one's personal affairs, too, one should conduct oneself according to this principle, and cultivate the attribute of trust. One's conduct will then accord with the above-quoted verse,<sup>459</sup> "I will walk about at ease." Or, in the words of another verse,<sup>460</sup> "Open wide your mouth" [i.e., state all your desires] "and [then] I shall grant them."

What concept underlies this approach?

Jews use material things in a way that utilizes them for holy ends and transforms them into vessels for Divinity.<sup>461</sup> *Rambam* expresses this as follows:<sup>462</sup> "A Torah scholar is recognizable... by the way he eats [and drinks and conducts his marital life]," and so

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459. *Tehillim* 119:45.

460. *Op. cit.* 81:11.

461. In the original, *Elokus*.

462. *Hilchos Deos* 5:1.

on. *Rambam* proceeds to enumerate ten subjects in all, which correspond to the Ten *Sefiros*, and hence they also correspond to the ten faculties of the soul<sup>463</sup> “that descend from them.”<sup>464</sup> And some of these subjects are related to one’s material livelihood.

As was said above, with regard to spiritual matters such as one’s expenses for *Shabbos* and *Yom-Tov* and for Torah tuition fees, G-d says: “Borrow on My account..., and I will repay the debt.”<sup>465</sup> Accordingly, a Jew can conduct himself in this way with regard to his material livelihood as well, because his material affairs, too, become vessels for Divinity. In other words, every Jew is capable of transforming anything into an echo of *Shabbos* or (even more certainly) of *Yom-Tov*.

It is indeed conceivable that at an individual’s present level, his desire for material things *in order to utilize them for spiritual ends* is not utterly truthful, and that his desire for material things derives also from their material aspect. Yet the above capability remains.

This we see in a well-known Midrashic debate.<sup>466</sup> [“When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create Adam..., the Attribute of *Chessed* said, ‘Let man be created, for man will do kindly deeds!’ The Attribute of Truth said, ‘Let him *not* be created, for man is all lies!’”] And in the Letter Concerning a Lowly Soul,<sup>467</sup> the Alter Rebbe points out that even though man is prone to a certain lack of truthfulness, to the extent that Truth argued that he should not be created, *Chessed* nevertheless declared, “Let him be created!”

As I heard from one of the chassidim, in Lubavitch they used to say that this letter was written in response to a certain situation. In an earlier pastoral letter that appears in *Iggeres HaKodesh* in

463. In the original, *kochos hanefesh*.

464. *Likkutei Amarim* — *Tanya*, ch. 3.

465. See footnote 455 above.

466. *Bereishis Rabbah* 8:5.

467. In the original, *Iggeres DeNefesh HaShefalah*, a mystical letter written by the Alter Rebbe shortly before his passing, and appearing in his *Igros Kodesh* (Kehot, N.Y., 5747/1987), p. 151.

*Tanya*,<sup>468</sup> the Alter Rebbe had admonished his chassidim for their “custom [...] to ask for advice in mundane matters, as to what one ought to do in matters of the physical world.” Despite this rebuke, his chassidim had continued to consult him on mundane matters. And this was the situation to which the Letter Concerning a Lowly Soul responds: Since, in the case of a lowly soul, the links of *his-kashrus* that bind him to his Rebbe are material, the blessings<sup>469</sup> that flow to him [through the Rebbe] must also be material.

### 83.

**“Even a little guy like me gave *tzedakah*  
to a bedraggled stranger!”**

When<sup>470</sup> a person asks G-d to grant a particular request, a question arises: Since G-d owes nothing to anyone — for no one does Him a favor that would obligate Him to repay — how does one have the nerve to confront Him with requests?<sup>471</sup>

The solution<sup>472</sup> is to give *tzedakah* to an individual whom one has never seen, and who has never done the donor a favor, and who is never going to return the present favor. And despite all that, one now provides such a person with all his needs, without calculations and without conditions.

That done, one can now have the nerve to face the Holy One, blessed be He, and say: “Even a little guy like me has given money that I toiled to earn (or at least I could have used it to buy whatever I fancied) to a bedraggled stranger whom I had never seen and from whom I will never get anything in return. So certainly

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468. See Epistle 22 in *Lessons In Tanya* (Kehot, N.Y., 5753/1993), Vol. 5, pp. 21ff.

469. In the original, “the *hashpaah*.”

470. From a *sichah* which the Rebbe addressed in his study to supporters of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah on the eve of 6 Tishrei, 5716 (1955), and which was published in *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 15, pp. 20-21.

471. Making a request presupposes that one believes that it is in place.

472. For an alternative answer to the above question, see Item 92 below.



You, G-d, ought to grant all my needs from Your wide-open hand, without any conditions or calculations!”

[At this point the Rebbe turned to one of those present who had previously said that he would contribute a certain sum to *tzedakah*, but on a certain condition, and told him that he ought to donate that sum, but without any conditions.]

#### 84.

**The first time Adam saw nightfall, he discovered  
that a man is able to diffuse light even when the  
world around him is dark.**

This<sup>473</sup> is the message of a *Melaveh Malkah*, which takes place after the passage of 24 hours during which no business was done. Yet one has to compete with someone who has not observed *Shabbos* — and according to the natural order of things, every additional working day adds dollars to one’s bank account.

In response to this, the One on High<sup>474</sup> says: “‘Have no fear, My servant Yaakov!’<sup>475</sup> If you are My servant, you have nothing to fear. I will provide you with everything.”

When someone has a bondman, the Torah rules that the master has to provide for him and for his family. The bondman is obligated to do the work that his master assigns him; as to his livelihood, his master will see to that. The same applies to Jews. When a Jew is “My servant Yaakov,” and does what the One on High wants him to do, He provides him with all his needs, both spiritual and material.

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473. Extract from a talk addressed to a group of businessmen from New Haven who met every week for a *Melaveh Malkah*, the festive meal — with meditative *niggunim*, stories of *tzaddikim*, and inspirational Torah teachings — with which the departing *Shabbos* Queen is escorted every Saturday night. The talk was delivered on Sunday, 16 Iyar, 5719 (1959), and appears in *Toras Menachem* — *Hisvaaduyos*, Vol. 25, pp. 286-289.

474. In the original Yid., *der Eibershter*.

475. *Yeshayahu* 44:2. This assurance is the theme of a well-loved *Melaveh Malkah* hymn.

This is highlighted whenever a group of Jews foregather happily for their weekly *Melaveh Malkah*. A day has just passed during which there was no income. Not only that, but there were various *Shabbos* expenses as well, and a donation made in the course of a *Mi SheBeirach*<sup>476</sup> after being called to the Torah, and there was a guest for *Kiddush* and a *Shabbos* meal, and so on.

And when that day comes to an end on *Motzaei Shabbos*, a Jew says *Baruch Atah... boreh meorei ha'esh*, blessing Him "Who creates the lights of fire," for he knows that though the world outside is dark, he is able to light it up. This is what we learn in the *Midrash* — that the first time Adam saw nightfall, G-d gave him the notion that he should rub two stones together and produce light. It was then that he discovered that a man is able to diffuse light even when the world around him is dark.

## 85.

### Before the Sea Splits: Four Responses to the Crises of This World

The<sup>477</sup> Torah reading that is connected with this day of the week<sup>478</sup> describes how the Jews, having left Egypt, had already reached Pi HaChiros. And though, as the *Midrash* teaches, Egyptian law granted freedom to any escaped slave who reached that point, Pharaoh and his chariots were still in hot pursuit.

As we learn in the *Mechilta*, the Jews at this point divided up into four groups.

476. See *Siddur Tehillat HaShem* (Annotated Edition), p. 226.

477. The above text translates sec. 16ff. of a *sichah* delivered on Yud Shvat, 5722 (1962), that appears in *Sichos Kodesh*, 5722; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 3, p. 883ff., and the forthcoming Vol. 33 of *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*.

478. The Rebbe introduced his subject by mentioning that the Rebbe Rayatz had widely encouraged the practice of studying part of the weekly reading of *Chumash* together with the commentary of *Rashi* every day. Each day's reading covers one of the seven passages to be read on *Shabbos*. Since this *sichah* was delivered on Monday of the week of *Parshas Beshalach*, the Rebbe is referring here to the *parshah* from *Sheini* to *Shlishi*.

One said, **“Let us leap into the sea.”**

A second group said, **“Let us return to Egypt.”**

A third group said, **“Let us fight Pharaoh.”**

And a fourth group said, **“Let us cry out and pray.”**

Moshe Rabbeinu answered them all<sup>479</sup> according to the command of G-d.

To those who said, “Let us leap into the sea,” he said: “Stand firm and behold the salvation of G-d.” There is no reason for suicide, because G-d’s salvation will soon be seen.

To those who said, “Let us return to Egypt,” he said: “You will never see them again.”

To those who said, “Let us fight Pharaoh,” he said: “G-d will do battle for you.”

And to those who said, “Let us cry out and pray,” he said: “And you shall hold your peace.” There is no need even to cry out and pray.

What, then, *should* be done? G-d’s answer to Moshe Rabbeinu comes in the next verse: “Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey ahead!”

Now, this appears problematic. In Moshe Rabbeinu’s compound reply, how could all four groups be latched together — the group that said, “Let us return to Egypt,” together with the other three groups? Since the stance of that group is the antithesis of the Exodus from Egypt, how can its members be grouped together even with those who argued, “Let us leap into the sea”? For the desire to leap into the sea indicates self-sacrifice. A person in this frame of mind wants to have nothing to do with a world in which the victors are Pharaoh and his hosts. True, this desire stems from the World of *Tohu*,<sup>480</sup> [which is the very opposite of *Tikkun*,] but the fact remains that it indicates self-sacrifice. It is certainly unrelated to a desire to return to Egypt.

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479. His answer extends over two consecutive verses (*Shmos* 14:13-14).

480. And is thus a dangerously undisciplined explosion of intense spiritual energy.

More problematic is the question of how the group that said, “Let us return to Egypt,” could be coupled together with those who said, “Let us fight Pharaoh,” for fighting Pharaoh and the Egyptians would certainly be a positive move.

And even more problematic is the question of how the group that preferred to return to Egypt could be coupled together with those who said, “Let us cry out and pray.” After all, what could be loftier than the *avodah*<sup>481</sup> of prayer? Ever since the Torah was given, there has been (according to all halachic opinions) an explicit Scriptural commandment to turn to G-d in prayer for all of one’s needs, especially in time of distress. True, the above debate took place before the Giving of the Torah, but if one of the four groups correctly anticipated the future *mitzvah* of prayer, how could they be coupled with the other three groups, especially with the group that preferred to return to Egypt?

Apart from that, what is signified by the command to “speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey ahead”? Why was it inappropriate to turn to G-d in prayer? At first glance, surely it would appear that to cry out and pray to G-d indicates that one is entrusting one’s entire self into His Hands. And surely this is particularly true when one senses that his very survival is in the balance. By contrast, journeying ahead could be motivated by all kinds of causes, such as a fear of Pharaoh.

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As has often been pointed out, the subjects that the Torah speaks of are not narrations of one-time events from the past. Rather, the word *Torah* shares a root with *horaah*, which means a teaching<sup>481</sup> — and from every teaching one is intended to learn something, in all places and at all times.

This principle applies especially to subjects related to the Exodus from Egypt. The *Mishnah* teaches:<sup>482</sup> “*In every generation a man is obligated to regard himself as if he personally came out of Egypt.*”

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481. *Zohar* III, 53b.

482. *Pesachim* 10:5.

When the Alter Rebbe paraphrases this in chapter 47 of *Tanya*, he writes: “In every generation *and every day*....” Clearly, then, subjects that are related to the Exodus from Egypt should serve as lessons day by day.

This principle applies even more particularly to our subject because, as is taught in the *Tosefta* and cited in *Torah Or*, just as one must mention the Exodus every day, so, too, must one mention the Splitting of the Sea every day. And since the Splitting of the Sea came as a response to all four groups, it is of course relevant to every day, so that people will know that their *avodah* should not be directed to follow the approach of any of the four groups. Instead, “Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey ahead,” for it is specifically this approach that will make the Sea split.

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In one’s *avodah*, his personal service of G-d, even on the positive side, there are also “four groups” — four approaches.

The easiest approach is to say, “Let us leap into the sea.” That is an approach of *Tohu*. When a person observes that he is located in This World, which is known as the World of *Asiyah*,<sup>483</sup> a world “in which the wicked prevail” (as is written in *Etz Chayim* and cited by the Alter Rebbe in *Tanya*<sup>484</sup>), and so on, the easiest resort is to “leap into the sea,” and to have nothing to do with civilizing the world. As to what will be with the world, such a person will argue that the world can survive through the efforts of others. Moreover, he will argue, such matters are “the mysteries of G-d,”<sup>485</sup> His affairs that He will attend to. As to this individual himself, he will “leap into the sea” — whether it be the sea of Torah study, or a sea of *mitzvos*, or a sea of *teshuvah*,<sup>34</sup> depending on the individual. After all, the sea is a purifying agent, so this individual will unite

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483. I.e., the lowest of the Four Worlds.

484. Ch. 6.

485. *Berachos* 10a.

with his Maker, but in a way from which the world will gain nothing.

There is a second approach. When one observes what goes on in the world around him, he falls into despair. However, he realizes that “against your will you live,”<sup>486</sup> so he has no license to leap into the sea. Indeed, he must interact with This World. The trouble is that he fulfills this obligation like a slave — in fact, like a fully-fledged slave in the bondage of Egypt, so that he bites his tongue and nods his assent to every approaching wave in this revealed world. Day after day he drags his burden and toils his due — but through all this, not only does he not illuminate Egypt, but he has become a mere slave.

