

EXCERPTS FROM

# Healthy <sup>in</sup> Body, Mind & Spirit

THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE  
לפי תפיסת הרב



MENTAL HEALTH

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



A GUIDE TO GOOD HEALTH

Healthy <sup>in</sup> Body,  
Mind & Spirit

MENTAL HEALTH

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RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON



SICHOS IN ENGLISH

788 Eastern Parkway | Brooklyn, New York 11213



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HEALTHY IN BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT  
— MENTAL HEALTH —

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# *chapter 3*

CONQUERING ANXIETIES, FEARS,  
WORRIES AND "NERVES"



## NEEDLESS WORRIES — A NEEDLESS WASTE OF ENERGY

Your 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>1</sup> "I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you *and deliver you.*"

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

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<sup>1</sup> *Yeshayahu* 46:4.

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 situation! 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>2</sup> “Serve G-d with joy.” ...

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. IV, p. 255)*

## FEELINGS OF INSECURITY

...A Jew can attain internal and external harmony only by living life as he or she is supposed to live it. If, for whatever reason, one's daily conduct and life are not as they should be,

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<sup>2</sup> *Tehillim* 100:2.

this disturbs the person's harmony and creates a feeling of restlessness, insecurity, etc.

Sometimes this feeling rises unconsciously. And sometimes, as you mention in your letter, it comes as a result of having a troubled conscience, all the more so since there is a special Jewish conscience over and above the general human conscience that is common to all decent human beings, Jews and non-Jews alike.

*(From a letter of the Rebbe)*

## FEELINGS OF DISQUIETUDE AND CONFLICT

...It has been explained in our Torah — and this has also been confirmed by modern science — that a surface layer may cover up an essential trait or quality, or, to use modern terminology, the subconscious may be overlaid by the conscious mind.

In such a case, conflicts are inevitable, for man's essence is linked to the deep internal layers and not the surface "cover," which itself is subject to change and under the influence of external forces.

For a Jew to eliminate conflict, it is necessary for him to bring to the fore his inner essence,<sup>3</sup> which is his deep-rooted faith in G-d. Failing this, he is bound to feel perturbed, even though the cause may be concealed from him.

In other words, a Jew must live his daily life in accordance with the Torah and *mitzvos* — the Jewish way of life — for it

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3 *Rambam, Hilchos Gerushin*, conclusion of ch. 2.

is only in this way that he can attain true harmony and peace of mind.

Needless to say, it is not easy to transform one's daily life and routine, transforming it into a way of life that has not been practiced in the past.

However, inasmuch as this is the will and the directive of G-d, the Creator of man, it is clear that the Creator does not expect the impossible from His creatures, and that He has provided every Jew with the ability to live at the level that He has willed.

It does, however, require an effort, oftentimes a strenuous effort and much determination, including at times the sacrifice of certain conveniences, whatever they may be.

But considering what is at stake — nothing less than the attainment of peace of mind and inner harmony, and even plain physical health (inasmuch as the physical and the spiritual are interrelated) — every effort made in this direction is surely worthwhile and most rewarding.

I would suggest that as a start you begin putting on *tefillin* every weekday morning, and that in addition you say at least a short prayer. The *tefillin* should be checked first to ensure they are kosher. ...

*(From a letter of the Rebbe in the year 5725)*

## FEELINGS OF INSECURITY

...In reference to your writing about doubts and the difficulty of making decisions, and about a general feeling of insecurity, it is unnecessary to elaborate to you at length that such feelings arise when a person thinks that he is alone and can only

rely upon himself and his own judgment, and therefore feels doubtful and insecure about each move he has to make.

And while he also trusts in G-d, this trust is somehow superficial, without permeating him and his way of life in every detail; and [when it does, it does so] only on certain days, such as the High Holy Days, [when] he feels closer to G-d.

But when a person's faith in G-d is deep, and when he reflects that G-d's benevolent providence extends to each and every person, and to each and every detail, and each and every minute, surely he must develop a profound sense of security and confidence. ...

*(From a letter of the Rebbe, dated 25 Elul, 5735)*

## ACUTE ANXIETY

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter with the enclosure, in which you write about your problem of acute anxiety, and ask my advice.

The best and most effective thing to do, in a situation such as yours, is to study thoroughly those sections and chapters in our sacred books where the matter of Divine Providence and *Bitochon* are discussed, such as *Chovos Halvovos*, *Shaar Habitochon*, and similar. It is well to keep in mind those chapters and verses in the *Tehillim* which speak of these subjects, as well as the *Midrashim* and interpretations of our Sages on them. These things should be studied with such depth that they should become a part of one's thinking. In this way there will be no room left for any kind of anxiety or

worry, and as King David said in the *Tehillim*,<sup>4</sup> “G-d is with me, I shall not fear. What can man do unto me!”

