

יצחק קולדצקי

חתן מרת הנ"ח קובנסקי
מח"ס 'ישכנו תדרשו'
רח' ברסלב 9 ב"ב

תאריך: 2 במאי תשס"ג

א'יצו היקו מאז יתחיל תורה כתיב האמן רבי אד ק'ו ון שלטא
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 וידוע שפ'תוקב כגו' ש'ר רש'ן חסן אה כאנוה כססיו יוה
 אה מהספיק שג'ב, ו'ט'רפ ג'א * ששן ש'דאנוה היא יס' ג'
 ג'ע'ר והמ'ולו, וכ'ר א'ימ'י ג'כ'א א'רמ'י ק'י'ע כ'ס'ולו ה'מ'ולו
 וכס'וים ש'ע'ב, ו'י' ר'זן ש'רס'ו י'ק'ל ר'ז'ן א'ר' א'ר' ש'מ'ל
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ממני ה'מ'ר'ק ק'ל'ר'
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 ש'ר א'ר'מ'ע'ר ז'ב'י'ק'



כ"ד

YESHIVA DARCHEI TORAH

ישיבה דרכי תורה

YAAKOV & ILANA MELOHN CAMPUS. IN MEMORY OF REB YOSEF MELOHN, ז"ל

Rabbi Yaakov Bender
Rosh HaYeshiva

21 Tammuz 5783

We have had the great and distinct honor to have Harav Dov Keilson as mashgiach Ruchni of our Mesivta. I consider him to be one of the 36 tzadikim of our Dor.

Now, he has taken upon himself to strengthen and give solace to people who have experienced sadness in their lives. When Reb Dov counsels bochurim in our yeshiva, or the general population, he feels their pain, their anxiety, and even their depression. His Lev Tahor, the heilige heart of Rabbi Keilson comes through in this collection of letters, because his heart feels the hearts of others.

It is our hope that in the near future there will be only simcha and joy in klal Yisroel.
In the meantime, the broken hearts of Klal Yisroel will gain great chizuk from this Sefer.

Yaakov Bender

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CHAPTER 1

THE PAINFUL LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

LETTER 1

Illness and Tefillah

Erev Yom Kippur 5775

To my dear *talmid*,

The news came to me a few moments ago about your mother, and the return of her dreaded disease, *R"l...my talmid...there are no words.*

But the fact that this happened at such an auspicious time is truly mind blowing, and perhaps that itself can be somewhat comforting, my *talmid*.

There is no day in the entire year as special and as powerful as Yom Kippur, and the ability that we have to affect the decree is beyond fathom. Emotions are running high, and the power within this day is enormous. *This is our time to make a difference.*

What Hashem has in store for the year 5775 we do not know, but we do know that He is the *Av Harachaman* and that He is the *Shomei'a Tefillah*, and no one else can decide what will be. Our *tefillos* count, our *tefillos* will make a difference, my *talmid*. We must do everything in our ability to storm the heavens.

*May Hashem grant us and our families a year that is truly good;
chayim tovim, but also mesukim, sweet and pleasant.*

Oy, my *talmid*, I wish I were in yeshiva with you so that I could stand by your side crying and screaming to *Hashem Yisbarach* on this awesome day. May we merit together the *sh'nas geulah v'yeshuah*.

With very great love,
Rebbi

LETTER 2

Pain and Merits

7 Iyar 5755

Dear *talmid*,

I might be far from you in miles, but I am very, very close to you at heart. I heard about the enormous gathering that was held for your mother's *zechus*, and I heard about all of the many projects that you are doing for her *refuah*.

My dear *talmid*, we have no idea what is happening in *shamayim*, but I promise you, the *zechuyos* are building up for her.