True, he does not transgress the Torah’s commandments, but whatever he does is a mere fulfillment of the order that “against your will you live.” This kind of acceptance of the Yoke of Heaven<sup>487</sup> is *lower* than mortal reason. For such a person, *kabbalas ol* does not serve only as a starting point for his *avodah*; rather, all of his Torah study and observance of the *mitzvos* is no more than *kabbalas ol*. Having despaired of ever doing anything worthwhile with This World, he resigns himself to his lot which is — as he perceives it, G-d forbid — to remain forever a slave to Pharaoh.

In truth, of course, one should keep in mind that “you are My servants, and not servants to servants.”<sup>488</sup> An awareness of this ought to arouse one to study Torah and fulfill the *mitzvos* with vitality and exuberance, so that even a bypasser will be able to discern that he is studying Torah not out of despair, but joyfully. With such a person, the commandments will likewise be observed not out of *kabbalas ol* alone, because that is only “the *beginning* of Divine service and its core and root.”<sup>489</sup> After that, he will proceed to observe the *mitzvos* with vitality and joy. He knows that he can

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486. *Avos* 4:22.

487. In the original, *kabbalas ol*.

488. Cf. *Bava Metzia* 10a, commenting on the verse, “For the Children of Israel are servants unto Me” (*Vayikra* 25:55).

489. *Tanya*, ch. 41.

take the skin of an animal, inscribe four passages on it, bind it on his arm and head, and thereby fulfill the Divine Will. He knows that he can make the animal cease being an animal and transform it into a *mitzvah*, a vessel for Divinity. Realizing all this, he will obviously perform his *mitzvah* with joy.

By contrast, the above-described individual who chooses to return to Egypt has already lost hope. He sees no option, because he has been told that “against your will you live.” So he drags his burden with neither joy, nor vitality, nor pleasure, nor desire, nor hope that he will accomplish anything thereby. Having no choice, when the sun rises he prays at dawn, when it’s time for *Minchah* he *davens*<sup>490</sup> *Minchah*, when it’s time for *Maariv* he *davens Maariv*, and when he has to eat something he duly recites the appropriate blessings before and after eating. But he has long since given up hope. He has already returned to Egypt.

Then there is a third approach: “Let us fight Pharaoh.” However, a person in this frame of mind does not ask G-d how this should be done: he relies on his own mortal understanding. Seeing no alternative, he sets out energetically to do battle with Egypt. Now, at first glance this course of action would appear to be right. It will not be right, however, if instead of consulting the Divine Will he follows his own reason. The fact that he personally sees no alternative does not mean that G-d, too, can find no alternative solution. It could well be that the Divine Will perceives the situation quite differently.

The fourth approach proposes, “Let us cry out and pray.” As to what will happen next, “G-d will do what seems good in His eyes,”<sup>490</sup> and the individual who lives according to this approach is no longer concerned with the outcome. It is true that prayer is the beginning of the “ladder placed on the ground,” and that through prayer one can reach a point at which “its upper end reaches up to the Heavens.”<sup>491</sup> However, if one submits everything into the

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490. Cf. *I Shmuel* 3:18.

491. *Bereishis* 28:12.

Hands of G-d so that He should do as He sees fit, and as for oneself one does nothing, this is no way to tackle one's *avodah*.

Two opposites are expected of a Jew. Since, as was discussed in today's *maamar*,<sup>492</sup> the capacity for boundlessness<sup>493</sup> is to be found in This World, too, it is possible to demand of a Jew that he combine two opposite thrusts.<sup>494</sup>

On the one hand one is required to believe<sup>495</sup> that "everything is in the hands of Heaven,"<sup>309</sup> and that every detailed occurrence is directed by the particular Providence<sup>140</sup> of the Holy One, blessed be He. And since it comes from Him, then even if His Word contradicts what a mortal perceives as reasonable, that mortal will respond by willingly saying, "Here I am," even if it is the opposite of overt and manifest good.

On the other hand one is required to have trust,<sup>496</sup> which is one of the essential foundations of our faith. Having trust does not mean being certain that G-d will do something that *He* knows is good; it means being certain that He will bestow — in material affairs, too — the kind of good that is visible and manifest,<sup>152</sup> at a level that is "lower than ten handbreadths[from the ground]." <sup>497</sup>

Now, one knows that it is written in *Iggeres HaKodesh* that hidden acts of kindness<sup>498</sup> can sometimes find a contrary expression here below. In such a case — *after* the event, when the order has already been given from Above — one must know that what has happened is in truth something good, except that it is a hidden and concealed good. Beforehand, by contrast, one ought to trust that

492. *Basi LeGani* 5722 (1962).

493. In the original, *bli gvul*.

494. I.e., that he resemble his Maker, Whose infinity enables Him to simultaneously comprise opposite thrusts (in the original, to be *nosei hafachim*).

495. In the original, the corresponding noun is *emunah* — "belief."

496. In the original, *bitachon*.

497. In the original, *lematah me'asarah tefachim* — a common Talmudic phrase that is borrowed here as a metaphor to signify something that is actual, tangible, and down to earth.

498. In the original, *chassadim hamechusim*. Cf.: *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 11; see also *Tanya* — *Likkutei Amarim*, ch. 26.



things will certainly work out well, visibly and manifestly, even when according to the laws of nature there is no such prospect.<sup>499</sup> Despite that, one trusts that G-d will help him, because G-d is unbounded and can thus change the laws of nature.

By way of parallel: At the same time that one needs to know that “everything is on the hands of Heaven” and that one should utterly rely on G-d alone, one must simultaneously keep in mind the continuation of that teaching: “Everything is on the hands of Heaven *except for the fear of Heaven*.”<sup>500</sup> In matters related to the fear of Heaven, it is not appropriate to rely on “G-d, [Who] will do what seems good in His eyes.”<sup>490</sup> Together with that, one must invest one’s own effort.

To fear Heaven does not mean being afraid of the One on High, such as being afraid of punishment (G-d forbid). Rather, it resembles the anxiety of an only son who would like to carry out his father’s will, but is afraid that his efforts may perhaps not have been quite on target. Since a mortal realizes that in every respect he is finite, he is afraid lest he has not fulfilled the will of his Father in Heaven. (This is discussed at length in *Hemshech* 5666.<sup>501</sup>) That is why he checks to see if every move of his accords with the Divine Will.

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And this explains why all four groups were latched together in the compound answer that Moshe Rabbeinu relayed to the people on the brink of the Sea. For what was common to them all was that they were all lacking in the fear of Heaven.<sup>502</sup> If they were not lacking in their *yiras Shamayim*, they would not have propounded their own opinions: they would have asked Moshe Rabbeinu what they ought to do. However, since this fear of Heaven was lacking, even a proposal to fight Pharaoh and even a proposal to cry out

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499. See Appendix B on p. 199 below.

500. In the original, *chutz miyiras Shamayim*.

501. A series of *maamarim* of the Rebbe Rashab.

502. As defined in the previous paragraph.

and pray can run counter to the Divine Will, just like the proposal to leap into the sea or the proposal to return to Egypt.

## 86.

### Faith and Trust

#### (a)

**Faith relates not to practicalities but to one's  
Divine service. Trust, by contrast,  
has a practical consequence.**

The<sup>503</sup> Alter Rebbe gives two distinct explanations for the daily custom of reciting the passage from the Torah<sup>504</sup> that describes how G-d sustained His People in the wilderness with manna, food from Heaven. The Alter Rebbe's reason for offering two explanations was not a consideration of style, but of substance, though he did not include this reading in his *Siddur* (for [Kabbalistic] reasons to be found in *Shaar HaKavanah* by the AriZal).

The message of the verses concerning the manna is particularly highlighted by a teaching of the Rebbe Maharash:<sup>505</sup> "Today, [too,] one's livelihood comes [from Heaven] like manna — except that because of the prevailing darkness and [Divine self-]concealment, people aren't aware of this."<sup>506</sup>

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503. Abridged from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Beshalach*, Tu BiShvat, 5723 (1963), and appearing in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 26, p. 95ff.

504. Known as *Parshas HaMan* (*Shmos* 16:4-36). In the Holy Tongue, the original of "manna" is מן.

505. R. Shmuel Schneersohn (son and successor of the *Tzemach Tzedek*), the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe.

506. A graphic instance of a Sage who did retain this awareness is discussed below in section (d) of the present *sichah* — regarding R. Yeissa the Elder, who would say, "We will not prepare the meal until it is given by the King," even though "he *had* food for that day."

In the later edition (*Mahadura Basra*) of his *Shulchan Aruch*,<sup>507</sup> the Alter Rebbe wrote that “it is proper to recite every day [...] the passage concerning the manna, [to spur] one’s **trust** (*bitachon*) in G-d Who provides one with his daily bread.” The person who cultivates this attribute does not merely have faith that G-d is his Provider. Beyond that, without anxiety, he *relies* on G-d, Who will provide him with his daily bread, certainly and constantly — or, to translate the Alter Rebbe’s concluding words more literally, “Who provides one with each day’s bread on its day.”

This explanation (“[to spur] one’s trust in G-d”) varies from the one that the Alter Rebbe had given in the first edition (*Mahadura Kama*) of his *Shulchan Aruch*:<sup>508</sup> “[One should also read] the passage concerning the manna, to fortify his **faith** (*emunah*) that all his provisions are granted to him by Divine Providence, for the Holy One, blessed be He, specifically provided every man with an *omer* [of manna] for every member of his household. As it is written, ‘When they measured it by the *omer*, he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little was lacking nothing.’”

In the same two contexts the Alter Rebbe writes: “It is proper to recite every day the passage of the *Akeidah* (the Binding of Yitzchak).” In the later edition of his *Shulchan Aruch* he gives only one reason for doing so — “to recall the merit of the Patriarchs.”<sup>507</sup> In its first edition he had given two reasons — “to recall the merit of the Patriarchs before the Holy One, blessed be He,” and further, “This also serves to make one’s [Evil] Inclination submit to the service of G-d, just as Yitzchak sacrificed himself.”<sup>508</sup>

It will be noted that in the edition that explains the reading of the passage concerning the manna in terms of **trust**, the Alter Rebbe explains the reading of the passage concerning the *Akeidah* in terms of the merit of the Patriarchs. By contrast, in the edition that gives *two* reasons for reading the passage concerning the *Akei-*

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507. See sec. 1:9 in the annotated Bilingual Edition of the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch* (Kehot, N.Y., 5762/2002), Vol. 1, p. 76.

508. Sec. 1:10; *op. cit.*, p. 112.

*dah*, he explains the reading of the passage concerning the manna in terms of **faith**.

To distinguish between faith and trust: **Faith** relates not to practicalities but to one's Divine service. Hence, even when a man of faith makes a living, he will appreciate that it is given to him by G-d. He will not delude himself into thinking that "my strength and the might of my hand have brought me all this prosperity."<sup>509</sup> **Trust**, by contrast, has a practical consequence. A person without a livelihood could despair, thinking, "From where will my help come?"<sup>510</sup> Instead, despite his predicament, he places his trust in G-d. Thus, **faith** [merely] indicates a certain rung in a person's Divine service, whereas in response to a person's **trust**, G-d reciprocates "measure for measure"<sup>511</sup> and fulfills his needs.

This distinction has a halachic corollary. If the reason for reading the passage concerning the manna relates to faith, one may do so not only on weekdays but also on *Shabbos*. If, however, the reason for reading this passage relates to trust, it should not be read on *Shabbos*, for the prayers of that day do not include material requests.

(b)

**Faith is constant. Trust is a sensation  
that is aroused within one when it is needed.**

Another<sup>512</sup> difference between faith (*emunah*) and trust (*bitachon*) is the following:

Faith is constant. Since faith is the believer's certainty in his basic axiom, it is constantly present, even when his faith has no

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509. *Devarim* 8:17. Significantly, this verse appears immediately after the verse that speaks of Him "Who sustained you with manna in the wilderness."

510. *Tehillim* 121:1.

511. *Nedarim* 32a.

512. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 26, p. 99ff., as abridged in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 115.

immediate practical application.<sup>513</sup> Take, for example, a man's faith that his entire livelihood comes to him through Divine Providence. It would not be appropriate to say that he believes in this only at the time that he is actually engaged in earning his livelihood. Rather, his faith is within his soul constantly.

This is not the case with trust. A man's certainty and reliance on G-d for his livelihood is a sensation that is aroused within him when it is needed:<sup>514</sup> when he is working to make a living, he trusts that "the L-rd your G-d will bless you in all that you do."<sup>515</sup> He trusts that G-d will *certainly* make his activities succeed so that he will be able to earn his livelihood.

In the same way, if a person is confronted by imminent misfortune, and sees no possibility of being saved from it by natural means, he does not fall into despair (G-d forbid), [as if left with the question,] "From where will my help come?"<sup>516</sup> Rather, he is *certain*<sup>517</sup> — i.e., he *trusts*<sup>518</sup> — that He Who is the Master of nature,

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513. As to the other side of the coin: In the teachings of *Chassidus*, faith is described as a *ko'ach makkif* — an attribute that is not numbered among the conscious (rational and emotive) faculties of the soul, but transcends them (lit., "encompasses them"). This very fact explains why, when there is a question of practical application, one can have a paradoxical situation in which "a burglar, at the mouth of his tunnel, calls upon G-d!" (*Berachos* 63a, as cited in *Ein Yaakov*).

Now, if the burglar's belief in G-d is so strong that he pleads with Him that He make the present escapade prosper, how can he flaunt G-d's Will at the very same moment? Does he not believe in Him?! *Chassidus* resolves this anomaly by explaining that this individual does indeed believe in G-d — except that his faith has remained transcendent: he has never integrated it into his conscious thinking.

This characteristic of faith (*emunah*) is not present in the attribute of trust (*bitachon*).