As you well know, the matter of *Hashgocho Protis* is the basis of true monotheism, a concept which to us means not only that G-d is one, but that there is oneness in the whole of Nature. In other words, the whole universe has one Supreme Being, Who not only is the Creator of everything, but also is the Master, continually supervising every detail of his handiwork. The corollary of this is that there cannot be a single point in the whole order of the world which is separated from the Supreme Being, or in any way not subject to His control. At the same time it is obvious that the Supreme Being is also the Essence of Perfection and Goodness. And although many things in the world seem imperfect, and require completion or perfection, there can be no doubt that there is a perfect order in the world, and even the lowest in the scale of Creation, namely the inanimate things, display wonderful perfection and symmetry, as can be seen from the atoms and molecules of inorganic matter. Hence, the conclusion must be that even those things which require completion are also part of the perfect order, and necessary for the fulfillment of the good, as all this is explained at length in the teachings of Chassidus. It is explained there that in order for a man to attain perfection, it is necessary that he should also have the feeling that he is not only on the receiving end, but also a contributor, and according to the expression of our Sages of blessed memory, “A partner in the Creation.”<sup>5</sup> This is why many things have been left in the world for him to improve and perfect.

I also want to make the further observation, and this is

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4 *Tehillim* 118:6.

5 *Shabbos* 10a.

also essential, that there is really no basis for anxiety at any time, and as you yourself mentioned in your letter, that you find no reason for it. Even in such cases where you think you know the reason for your anxiety, the reason is undoubtedly imaginary, or at any rate, not the real cause. For the real cause is that one's daily life is not in complete harmony with the true essence of a Jew. In such a case it is impossible not to have an awkward feeling that things do not seem to fit somehow, and it is this disharmony which is at the bottom of the anxiety, and it is in proportion to the discrepancy between his way of life and his true natural self.

Everybody recognizes that anxiety has to do with the psyche. But in the case of a Jew, the so-called psyche is really the *Neshama*. Some Jews have a particularly sensitive soul, in which case the above-mentioned disharmony would create a greater anxiety. In such a case even subtle and "minor" infractions of *Dikdukei Mitzvoth* would create anxiety. But even in the case of an ordinary soul of the average Jew, there must inevitably be created some anxiety if there is a failure to observe the fundamental Mitzvoth. It is very possible that the above may have a bearing on your situation. If this is so, then all that is necessary is to rectify matters, and bring the daily life and conduct into complete harmony with the essence of the soul, through strict adherence to the Torah and *Mitzvoth*. Then the symptoms will disappear of themselves.

It is necessary to mention also that in your case, where your position gives you a great deal of influence on your environment, your influence is an integral part of your harmonious life, and it is therefore essential that your influence, too, should be in harmony with the Torah and *Mitzvoth* in the fullest measure.

I suggest that you should also have the *Mezuzoth* of your home

checked, as also your *Tefillin*, and before putting on your *Tefillin* every weekday morning, to put aside a small coin for *Tzedoko*.

*(From a letter of the Rebbe, dated 26 Teves, 5725)*

## FEELING OVERWHELMED

Several decades ago, medicine discovered that the body could avoid certain illnesses through vaccination — i.e., inoculation with a radically weakened strain of those diseases one desires to guard against. Through this process, the body produces antibodies — custom-made weapons to guard against the illness.

The principles of healing the body, according to Maimonides, apply equally to remedies of the soul. This can provide us with a positive way of viewing minor difficulties in the execution of an important project. A weak dose of opposition early on in a venture can serve as a “vaccine” against more severe and difficult adversity later on.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XI, p. 58)*

## FEARS AND PANIC ATTACKS

### BE INATTENTIVE, HEEDLESS AND UNMINDFUL

In reply to your letter with the enclosed *pidyon nefesh* —

which I will read at a propitious time at the holy resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe — in which you write that you are fearful and panicky, etc.

Generally, matters such as these do not have a basis in reality (except for the fact that the person thinks and obsesses about these thoughts). Therefore, ceasing to think these thoughts (*hesach hadaas*) eliminates them entirely.

It is well known that *hesach hadaas* does not mean doing battle with a particular thought, for battling a thought is also contrary to ceasing to think about it.

Rather, it means, plainly and simply, to think about other matters entirely — when the troubling thought arises in his mind, he ignores it entirely; most definitely the person will not let the thought grow or battle it. Rather, he will push it aside by thinking about something else.

More specifically, these thoughts are banished by thinking about matters of Torah and *mitzvos* — for even a small measure of light banishes a large measure of darkness.

Understandably, all the above can be best achieved when a person is strong and healthy, which is why you should ask a doctor about your symptoms and follow his instructions. However — as stated above — do so without dwelling on the matter, i.e., whether you feel panicked, and so on and so forth.