I want you to appreciate and understand that one of the greatest *zechuyos* you can accrue right now is that of *simchah*, joy in life, and joy in *avodas Hashem*. The *yetzer hara's* tactic is to get you down, as you feel that this is the *nesius ol* that is expected of you now. It is true that you must feel pain, especially for your beloved mother who is suffering, but that is *not* your main *avodah* at this time. Your main *avodah* right now is specifically to be happy. And especially, especially, when you are around her, my *talmid*!

In his commentary on *Mishlei* 18:14, the Vilna Gaon writes an unbelievable thing. The *middah* of *simchah* and joy is itself a source of *refuah* and healing for a sick person; and *chas v'shalom*, the opposite is true as well. When the *choleh* is down, it can cause a decline in his physical state as well, *Hashem yerachem*.

The best way to bring *refuah* to your mother is by being your happy-go-lucky self. She wants nothing more than for you to be happy, and that itself will bring her more joy.

Keep on doing more and more for her merit. We do not know *how* all of it will affect her, but you can be rest assured that every drop *will* bring positive effects to her—one thousand percent.

Not one *tefillah*, tear, or mitzvah will ever go for naught, my *talmid*—ever. It will be for her as a *zechus*, standing by her side. There is no greater *kibbud eim* than that. I love you deeply, my dear *talmid*, and I am joining you in your great mission of accruing *zechuyos*. Keep in close touch.

Love,
Rebbi

LETTER 3

*Accepting without
Expectations of Yourself*

3 Tammuz 5755

To my beloved *talmid*,

Your mother's situation is one that is foremost in my mind and heart, and although I cannot be with you physically right now, believe me, I am with you every step of the way.

Remember that whatever happens is the will of Hashem. The *chiddush* I am about to share with you is that this even includes *your emotions*! Yes, you surely *do* have free will in *how* you react to the unbelievable *nisayon* you are going through, but at the same time, emotions themselves are spontaneous, and they can do funny things. Sometimes, when you are supposed to be crying or overwhelmed, you feel calm and content, and that itself creates guilt, for you feel as if your heart is hard and cold.

My *talmid*'l! Trust me when I tell you this: the most important thing while going through any experience, whether difficult or joyous, *is not to have any expectations whatsoever*. Whatever your emotions will do and how they will react to the situations you will be in might not be the way you expected them to; therefore, do not have any expectations at all!

You need only to focus on *doing* what you are supposed to be doing in each situation and allow your emotions to go with the flow. If you cry,

you cry; if you do not, you do not. The only thing in your control is to do *your avodah*.

And your *avodah* is twofold now: first, to daven and daven and daven, but at the same time, to be there for your beloved mother in every way you possibly can. Do everything in your ability, as I am sure you are, to make her life more comfortable. May Hashem continue to guide you, my dear *talmid*, and protect your family from all harm, and may He give you the strength to fulfill the incredible role of a son.

Love always,
Rebbi

LETTER 4

Hashem Is in Charge

14 Tammuz 5755

To my dearest *talmid*,

There are not many words that can be said to properly address the pain and turmoil in which you find yourself now, with your mother's sickness deteriorating so rapidly and the natural chances of her survival becoming so slim, *Rachmana litzlan*. But I beg of you, my dear *talmid*, please do not think for a moment that you are alone in your *tzarah*! Please realize that I am by your side throughout this enormously difficult period of your life, every single step of the way. You might feel alone in your world of darkness, but please know, my *talmid*, that you are not alone—not for a moment.

Please do not stop reaching out to me, day or night; my phone is on, and I am always ready to talk. You are in my heart, and your mother's name is on my lips. We are all davening day and night for her *refuah*. Hashem is in charge of this world, and everything is in His hands alone. *No doctor can ever decide the fate of another person.*

Chazal teach us very clearly that “even if a sword is on a person's neck, he must not withhold from beseeching Hashem!”¹ We must not stop

1 *Berachos* 10a.

davening and pouring out our hearts to the Creator, the One whose compassion is never ending, to heal your beloved mother speedily. The redemption of Hashem can come in the blink of an eye!