514. Though always present, the attribute of trust is *aroused* when one is confronted by a question of practical application. (See *Nesivos Olam* by the *Maharal*, at the beginning of *Nesiv HaBitachon*.)

515. *Devarim* 15:18.

516. *Tehillim* 121:1.

517. In the original, *batuach*.

518. In the original, *boteiach*.

and can change it,<sup>519</sup> will certainly help him. As the following verse answers, “My help will come from G-d, Who makes heaven and earth.”<sup>520</sup>

(c)

**The Certainty of One’s Trust Elicits Salvation**

It<sup>521</sup> could be argued that when a Jew demonstrates his complete trust in G-d, so that it is utterly clear to him that G-d will show him kindness that is unconcealed and manifest, then regardless of the calculations and possibilities of the natural order, that trust itself elicits a reciprocal response from Above. G-d relates to him measure for measure, for this, as the Torah explicitly rules, is the Divine mode of operation.<sup>522</sup> G-d grants him the kind of good that is visible and manifest,<sup>523</sup> utterly disregarding any calculations as to whether he deserves it.<sup>524</sup>

(d)

**Food from the King’s Hand,  
or through a Natural Conduit?**

(i) R.<sup>525</sup> Yeissa the Elder<sup>526</sup> would prepare his meal every day only after first having asked that his food come from G-d. As he

519. Cf. Rabbeinu Yonah, cited in *Kad HaKemach*, s.v. *Bitachon*. See also the letter of the Rebbe Rayatz, which appears as Appendix B on p. 199 below.

520. *Tehillim* 121:2.

521. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 26, p. 99ff., as abridged in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 114.

522. *Sotah* 1:7.

523. And since the Divine mode of operation is “measure for measure,” from the very outset one trusts that G-d will grant him that kind of good. Indeed, in defining the attribute of *bitachon*, Rabbeinu Bachaye writes that “one’s heart is strong in his trust, as if G-d had made him a promise.” (See *Kad HaKemach*, s.v. *Bitachon*.)

524. This question is taken up in greater detail in Item 100 below, under subheading (c): Those who are Deserving and Those who are Not.

525. *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 26, pp. 99ff., as abridged in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 119.

526. In the original, R. Yeissa Sava.

would say, “We will not prepare the meal until it is given by the King.”<sup>527</sup>

Now, this calls for explanation. Since the food for the meal was already in his possession and only needed to be prepared (“He *had* food for that day”<sup>528</sup>), what is the meaning of his request that G-d grant him his food?<sup>529</sup>

This could be understood as follows.

The Sages teach<sup>530</sup> that Yosef was punished for having requested of the Chief Butler, “Mention me to Pharaoh.”<sup>531</sup> On this teaching, Rabbeinu Bachaye comments:<sup>532</sup> “Heaven forbid that Yosef the Righteous should make his trust depend on the Chief Butler; he trusted in G-d alone. He only meant that G-d had engineered his encounter with the Chief Butler so that He could perform a miracle through him.” Why, then, was Yosef punished?<sup>533</sup> “Because in the Chief Butler he sought a *medium*, a *causal link*<sup>534</sup> (through which G-d would send him his salvation) — and it is not fitting that *tzaddikim*<sup>17</sup> of his stature should seek a causal link. This is why he was punished. He should have trusted only that the Holy One, blessed be He — the Cause of all causes — would provide him with the appropriate causal link, without his seeking it.”

527. *Zohar* II, 62b; cf. I, 199b. In several other sources the above practice is told of Rav Hamnuna Sava (see: *Maamarei Admur HaZakein* 5565 (1805), Vol. 2, pp. 648, 652; *Siddur im Dach*, p. 224; *Sefer HaMitzvos — Derech Mitzvosecha*, by the Tzemach Tzedek, *Mitzvas Tiglachas Metzora*, sec. 2; et al.). In *Kuntreis U'Maayan* (17:1, et al.), the same is told of R. Yeiva Sava.

528. *Zohar*, loc. cit.

529. Indeed, this practice recalls a teaching of the Sages (*Shabbos* 118b): “If one recites *Hallel* every day, [it is as if he blasphemed].” As *Rashi* explains there, the early prophets ordained that certain psalms of praise and thanksgiving be recited at appropriate times (*Pesachim* 117a). Making this a commonplace habit turns *Hallel* into a lighthearted song.

530. *Bereishis Rabbah* on the beginning of *Parshas Miketz*; *Rashi* on the end of *Parshas Vayeishev*.

531. *Bereishis* 40:14.

532. At the end of *Parshas Vayeishev*.

533. On this question, see also Item 78 above and Item 94 below.

534. In the original, *sibah*.

This comment has been queried:<sup>535</sup> Speaking of *bitachon* (trust), the author of *Chovos HaLevavos* writes that there is an *obligation* to be concerned with causal links, and he supports this claim with several proofs.<sup>536</sup> Why, then, was Yosef punished?

In resolution, it has been explained<sup>537</sup> that trust exists at two levels:

**The Natural Mode:** Sometimes G-d relates to [a person] in such a way that “things [such as Divinely-bestowed blessings] are elicited — and they proceed to descend — in an orderly manner according to the pattern of nature.”<sup>538</sup> (As expressed in the language of *Chassidus*,<sup>12</sup> this mode of descent characterizes the flow of Divine energy that is called *memaleh kol almin* — Divinity that is *immanent* in all the worlds.) When G-d relates to a person in such a way, he should seek an appropriate medium and create a natural vessel or conduit, because this particular mode of Divine influence is reaching him in a way that is vested in nature.

**The Supernatural Mode:** Sometimes a person perceives that G-d is relating to him in such a way that “things [such as Divinely-bestowed blessings] are elicited and drawn downward in a manner that does *not* accord with the pattern of nature.” (As expressed in the language of *Chassidus*, this mode of descent characterizes the flow of Divine energy that is called *sovev kol almin* — Divinity that *transcends* all the worlds.) When G-d relates to a person in such a way, a higher level of trust is demanded of him. He is expected to “trust in G-d’s direction alone and to take no steps whatever, only

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535. Or *HaTorah* (Yahel Or) on *Tehillim* 40:5; the *maamarim* beginning *VeLo Zachar* dating from 5677 (1917) and 5688 (1928). See also: *Maamarei Admur HaZakein* 5565 (1805), Vol. 1, p. 200; *Toras Chayim*, *Parshas Vayechi*, the *maamar* beginning *Ben Poras Yosef*, sec. 13.

536. *Shaar HaBitachon*, in the Fifth Introduction to ch. 3, and in ch. 4, *et al.* See also Letter 2 above.

537. See the above *maamarim* beginning *VeLo Zachar*.

538. From *Hemshech* 5672 (1912), Vol. 1, sec. 82. The quotation there relates to the two modes of *bitachon* that are mystically alluded to by the verse which literally means, “Better to trust in G-d than to trust in man,” and that are cited in the above-mentioned *maamarim* beginning *VeLo Zachar*. (See Item 78 above.)



to trust that G-d will certainly help him by arranging an appropriate medium.”<sup>539</sup>

To revert to the above question as to why Yosef the Righteous should have been punished for seeking a natural medium through which his salvation should come: Since through his *avodah* he was constantly connected with the latter, supernatural mode of Divine influence,<sup>540</sup> he ought to have conducted himself at the loftier level of trust.

(ii) The distinction between the above two levels in the attribute of trust is also apparent while one is fashioning a medium.<sup>541</sup>

Why, at the first level, is a person required to make a vessel? Because when G-d relates to him in such a way that “[Divinely-bestowed blessings] are elicited... according to the pattern of nature,” nature and natural processes acquire a certain standing in his mind. This is why he must seek a conduit or a medium through which the Divine blessings will be conveyed.

This is not the case with a person who trusts at a loftier level — who needs “to take no steps whatever, only to trust in G-d.” In his mind, the processes of nature are of no account. (This is why he needs no medium nor vessel.) Hence, even when a natural medium or conduit for his livelihood exists, he does not consider his livelihood to be any *nearer* to him than if it did not exist. Because the medium or vessel in their own right are of no account in his eyes, he knows only that he receives everything directly from

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539. Moreover, in the words of the above-mentioned *Henshech* 5672 (1912), *loc. cit.*: “When one sees that he should conduct himself in this manner, he does not thereby contravene the principle that ‘one may not depend on a miracle’” (*Pesachim* 64b).

540. Yosef’s mode of *avodah* is contrasted with that of Yaakov in the sources enumerated in footnote 535 above.

541. In the original — *keli*, i.e., a vessel or a conduit.

On the following passage, see also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 16, p. 174ff. (and footnote 544 below). See also Item 87 below.

G-d — and indeed, the medium or vessel were created for him<sup>542</sup> by G-d, together with his livelihood.

This also explains why R. Yeissa the Elder<sup>543</sup> would say, “We will not prepare the meal until it is given by the King,” even though “he *had* food for that day.” For his trust was such that he perceived every single activity not as his own doing, but as *given by G-d*.<sup>544</sup> Hence, even when the food was already in his home, in his possession, and needed only to be prepared, he felt that it was not *his* food — that *he* was taking his food and preparing it — but that “it was given by the King.” At this present moment, G-d was giving it to him. *This, too*, he therefore had to request of G-d, just as he would ask G-d for his food when it was *not* in his possession.

(iii) The above concept enables us to understand another aspect of the conduct of R. Yeissa Sava.

From the language of the *Zohar* — “R. Yeissa Sava would prepare his meal *every day* only after first having asked...” — it would appear that this was his practice even on *Shabbos*.<sup>545</sup> Now, *Shabbos* is not a time for making one’s material requests. How, then, did this sage ask for food even on *Shabbos*?

In the light of the concept discussed in sec. (ii) above, the problem is solved. Requesting one’s material needs on *Shabbos* is out of place when the individual is focusing on *himself*, when he is requesting that *his* needs and wants be filled. Not so the prayer of R. Yeissa Sava. What impelled his prayer was the very fact that he

542. It is written, “Cast your burden on G-d and He will sustain you” (*Tehillim* 55:23).

The latter phrase (“He will sustain you”) translates *yechalkelecha*. Noting that the root of this word resembles the word *keli* (“a vessel”), our Rebbeim understand — on the non-literal level of interpretation called *derush* — that the verse is intimating that “He will make you a vessel” [for your sustenance]. (See the closing lines of the above-mentioned *maamar* beginning *VeLo Zachar* 5688/1928.)

543. See also: the sources listed in footnote 527 above; *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 1, p. 6ff.

544. On the parallel with the granting of manna in the wilderness, see the discussion in *Likkutei Sichos* (Vol. 16, p. 176) on the verse, “I will hereby cause bread to rain for you from the heavens” (*Shmos* 16:4). Manna, too, entailed some exertion on the part of its recipients.

545. Cf. *Zohar* II, 62a, which speaks of preparing “every day’s food on that day, except on *erev Shabbos* for *Shabbos*.”

was utterly *devoid* of self-concern — to the extent that at every single step he felt that everything depended on G-d, in the spirit of the verse, “[G-d desires...] those who long for His kindness.”<sup>546</sup> And, as the *Zohar*<sup>547</sup> comments, “These are the people who *yearn and wait every single day to ask* the Holy One, blessed be He, for their provisions.” In other words, their prayer simply expresses the fact that they are “longing for His kindness.”<sup>548</sup> Their prayer voices their feeling that everything comes only as an act of G-d’s loving-kindness.

And praying for food in *this* manner is in place even on *Shabbos*.

(iv) True, the above-described conduct of R. Yeissa Sava is not equally appropriate to everyone. Nevertheless, “a minute portion and particle of it”<sup>549</sup> is applicable to everyone,<sup>550</sup> at least at certain times.

And here, it could be suggested, lies the difference between weekdays and *Shabbos*. During the six weekdays, when a Jew lives his life as set out in the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>551</sup> — going about his affairs, doing his business honestly, preoccupied with his livelihood — he trusts in G-d at the level at which one seeks a natural medium,<sup>552</sup>

546. *Tehillim* 147:11.

547. *Loc. cit.* See also *Or HaTorah* on *Parshas Beshalach*, p. 644.

548. On the concept of eating *lesheim Shamayim* (“for the sake of Heaven”), the Rebbe speaks of a level at which the act of eating becomes subordinate to the blessing that is recited over the food — so subordinate, in fact, that the eater’s worldly *pleasure* derives only from the fact that it enables him to recite the blessing. (See the Rebbe’s *Haggadah shel Pesach im Biurim* (Kehot, N.Y., 5746-7/1986-7), p. 633ff.)

549. The Alter Rebbe uses these words when comparing the limited capacity of people at large to the sublime level of love of G-d experienced by Moshe Rabbeinu (*Tanya*, ch. 44). After noting this, the Rebbe cites sources in the Kabbalah that discuss the link between Rav Hamnuna Sava (see footnote 527 above) and Moshe Rabbeinu. (See: the Introduction to *Zohar* I, p. 7b, and *Mikdash Melech*, *ad loc.*; *Shaar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 36.)

550. Cf.: *Sotah* 48b; *Yoma* 76a; *Mechilta* and *Tanchuma* on *Shmos* 16:4; *Zohar* II, 62a and 63a; *Or HaTorah* on *Parshas Beshalach*, p. 644.

551. *Orach Chayim*, sec. 156:1.

552. See the above subheading on The Natural Mode.

because he cannot be expected to utterly transcend nature and to trust at the superior level.<sup>553</sup> *Shabbos*, by contrast, is not a day of activity,<sup>554</sup> and at that time a Jew is elevated above and beyond workaday activities. On that day he is expected to attain, at least to some degree, the superior level of trust — the trust of “those who long for His kindness.”