[You can gain additional confidence that you will succeed in your quest of ridding yourself of your fears,] as we now find ourselves [in the midst of the period of the High Holidays,] in the days of being signed and sealed for the good. [At this time,] G-d, the Essence of Goodness, causes goodness to descend below upon each and every Jew, in an overtly revealed manner.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XVI, p. 13)*

## COMBATING FEARS AND ANXIETIES BY COMMITTING TO MEMORY THE FIRST SECTION OF CHAPTER 41 IN TANYA

...You write about your fears and anxieties:

It would be of benefit to you to examine your *tefillin*. Also, commit to memory the beginning of chapter 41 in the holy *Tanya* until the word *haMelech* found at the beginning of p. 56b. Review these words [often] in your thoughts, or even verbalize them.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XVII, p. 331)*

## COMBAT FEARS THROUGH ADDITIONAL MEASURE OF TZEDAKAH

...You write that at times your wife, [who is pregnant,] is sometimes overly anxious and fearful:

You should inspect the *mezuzos* in your home as well as your *tefillin*. Surely your wife conducts herself according to the good Jewish custom of fine Jewish women, the custom of giving *tzedakah* prior to lighting candles *erev Shabbos* and *erev Yom Tov*.

In addition to the above, your wife should give several cents to *tzedakah* every weekday morning until after she gives birth in a good and auspicious hour.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XIII, p. 180)*

## COMBAT FRIGHTENING IMAGES THROUGH CHASSIDIC TALES, BEDTIME SHEMA AND HAMAPIL

...You write that your grandmother's thoughts are filled with disturbing and frightening images:

It would be appropriate to check the *mezuzos* of her room. She should also give several cents to *tzedakah* every weekday morning.

Before retiring for the evening, she should read or have read to her — depending on her health — stories from our holy Rebbeim, as well as stories of chassidim in general. Your grandmother surely recites the bedtime *Shema* — at least the first section, as well as the blessing of *HaMapil*...

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XV, p. 13)*

## COMMITTING WORDS OF TORAH TO MEMORY INCREASES G-D'S BLESSINGS AND PROTECTION

In reply to your letter in which you write that at times you are terrified of lightning and other similar matters:

Commit to memory several chapters of *Mishnayos* and at least one chapter of *Tanya*. From time to time, review them while you walk in the street and the like.

The fact that words of our Torah — given by G-d, Creator of the world — are embedded within your mind will increase G-d's blessings, protecting you in all your affairs.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XVIII, p. 124)*

## FEAR OF AN AYIN HARA

You write about an individual who is fearful that an *ayin hara* [“evil eye”] has been cast upon him:

In matters such as these, the fear can be totally nullified by not paying it, [i.e., the fear of the *ayin hara*,] even the slightest attention — not thinking about the matter at all.

*(from a letter of the Rebbe)*

## FOLLOWING THE PATH OF TORAH NEGATES FEAR OF AN AYIN HARA

...You write about an “*ayin hara*”:

It is explained in our Torah, called *Toras Chayim* and *Toras Emes*, because it is our guide in life and all its teachings are true, that when a Jew conducts his daily life in accordance with G-d’s Will, as set forth in the *Shulchan Aruch*, he is thereby keeping the channels needed to receive G-d’s blessings wide open. There is then no room for fear or anxiety.

For, as frequently stated in our Holy Scriptures, “G-d is with me, I shall not fear;” “He sends His angels to guide you in all your ways;” and many other verses in this vein.

If you have not had your *mezuzos* checked recently, it would be well to have them checked to make sure they are kosher and properly affixed.

*(From a letter of the Rebbe, dated 7 Iyar, 5737)*

## MENTAL HEALTH — NOT AN EVIL SPIRIT

...With regard to that which you write about Mr. ... from Bashar, who told you about what is transpiring with his son... [and fears that it may be the result of an evil spirit].

You should explain to him that this is merely a matter of [his son's mental] health and not — Heaven forbid — a matter of an evil spirit.

Physical wellbeing is primarily dependent on spiritual wellbeing; one must, however, utilize natural means [of healing] as well. [Mr. ...] should [therefore first] inspect the *mezuzos* in his home as well as his *tefillin*. I am referring not so much to the boxes that house the parchments of *tefillin*, but to the parchments [and writing] themselves, that they be kosher according to Jewish law.

The mother of the boy should scrupulously observe matters of *tznius*, most importantly with regard to the laws and regulations of family purity.

Prior to lighting candles *erev Shabbos* and *erev Yom Tov* as well as every Monday and Thursday during the week, his wife should give several francs to *tzedakah*.

Their son should wear a *tallis kattan* and be scrupulous about keeping his head covered (*kisui harosh*).

In addition to all the above, they should seek the advice of a noted psychiatrist from a large city and follow his instructions.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XI, p. 303)*

## "A CASE OF NERVES"

...You write that you are under the impression that you are

having heart palpitations:

It is almost certain that this is merely a product of your imagination — at most, it is merely a case of nerves. However, in order to set your mind at ease, you should visit a heart specialist and follow his instructions. All this pertains to your physical conduct.

