

letters for Life

Guidance for Emotional Wellness
from the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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 **Chabad.ORG**

PREVIEW EDITION

INTRODUCTION * CHAPTER ONE

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*To my friend forever,
Moshe Yehuda ben Golda*

—George Rohr

Preface

THE QUEST FOR PEACE of mind is universal. It spans every age, class, culture, and background. This book looks for answers in the counsel of a revered Jewish sage and Chasidic master who lived in our times and drew his wisdom from a river stretching all the way back to Mt. Sinai.

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of saintly memory, is widely known for his central role in reviving Jewish life in the wake of the Holocaust. After living through czarist pogroms and the rise of communism, he escaped the Nazi inferno and established his home in New York City, where he shared the secrets of Jewish mysticism and the riches of traditional Jewish practice. As the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty, he taught spiritual values of self-refinement, love, and prayer, and mentored hundreds of thousands who came to his humble synagogue in Brooklyn to imbibe his Chasidic wisdom and piety.

In posthumously awarding him the Congressional Gold Medal, the United States Congress praised the Rebbe for “exemplifying the highest ideals of scholarship, teaching, ethics, and charity,” for “inspiring people to a renewal of individual values of spirituality, cooperation, and love of learning,” and for creating “over 2,000 educational, social, and rehabilitative institutions touching millions of people from all walks of life in every corner of the globe.”

Much has been written examining the Rebbe’s innovative teachings and transformative campaigns. This book, however, hones in on a lesser-known area of his vibrant legacy: His insights into emotional health communicated in one-on-one audiences and correspondences.

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Introduction

IT WAS AN ORDINARY evening in 1960, and several students and educators from Hillel (a Jewish campus organization) sat in the Rebbe's study. A new world was dawning, and their minds were plagued by pressing existential and practical questions.

Do I have free choice or is everything predestined? What are the strengths and limits of reason? Where can I find G-d in this cold and physical world?

The questions went on. For our purpose, I want to highlight one snippet from the wide-ranging conversation.

"I observe from your library that you are well-read," a Hillel director said. "So I want to ask you: Must we address how Judaism aligns with philosophy and science when teaching today's erudite college students?"

"I'll give you an example from a professor I knew," the Rebbe responded. "He was a professor of medicine, and, at one point, he was immersed in studying the anatomy of the leg. He delved into the research to understand the function of all the muscles and how they perfectly coordinate when a person walks. However, he later told me, while he was

engrossed in the details of walking, he found that *actually walking became more difficult*. With every step he took, his mind would analyze the workings of each muscle and joint, complicating his natural gait.

“Similarly, when introducing students to Judaism, talk of the essentials without trying to convey all the complex philosophical intricacies... It will save time, and it will be clearer in the student’s mind.”



This book is not an anthology of abstract hypotheses. To borrow from the above metaphor, this book does not explore the Rebbe’s extensive theoretical insight on the “anatomy” of the human psyche—the complex workings of the mind, the harmonic interplay of divergent emotions, the delicate relationship between faith and reason, and so on. Instead, it is a collection of practical tools, culled from the Rebbe’s counsel to regular individuals in real time, on how to actually walk through life with confidence and serenity.

Thus, the letters in this book speak in a clear and direct tone. A sense of immediate relevance, almost urgency, is felt throughout their lines. Unlike other areas in the Rebbe’s corpus, they are not characterized by intellectual journeys into the transcendent world of Chasidic ideas. They seem focused on extracting and applying the core of those ideas to help people live their daily lives with health and purpose.

An exploration of the Rebbe’s thought on the psyche’s “anatomy” merits a book of its own. This is a book on walking.



On a personal note:

I never met the Rebbe, nor received a letter from him. Yet, I am a direct beneficiary of his timeless guidance.

At a certain point in my teenage years I hit upon emotional turmoil common to adolescents. An apathetic attitude gradually took root inside of me: Nothing is worth getting upset over, nor is anything worth getting excited about. Have no expectations of life and life will have no expectations of you. A passive cynicism morphed into my default disposition. To take life seriously was for those who didn't get the memo, who hadn't grasped the tragic comedy of it all.

It was then that I discovered the Rebbe's letters.

I'd been aware of them before. I'd even read many of them. I found them intellectually stimulating—and then promptly returned them to the shelf. Conveyed with such straightforward simplicity, the real depth of the Rebbe's advice had eluded me. Until now, when I rediscovered them through the prism of my lived experience.

An alternative world opened up before me. New perspectives on life and its complexities, new methods of thought, new strategies to approach internal struggles.