## 87.

**A Jewish farmer “believes in Him Who is the Life  
of all the worlds — and sows.”**

(a) There<sup>555</sup> is a verse that says,<sup>556</sup> “And the L-rd your G-d will bless you in all that you *do*.” In explanation of this verse, *Sifri* writes: “Lest a person think that he should sit idly, the verse comes to teach us that G-d’s blessing is bestowed in all that you *do*.” This means that it is the Torah that instructs one to create a natural vessel for one’s livelihood, and that “one should not rely on a miracle.”<sup>557</sup>

This requirement to *do* — i.e., to create a natural conduit through which one’s living is to be earned — may be approached in either of two ways:

- (i) One knows that nature *per se* has no self-sufficient existence<sup>558</sup> and is no more than “an ax in the hand of the woodchopper”; nevertheless, since G-d commanded that one should *do* — i.e., one should create a natural vessel for one’s livelihood — *nature acquires a certain standing in one’s*

553. See the above subheading on The Supernatural Mode.

554. Cf. *Yechezkel* 46:1.

555. From a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Balak*, 5723 (1963), and published in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 18, p. 295, as abridged in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 123ff.

556. *Devarim* 15:18.

557. Cf. *Pesachim* 64b; *Zohar* I, 111b; *op. cit.*, II, 112b. See also *Berachos* 35b: “Many [emulated] R. Shimon bar Yochai [and sought to rely on a supernatural provision of their material needs], but did not succeed in this.”

558. In the original, “nature... is not a *metzius*.”

*mind*, even though this status does not derive from nature in its own right but only by virtue of G-d's command.

- (ii) One engages in natural ways and means only because G-d so commanded. Nature is of no account in one's eyes because one perceives it as *nothing more than a means* of fulfilling G-d's Will.

This explains<sup>559</sup> the teaching of the Sages<sup>560</sup> on the verse,<sup>561</sup> "He shall be the faithfulness of your times...." The Sages teach that here, *emunas* ("faithfulness") alludes to *Seder Zera'im* [which is the section of the *Mishnah* that deals mainly with the laws applying to agriculture], for [a Jewish farmer] "believes in Him Who is the Life of all the worlds — and sows."

True enough, the fact that germination follows sowing is a natural phenomenon. It does not matter whether the farmer is Jewish or not, nor even if the seed fell to the ground without any human agency. The earth by nature promotes germination, regardless. (Indeed, this intrinsic nature of the earth is constant, as in the verse,<sup>562</sup> "seed time and harvest... will not cease.") Nevertheless, nature does not acquire status in the mind of a Jew. When he sows, he does not sow because according to the laws of nature sowing leads to germination, but only because "he believes in Him Who is the Life of all the worlds." *That* is why he sows.

(b) The difference between the above two approaches is not only a matter of *how one experiences* the attribute of trust. Beyond that, the manner in which experiences this attribute leads ultimately to *actual* differences in one's thought, speech, and action.

When what one has to *do* is perceived as a value in its own right,<sup>563</sup> i.e., when the laws of nature enjoy a certain standing in one's estimation, then one's obligations in the realm of the Torah

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559. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 1, pp. 216, 240.

560. *Shabbos* 31a, *Tosafos* s.v. *Emunas*, citing the *Talmud Yerushalmi*.

561. *Yeshayahu* 33:6.

562. *Bereishis* 8:22.

563. In the original, "when it is a *metzius* in its own right."

and its commandments (on the one hand) and the requirement to *do* (on the other hand) are perceived as two separate entities. In such a case, what happens if the two interests conflict? (A person might think, for example, that if he invests more time in meditation during prayer, his business affairs will suffer. Likewise, if he fulfills the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* generously, he may be left with less money to invest.) The tension between the two contrary claims can then be metaphorically described by the phrase,<sup>564</sup> “Two nations will contend for the upper hand.”

Indeed, let us even suppose that one foregoes activities that are bound by the laws of nature (because he realizes that “it is G-d’s blessing that bestows wealth,”<sup>565</sup> and natural processes are merely a conduit for G-d’s blessing), and he therefore engages in studying Torah and observing *mitzvos*. Even in such a case, he is following his present priorities by battling and contending with his animal soul. Hence it is always possible that the “other nation” will gain the upper hand (G-d forbid).

This is not so when what one has to *do* is not esteemed as a self-sufficient value, and one engages in natural ways and means only in order to fulfill G-d’s Will. Indeed, this kind of occupation in itself becomes a mode of Divine service.

The Sages teach that “all your actions should be performed for the sake of Heaven,”<sup>566</sup> and there is a verse that teaches, “Know Him in all your ways.”<sup>567</sup> Now, when one’s service of G-d is such that one engages in natural ways and means only in order to fulfill His Will, “all [one’s] actions” and “all [one’s] ways” are not distinct from “the sake of Heaven” and from the obligation to “know Him.” They all become one.

Moreover, because in such a person’s mind nothing is held to be of any account apart from G-d’s Will, there can obviously be no

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564. *Bereishis* 25:23. See also *Likkutei Amarim* — *Tanya*, ch. 13 (explained in *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. 1, pp. 193-195).

565. *Mishlei* 10:22.

566. *Avos* 2:12.

567. *Mishlei* 3:6.

conflict between one *mitzvah* and another. Indeed, “One *mitzvah* draws another in its train.”<sup>568</sup>

(c) The distinction between the above two approaches does not find its first expression in an actual deed; the Evil Inclination does not begin by inducing a Jew to contravene the Divine Will outright. Rather, it begins with a hair’s-breadth. As the Sages teach,<sup>569</sup> “This is how the Evil Inclination plies his craft: Today he tells a man, *Do this*; the next day he tells him, *Do that*; until ultimately he tells him, *Serve idols* — and he goes and serves them.” At first,<sup>570</sup> the Evil Inclination ostensibly agrees that one’s involvement in worldly activities must not conflict with one’s fulfillment of the Torah and its commandments. At this initial stage, the Evil Inclination only emphasizes that the Torah concedes that nature does have a certain status. Later, however,<sup>571</sup> he ultimately persuades his listener to accord first priority to the nature-bound activities of this world.

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], interpreted<sup>572</sup> the above Talmudic teaching (“today [the Evil Inclination] tells a man, *Do this*”) as follows: The Evil Inclination does not begin by trying to persuade a man to do something that is opposed that person’s *real* desire<sup>573</sup> (and thereby contravene the Divine Will). On the contrary, he tells him to *Do this*. The Evil Inclination *agrees* that this Jew should fulfill the Torah and its commandments. Indeed, he even explains the subject at hand *according to the intellect of the animal soul*. In this way, by involving himself in his listener’s fulfillment of the Torah and its commandments, and by habituating his listener to the idea that the listener needs his consent, the Evil Inclination draws him along to the point at which

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568. *Avos* 4:2.

569. *Shabbos* 105b.

570. In the language of the above Talmudic teaching, “today.”

571. In the language of the above Talmudic teaching, “the next day.”

572. In the *maamar* beginning *Amar R. Oshaya* 5689 (1929), sec. 7 (see *Sefer HaMaamarim* — *Kuntreisim*, Vol. 1, p. 37a). See also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 3, p. 900.

573. *Rambam*, *Hilchos Geirushin* 2:20.

“the next day he tells him, *Do that*; until ultimately he tells him, *Serve idols*.”

Accordingly, the way to defend oneself properly against the wiles of the Evil Inclination is *not* to gear one’s Divine service to the dictates of mortal reason, because mortal reason gives weight to nature as a self-sufficient consideration. Rather, one should go about one’s *avodah* by subjugating one’s own will — to the point of self-sacrifice — to the Divine Will,<sup>574</sup> in a manner that transcends mortal reason, for then the only consideration in one’s life that has real substance is the Divine Will.

## 88.

### From the Mouths of Babes: Three Modes of Trust

The<sup>575</sup> *Midrash* relates<sup>576</sup> that when the letters ordaining the decree against the Jews had been duly sealed by the king and delivered to Haman’s hands, Haman and all his comrades went strolling with jovial hearts and encountered Mordechai.

Just then Mordechai had caught sight of three little boys on their way home from school. He hastened towards them, and Haman and his band followed him so that they could hear what he was going to ask them.

When Mordechai caught up to the young pupils he said to one of them: “Recite me your verse!” The little boy promptly recited the verse he had just learned at school: **“Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes.”**<sup>577</sup>

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574. In the original, *bittul umesirus nefesh laratzon haElyon*.

575. Excerpts from a *sichah* delivered on Purim, 5726 (1966), and appearing in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 21, p. 206ff.

576. *Esther Rabbah*, toward the end of sec. 7:17. An abbreviated version is to be found in *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Esther*, sec. 1057. See also: *Aggadas Esther* 3:9, *Midrash Abba Gurion* 4:1, and *Midrash Lekach Tov* 4:1.

577. *Mishlei* 3:25.



The second little boy spoke up and said, “I studied Scripture today, and this is the verse I just reached at school: **‘Contrive a scheme, but it will be foiled; conspire a plot, but it will not materialize, for G-d is with us.’**”<sup>578</sup>

And the third little boy said: **“To your old age I am [with you]; to your hoary years I will sustain you; I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you.”**<sup>579</sup>

The *Midrash* proceeds to relate that when Mordechai heard these responses, he smiled with a happy heart.

Haman asked him: “What makes you so happy about what these children said?”

Replied Mordechai: “I am happy because of the glad tidings they told me — that I should not be afraid of the evil plot that you contrived against us.”

Hearing these words, the wicked Haman flew into a rage and declared: “The very first ones whom I will destroy shall be these children!”

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Simply understood, the reason for Mordechai’s joy was that in the children’s words he saw a prophecy that he had no cause to fear Haman’s decree. Along these lines, there are a number of sources in the *Talmud*<sup>580</sup> in which we encounter the phrase, “Recite me your verse,” intimating that the verse quoted by a small child serves as a kind of prophecy<sup>581</sup> from Above.

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578. *Yeshayahu* 8:10.

579. *Op. cit.* 46:4. These are the three verses (*Al tira...*) that appear immediately after *Aleinu* at the conclusion of each of the three daily prayer services.

580. *Gittin* 68a; *Chullin* 95b. See also: *Chagigah* 15a ff.; *Gittin* 56a; and further references discussed in the source of the following footnote.

581. In two substantial footnotes appended to the text of this talk as published in the Holy Tongue (in *Likkutei Sichos*, *loc. cit.*), the Rebbe analyzes the various stances of a broad range of *Rishonim* on the question of whether such a response should be termed “a kind of prophecy” or “a kind of minor prophecy” or “something related to prophecy”; on the ways in which asking a child to “recite his verse” is distinguishable from the forbidden kinds of divination (*Vayikra* 19:26); and accordingly, whether it is permitted to rely on such a response as a basis for

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As to the spiritual content of the above three verses: A Jew has an innate, latent capacity to sacrifice himself for the sake of Heaven. And these verses indicate three modes and levels of faith and trust in G-d, faith and trust that propel this latent capacity to the surface.

The first child's verse was: "Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes." It is natural that a person should be afraid when confronted by sudden terror or by the destruction of the wicked. Nevertheless, because of his innate faith and trust, a *believer* — a Jew — does not have this fear, nor does he need any rational explanation as to why he should be unafraid. With him it is natural that he should experience something in the spirit of the teaching of the Sages: "Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the good."<sup>265</sup>

The second child's verse was: "Contrive a scheme, but it will be foiled; conspire a plot, but it will not materialize, for G-d is with us." This verse indicates a stronger kind of faith. At this level, not only is one unafraid. Beyond that, he is certain that the threatening evil will be foiled and will not materialize. Moreover, he is certain of the reason that underlies his response to his predicament — "for G-d is with us."

Higher yet is the fundamental premise of the individual who lives at the level of the third verse: "To your old age I am [with you]; to your hoary years I will sustain you; I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you." It is clear to such an individual that even the laws of nature that G-d imbued in all of Creation have no dominion over a Jew. He does not feel overwhelmed by them. This state of mind demands more justification than the previous state of mind. Not only is a person at this level conscious that G-d is "*with us*," but moreover, since He has promised that "I have *made* you," the individual who lives at this level is

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actual decision-making, as opposed to merely rejoicing and taking note that this response is a good omen.

confident that the corollary of that promise will be fulfilled — “I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you.”

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These three modes of faith and trust also correspond to three levels in the schooling of the three children.

The first child, taking his earliest steps at school, can only “recite his verse.” More than that he has not learned. Nevertheless, even before he reaches an age at which he can understand things rationally, this he should know, simply and decisively: “*Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes.*”

When a child is a little older and his learning has progressed (“I studied Scripture today, and this is the verse I just reached at school”), so that he can now read and study alone and can use his own understanding, he is taught to appreciate a deeper principle. He can now be taught to attain — and with certainty — a superior level of faith and trust. He can now be taught: “Contrive a scheme, *but it will be foiled*; conspire a plot, *but it will not materialize.*” Moreover, he is now ready to be taught why such certainty is warranted — “*for G-d is with us.*”

The mind of a child at the third level is even more developed.<sup>582</sup> In the mind of such a child one ought to impart and implant the axiom — complete with an explanation of the third-quoted verse — that a Jew does not allow himself to be overawed even by the natural laws and limitations that G-d created.

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582. Since in the *Midrash* the third child spoke in sequence to the second, it may be assumed that he introduced his verse similarly: “I studied Scripture today, and this is the verse I just reached at school.”

## 89.

**When one has trust in the One on High,  
he also has trust in his fellow Jews.**

Everyone<sup>583</sup> agrees that it is a fundamental principle in our faith and in our Torah to be certain that the One on High is Omnipotent — and not only in the Seventh Heaven, but also in this material and physical world, including the United States of America.