With regard to your spiritual conduct:

Firmly fix in your thought, with the strength and intensity of faith that is possessed by all Jews, “believers, sons of believers,” that G-d — Who created the world 5,711 years ago<sup>6</sup> and constantly recreates the world and conducts it according to His will — is the ultimate of goodness, and it is in the nature of He Who is good to do good.

This being so, it is obvious that your personal affairs are included in the above — that in your life and in your affairs G-d is the Master, and He will lead you to your ultimate [good] destination.... May it be G-d’s will that He direct you with manifest and overtly revealed love, goodness and mercy.

Put all thoughts of “nerves,” etc., out of your head. A chassid must be healthy not only spiritually, but physically as well, so that he may himself fulfill, and act as an instrument — meaning, through him his soul’s mission is fulfilled, for which purpose his soul descended into the physical and corporeal world.

With blessings that in the immediate future you will convey to me glad tidings with regard to all the above.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. IV, p. 262)*

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6 This letter was written in the year 5711.

## SPIRITUAL AIDS TO HELP CALM THE NERVES

...You write about your wife's health and that the doctor is also of the opinion that it is a case of nerves:

It would be worthwhile for you to inspect the *mezuzos* in your home to insure that they are all kosher according to Jewish Law. Additionally, your wife should give several cents to *tzedakah* every Monday and Thursday during the week.

This is in addition to the fact that surely your wife conducts herself according to the good Jewish custom of fine Jewish women, the custom of giving several cents to *tzedakah* prior to lighting candles *erev Shabbos* and *erev Yom Tov*.

She may rest assured that the "Healer of all flesh, and Performer of wonders" will grant both of you lengthy years filled with all manner of good.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XII, p. 91)*

## BE INATTENTIVE AND THE ATTACKS OF NERVES WILL CEASE

...With specific regard to the health situation [of your wife]:

It seems that this is mostly a case of nerves. Therefore, she should be inattentive to and unmindful of the entire matter, strengthening herself in her *bitachon* in the "Healer of all flesh, and Performer of wonders," the Creator and Director of the entire world.

[When your wife will do this,] the attacks — about which you write — will become more and more infrequent...

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XII, p. 357)*

## "WORRY ABOUT WHY YOU ARE NEEDED, NOT ABOUT YOUR NEEDS"

In reply to your letter ... in which you write that you are very anxious and worried about your wife and family *sheyichyu*; also that you have grave concerns about earning a living, and consequently you do not have the peace of mind to engage in the study of G-d's Torah:

I am astonished that you completely fail to mention what you are doing regarding Torah and *mitzvos* in order to create vessels and channels through which to receive G-d's blessings regarding all the above [needs and concerns].

There is the famous saying of the Alter Rebbe, author of the *Tanya* (and [thus] *Posek* in the esoteric portion of Torah) and author of the *Shulchan Aruch* (and [thus] *Posek* in the exoteric portion of Torah), who replied to an individual who had a similar complaint: "Your concerns are all about what you need, but not what you are needed for."

The above is cited in a letter of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of blessed memory, printed in *Kuntres 57*.<sup>7</sup> He mentions there as well that when one makes an effort to accomplish those things for which man was placed on earth — and as our Sages say at the conclusion of Tractate *Kiddushin*, "I was created for no other purpose than that of serving my Creator" — then G-d satisfies the person's needs and requirements.

(*Igros Kodesh, Vol. VIII, p. 296*)

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<sup>7</sup> *Sefer HaMaamarim 5708*, p. 194.

## COPING WITH NERVOUSNESS

You write about your being nervous:

It would be beneficial for you to study several chapters in *Shaar HaBitachon* in [the *Sefer*] *Chovos HaLevavos*.

Also, seek out those places in *Chassidus* that explain the concept mentioned in *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle XXV, p. 138b: “Were he to believe that this came from G-d, etc.”

From the above, it is obvious that there is nothing to be nervous about, as the pathways for drawing down G-d’s blessings for all one’s needs are known.

Moreover, these are well-trodden paths that each and every person is capable of treading confidently. By doing so, the person achieves self-elevation. Thus, there is no reason at all to be under constant nervous tension.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. VIII, p. 279)*

## WORRIES ABOUT DEPLETION OF ONE'S NEST EGG

In reply to your letter of the 10th of Menachem Av:

I am baffled by the statement in your letter that the difference [in your wealth] between last year and this year [is so great that it] defies the laws of nature — and in the phraseology of your letter you are not referring to [a difference on] the side of good, [but to the other side, due to the losses in your investment portfolio].

