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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
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By the Grace of G-d
25th of Menachem Av, 5718
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. [redacted]

Montreal Quebec
Canada

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of the 18th of Menachem Av, and, as requested, I will remember you and all those mentioned in your letter, in prayer, when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory.

You write that you feel depressed, as it appears to you that you have not made the success in your study at the Yeshiva which you had expected. Even assuming that you were completely right in your appraisal, this still would be no reason for being depressed. For, it is explained in many sources, especially in the Book of Tanya, that even in the case of spiritual failure, no Jew should feel depressed, for a feeling of depression and gloom is, in itself, one of the strategic weapons which the Yetzer Hora uses, in an effort to discourage a person from serving G-d with joy and alacrity. And, when the Yetzer Hora succeeds in one thing, such as in discouraging you from study, as you write, he goes for further things.

The way to combat the Yetzer Hora is, as explained in the Tanya, to call forth redoubled effort on one's part to overcome the feeling of depression, and replace it with a feeling of joy in the realization that no matter what the past has been, it is always possible to attach oneself to G-d, through the study of the Torah and the observance of the Mitzvoth. The well-known illustration used in the Tanya, in the case of persistent distraction, is to imagine that a heathen is standing by while one is in the midst of prayer and trying to distract one from concentrating on prayer and study. In such a case, one would certainly not blame himself, but would rather redouble his efforts to concentrate on his prayer or study, completely ignoring the distractions from outside.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is up to a person to overcome his difficulties by his own effort and determination, and we have already been assured that where there is a determined effort, success is certain. Moreover, in your case, it is quite possible that you have underestimated your success, which could also be a thought implanted in your mind by the Yetzer Hora.

With regard to your apprehension that when you return with a beard, etc., how are you to cope with any possible derision and the like.

I would suggest that you study carefully the words of the Tur and the Remo, (which are based on the words of the Rambam), Orach Chaim, beginning of paragraph 1. These words are essentially an introduction to the fulfilment of all of the four parts of the Shulchan Aruch. In addition, you should also study the Responsum of the Tzemach Tzedek, Yore Deah, where the question is discussed, also the latter's annotation on the verse in Tillim "Vehu Rachum," etc.

In regard to the question of your eyesight, you should consult a good specialist who should give you the proper instruction as to what you have to do in this connection.

As for the question of advising Mr. [redacted] what he should study, and how to guide him in this connection, our Rabbis have taught, "A man should always study in those areas where he finds greatest gratification." At any rate, you should only advise him if he turns to you for advice.

With regard to what you write about your sister [redacted] the best way to influence her is through her friends rather than by direct approach, as an indirect approach promises greater success.

Finally, with regard to the Transgression to which you refer, I have already given my advice in such cases, by references to various sources, especially the Tanya, including those chapters which deal with the inner battle with the Yetzer Hara, to which I referred earlier in this letter. In addition, I would also suggest Iggereth Hateshuva, Chapter 11. I was glad to read, at the conclusion of your letter, about the birth of a son to your sister [redacted] May G-d grant that the parents bring up the newly-born child to a life of Torah, Chuppah, and Good Deeds, and may you always have good news to report.

With blessing,

By *Avraham Sender*