I specifically took time to write to you today, my *talmid*, because I want to share with you what I believe is the most important thing for you to remember at this time. Whatever Hashem has in store for the upcoming days and weeks is unknown. It might be very, very trying and unbelievably painful, but I promise you one thing, my beloved *talmid*: *you will survive it*. I emphasize those four words, for they are the most important four words you need to hear right now.

No matter what will transpire, Hashem will carry you through it to the other side. This is first because Hashem has made us in such a way that our bodies and emotions can weather incredible storms. And second, because in a time of great difficulty, Hashem gives a tremendous *siyata d'Shmaya* that allows a person to withstand even the most challenging circumstances. My *talmid*, you must hold on tight to Hashem's hand and not let go. He will guide you. He will protect you. He will carry you.

With all my love,
Rebbi

LETTER 5

Painful Separation

20 Tammuz 5755

My *talmid*!

I have not slept at all in the last two days; I cannot imagine you did at all either. I have been hearing about the care and devotion that you have been giving to your beloved Mommy, and I am deeply proud. As I have told you before, we cannot change our life's circumstances, but we *can* choose how to react to them, and right now, the *avodah* of *kibbud eim* is your main *tafkid*. I know that you have been fulfilling this *tafkid* in indescribable ways. You are there for your mother in every way you can and are savoring every single moment in her presence. And you really

must, for your mother is a beloved *tzaddekes*, and the levels of *emunah* that she has reached at this time are beyond words.

At the same time, you must continue to function normally for yourself and your family. You must eat and sleep so that you can be the best son possible, and so that you can deal with the severity of the situation with a clear head.

I have told you this before, but I want you to hear it again: The pain is very, very real, and crying is an effective way to express that pain. But please try your utmost to do it in private, away from your mother so that she does not see your pain. Hashem knows and Hashem hears. Every tear is being collected in the upper spheres. Every tear will be received with love and compassion from the One who created you. My child, I cannot imagine the depth of what you are going through. No one can. *Only Hashem knows, and it is to Him you must cry.* Crying expresses our feelings when no words could ever do justice. I am crying with you, my *talmid*.

Signing in tears,
Rebbi

CHAPTER 2

GRIEVING

LETTER 6

Unbearable Pain

25 Tammuz 5775

Oy, my *talmid*,

I have no words. The pain is so deep and profound, *no one but Hashem can understand it*. One day, she was here, your life was filled with her love and her light, and now she is not here anymore. No more can you talk to her and see her smile, hear her laugh, listen to her counsel, feel her endless care and love for you. The pain is unbearable, my *talmid*, and I will try my utmost to be a shoulder to cry upon at this trying time. There is no comfort now. There is no moving forward now. Now is that time to mourn and weep copious tears over the loss of this great and precious person in your life.

The Gemara tells us that Hashem counts the tears shed upon a righteous person.¹ Your mother was a righteous woman, my *talmid*. Every tear shed over her loss is being counted by *Hashem Yisbarach*.

Oy! The heavens must cry, the oceans must join in weeping over the loss of Hashem's child, a *bas Yisrael*, a mother in Am Yisrael. How many lives did she touch? How many good deeds did she do? How many *tefillos* did

1 *Shabbos* 105b.

she say? My *talmid*, you are not alone! We are all crying with you! Every part of this earth cries along with you. But most of all, *Hashem Himself is, ki'veyachol, crying over the loss of your beloved mother.*

Do not be afraid to cry; do not be afraid not to cry. Your emotions may come in waves. Do not let that worry you. Your job now is to keep the halachos of *aveilus*. Perform the proper actions, and allow Hashem to do the rest. Ayy, the pain is truly unbearable. Do not feel bad for feeling this way. Hashem is holding you, my dearest *talmid*, and so am I. I love you more than words can say.

In profound sadness,
Rebbi

L E T T E R 7

Levayah and Shivah

26 Tammuz 5755

To my beloved *talmid*,

Oy my *talmid*, I truly felt there was nothing to do but shed bitter tears when I sat with you at the *shivah* house today. I was trying to convey a message that I felt would be better in writing, so I will try to do so now.