According to my thinking, if you will remind yourself about your current, [i.e., vastly improved,] state of health, and if you will consider that your wife is currently expecting a

child in a good and auspicious hour, then it is abundantly clear that it indeed is, thank G-d, beyond the laws of nature — but to the side of good.

The fact of the matter is that for a short period of time the amounts that lie in your bank account have lessened, but this has caused no real loss in your actual standard of living, and surely has not affected you negatively in any of the three [critical] areas of children, life [and health,] and sustenance.

There is a popular saying from our Sages (*Sotah* 48b), that “he who has enough to sustain him for the day but is apprehensive about the morrow is considered to be wanting in faith.”

This being so, [imagine how one should feel] when one — thank G-d — has enough cash to keep him going not only for the day but also for the month, and particularly when one has a sufficient reserve for the next several years but worries what [the situation] will be many more years in the future.

When the deposits in the bank become smaller, and consequently the anxiety about what will transpire many years in the future becomes ever greater, and one forgets at the time that [these losses] are truly incomparable to the goodness of improved health and the fulfillment of their wishes [for having a child] — this denotes an obscurity and concealment [of G-dliness and His bountiful blessings] to an extremely great degree.

Surely you understand that I am not stating the above as a reprimand. Only that it is a pity and it hurts to see a Jew who has so much to be joyful about — not only regarding spiritual matters but also regarding material matters, which is to say that the joy is then not only a soulful joy but a bodily joy as well, of both the Divine and animal soul. And instead

of [focusing on] this [joy], you are worried and pained about what G-d — the One Who sustains all with kindness and mercy — will do several years from now with regard to your sustenance and the sustenance of your family.

As we now already find ourselves in the joyful days,<sup>8</sup> and according to the expression of the *Zohar* (*Yisro* 78b), that from the tenth of Av the forces of Esav, [i.e., the forces of evil,] vanish and are not to be found, so too should there be lost and never be found again all the concealments and smooth talk, that stem from the side of Esav.

You will then see the fulfillment of serving G-d with “all your heart” (*b'chol levavcha*) and with a “complete heart” (*b'leivav shaleim*), [in both cases with the Hebrew spelling of the word “heart”] written with two “veis” letters, [signifying serving G-d with the completeness of the heart the Divine soul as well as the heart of the animal soul] — so that you will serve G-d with joy.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. IX, p. 242)*

## OBTAINING RELIEF BY OCCUPYING ONE'S MIND WITH OTHER MATTERS

In reply to Monday's letter: As per your request, I will mention your wife ... in prayer at the holy resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of blessed memory, for a speedy recovery.

According to the way you describe the situation in your

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<sup>8</sup> The letter was written on the 18th of Av, following the Three Weeks and the Ninth of Av.

letter, it would seem that, in large part, your wife's pains stem from a case of nerves.

Thus, the more your wife will be inattentive and unmindful of this, [i.e., the thoughts that are troubling her,] by occupying her mind with other matters — and most importantly, the stronger her *bitachon* will be in G-d, “Healer of all flesh, and Performer of wonders,” the more this will hasten her healing.

Understandably, this does not at all negate following the doctor's instructions, for “permission was granted to the healer to heal,”<sup>9</sup> and every matter has to be rooted in nature as well....

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XI, p. 108)*

## DO NOT WORRY ABOUT WHAT IS IN G-D'S HANDS; CONCERN YOURSELF WITH WHAT IS IN YOUR HANDS

...You write about your current state of health and the illness you suffered in the past, and that the doctor told you that you must control your mental state and free yourself from worries, anxiety and stress:

It is recognized that utilizing the attribute of *bitachon* is the best way to counter worry. The manner of generating this attribute within oneself is explained at length in many places [in our sacred writings], among them *Shaar HaBitachon* in *Sefer Chovos HaLevavos*.

In truth, this [attribute of *bitachon*] is a direct result of a foundation of the belief of the Jewish people — all of whom

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<sup>9</sup> *Berachos* 60a.

are “believers, sons of believers” — which is that G-d oversees each and every one of us with individual Divine providence, and that G-d is the Essence of Goodness. In the words of our Sages,<sup>10</sup> “All that G-d does, He does for the good.”

In light of the above, what room can there possibly be for worry? It is only when one forgets a fundamental principle of faith it is possible for one to worry.”

It is worth noting that, in accordance with the above, this [aspect of not having to worry because matters are in G-d’s benevolent hands] only applies to those things that are “in the hands of Heaven.”

However, since our Sages say,<sup>11</sup> “Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven,” it follows that a person should be concerned with how he can improve his behavior so that it will be in concert with the words of the *Mishnah*:<sup>12</sup> “I was created to serve my Master....”

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. XVII, p. 100)*

## REMOVING WORRIES BY STUDYING CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE IN TEHILLIM

In reply to your letter ... in which you write that you find yourself constantly worrying:

I am indeed surprised that this is so, after your having merited to study for a lengthy period of time in the holy *Yeshivah* of *Tomchei Temimim* (and “Holiness is not subject to

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 60b.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33b.