That said: When one has trust in the One on High, he also has trust in his fellow Jews, “the one nation on earth.”<sup>584</sup> On this theme, [the *Gemara* discusses whether the sages in the time of the Prophet Yechezkel could have been expected to rebuke their contemporaries for their shortcomings]. There the rhetorical question is asked:<sup>585</sup> “If everything is revealed before You, [G-d,] does this mean that everything is revealed before [mere mortals]?!” When one has trust in the Jewish people, this rhetorical question is fulfilled with regard to the untoward<sup>586</sup> conduct of others: one does not see it. Moreover, trusting in the Jewish people, one discovers that the young people one encounters are “seed blessed by G-d”<sup>587</sup> — when one approaches them with a true teaching drawn from

583. Extract from a *sichah* delivered on *Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5731 (1970), and published in *Sichos Kodesh* 5731, Vol. I, pp. 257-271. This talk was occasioned by a public meeting that had recently been held elsewhere, at which a certain speaker had argued that because of the changing circumstances of time and place, premarital license should nowadays be condoned.

The above extract translates only the part of the *sichah* that is related to *bitachon*. In other parts of the *sichah*, the Rebbe chastises the Rabbinic and educational figures who had been part of that audience but had remained silent, and goes on to advise how one should present the Torah way of life to young people — directly, positively, and without fear of being stigmatized as outmoded.

584. *Il Shmuel* 7:23.

585. *Shabbos* 55a.

586. Characteristically, instead of describing negative conduct outright by an adjective such as “evil,” the Rebbe employs a euphemistic circumlocution — the adjective “not-good.”

587. Cf. *Yeshayahu* 61:9.

the Torah of Truth,<sup>588</sup> without fear [of losing status or communal approval].

90.

Once the beleaguered King Chizkiyahu heard  
the words of Yeshayahu, he placed his trust so  
completely in the Hands of G-d that he lay  
down in bed... for a sweet and tranquil slumber.

...We<sup>589</sup> celebrate the Festive Meal of *Mashiach*<sup>590</sup> while we are still *in exile*, thereby demonstrating that Jews do not acknowledge the exile. This very fact in itself is effective in “burning down the walls of exile” (to cite the idiom of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]) — very, very soon, when *Mashiach* will be revealed and will “lead us upright to our land.”<sup>591</sup>

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...In order to make it easier for people to appreciate this line of thinking, we may note that — like all subjects in the inner, mystical plane of the Torah<sup>592</sup> — this subject, too, is alluded to in the revealed plane of the Torah.<sup>593</sup>

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588. In the original, *Toras emes* (*Malachi* 2:6).

589. Excerpts from a *sichah* delivered on the last day of Pesach, 5732 (1972), and published in the Appendices to *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 7, pp. 274-275.

590. In the original, *Seudas Mashiach* — first celebrated by the Baal Shem Tov, “for on this day the radiance of *Mashiach* is openly revealed.” Ever since the year 5666 (1906), when this custom was instituted — complete with four cups of wine — by the Rebbe Rashab in the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah, it has been widely honored throughout all Lubavitch (and many other) communities. See: *HaYom Yom*, entry for 22 Nissan (*Acharon shel Pesach*); *From Exile to Redemption* (Kehot, N.Y., 1952), Vol. 1, p. 85ff.

591. From the blessing that immediately precedes the Reading of *Shema* in the morning prayers.

592. In the original, *pnimiyus haTorah*.

593. In the original, *nigleh deTorah*.

On the eighth day of Pesach, the Reading from the Prophets<sup>594</sup> is the passage that opens with the words, “[Sanheriv exerted himself] to be standing at Nov while it was yet day....”<sup>595</sup> Why on that day? — “Because the downfall of Sanheriv took place on the eve of the first day of Pesach.”<sup>596</sup> Now, since the downfall happened on the *first* day, the above-quoted explanation for the choice of this passage for the *eighth* day comes as a surprise.

The solution to this seeming anomaly lies in the fact that this passage speaks of the victory of King Chizkiyahu,<sup>597</sup> whom G-d sought to establish as *Mashiach*<sup>598</sup> — and it is on the Last Day of Pesach<sup>599</sup> that “the radiance of *Mashiach* is openly revealed.”

Moreover, many of the predictions promised in this *Haftarah* were not fulfilled during the victory of Chizkiyahu; they will be fulfilled with the arrival of our Righteous *Mashiach*. For example, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb....”<sup>600</sup> (According to *Rambam*,<sup>601</sup> too, this prophecy relates to the Days of *Mashiach*, though in keeping with his approach he understands it as a parable alluding to the presently warring nations.) Another example of a prophecy that will be fulfilled only in the Messianic era concerns the Ingathering of the Exiles: “And it shall come to pass in that day that G-d will [...] recover the remnant of His people that shall remain from Assyria and from Egypt... and from the islands of the sea..., [and He will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather

594. This *Haftarah* is read only in the Diaspora, because Pesach in *Eretz Yisrael* is a seven-day festival.

595. See *Yeshayahu* 10:32-12:6, which begins by predicting the miraculous collapse of the mighty armies of Sennacherib of Assyria as he stood overlooking Jerusalem in scorn, confident that he would conquer it within a blink.

596. The Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chayim* 490:13, paraphrasing *Rashi* on *Megillah* 31a.

597. I.e., the victory of Hezekiah, King of Judah, which came about by the downfall of Sanheriv. The above passage then proceeds to describe the world as it will ultimately be transformed in the Messianic era.

598. *Sanhedrin* 94a.

599. In the original, *Acharon shel Pesach*.

600. *Yeshayahu* 11:6.

601. *Hilchos Melachim* 12:11.

together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth].”<sup>602</sup> Since this *Haftarah*, much of which will be fulfilled when *Mashiach* comes, is read on the Last Day of Pesach, it is self-evident that “the radiance of *Mashiach* is openly revealed” on that day.

Accordingly, it is possible to explain the above concept even when speaking to a person who contends that not every individual can experience this radiance. One can explain to him that it illumines him, too. After all, in his *shul*, too, this *Haftarah* was read, complete with its introductory and concluding blessings to which everyone responded *Amen*. And since this *Haftarah* speaks of the Coming of *Mashiach* and related subjects, he, too, should experience this theme. He, too, is lit up by the above radiance, so that he, too, will be able to trust in G-d, utterly and absolutely, and without any trace of a doubt. Even though according to the laws of nature there is nothing to warrant such a trust, he trusts in G-d that He will fulfill His promise supernaturally.

One’s trust ought to resemble that of Chizkiyahu. His trust was so complete that he said to the Holy One, blessed be He: “I do not have the strength to kill nor to pursue nor [even] to sing [Your] praises. Instead, I shall sleep in my bed — and You will act.”<sup>603</sup> This he said even though the armies of Sancheriv had besieged Jerusalem on all sides, and had promised Chizkiyahu peace if he would surrender under certain specified conditions.<sup>604</sup> Moreover, Shevna [the Scribe] and his party, who constituted the majority of the Sanhedrin, held that according to the Torah, the Jews should submit to this offer of peace and follow the laws of nature.

Yet despite all this, Chizkiyahu acted according to the Word of G-d that the Prophet Yeshayahu relayed to him: “Thus says G-d, ‘Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed Me...,

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602. *Yeshayahu* 11:11-12.

603. *Eichah Rabbah* 4:15.

604. I.e., a promise of prosperity if they would agree to be uprooted from their land.  
See: *II Melachim* 18:31-32; *Yeshayahu* 36:16-17.

for I shall cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”<sup>605</sup> Once the beleaguered King Chizkiyahu heard these words, he placed his trust so completely in the Hands of G-d that he lay down in bed and, unlike a worried man who cannot fall asleep, his trust allowed him a sweet and tranquil slumber. And as he slept, G-d fought his battle, as it is written: “And it came to pass that night that the angel of G-d went out and smote in the Assyrian camp....”<sup>606</sup>

In the same way, every individual should be certain about the Coming of *Mashiach* with an absolute and unwavering trust, so that “I shall await his coming every day.” He trusts that *Mashiach* is coming the very next day, even though he finds no support for this trust in the rational arguments of nature.

A trust such as this has the power — in itself — to accelerate the Coming of *Mashiach* in the immediate future.

## 91.

### Even Bread from the Earth comes from Heaven.

When<sup>607</sup> the Children of Israel were in the wilderness, the gift of manna — “bread from the heavens”<sup>608</sup> — prepared them for their entry into the Land of Israel, where the norm is “bread from the earth.”<sup>609</sup> The gift of manna clearly demonstrated to them that G-d alone provided them with their livelihood and satisfied all their needs. This awareness prepared them and enabled them, even when they arrived in “a settled land”<sup>610</sup> where the norm was “bread from the earth,” not to forget that “it is *He* Who gives you the power to prosper.”<sup>611</sup>

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605. II *Melachim* 19:6-7; *Yeshayahu* 37:6-7.

606. II *Melachim* 19:35; *Yeshayahu* 37:36.

607. Based on *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 16, p. 176 (incorporating *sichos* delivered on *Shabbos Bereishis*, 5733/1972, and on *Tu BiShvat*, 5737/1977), as abridged in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 126.

608. *Shmos* 16:4.

609. From *HaMotzi*, the blessing over bread, echoing *Tehillim* 104:14.

610. *Shmos* 16:35.

611. *Devarim* 8:18.



Moreover, the supernatural gift of “bread from the heavens” not only serves to prepare and empower; it is also drawn into the mundane reality that is called “a settled land,” and it may be experienced there. The Jewish people essentially transcend the world and nature. Hence, even when they (so to speak) descend into the mode of Divine service demanded by “a settled land,” the bestowal of their livelihood is — at its truest and innermost level — *unconnected* with the workings of nature that are known as “bread from the earth.”

92.

**G-d will provide him with all his needs even  
if he has not yet tackled his task for the month  
of Elul — repentance. Indeed, it applies  
because he is in that state.**

To<sup>612</sup> have *bitachon* means that having placed one’s trust in G-d, one is certain that he will succeed in his affairs. Moreover, the individual with *bitachon* is certain that G-d will provide him with as much as he needs of whatever he needs. And since the Children of Israel are “the sons of kings”<sup>613</sup> — or, according to another version,<sup>614</sup> “kings” — G-d will grant him his needs in their entirety, as is appropriate for kings.

In this train of thought, the *Gemara* teaches<sup>615</sup> that an employer should stipulate that his commitment to provide meals for his hired laborer extends only as far as bread and lentils. Otherwise, even “a banquet of Solomon at his finest hour” would not suffice, for though this employee is a common laborer, he is a son of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and a king. Moreover, he

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612. Excerpts from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Re’eh*, *Mevarchim HaChodesh*, the eve of Rosh Chodesh Elul, 5734 (1974), and published in *Sichos Kodesh* of that year.

613. *Shabbos* 67a.

614. *Zohar* II, 26b.

615. See *Bava Metzia* 83a and 86b.

resembles Shlomo HaMelech,<sup>616</sup> who did not have to go to any trouble to secure his meal. After all, even a dignitary who has been appointed to lead his community is not permitted to perform common work. How much more would this apply to a king, and in particular to Shlomo HaMelech, of whom it is written that “he sat on the throne of G-d.”<sup>617</sup>

With the above thoughts in mind, the individual with *bitachon* is certain that G-d will provide him with whatever he requires, and without trouble. Furthermore, such an individual trusts that these blessings will be valid not only on a spiritual plane — for, as is discussed in *Kuntreis U'Maayon*,<sup>618</sup> it is conceivable that a benevolent flow of Divine influence<sup>619</sup> be elicited from Above, but that it remain spiritual and intangible, without reaching down to This World. The above individual, however, is confident in his trust that such blessings will also materialize on the physical plane. For one's trust should span all levels, from “the heads of your tribes” until your “woodchoppers and water drawers.”<sup>620</sup> [When these phrases are perceived at the non-literal level of interpretation known as *derush*, the diverse categories of Jews that they enumerate may be linked as follows:] Even the “heads,” the men of spiritual stature, are required to trust that Divine blessings will also be expressed down here on the material plane. How much more does this apply to the “woodchopper.” He knows of nothing beyond his simple occupation; he asks only that he should chop his wood properly so that he will be able to earn his few pennies.

In either case, the blessings need to be numerous and powerful, so that they will descend from the Source of all Blessings and reach down to This World — and not only in the lofty affairs of This World, but also in its simple matters. The individual who trusts is confident in all of this. It is not only that he would *like* things to

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616. I.e., King Solomon.

617. *I Divrei HaYamim* 29:23.

618. *Maamar* 19ff.

619. In the original, *hashpach*.

620. *Devarim* 29:9-10.

transpire in this way: beyond that, the Torah of Truth<sup>588</sup> prescribes that one's trust should encompass everything.

\* \* \*

One might well ask: Why is such an individual certain that G-d will provide him with all his requirements? Does G-d *owe* him anything?!

And as to those who might be entitled to make their demands of G-d outright, even they say likewise, "Charity is in Your Hands."<sup>621</sup> Only from the perspective of *This* World are they able to make demands; when those demands appear Above, the truth becomes apparent — "Charity is in *Your* Hands." Most certainly, then, in the case of ordinary folk who are not entitled to make outright demands, whatever they are granted is a charitable gift. The above question, then, is a strong one: On what grounds does the above individual base his utter trust that G-d will provide him with whatever he needs?

The answer<sup>622</sup> is simple: he and G-d are one.<sup>623</sup> Moreover, he is located in This World below because G-d dispatched him there. Hence, since G-d is the ultimate good, and "it is the nature of One Who is benevolent to act benevolently,"<sup>39</sup> it is self-evident that G-d will provide him with all his needs. This applies even if he has not yet tackled his task for the month of Elul — repentance. Indeed, it applies *because* he is in that state.

In the same way, G-d provides for him every day. Even before he embarks on his daily Divine service, he says: "My G-d, the soul that You have placed within me is pure," and even before that he says: "I offer thanks to You..., for You have mercifully restored my soul within me...." For G-d restores it refreshed, and He Who provides life provides sustenance.<sup>624</sup> Moreover, since this individual is not located down here by chance, it is expected of him that he

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621. *Daniel* 9:7.

