

# DEALING WITH LONELINESS

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*The following is a collection of letters by the Rebbe addressing the issue of how to cope with (and rid oneself of) feelings of loneliness. It is not intended to give a full overview on the Rebbe's approach to this subject; for more comprehensive study it is imperative to learn the many igros and sichos of the Rebbe on this matter.*

① In the following letter, the Rebbe addresses an introvert, explaining how every person has a natural need for social contact, and that the only way for one who struggles socially to attain the gains of contact is through creating a situation in which it is absolutely unavoidable, rather than contemplating “from the outside” how to succeed socially.

I would like to confirm receipt of your letter - undated - in which you write about your emotional state etc.

I believe that I have previously written a few times, that in my opinion -and this is what I have clearly seen in actuality- every person, without exception, has a natural need for social contact, though obviously the level of dependency varies from person to person. When one tries to ignore this natural need it understandably brings to “complications” and the like. For those who for some reason have difficulty connecting with others, their only solution is as in the case of learning how to swim, which is impossible before entering the water, even when standing close to the edge of the river. Rather, one must first jump into the water. Automatically, the process of gaining swimming skills begins and eventually one masters them. Contemplating whilst standing at the edge of the river how, what, and in which manner he will learn to swim, is useless; as it is impossible to learn how to swim unless one is in water.

Pardon me for saying so, but this is the case in your regard. In your letter you argue whether or not to accept a job which will involve being in the presence and company of others, all whilst sitting in your own room or “daled amos”.

Obviously I do not intend to rebuke, rather to try once more; possibly, this time my words will be effective and you will “jump in” to a situation in which you will be forced (at least for the first few days) to be amongst people outside of your own home, and I strongly hope that within a short amount of time it will no longer be a strain and you will see the great importance and gain, also for others in society, as it is not for naught that man was created with a natural need for social contact.

How amazing are the words of our sages, which are a practical guide for day to day life, that any matter of holiness should be conducted in the presence of ten people, not only publicly but the complete form of public. There is also a known Chassidic saying repeated in the name of great Chassidic masters, that it is worse in Gan Eden all alone then to be in... with the company of other Jews.

...May it be the will of Hashem that there be drastic development for the good and that you will have good news in this area.

With blessings for good news...<sup>1</sup>

② The Rebbe encourages a loner to abandon their loneliness using his own strengths, in the following letter, rather than seeking help from others. The Rebbe also suggests a method: help others in need.

In one of our prayers we ask “Do not make us dependent on the generosity of flesh and blood”.

Hashem has certainly given you (as well as your friends in the same situation) the strength and vigor to overcome your difficulties, including – withdrawal from loneliness (as you expresses in your letter), not in a manner of “the generosity of flesh and blood”, rather, using your own strengths. One method is – through encouraging and helping (either spiritually or physically) those who are in need (of which there are many such people in each city and sect, though some are embarrassed to talk about it – and they specifically are in a more pitiful situation).<sup>2</sup>

③ In a letter to a lonely Bochor far from home, the Rebbe advises to substitute – to a degree – friends for family. The Rebbe also suggests that he involve himself in helping others, thereby increasing his awareness of the connection

## between Jews. Additionally, being involved in Chassidus itself creates a feeling of closeness.

In response to your letter dated Friday, in which you write that since your youth you have been alone and that you experience great difficulty due to your loneliness.

It is understandable that for a young man who finds himself in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in a class of numerous boys his age, it is largely up to him to befriend them. Although, understandably, this cannot be a full-fledged substitute for his parents' home, it is of much and substantial help to get through this period until one settles down with Hashem's help into family life. Another helpful technique in situations such as these is taking action for the benefit of others, for by doing so, one feels in the depths of his heart the connection of Jews with one-another. Even if in the beginning this emotion is not fully felt, eventually it will carry out its function. If the above is said regarding all Jews, all the more so concerning one who finds himself in a Chassidisher environment, participating in activity for the benefit of Chassidus. May Hashem make you successful in increasing persistence and diligence in our Torah, which all its ways are "pleasant ways", infused with Chassidic light and vitality. Then, you will actually feel the authenticity of the anecdote we heard my father-in-law, the Rebbe, "Chassidus brings about that one does not feel alone" and additionally, another, higher level, that one also feels closeness and friendship.

With blessings for good news in all of the above...<sup>3</sup>

### ④ To a Shliach in a remote location, the Rebbe explains how there is no basis for feelings of loneliness, as one is always in the presence of the Rebbeim.

Regarding that which you write that you feel isolated and lonely, and that it greatly weakens all areas of your spiritual service:

The latter part of your statement [i.e. your weakened spiritual service] proves that the former [feelings of loneliness] is

the trap of the *Yetzer Hora* who tries to weaken each person from fulfilling his mission, using words that match the personality of the individual.

The saying of my father-in-law, the Rebbe *haka"m*, is well-known that "Chassidus brought about that one is not alone. Wherever one finds himself, the Rebbeim are there". Specifically regarding my father-in-law, the Rebbe *haka"m*, who himself wrote in reference to the passing of his father, the Rebbe [Rashab] *n"e* that "the shepherds of Israel will not forsake their flock". As is expounded upon in *Igeres Hakodesh Siman Chof-Zayin* and its explanation, the limitations of physicality have now been removed. They find themselves with each and every one of those who belong and are connected to them wherever they are, specifically in places to which they were sent by the Rebbeim to fulfill a mission, and more specifically in a case where the mission is to spread the wellsprings of the Ba'al Shem Tov to the outside world, which is a preparation and introduction to the coming of Moshiach and *techiyas hameisim*, "and those who are situated in the dust will awaken and rejoice", and he amongst them.

See also the *Sicha* of the 13 Tammuz, 5709, printed in *Kuntres Yud-Beis Tammuz* 5710. From there you will be able to draw much vitality, inspiration, and strength to fulfill your task in the place where you currently find yourself. From there, you will recognize that even common sense agrees that there is no reason to think that you are alone, Heaven forbid, and that it is obvious that there is no basis for weakness in your spiritual service.

If only *Ana"sh*, and *Temimim* specifically, would study the words of my father in law, the Rebbe, with precision, even his *sichos*, specifically those of the year 5710 and the preceding year.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 18 p. 534

2. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 27 p. 99

3. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 17 p. 9

4. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 4 p. 23