<sup>12</sup> *Kiddushin* 82a.

change<sup>13</sup>), in which you studied [not only the exoteric portion of Torah, but] also *Chassidus*, which explains the theme of individual Divine providence and how G-d is the Essence of Goodness, and how “It is in the nature of He Who is good to do good,” etc.

It would be beneficial for you to study chapter 23 of *Tehillim*<sup>14</sup> with many of the commentaries, and to review it from time to time.

It would also be proper for you to check your *tefillin* if they have not been checked in the past twelve months. ...

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XXIII, p. 90)*

## OVERCOMING WORRYING THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF SADNESS

I received your letter in a timely fashion. However, I was not able to respond until now for any number of reasons. I hope that by the time you receive this letter your mental disposition will have improved.

I am intentionally sending my response at the conclusion and termination of the month of Nissan (the month of freedom and liberation, including of course freedom from all disruptive thoughts and matters) and the time of preparation for the month of Iyar, known as the month of *Ziv* (“ray of light”), at which time — in accordance with the explanation

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13 See *Eitz Chayim*, Shaar 4:3; 34:3; *Shalah*, ch. 1; elucidation of *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle XXVII.

14 The chapter that begins: “The L-rd is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.”

of our Sages<sup>15</sup> — [sacred] rays of light and illumination are intensified within the world.

It is self-understood that my intent in the above words is that they address yourself — that now is a propitious time to increase G-d's blessings for success in all your matters, beginning with strengthening your physical health.

Doing something about it, [i.e., doing something concrete to bring about an improvement in your mental state,] (even if it be but a minor action), draws down from Above and increases G-d's blessings many more times so [than the person's action].

First and foremost of these actions is to strengthen one's *bitachon* in G-d and to contemplate G-d's Divine providence: how G-d oversees each and every individual, extending His providence to each and every detail within that individual's life.

The immediate [and obvious] conclusion from the above: do not pay attention to those thoughts that — G-d forbid — arouse worry or sadness. This is particularly so, according to that which is explained in *Toras HaChassidus* from our Rebbeim and *Nesi'im*, how sadness and melancholy should be utterly negated.

This negation is not to be accomplished through internal debate and bringing proofs, etc., [that such thoughts are wrong and harmful,] but by being completely inattentive and unmindful of these thoughts.

Should you find it difficult to free yourself of these thoughts, one bit of sound advice is to alter your thoughts, occupying your mind with matters that have absolutely nothing at all to do with your previous [injurious] thoughts. Do not even negate the previous thoughts, just think about something completely different.

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15 See *Rosh HaShanah* 11a.

Additionally, since every matter must be rooted in nature as well, it would be appropriate for you to ask the opinion of a doctor [who specializes in this area] and follow his instructions. As to which doctor you should confer with — consult with your family doctor.

Do all the above with strong feelings of *bitachon* — in the words of King David, “Sweet Singer of Israel”: “The L-rd is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing”;<sup>16</sup> “The L-rd is with me, I do not fear.”<sup>17</sup> May all the above be accomplished in good health and gladness of heart.

With blessings for good spirits and glad tidings regarding all the above, and with regards to your parents, *sheyichyu*.

P.S. As I want you to receive this letter while we are still in the month of Nissan or, at the latest, on *Rosh Chodesh Ziv*, I am therefore sending this letter by express mail.

(*Igros Kodesh, Vol. XXIII, p. 158*)

## “YOU ARE WITH ME”

I received in a timely manner the *pidyon nefesh* [written] for you by ..., in which he writes that you are suffering from a certain fear:

I hereby want to emphasize [to you] once again that every Jew, both woman and man, should be strong in their *bitachon* in blessed G-d. Just as every Jew believes with complete faith that G-d is the Master of the world, so too is He the Master of the life of every individual Jew, male and female.

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<sup>16</sup> *Tehillim* 23:1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 118:6.

As it is a given that G-d is good, He will surely lead [matters in the direction of good and] to the good. And when people find themselves under the care — *hashgachah pratis* — of G-d, then there is nothing to fear. As King David says in *Tehillim*,<sup>18</sup> “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” This aspect of “You are with me” applies to each and every Jew.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. V, p. 242)*

## SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVICE FOR COMBATING NIGHT TERRORS

...You write that you suffer from night terrors:

Check your *tefillin* and *mezuzos*; be even more scrupulous in your recitation of the bedtime *Shema* and while in bed verbally recite from memory or just think by heart several lines of *Tanya*. Study several times *Shaar HaBitachon* in the *Sefer of Chovos HaLevavos*.

Completely ignore and be heedless of these terrors — do not even fight them. They will of themselves become ever weaker; ultimately, you will be completely free of them.