622. For an alternative answer to the above question, see Item 83 above.

623. Cf. *Zohar* III, 17a ("Israel, who are the organs of the Divine Presence"), paraphrased in *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 31.

624. Cf. *Taanis* 8b.

should be happy: knowing that G-d sent him here, he is certain that G-d will provide him with whatever he needs.

93.

**G-d's army — and in our context,  
the Israel Defense Forces, whose privilege it is  
to defend Jewish towns with actual self-sacrifice...**

The<sup>625</sup> soldiers who have been privileged to protect Jewish towns at the risk of physical self-sacrifice will no doubt continue fulfilling their duty and mission of ensuring — by natural means — the security and welfare of the Jewish people, and will no doubt maintain this activity until its completion.

It goes without saying that they fulfill their duty and mission in the spirit of the verse,<sup>626</sup> “[Some rely upon chariots and some upon horses,] but we [rely upon and] invoke the Name of the L-rd our G-d”; likewise,<sup>627</sup> “We raise our banners in the Name of G-d.” They do not believe that “my power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.”<sup>628</sup> Rather, they know that so long as we are still surrounded by the doubled and redoubled darkness of the era of exile, the Holy One, blessed be He, wants physical armaments to be used and action to be taken — according to the laws of nature — to ensure the security and welfare of Jewish people.

G-d grants His help when Jews tackle their defense tasks with the realization that He is the source of their strength and when they fulfill His directives. These include the directive that it is forbidden to cede territories which are part of *Eretz Yisrael* (or

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625. The Heb. original of the above text, whose wording was approved by the Rebbe, combines excerpts from three *sichos* delivered (on 22 Sivan, and 3 and 7 Tam-muz) at the height of the war in Lebanon — “Operation Peace for the Galilee” — in the summer of 1982. See *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, 5742 (1982), Vol. 3, p. 1744.

626. *Tehillim* 20:8.

627. *Loc. cit.*, v. 6.

628. *Devarim* 8:17.

territories vital to its security) and which He gave to the Jewish people. This prohibition is in effect now, too, when we are still living in the era of exile. (The fact that we are still in exile explains why some regions of *Eretz Yisrael* have not yet been given to the Jewish people, for this must wait until the coming of our Righteous *Mashiach*.) To resume the above thought: When Jews tackle their defense tasks with the realization that the source of their strength is the power of the Holy One, blessed be He, He sees to it that they will have no need for actual armaments, for the mere knowledge that such armaments exist will cast fear and dread on the other party, to the point that they will flee for their lives.

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Endeavors should therefore be made to strengthen the soldiers' connection with all aspects of *Yiddishkeit*.<sup>629</sup> Uppermost among these is a genuine trust in "G-d, the L-rd of Hosts,"<sup>629</sup> a trust that He stands at the head of all armies, beginning with "the hosts of G-d,"<sup>630</sup> G-d's army — and in our context, the Israel Defense Forces,<sup>631</sup> whose privilege it is to defend Jewish towns with actual self-sacrifice.

In order to fortify their trust in "G-d, the L-rd of Hosts," their connection with all aspects of *Yiddishkeit* should be strengthened — to the extent of fully observing the Torah and its *mitzvos* in their daily lives.

This applies especially to the observance of the commandment of *tefillin*. For there is a Divine promise that "all the nations of the world will see that the Name of G-d is proclaimed over you and will stand in fear of you"<sup>632</sup> — and the Sages teach that this verse alludes to the *tefillin* that are worn on the head.<sup>633</sup>

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629. *Amos* 3:13.

630. In the original, *Tzivos HaShem* (*Shmos* 12:41).

631. In the original, *Tzva Haganah LeYisrael* — the IDF.

632. *Devarim* 28:10.

633. *Menachos* 35b. With this teaching the Rebbe launched the worldwide *Tefillin* Campaign on the eve of the Six-Day War in 1967.

## 94.

**Yosef turned to the Chief Butler  
as if his whole salvation depended on him —  
and this constituted his sin.**

By<sup>634</sup> Divine Providence, Pharaoh's two servants were located in the dungeon in which Yosef was jailed "in order that the *tzad-dik's*<sup>17</sup> salvation should take place through them."<sup>635</sup> Yet when Yosef asked the Chief Butler to mention his name to Pharaoh, he was punished, and even "obliged to be imprisoned for two years."<sup>636</sup> Why?

The answer to this question may be found by examining the wording of *Rashi*:<sup>636</sup> "...because Yosef *depended on him* to remember him."

It will be noted that in the original, the verse that *Rashi* proceeds to paraphrase says,<sup>637</sup> "Happy is the man who makes G-d his trust, and does not *turn* to the arrogant<sup>638</sup> nor the followers of falsehood." Yet in his paraphrase that explains why Yosef was imprisoned, *Rashi* does not write, "because Yosef *turned* to the [Egyptian]"; *Rashi* writes, "because Yosef *depended* on him...."

This dependence means that if the Chief Butler mentioned him, he would be freed; if not, he would not be freed. Yosef turned to the Chief Butler as if his whole salvation depended on him — and this constituted his sin.

True, Yosef ought to have taken action according to the dictates of nature and turned to him with the request that he mention him to Pharaoh. After all, the Chief Butler was imprisoned there

634. Excerpt from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* (*Mevarchim Teves*), the first day of Chanukah, 5743 (1982). See *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, 5743 (1982-1983), Vol. 2, p. 711.

For an additional perspective on the subject of this passage, see Item 78 above, and Item 86, under subheading (d), above.

635. *Rashi* on *Bereishis* 40:1.

636. *Rashi* on 40:23.

637. *Tehillim* 40:1.

638. An allusion to the Egyptians (*Rashi, loc. cit.*).

precisely for that reason — “in order that the *tzaddik*’s salvation should take place through [him].”<sup>635</sup> However, this step should have been taken with a complete trust that its success depended on the Will of G-d, not on the Chief Butler.

This explains why, instead of quoting the verse, *Rashi* paraphrased it and wrote: “Because Yosef *depended on him* to remember him, he was obliged to be imprisoned for two years.” It also explains why *Rashi*, uncharacteristically, also quoted the first half of the verse (“Happy is the man who makes G-d his trust”): *Rashi* wanted to contrast that kind of trust with Yosef’s request.

## 95.

**This arousal included a heightened trust that  
Divine Providence supervises the particulars of  
every individual’s life, and this in turn empowered  
the chassid to decide what to do and how to act.**

Since<sup>639</sup> these words are being heard elsewhere, too,<sup>640</sup> this is an appropriate time to clarify a point for those who are puzzled by the fact that they have not received replies to the questions that they have written here.

Throughout the month of Tishrei, as has been explained several times, no time at all is available to reply to questions and letters, even orally. There is therefore no reason for seeking out allusions and interpretations to explain the absence of a reply, and certainly no reason for understanding the absence of a reply as a lack of closeness, G-d forbid.

As to the subject itself: There is a standing assurance that by the very fact of asking a question [of one’s Rebbe], especially if it is asked truthfully, G-d casts the right understanding and the right

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639. From a *sichah* delivered on the sixth eve of Sukkos, 5744 (1983), and published in *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, Vol. 1, p. 264.

640. Internationally, by radio hook-up.

decision into the mind of the questioner. This can be seen even with fleshly eyes.

Moreover, there are several episodes in which the absence of a reply aroused the chassid concerned to turn his heart more intensely heavenward. This arousal included a heightened trust that Divine Providence supervises the particulars of every individual's life, and this in turn empowered the chassid to decide what to do and how to act.

## 96.

**“In G-d we trust” means that one regards G-d as his trustee: one hands everything over into His Hands and relies on Him in all one's affairs.**

Everything<sup>641</sup> that occurs is engineered in detail by Divine Providence,<sup>642</sup> especially something that occurs in the country in which a Jew finds himself. This certainly applies to the present case, the United States, in which the Rebbe whose *hillula* we have just marked<sup>643</sup> spent the last ten years of his life in This World — and ten years is a significant period.<sup>644</sup>

The connection between a Jew and the country in which he lives is highlighted by the ruling of the Torah, which is called a Torah of Truth<sup>588</sup> and a Torah of Life,<sup>67</sup> that “the law of the land is binding”<sup>645</sup> (in matters that do not conflict with the Torah and its commandments).

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641. Excerpts from a *sichah* delivered on 13 Shvat, 5744 (1984) and published in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 26, p. 341ff.

642. The Baal Shem Tov teaches that *hashgachah peratis* applies to every particular detail in the whole of creation. (See *Keser Shem Tov*, *Hosafos*, sec. 119ff., and sources listed there.)

643. This talk was delivered three days after *Yud Shvat*, the anniversary of the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz in 5710 (1950).

644. Cf. *Avos* 5:22.

645. In the original Aram., *dina demalchusa dina* (*Gittin* 10b).



The currency of this country is distinctive: its coins are engraved with the words, “In G-d we trust.”

Now, money is something that “stands [a man] on his feet,”<sup>646</sup> and it also plays an important role in the life of a Jew. For a start, it enables him to give *tzedakah*; the more he has, the more can he give — and *tzedakah* is equated to all the commandments.<sup>647</sup> Money is also needed for the fulfillment of other *mitzvos*, for there is a principle that one should see to it that all the *mitzvos* should not be acquired “free,”<sup>648</sup> but as the result of one’s own exertion.<sup>649</sup> This ideal is also highlighted in a teaching of the Sages: “If someone tells you [...], ‘I have *exerted* myself and I have found [success in my Torah study],’ believe him.”<sup>650</sup>

Money, then, is central to life in general and to Jewish life. And engraved on the coins of this country is a message of faith in G-d — and not merely faith, but a *trusting* faith.<sup>651</sup> “In G-d we trust” means that one regards G-d as his trustee: one hands everything over into His Hands and relies on Him in all one’s affairs.

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[Everyone who is about to return to his home country<sup>652</sup>] will now be given a dollar bill to be contributed as *tzedakah*, thus making his journey a *shlichus mitzvah*, a mission for the sake of fulfilling a commandment.<sup>653</sup> Every dollar bill bears the words, “In G-d we

646. *Sanhedrin* 110a.

647. *Bava Basra* 9b. See also *Tanya*, the latter part of ch. 37.

648. In the original, *chinam* — as in the verse in which the Children of Israel in the wilderness hankered ungratefully after the food “that we ate in Egypt, free” (*Bamidbar* 11:5). And on this phrase *Rashi* cites the interpretation of *Sifri*: “I.e., free of *mitzvos*.”

649. In the original, *hishtadlus*; cf. *Zohar* II, 128a, expounded by the *AriZal* in his *Taamei HaMitzvos* on *Parshas Re'eh*, s.v. *Mitzvas HaTzedakah*.

650. *Megillah* 6b.

651. On the distinctions between *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust), see Item 86 above.

652. These parting words were addressed toward the close of the *farbrengen* to the numerous chassidim who had arrived in New York in honor of *Yud Shvat* and were about to leave.

653. “Emissaries for the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* do not come to harm” (*Pesachim* 8b).

trust.” This phrase means that one is bound with a faith so complete that one relies utterly on G-d, entrusting to Him whatever one has — one’s soul and body, one’s money and property, and one’s daily conduct.

97.

**When a child is born, his sustenance is born together with him. Indeed, the birth of an additional child increases the sustenance of the entire household.**

Parents<sup>654</sup> have been granted a great blessing and a great privilege: G-d has enabled them to fulfill the mission of being fruitful and multiplying — not only spiritually,<sup>655</sup> but also, and chiefly, physically.

As to the argument about the expenses this entails, the Torah teaches that Adam was created on the eve of *Shabbos* in order that he should immediately enter and find his meal ready and eat whatever he desired.<sup>656</sup>

Moreover, “Man was created as an individual in order to teach you that [...] whoever saves one Jewish life is regarded by Scripture as having saved an entire world.”<sup>657</sup> Thus every Jew, in all places and at all times, is “an entire world,” like his prototype, Adam, and may immediately enter and find his meal ready.

This, then, is the eternal directive of the Torah of Truth<sup>588</sup> and the Torah of Life<sup>67</sup> — that when a man conducts his life as he ought, G-d provides him with all his needs without any bother, just as He did for Adam.

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654. From a *sichah* delivered on *Yud-Alef* Nissan (the Rebbe’s birthday), 5744 (1984), and published in *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, 5744 (1984), Vol. 3, p. 1429.

See also Items 21 and 70 above and Item 98 below.

655. I.e., generating offspring by teaching people who had not been exposed to Torah and *mitzvos*.

656. *Sanhedrin* 38a and *Rashi* there.

657. *Op. cit.*, 4:5.

True, G-d desires that a man make a natural vessel<sup>6</sup> that will serve as a conduit to draw down blessings and a livelihood, as it is written,<sup>658</sup> “And the L-rd your G-d will bless you in all that you *do*.” At the same time, the Torah of Truth assures us that when a child is born, his sustenance is born together with him. Indeed, the birth of an additional child increases the sustenance of the entire household.

Parents should therefore utilize the blessing that G-d has granted them, by fulfilling the *mitzvah* to “be fruitful and multiply”<sup>659</sup> quite literally. This they should do with perfect trust in G-d, “Who, in His goodness, provides sustenance for the entire world with grace, with kindness, and with mercy,”<sup>146</sup> from His “full, open, holy and generous Hand.”<sup>147</sup> Let them trust that He will surely bestow sustenance upon the newborn child, and that moreover, his birth will elicit added blessings for the sustenance of the entire family.

