

By the Grace of G-d
3rd of Menachem Av,
5741. Brooklyn, N.Y.

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Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 20th.

Although I have heard a great deal about you and your work in South Africa through our people there, it is not the same as coming in direct contact. I was particularly gratified to note how dedicated you are to strengthen and spread Yiddishkeit in your city and country. This, of course, is very much in the tradition of your late father, of saintly memory, with whom we had a very close relationship, and who was very dedicated to the cause of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvoth.

It is also in keeping with the timely message of the Three Weeks, especially as your letter was written on the day after the 17th of Tammuz. For this period reminds every one of us most forcefully that it is the duty of every Jew to do his utmost to minimize, and help offset, the only cause of the Churban and Golus which is, as we say in our prayer, "Because of our sins we have been exiled from our land."

At first glance, it calls for an explanation why the text reads, "Because of our sins," considering that the exile started more than 1900 years ago. It would have been more reasonable to say, "Because of the sins of our fathers."

The simple explanation is as follows: Inasmuch as the only cause of the Golus was the alienation from the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth, the way to do away with the cause, and hence with the effect, is through strengthening everyone's commitment to Torah and Mitzvoth in the everyday life. It is thus within the capacity of every generation since the Churban to rectify the cause and bring an end to the Golus. This is why our Sages declared that any generation in whose time the Beis Hamikdash was not rebuilt, it was deemed as if it was destroyed in its time (Yerushalmi, Yoma 1:6).

With regard to the subject matter of your letter, in general we have the rule that "a Dayan must rule according to the evidence before his eyes." In other words, those who are on the spot are the best judges of how to improve the situation, and it is difficult to give advice from the distance. What I do want to

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emphasize is that an old established community such as you are now heading should certainly go from strength to strength in all matters of Yiddishkeit, and surely the lay leadership will give you the fullest support in this direction. Moreover, there is the assurance that "One who is determined to purify himself (to which the Alter Rebbe adds "and others", since both renditions are included in the word לטהר), receives aid from On High."

With reference to the idea of establishing a Kollel and a Yeshiva - however commendable such an undertaking is, it is especially important to make certain, as much as this is possible, that it will be with Hatzlocho. For, being a new and significant step aimed at uplifting the level of Yiddishkeit in the community, it is necessary to ensure that it should not fail, G-d forbid, and bring about a feeling of letdown and despair - not only in the community at large, but also among the leadership that had undertaken this ambitious task.

I believe, therefore, that such an institution should begin with candidates (students) who have a closer, mentally and spiritually, affinity with the community. Especially in regard to a Kollel, in which young married women and young families are involved, and it is important that the women should also be content with the conditions, etc.

In view of the above, it seems to me that if a Kollel is to be established, even a so-called "small" Kollel, the candidates should be recruited from young couples in the United Kingdom, for a trial period, so that there should be no question of making a great sacrifice, bringing them from distant countries, thereby giving the candidates perhaps unrealistic expectations that having made such sacrifices, they should be entitled to very special treatment, etc. This would also hold out better promise that the little Kollel would be viable, starting with only several couples from the United Kingdom, though I do not know what you have in mind when you speak of a "little Kollel."

A further advantage would be that the members of the Kollel would remain in proximity to their families, could occasionally visit them, or be visited by them, and perhaps also benefit from a little extra support.

May G-d grant you much Hatzlocho in all your endeavors to strengthen and advance the level of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvoth, in your community, and, in the spirit of the message of these days, help bring about all the sooner the fulfillment of the prophecies that these days will be transformed into days of gladness and rejoicing, with the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily in our time.

With blessing,