Surely you have a pocket-sized picture of my father-in-law, the Rebbe.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XI, p. 162)*

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18 23:3.

## NEGATING FEARS OF "EVIL SPIRITS"

In reply to your letter from the fourth of Cheshvan, in which you enclosed a *pidyon nefesh* on behalf of Mrs. ... *tichye*:

[Convey to her that] the *mezuzos* in her home should be checked to insure that they are all kosher according to Jewish Law. Before she goes to sleep, she should recite at least the first section of the bedtime *Shema*, and weekday mornings she should give several francs to *tzedakah*.

Additionally, [convey to her that] she should be completely unmindful and inattentive to all these groundless thoughts about "evil spirits" (*sheidim*) and the like.

It has already been stated,<sup>19</sup> "The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps," and it is also stated,<sup>20</sup> "He will cover you with His pinions [and you will find refuge under His wings]... You will not fear the terror of the night, etc. ... When he calls on Me, I will answer him, etc."

(*Igros Kodesh, Vol. XII, p. 64*)

## FEAR OF BEING UNDER A MAGIC SPELL<sup>21</sup>

...Explain to her the words of the [illustrious personage, the] *Rambam*,<sup>22</sup> [who states] that there is no reality to magic, etc. ....

(*Neilchah B'Orchosov, p. 233*)

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19 *Tehillim* 121:4.

20 *Ibid.* 91:4,5,15.

21 The following is a response from the Rebbe regarding a woman who feared that she was being influenced by magic.

22 See *Rambam, Hilchos Akum* 11:16.

## IMAGINED FEARS AND HEART PAIN

...Regarding that which you write about being fearful at times and that you also think you are suffering from a heart ailment:

In my opinion, both these matters are a fantasy. You should therefore examine your *tefillin*, as well as the *mezuzos* in your home — at the very least the *mezuzah* in your room; also check the *kashrus* of your *tallis kattan* on a daily basis.

Be strong in your *bitachon* that G-d, Who oversees every person with individual Divine providence, [constantly] hovers over you. Also, commit to memory the beginning of chapter 41 in the holy *Tanya*, at least until the word *haMelech* found at the beginning of p. 56b....

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. X, p. 289)*

## HEADACHES CAUSED BY NERVES

I received your *pidyon nefesh* in which you write that you are not feeling well, that you are suffering from headaches and the like. When I will be at the holy resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of sainted memory, I will remember you in prayer for good health.

Since in the majority of instances [symptoms such as yours] result from anxiety and nerves, you should strengthen your *bitachon* in G-d, Who created and conducts the world, and Who also directs the various aspects of your life.

You therefore need not be anxious and apprehensive, for He will surely lead you in the path of goodness, strengthening your health as well. The greater your *bitachon* in G-d, the

more rapidly will be the realization of the above.

Understandably, you are to maintain your conduct in the paths of Torah and *mitzvos* and even increase your performance — that is to say, increase the amount you give to *tzedakah*, recite daily a chapter of *Tehillim*, and say a section of *Kerias Shema* before going to sleep.

It would also be advisable for you to check the *mezuzos* in your home to assure that they are all kosher.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. VI, p. 94)*

## OVERCOMING ANXIETIES

It was upsetting not to have heard any news from you for such a long while. It therefore gladdened me greatly to receive your letter with the news that — thank G-d — your health has improved. Naturally I will read the *pidyon nefesh* that you sent at the sacred resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe.

Once again, I reiterate [my request] that you think long and hard about how G-d directs the world as a whole, and each and every one of us in particular.

Realizing this will remove your anxieties, for it will then be clear to you that G-d takes care of [all] matters in the best possible manner. Taking care, [i.e., micromanaging our lives in their every detail,] is not our responsibility; our responsibility is solely regarding matters of performing Torah and *mitzvos*, over which we were granted freedom of choice [and not over matters that are Divinely ordained and over which we do not have freedom of choice].

[With the above,] I am not writing anything new; these matters are basic and known to all. However, if these matters remain tangential [to our lives and we know them only peripherally,] and in actual practice we conduct ourselves as if these matters depend on ourselves, then we make our lives — our actual physical lives — extremely difficult.

This, however, is not the case when we are permeated with the concept that “G-d is my shepherd”<sup>23</sup> — then even the body and animal soul are cognizant that “I lack nothing.”<sup>24</sup>

Heaven forbid that [you think] I am chastising you; it is only that I am pained by your anguish and distress which you cause yourself over something that has no foundation and surely is also groundless — and as known, the difference between the service of “tests” (*nisyonos*), [where the difficulty is merely in the person’s own mind and once the person succeeds in overcoming the test, the difficulty disappears,] and the service of “refinement and elevation” (*birurim*).

Looking forward to hearing glad tidings from you about the improvement in your and your wife’s health.