Absolutely nothing can ever take the place of a parent. There is no relative or friend who can ever be a substitute. There are no words or songs that can ever possibly describe the depth of the relationship of a child to his parent or vice versa, and thus, *no pain can ever compare to the pain of losing a parent; no pain in the world.*

At the *shivah* we say to the mourners, "*HaMakom yenachem*—Hashem will comfort," for what can a mere human being say that will supply comfort to one who has lost a parent?! What words will suffice? What embrace could console?! Only Hashem—the one who created love, He who created life, He who created comfort—can provide the ultimate comfort.

The *hesped* you gave, my dear *talmid*, was the greatest of *hespedim* possible. The tears, the words, the stories, the lessons, what an incredible

kavod, *talmid*'l. Oy, what an incredible person she was, and what a merit you had, and forever will have, to have a mother like her.

Oy, how will life go on without your beloved mother? We cannot address that question now; for right now the pain is too immense to even try to make sense of it all. The most important thing to do right now, my *talmid*, is *aveilus*. Mourning is an honor to your mother. Mourning is the way of dealing with tragedy, and it is the only way to enable the wound to ever possibly heal. Mourning is the way that Chazal established for us to somehow live after loss. I will, *b'ezras Hashem*, be in touch with you soon, my *talmid*.

I love you deeply,
Rebbi

LETTER 8

Whirlwind to Reality

28 Tammuz 5775

Dearest *talmid*,

The experiences that you are living through now, my *talmid*, are in a way surreal. Although you are not able to process it all now, you will look back and appreciate all the details of *shivah*, and the wisdom of Chazal at a much later time. Try your utmost to write down the name of every person who comes to see you, because it will be hard to remember after the whirlwind of days. Do your best, also, to record whatever you can about your beloved mother.

The *avodah* of *shivah* is a very difficult one, but every single part of it is necessary for the healing of the *avel*, every nuance. Besides sitting on low chairs, not washing, and not changing garments, you must be careful to try and ensure that the conversation focuses on the *nifteres* and the greatness of her life and eternal achievements.

While *shivah* is the period of greatest mourning, paradoxically, *shivah* also serves as a distraction which keeps the *avel* from being overwhelmed by the absence of his loved one for the first few days. Only after *shivah*

ends does the reality kick in. By that time, a few days have passed, and time has healed the wounds slightly. In this way, the *avel* experiences a drop of *nechamah* before the difficult year of *aveilus* begins. The whirlwind is there for a reason, my *talmid*.

Hashem should just help you to be able to mourn; for that mourning is so important right now. Every drop of your mourning now will help you later; trust me, my *talmid*. Hashem created emotions, and now is the time to express them, and embrace them. Tears are exceedingly powerful; know that and cherish Hashem's marvelous creation.

At the same time, Hashem, Your beloved Father who cares for you more than you will ever know, should simultaneously allow you to find some measure of comfort, my *talmid*.

Thinking about you day and night,
Rebbi

L E T T E R 9

Absence and Tears

2 Av 5775

Dear *talmid*,

I am sure you are overwhelmed and drained from the days of *shivah*. Every drop of mourning is a mitzvah, fulfilling the words of Chazal, and more importantly, fulfilling the mitzvah of *kibbud eim*. Although we cannot understand fully what it means, we are told that the *neshamah* of the *niftar* hovers over the *shivah*; and, as you take a walk around the block signaling the end of *shivah*, it is as if you are escorting her one more time.

To say goodbye to someone that you love more than life feels impossible. It is heart wrenching and unbearably painful, and this is where tears come in, my beloved *talmid*.

Tears enable us to express pain that is beyond words. Treasure this gift of expression, for Hashem gathers every tear. Cry on His shoulders, *ki'veyachol*. I promise you; He is with you.