## 98.

**The commandment to “be fruitful and multiply”  
should be fulfilled in a spirit in which G-d’s  
blessings of sons and daughters are received  
“with joy and a gladsome heart.”**

There<sup>660</sup> is a commandment to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it.”<sup>659</sup> This commandment should be fulfilled in a spirit in which G-d’s blessings of sons and daughters are received “with joy and a gladsome heart”<sup>91</sup> and without the intervention of calculations — with a joy arising from a perfect trust that G-d will bestow His blessing in the best way possible, both for the baby and for the father and mother.

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658. *Devarim* 15:18.

659. *Bereishis* 1:28.

660. From a *sichah* delivered on the Last Day of Pesach, 5744 (1984), and published in *Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos*, 5744 (1984), Vol. 3, pp. 1549-1550.

See also Items 21, 70 and 97 above.

On this subject we may learn a lesson from “the righteous women... in whose merit the Children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt.”<sup>661</sup> These women bore and raised sons and daughters without taking Pharaoh’s decree into consideration. In response, G-d Himself helped them by providing sustenance for their children. Thus the *Gemara*<sup>661</sup> relates that the Holy One, blessed be He, “would provide each one with two circular servings, one of olive oil and one of honey, in the spirit of the verse,<sup>662</sup> ‘He fed him honey from the crag, and oil from the flinty rock.’” In this manner they raised the sons and daughters of whom it is written,<sup>663</sup> “I increased you like the plants of the field, and you multiplied and grew....” And [soon after], “when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself at [the Splitting of] the Sea, it was these children,” born in the Egyptian exile, “who were the first to recognize Him.”<sup>661</sup>

It goes without saying that the same thinking should apply today. One should not take into consideration the decrees of “Mitzrayim” — the decrees of *meitzarim u’gvulim*, the restraints of a bounded and constricted mindset.<sup>664</sup> For example: being concerned about how future children will be supported, about whether one’s apartment will be spacious enough, and so on, and on the strength of such estimates deciding between “every son that is born,”<sup>665</sup> or (*May Heaven save us!*<sup>666</sup>) “shall be cast into the Nile,”<sup>667</sup> or from the outset refraining from the matter. Rather, the Divine command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and conquer it” should be observed without any such calculations, but with a certain trust that G-d will provide the vessels that are required to enable one to receive His blessings.

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661. *Sotah* 11b.

662. *Devarim* 32:13.

663. *Yechezkel* 16:7.

664. An instance of the non-literal level of interpretation known as *derush*. Here the additional connotation of the word for “Egypt” is arrived at by a change in the vowel points only (Mitzrayim — Egypt; *meitzarim* — straits).

665. *Shmos* 1:22; i.e., deciding to have children.

666. In the original Aram., *Rachmana litzlan!*

667. *Shmos*, *loc. cit.*; i.e., a euphemism for abortion.

Now, it is true that when our forefathers were in Egypt, G-d nourished the newborn children miraculously, as described above, whereas nowadays one does not witness manifest miracles in the area of one's income and the like. Nevertheless, it is utterly certain that the birth of each additional infant elicits an increased financial blessing that is garbed in the veils of the natural order. (As people say, "With every baby comes his loaf.") Moreover, through the arrival of this additional infant, supplementary blessings are elicited for the livelihood of the entire household. And all this comes over and above the great pleasure and delight that are aroused by the presence of an additional child in the home.

On a broader scale: When Jews conduct themselves in this way, we will be privileged to a downward current of G-d's blessings to a degree that breaks through barriers — until ultimately we will be privileged to see the barriers of exile breached. For "the son of David<sup>668</sup> will come," the *Gemara* teaches,<sup>669</sup> "when the Heavenly Treasury<sup>670</sup> is emptied of all its souls."<sup>671</sup>

## 99.

### Trusting in G-d does Not Contradict the Belief that Everything is for the Good.

One<sup>672</sup> of the foundations of our faith and of our Torah is the attribute of trust, *bitachon*. Plainly and simply, without any artful interpretations,<sup>673</sup> this means that one should trust in G-d that things will work out for the good, and in a way that is visible and

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668. I.e., *Mashiach*, a descendant of David.

669. *Yevamos* 62a.

670. In the original, *guf*.

671. The original Talmudic quotation is as follows: "The son of David *will not come until* the Heavenly Treasury is emptied of all its souls." Characteristically, the Rebbe puts the two clauses of this quotation in reverse order when paraphrasing it — thereby replacing a negative warning by a message of optimism.

672. From a *sichah* delivered on 20 Menachem Av, and published in *Toras Menachem* — *Hisvaaduyos* 5745 (1985), Vol. 5, p. 2719ff.

673. In the original Yid., *on pshetlach*.

manifest. This understanding of the term is apparent from numerous passages in the *Shas*<sup>674</sup> and in the teachings of the Sages; it is discussed at length in *Chovos HaLevavos*, *Shaar HaBitachon*; and likewise in the chassidic discourses<sup>675</sup> that are based on the phrase, “Trust in G-d forever and ever.”<sup>676</sup>

This is what is entailed by trust, to the point that even if one sees that his situation is not as it ought to be, according to the indications that one is given from Above or down here below, “one should not refrain from [pleading for] Divine mercy.”<sup>677</sup> Rather, he should gather strength in his complete trust in G-d (particularly by means of prayer and good deeds), trusting that the undesirable situation will be *transformed* to the kind of good that is visibly and overtly good, and indeed, to a level of good that is *superior* to that of his previous state, “just as light is superior to darkness.”<sup>678</sup>

Moreover, in addition to trusting that G-d will certainly grant him good that is recognizably and manifestly good, this must also be *requested*: “There is a positive commandment to pray...; one must request and plead for the fulfillment of his needs....”<sup>679</sup> These requests are made in the way they are detailed in *Shemoneh Esreh*, where what is intended is the plain meaning of the words that address the One Who “heals the sick” and “blesses the years,” and the like. The same is true of other, private requests that every individual can make in the course of the blessing that begins *Shema Koleinu* (in addition to its standard wording).<sup>680</sup> What is common to all these requests is that they relate to visible and overt good.

674. Acronym of *Shishah Sidrei [Mishnah]* — lit., “the Six Orders [of the Mishnah],” but in fact a synonym for the *Talmud* in its entirety.

675. *Biurei HaZohar* of the Mitteler Rebbe, beginning of *Parshas Vaeira*, p. 37d ff.; *Biurei HaZohar* of the Tzemach Tzedek, p. 188ff. See also *Likkutei Torah, Shemini Atzeres*, p. 90d ff.

676. *Yeshayahu* 26:4.

677. *Berachos* 10a.

678. *Koheles* 2:13.

679. *Rambam*, *Hilchos Tefillah* 1:1.

680. The Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim*, sec. 119:1.

On the other hand, when (G-d forbid) an undesirable incident takes place, then after the event<sup>681</sup> “one is obligated to recite a blessing over evil [tidings] just as one recites a blessing over good [tidings], as it is written,<sup>682</sup> ‘You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might...’ [The Sages understood the last term<sup>683</sup> to imply that] with whatever measure He metes out [your fortunes]” — and *Rashi* explains: ‘whether it be a kindly measure or a harsh measure’ — “thank him.” Not only that, but one is also directed “to accept [a misfortune] with joy”<sup>685</sup> — “like the joy in a visible and obvious good, for it, too, is for the good...”<sup>684</sup>

In this spirit, the Sages taught that “whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the good.”<sup>685</sup> Or, in the Holy Tongue,<sup>685</sup> *Gam zu letovah* — “This, too, is for the good.” However, the difference between these two teachings is not merely that in one phrase “for the good” is in Aramaic (*letav*) whereas in the other phrase “for the good” is in the Holy Tongue (*letovah*). The difference is also one of substance.<sup>686</sup> As may be seen from the examples and narratives that the *Gemara* cites, “*letav*” is used to indicate merely the prevention of harm, whereas “*letovah*” is used to indicate that [for example] the dust that replaced the precious gems proved to bring a benefit more valuable than actual precious gems!

Accordingly, a Jew must place his trust in G-d and request that He provide all his needs with the kind of good that is plainly and recognizably good. Nevertheless, even if (G-d forbid) his prayer was not effective, he knows that “this matter has come from G-d,”<sup>687</sup> and, without a doubt, “whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the good.” Moreover, “This, too, is for the good,” even

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681. *Berachos* 54a and *Rashi*, *loc. cit.*

682. *Devarim* 6:5.

683. I.e., noting the similarity in the Holy Tongue between *meodecha* (“your might”) and *middah* (“measure”).

684. *Tanya*, ch. 26. (See *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. 1, pp. 346-7.)

685. *Taanis* 21a; *Sanhedrin* 108b ff.

686. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 2, p. 393ff.

687. *Bereishis* 24:50.

though it is not the kind of good that can be discerned by fleshly eyes.

## 100.

### Exactly What is Meant by the Obligation to Trust in G-d?

#### (a)

#### Certainty Only for the Sinless?!

The<sup>688</sup> obligation to trust in G-d<sup>689</sup> — to have *bitachon* — is not merely to believe in G-d's ability to treat one benevolently and to rescue him from distress and the like. It means that one trusts that G-d will in fact do this. And this trust is so certain that the individual is completely relaxed and not worried in the slightest. This is spelled out in *Chovos HaLevavos*:<sup>690</sup> "One who trusts in G-d has a tranquil spirit. His heart relies on the One in Whom he has placed his trust; He will doubtless do what is good and proper for him in the matter at hand."

Now, the grounds for such certainty are problematic. Even when a person has an explicit Divine promise, it is possible that

688. From a *sichah* that was delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Shmos*, 5751 (1991), published in *Likkutei Sichos, Parshas Shmos*, 5751/1991, and adapted in *Shaarei Emunah*, p. 119.

689. Some of the numerous Scriptural expressions of this obligation are cited in *Reishis Chochmah, Shaar HaAhavah*, sec. 12.

It is written, "When you go out to battle against your enemies..., you shall not fear them" (*Devarim* 20:1). As translated here, this verse expresses a command ("you shall not") and not merely a promise ("you will not"), thus following the view of *Rambam* (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, prohibitive commandment 58). And in the view of *Rabbeinu Yonah* (*Shaarei Teshuvah, Shaar Gimmel*, sec. 32), the obligation to trust in G-d is comprised in the above command. On the phrase, "you shall not fear them," he comments: "If a person sees that a misfortune is approaching, let G-d's salvation be in his heart, and let him place his trust in it."

690. *Shaar HaBitachon*, sec. 1. See also the Prologue to *Shaar HaBitachon* (s.v. *Ach to'eles habitachon*), et al. So, too, *Kad HaKemach* by *Rabbeinu Bachaye* (s.v. *Bitachon*): "This means that no trace of doubt should tinge one's trust."



“sin would cause” the promise not to be fulfilled.<sup>691</sup> How much more is this the case when there has been no explicit promise. And the concern “lest sin cause” the promise not to be fulfilled is applicable to everyone, for “there is no man on earth [so] righteous that he does [only] good and does not sin.”<sup>692</sup> Indeed, even Yaakov Avinu was anxious<sup>693</sup> lest sin would block the fulfillment of the Divine promise.<sup>694</sup>

(b)

**A Tentative Solution**

At first glance, one might want to explain as follows:

One’s trust in G-d is based on the belief that everything originates from the Creator. Hence, when a person finds himself in a dire predicament, this is not because the individual causing it is in some way in control, G-d forbid, for everything comes from Above. As a result, the mind of the person in trouble is utterly at ease, for either of two reasons:

- (i) If he is not deserving of any evil, G-d will surely rescue him from it. (And this certainty applies even when there is no natural possibility for salvation, for “who can say to Him, *What are You doing?*”<sup>695</sup> Moreover, G-d can choose to *change* the laws of nature.)
- (ii) If, on the other hand, one is not worthy of such kindly intervention (and is indeed deserving of the punishment at hand), his mind is still utterly at ease because he is certain that this misfortune does not result from a side factor. It

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691. *Berachos* 4a.

692. *Koheles* 7:20.

693. See Epistle Two in the Alter Rebbe’s *Iggeres HaKodesh*, s.v. *Katonti* (in *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. 4, pp. 24-28).

694. Cf. *Kad HaKemach* (*loc. cit.*): “It can happen that a believer will not trust with certainty, for at times he may fear ‘lest sin cause’ the fulfillment of his promise to be withheld.”

695. *Iyov* 9:12.

comes only from G-d, because he has not fulfilled his obligations satisfactorily, and that is why he was placed in the present predicament. Accordingly, he fears no one but G-d alone. Moreover, he is aware that what is transpiring is for his good, for the Torah's punishments are an expression of G-d's kindness, inasmuch as they cleanse him from the blemish of his sin. And if so, there is no room for worry or fear.

Accordingly, it is clear that there is no conflict between the two concepts: A person's trust in G-d can be perfect *even though he knows* that because of his sin he will possibly not be found worthy of being rescued from the impending misfortune. And this knowledge does not detract from his peace of mind because he realizes that whatever happens to him derives from G-d.

True, some of the commentators have written that according to the *Midrash*, "one ought not be afraid" (i.e., one ought not emulate Yaakov Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu, who *were* afraid). This was written because from a simple reading of the relevant verses it would appear that they feared the *cause* of their distress; i.e., Yaakov feared Eisav ("Yaakov was very frightened and distressed, and he [therefore] divided the people who were with him... into two camps"<sup>696</sup>), and likewise Moshe Rabbeinu, [when confronted by Og, the mighty King of Bashan,] was told, "Do not be afraid of him."<sup>697</sup> Thus, when the verses are understood at their simple level, the fear experienced by Yaakov and Moshe indicates that their trust in G-d was imperfect.

(c)

**Those who are Deserving and Those who are Not**

However, the above explanation is unsatisfactory, because *bitachon* plainly signifies not only a peaceful state of mind; it also

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<sup>696</sup>. Bereishis 32:8.