(*Igros Kodesh, Vol. IV, p. 189*)

## CALM THE NERVES WITH A CALMING CHAPTER OF TEHILLIM

Study chapter 23 of *Tehillim*<sup>25</sup> until you are well versed in its content (not necessarily the exact words, and it makes no

23 *Tehillim* 23:1.

24 Conclusion of the above verse.

25 The chapter that begins: “The L-rd is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.”

difference in which language you study it).

Recite the above chapter [any time during the day] on *Shabbos* and Monday and Thursday, *bli neder*. Give several cents to charity on weekday mornings as well as before lighting candles *erev Shabbos* and *erev Yom Tov*, *bli neder*.

In the future, pay no attention *at all* if somebody speaks about you; don't ask them about this, [i.e., if they spoke about you,] at all. For (as stated in the above chapter [of *Tehillim*,]) "G-d is with you" and "only goodness and kindness will follow you."

Consequently — no one at all can have power over you *at all*.

If your family doctor prescribes medication to calm you and the like, make sure to take it.

...Your husband should check his *tefillin* and the *mezuzos* in your home if they have not been checked in the past twelve months.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XXV, p. 256)*

## FEELINGS OF CONSTRICTION — A MATTER OF NERVES

In reply to your letter of the 10th of *Menachem* [Av,] in which you write that there are times when you feel a constriction in your windpipe:

This is merely a matter of nerves, from which we understand that if you take your mind off this matter and strengthen your *bitachon* in G-d, "Healer of all flesh and Performer of wonders,"<sup>26</sup> [i.e., the giver of the Torah and

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26 After the text of the *Asher Yatzar* blessing.

its commandments,] then your symptoms will gradually disappear by themselves.

You must, however, provide at least some vessel via natural means [in which to receive G-d's healing]. You should therefore go to a doctor and follow his instructions.

Of course, you should also increase your diligence and assiduousness in your study of Torah, both *Toras HaNiglah* and *Toras HaChassidus*, and see to it that you affect your friends in this direction. [When you do so,] it will be good for you both materially and spiritually.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. XV, p. 322)*

## **GROUNDLESS WORRIES CAN DISAPPEAR OVERNIGHT WHEN WORRIES ARE NOT EGGED ON**

I recently received your letter that came in response to mine. However, even in your second letter I fail to see any grounds for your lack of happiness and for that which you write that suddenly everything has fallen apart.

Since your lack of happiness is based on something without foundation, it can easily disappear — “here today and gone tomorrow” — that is, provided you do not egg it on by morose thoughts that are contrary to the nature of man and the dictates of our Torah of Life that requires us to serve G-d (service which can and must be during every moment of our lives) specifically with joy.

You surely know from your own experience, and we verily observe that if at times it is difficult to battle a certain mood,

the best advice is to distract your attention from the situation not by fighting these thoughts, but by focusing your thoughts elsewhere.

The general catch-phrase for this is: “G-d made man uncomplicated, but *they* have sought many schemes.”<sup>27</sup> Since it is “they,” [i.e., the person himself and not G-d,] who is doing the scheming, therefore this can be easily nullified.

As per your request, when I am at the holy resting place of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, of sainted memory, I will mention in prayer all the individuals you wrote about.

I will conclude with my advice — since you sought my counsel:

Completely ignore all your introspective, self-examining thoughts and go forth with confidence along life’s path, since G-d’s providence accompanies all of us every step of our lives — not only regarding those matters that seem to us to be of great import, but in each and every detail of our lives. And, as known, this is one of the fundamentals of the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, later expounded upon at length in the teachings of *Chassidus Chabad*.

*(Igras Kodesh, Vol. X, p. 118)*

## OVERCOMING INSECURITIES AND DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING DECISIONS

With reference to that which you write about your uncertainties and the difficulty in making decisions, as well as about general feelings of insecurity:

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<sup>27</sup> *Koheles* 7:29.

I trust it is unnecessary to elaborate to you at length that such feelings arise when a person thinks that he is alone and can rely only upon himself and his own judgment, and therefore feels doubtful and insecure about each move he has to make.

...However, when a person possesses a deep and abiding faith in G-d, and when he reflects that G-d's benevolent individual Divine providence extends each and every moment to each and every person and to each and every detail, he will surely develop a profound sense of security and confidence.

*(From a letter of the Rebbe, dated 25 Elul, 5735)*

## **REDUCING ANXIETY AND INCREASING PEACE OF MIND THROUGH BITACHON**

...I trust you know that one of the basic tenets of our religion and way of life is to have complete *bitachon* in G-d, Whose benevolent providence extends to each and every one individually.

In addition to this being a must for its own sake, it will go a long way to reducing anxiety and strengthening your peace of mind.

At the same time, it is, of course, necessary to follow the instructions of one's doctor, which is also one of the teachings of our Torah.

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

*(From a letter of the Rebbe, dated 10 Menachem Av, 5743)*

