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By the Grace of G-d
5721
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of August 22 reached me with some delay. In it you present a fairly clear picture of yourself, your background, education, spiritual vicissitudes, and present state of mind which you describe in rather dismal colors, and you conclude with the hope that I may be of some help to you.

Permit me then to make an observation, which is strikingly evident from the general tenor of your letter, and which I believe also holds the clue to the solution.

Your whole letter - two and half closely typewritten pages - is full of your own expectations and disappointments, as if everybody owes you everything, but no one has a claim on you.

Yet even a brief reflection will clearly reveal that the universe we live in is ordered in a system of give and take, and the personal universe of the individual (the microcosm) must likewise conform to this system of reciprocal relationship. Consequently, when one disrupts or distorts this system, it must necessarily bring about a distortion in one's immediate surroundings, and *especially* even in one's inner life.

Now, judging by your own description, Divine Providence and the society in general have been quite generous to you. You have been gifted with more than the average measure of intelligence and mental capacities; you have been given opportunities of education, etc. In other words, you have been on the receiving end, but - forgive me for being so blunt - it did not occur to you, judging from your letter, that you might owe something to the society; that you might have obligations to participate in it actively and help to better it by putting to good use some or all of the mental gifts and capacities with which you have been endowed. Heaven knows that our society is far from perfect and that there is much to be done in the way of raising its standards of justice and morality. It is the basic duty of everyone to contribute one's share towards ~~it~~ this end.

So far I have been speaking in general terms. When the individual in question happens to have the good fortune of being a Jew, his duties and obligations go infinitely further, especially in this day and age, after one third of our people (quantitatively, and

much more so qualitatively) have been annihilated. For, everyone who has been spared that fate must now contribute not only his normal share, but also make up the terrible gap that has been created in the life of our tortured people. One must now work for at least ~~the~~ towards the preservation of our people and the fulfilment of its destiny.

As for the question, wherein lies the preservation of our people, and what is its historic destiny? - the answer is not difficult to find if we examine the pages of our history throughout the many centuries of our sojourn among the nations of the world. It is neither power, nor country, nor even a common language that preserved us in the past, but our Jewish way of life in accordance with the Torah, Torath Chayyim (the Law of Life) and Mitzvoth, whereby Jews live. Those who sought new ways, or staked the future of our people on other factors - and there were such groups who made such attempts, viz. Kuthites, Saducees, Hellenists, Karaites, etc. - disappeared without trace. Only the eternal Torah and Mitzvoth, the true Jewish way of life, preserved us in the past, as will preserve us in the future. This is the golden thread that runs throughout our long history.

If the person turning to me with such a problem as you describe were a gentile, I would say to him: You are too much wrapped up with yourself, with your own emotions and feelings and aspirations. Stop being concerned with your own problems. The way to cope with such an emotionally charged situation is to stop trying to cope with it. You must get away from yourself, and begin to think of others. It is time to begin an active participation in the society; to give, and give generously. The opportunities are many, and the need is great. You have your choice: social work, charitable, or even scientific.

But you are a Jew, and your obligations go beyond the above. You must live like a Jew in your daily life, the Jewish way of life, the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth, and you must use your influence with others in the same direction. Some people think the Torah and the Jewish way is "old fashioned," ~~but~~ they are both misguided and unscientific. Truth never gets "too old," can never get stale. Only falsehood, half truth and compromise can not last long; but truth is enduring and timeless.

It may require courage and resolution to change one's way of life. But these are qualities with which youth is generously endowed, and you are a young man, nineteen, as you write. You are capable of facing this challenge boldly.

We are now in the very auspicious days of Elul, when the old year is about to give way to the new. This is the time of Teshuvah. "Teshuvah" is usually translated as "repentance," the turning over of a new leaf. It is this and more, for the real meaning of Teshuvah is "return" - return to the source, the source of truth, purity and holiness, the very essence of the Jew, whose soul is truly a part of the Divine above.

Wishing you a Kesivo vachasimo toivo,

With blessing M. Schneerson