<sup>697</sup>. Devarim 3:2.

signifies that one trusts with certainty that things will be good for him — and specifically with the kind of good that is visible and manifest, for G-d will rescue him from his predicament, and the like.

Moreover, according to that explanation, as outlined in section (b), *bitachon* in its plain meaning is not relevant to most of the Jewish people. (For “there is no man on earth [so] righteous that he does [only] good”<sup>692</sup> — and who is the man who can adjudge himself worthy of G-d’s kindness?) Hence, for most of our people, *bitachon* would primarily consist of the thought that even if they were not found to be deserving of G-d’s kindness, they would still enjoy peace of mind because everything stems from the Creator. Moreover, whatever was to transpire would be for their good, except that it would not be the kind of good that is visible and manifest.

According to this approach, only consummate *tzaddikim* — whose Divine service is perfect and who are not anxious about the possible effects of sin — can trust that things will work out well for them with the kind of good that is visible and manifest.

In fact, however, the author of *Chovos HaLevavos* states otherwise. In the course of his discussion of “the circumstances in which *bitachon* is conceivable,” he describes a situation in which “the One Who is trusted is infinitely magnanimous and kind toward whoever is deserving and to whoever is not. Moreover, His magnanimity is constant and His kindness is continuous, never ceasing and never severed.”<sup>698</sup> According to this statement, then, one’s *bitachon* is based on G-d’s kindness even to whoever is not deserving.

Now, this requires explanation. After all, even though G-d’s mercy extends also to someone who is not deserving, is it not possible that a person may be deserving of punishment for his unworthy deeds?<sup>699</sup> And if so, on what basis does a man trust with

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698. *Shaar HaBitachon*, *Shaar* 20 (sec. 7). See also: ch. 3 (the first introduction, sec. 6), and the end of ch. 1.

699. *Op. cit.*, ch. 3 (the fourth introduction).

certainty that G-d will act benevolently toward him, even though he is undeserving of this?

(d)

### Cast Your Burden upon G-d

This may be understood in the light of a teaching of the *Tzemach Tzedek*<sup>700</sup> that was often quoted by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz].<sup>701</sup> Someone had begged him to intercede in order to arouse Heaven's mercies upon a patient who was dangerously ill.<sup>702</sup> The *Tzemach Tzedek* replied: "Think positively, and things will *be* positive."<sup>703</sup> This implies that the very fact of thinking positively — having trust — will give rise to results that are visibly and manifestly good.

This teaching may be understood as follows:

The obligation to place one's trust in G-d (to have *bitachon*) is not merely a component and a corollary of one's faith (*emunah*) that everything is in His hands and that He is gracious and compassionate. Such an obligation would not need to be stated separately. Rather, the obligation to place one's trust in G-d is an *avodah*<sup>68</sup> of its own, an independent challenge in one's Divine service. That challenge is to rely on G-d to the point that one casts one's lot entirely into His hands — as in the verse,<sup>451</sup> "Cast your burden upon G-d" — and to be without any other support in the world apart from Him. It could well be that this is what the author of *Chovos HaLevavos* had in mind when he wrote that a person who has trust is "like a bondman who is incarcerated in a dungeon on the authority of his master." That prisoner's trust is beamed only toward his master, "to whose hands he is subordinate, and no man but him can bring harm or help."

Trusting in G-d in this way is such that the natural situation makes no difference whatever. Even if according to the natural

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700. I.e., R. Menachem Mendel (1789-1866), the third Lubavitcher Rebbe.

701. See his *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 2, p. 537, and Vol. 7, p. 197.

702. Cf. *Rama, Yoreh Deah*, end of sec. 335.

order it is impossible that a particular individual should be rescued, that individual relies on the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is not restricted by the laws of nature.

(e)

**Having Trust Entails  
Avodah and Exertion in one's Soul**

Precisely this is the basis for a person's trust that G-d will act benevolently toward him, bestowing upon him goodness that is overt and manifest, even if he is undeserving of such kindness.

Having trust does not mean that one believes that since G-d's kindness is limitless both toward those who are deserving and those who are not, one will therefore be granted His kindness without any independent exertion. (If this were so, there would be no such thing as reward and punishment.) Rather, having trust entails *avodah*<sup>703</sup> and exertion in one's soul, and it is this that evokes G-d's kindness. If a person genuinely trusts, from the depths of his soul, in G-d alone, to the point that he is not at all worried, this very arousal evokes a reciprocal response from Above, and he is blessed with lovingkindness (even if otherwise he would not have been found deserving of it).

This connection is stated explicitly in *Sefer HaIkarim*:<sup>704</sup> "Even if a person is intrinsically undeserving, trust has a way of evoking unearned lovingkindness<sup>705</sup> upon those who place their trust in G-d." And conversely,<sup>706</sup> "If such an individual had hoped as he ought to have done, G-d's lovingkindness would not have been withheld."

The author of *Kad HaKemach*<sup>706</sup> writes likewise: "He who trusts in G-d will be raised out of misfortune by virtue of his trust, even if

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703. *Maamar* 4, end of ch. 47.

704. In the original, *chessed chinam*.

705. *Loc. cit.*, ch. 46.

706. *Loc. cit.*

he was deserving of that misfortune.” Other classical works, such as *Nesivos Olam*,<sup>707</sup> write in similar vein.

So, too, *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Yeshayahu*:<sup>708</sup> “When the Jewish people enter a time of woe, they say to the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘Save us!’ The Holy One, blessed be He, replies: ‘Is there a man among you who fears Heaven?’ They say: ‘In the past [...], but today, the further we proceed, the thicker is the darkness around us [...].’ So the Holy One, blessed be He, advises them: ‘Place your trust in My Name, and it will stand you in good stead [...], for whoever places his trust in My Name, I will save.’”

*Keser Shem Tov*<sup>709</sup> reflects the other side of the same coin: “When Heaven seeks to exact punishment from someone who deserves it, they deprive him of his attribute of trust.”

This, then, is the content of the command to “trust in G-d”<sup>710</sup> (and of other similar commands) — one should cast his burden upon G-d, trusting that He will bestow upon him the kind of good that is overt and manifest. This trust one directs to G-d alone, without any calculations as to whether his rescue is possible. When a man’s trust is of this caliber, G-d relates to him “measure for measure”<sup>711</sup> — He protects him and has pity upon him, even if the tally shows that he does not deserve to be granted specifically the kind of good that is visibly and manifestly good.<sup>712</sup>

707. See end of *Nesiv HaBitachon*.

708. *Remez* 473.

709. Sec. 382.

710. *Tehillim* 37:3 and 115:9, and many similar phrases. See also footnote 689 above.

711. *Nedarim* 32a. Cf. *Zohar*, *Parshas Tetzaveh*, II, 184b: “The World Above bestows upon [the world below] only according to its state. If, down here below, it shows a luminous countenance, in the same way does a luminous Countenance shine down upon it from Above, and if it is melancholy, [strict justice is mirrored back at it].”

See also *Igros Kodesh* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, p. 324ff.

712. Cf. *Tanya* — *Iggeres HaKodesh*, end of Epistle 11: “And when one believes this truly, everything becomes good even on a revealed level.” (Cf. *Burei HaZohar* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, p. 194.) See also *Nesivos Olam*, *loc. cit.*

In this lies the explanation of the teaching of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, that trust in itself gives rise to good results.<sup>713</sup> This principle is not tangential to trust: it *defines* the trust concerning which we have been commanded.

(f)

**I am the One who can Remove my Obstacles**

The above thoughts lead to a practical directive. When a person encounters obstacles to his observance of the Torah and its commandments, he should be aware that their removal depends on him and on his conduct. If he trusts absolutely that G-d will see to it that things will be good, to the point that he is utterly at ease without any shadow of anxiety (and at the same time, of course, he takes whatever natural steps are dependent on himself in order to remove those obstacles<sup>714</sup>), then we have been given the promise, “Think positively, and things will *be* positive.” We have been promised that this will take place actually, that all the obstacles will cease to exist, and that things will be good for that individual — in a real and practical sense, with the kind of good that is overt and manifest, visible to fleshly eyes, and “lower than ten hand-breadths [from the ground].”<sup>715</sup>

And just as concerning the redemption from the Egyptian exile the Sages teach that “by virtue of their trust the people of Israel were redeemed from Egypt,”<sup>715</sup> so will it be with the Redemption from this last exile — as is written in the *Midrash*,<sup>716</sup> “They are

713. See beginning of sec. (d) above: “Think positively, and things will *be* positive.”

714. As is well known, there is no conflict between (on the one hand) having true trust in G-d, and (on the other hand) seeking ways and means according to the natural order. On this, see: *Chovos HaLevavos*, loc. cit., ch. 3, in the fifth introduction; *Akeidah*, *Parshas Vayishlach*, *Shaar* 26; *et al.* As is discussed in Letter 2 above, only exceptional *tzaddikim* do not need to seek ways and means.

715. *Kad HaKemach*, loc. cit., based on *Midrash Tehillim*, Psalm 22.

716. *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Tehillim*, *Remez* 736 (based on *Midrash Tehillim* on Psalm 40). Cited also in *Avudraham*, at the end of *Seder Tefillos Yom HaKippurim*. See also: R. Chayim Yosef David Azulai, *Midbar Kdeimos*, Letter Kuf, sec. 16.

deserving of redemption by virtue of their hope [alone]!” So may this indeed be fulfilled with us — that by virtue of our people’s trust that “My deliverance is soon to come,”<sup>717</sup> we will merit G-d’s deliverance, with the true and complete Redemption, speedily and actually in our own days.

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717. *Yeshayahu* 56:1.



## Appendix I

# “A Weighty Task Indeed”

A Thought from  
the Rebbe Rashab



*Bitachon*<sup>718</sup> transcends time and place. For a person to have *bitachon* means that he trusts in G-d that things will assuredly transpire in a certain way. True, his mind does not have room to accommodate that eventuality. Nor does he understand how that eventuality can be warranted by his own actions or by his own prayers, or even by the reason for which he desires it. All he has is a trust in G-d alone, by virtue of His power and ability.

Moreover, the matter does not reach a point at which it affects him and worries him. Even though he would not like the alternative eventuality on any account, he is not ruffled by any deepseated unrest. He considers all along that G-d will presumably help out. After all, it could not be otherwise.

In the same way, if a person is in need of something that should take place in a specific way, and he is able to see to it that it should indeed happen, it certainly does not worry him. After all, things are going to work out exactly as they ought to. [One thing is for sure:] he would not like the alternative possibility on any account. If, for example, a debt falls due, and he has the money ready, he is certainly relaxed, and the alternative scenario — not paying — he does not at all want to hear of.

The same applies to *bitachon*, one's trust in G-d. One has peace of mind even when he has nothing. It does not cause him unrest, and the alternative scenario he does not even want to consider; he only places his hope in G-d, Who will certainly help out. He has no kind of basis, such as a promise from someone. It is his trust alone that prevents his predicament from disturbing his composure. His trust is as sturdy as the trust of the individual who has all his cash ready for payment.

And to generate such trust is a weighty task indeed.

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718. From a talk of the Rebbe Rashab as preserved by his son and successor, the Rebbe Rayatz, whose manuscript notes only recently came to light.



## Appendix II

“When there is still a  
straw to hang on to”

A Thought from  
the Rebbe Rayatz



One's<sup>719</sup> trust in G-d can be called complete only when there is no shadow of an indication as to where help will come from, nor is there any physical source for it. People say that a drowning man clutches at a straw. But when there is still a straw to hang on to — that is, when there is still a shadow of a physical indication that one may yet be helped, even if only physically and even if only partially — this cannot yet be called a complete trust in G-d.

When there is a shadow of an indication, what one has is hope (*tikvah*). This is the word that appears in the Scriptural phrase, *es tikvas chut hashani* (“the cord of crimson thread”), where *tikvah* means “cord.”<sup>720</sup> The crimson thread served as a sign to indicate the house of Rachav, so that when the soldiers of the Children of Israel approached it they would know that they had to save the people who lived there. This sign is described by the above phrase, because even though it was a visible and overt sign, all kinds of things could happen to it — the cord could break, or the wind could blow it away, or whatever. Hence the use of the word *tikvah* (“cord”/“hope”), alluding to her hope that everything would work out well and that the cord of crimson thread would remain intact. For the term “hope” is appropriate in relation to something that tangibly exists, like the straw of the man who is drowning in the ocean.

By contrast, *trust* (*bitachon*) in G-d is what one has when he is without even a shadow of an indication that he will be saved. He does not even have a straw to clutch at. He has only his trust in G-d. Yet even though he places his trust in G-d, he is embittered and sad; a silent melancholy veils his face; whoever sees him can tell that his heart is burdened by a grievous anxiety.

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719. Extract from a letter of the Rebbe Rayatz, which the Rebbe appended as a footnote to a *sichah* that was delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Va'eira*, 5722 (1962), and published in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 3, p. 883. (Cf. Item 85 above.)

720. *Yehoshua* 2:18. The background to this passage: Joshua's two spies pledged to save the family of Rachav if she singled out her house by hanging up the crimson cord by which she had lowered them to safety from her window. See *Yehoshua*, ch. 2.

Now, according to the teaching of our mentor, the Baal Shem Tov, when a person places his trust in G-d but is agonized and worried and sighing, he has not yet attained a complete trust in G-d. For when one's trust in G-d is complete, his unfavorable — or even (G-d forbid) bad — situation should not affect his heart by causing it distress or, certainly, melancholy. Rather, he should do, according to the Torah and mortal understanding, whatever he is able to do, and place his trust in G-d. He should not have even a shadow of a doubt that G-d will help him, inasmuch as His Providence watches over every single created being [...]. All their affairs and even all of their most trivial motions are under the eye of His specific supervision,<sup>140</sup> and it is this Divine Providence that gives life and strength to every living being in the heavens and on earth.