Slowly, and almost imperceptibly, apathy was replaced by optimism and purpose. My painful emotions and thoughts, so pervasive just a little while back, were gradually fading out of consciousness. In their place a sense of inner freedom emerged. After a period clouded by negativity, the Rebbe's letters gave me a sense of gratitude and tranquility in a manner I'd never experienced before.

I was enthralled by the candidness of the Rebbe's counsel. Without evading their dilemmas nor relieving them of responsibility, he would urge each person to adopt the nec-

essary perspectives, habits, and practices to transform their own state of being.

As I internalized more of these letters, I started to detect patterns of advice and recurring themes. Instinctually, I organized these points in my mind, forming them into a series of principles. I then began applying these tools to my own mind and heart.

Since then, these tools have remained at my side, to use and use again: flattening hills, avoiding pitfalls, and continually pushing me toward a life of purpose, happiness, and true freedom.

These tools are in the book in front of you.

Levi Shmotkin

18 Iyar, Lag Ba'Omer 5784

Brooklyn, NY

Note: This book does not address mental illness and cannot replace professional consultation. Indeed, the Rebbe often clarified that his advice to one may not apply to another. Most letters quoted herein are only excerpts, many are free translations, and some are archival copies missing the Rebbe's final edits. In the end, this book is inevitably a subjective take on a vast body of material and all responsibility for error is mine alone.

Part 1

Essentials for a
Healthy Life

Chapter 1

See Others

IN A CANADIAN OBSERVATORY in the year 1971, an astronomer watched a faraway star orbiting a massive object some sixteen hundred light-years away. The object itself remained invisible, but he could see that it mysteriously caused the star to wobble. After months spent ruling out various possibilities, it became clear that he was witnessing the elusive phenomenon known as a black hole. Scientists had been speculating about this theoretical possibility for decades—an object with a mass so dense that nothing, not even its own light, could escape its gravitational pull.

A few years after this discovery, Professor Herman Branover, a respected physicist in the field of solar energy, was scheduled to address a conference of scientists. Before he left for the conference, the Rebbe asked that his presentation include a life lesson that could be learned from the sun and black holes, and suggested the following:

The black hole turns everything inward, drawing all of its energy toward itself. The sun, on the other hand, radiates its energy outward, illuminating other beings in the solar system. If the sun heated only its own mass, who would pay any attention to it? It is upon us to emulate the sun's example and turn our energy outward. We must make an effort to radiate our light and warmth to others.¹



KABBALAH TEACHES² THAT THE entire cosmic order is constructed according to a system of “sun and moon”—an interplay of giver and receiver. The sun, being the source of light and energy, represents giving. The moon, being the recipient and reflector of the sun's rays, represents receiving.

This system of give and take begins in the spiritual worlds. Like terraces in a cascading waterfall, each *sefirah*—divine attribute—acts as both the recipient from the *sefirah* that precedes it and the source of the succeeding *sefirah*.

The same dynamic can be found in the composition of the human psyche. For example, emotions receive guidance from the intellect and serve as the stimuli for speech and action. And it is ultimately reflected in the structure of the physical world. For example, plants receive energy from the earth, water, and environment, and contribute food and oxygen.

This same model applies to human relationships.³ In our inherent design, we are both moons and suns, both receivers and givers. Receivers of the wisdom, teaching, and advice provided to us by our elders and friends, and givers who contribute our energy to brighten the lives of others. If we

forget our responsibility to be a sun to others, and instead live like a moon, only taking from others—or, like a black hole, disengaging and focusing entirely inward—we are bound to experience emotional discomfort.

“A brief reflection,” reads a letter to a college student who wrote of his low spirits,

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 [by thinking only of their own needs], it must necessarily bring about a distortion in one’s immediate surroundings, and especially in one’s inner life.⁴

You Get What You Give

THE VALUE OF TURNING one’s mind and heart toward others was a central theme in the Rebbe’s counseling.⁵ In addition to fulfilling the Torah’s foundational dictum—“Love your fellow as yourself”⁶—he believed it could have a transformative effect on one’s personal wellbeing.

Marc Wilson, a syndicated columnist and community activist in North Carolina, was facing a grim period after the collapse of his second marriage and the disintegration of his career as a congregational rabbi. “These events just plunged me into a black hole of depression and despondency,” he re-

called. A friend advised him to go see the Rebbe. With little to lose, he traveled to New York.

It was the early 1990s, and the pressures on the Rebbe's time were greater than ever. Thus, their meeting was brief. "Sometimes," the Rebbe counseled Wilson, "a devoted layperson can do incalculably more good than a rabbi. You should teach something, perhaps Talmud, even if it's only to one or two people in your living room."

A year passed with no action. "It was, all told, a dismal, dark year, full of sickness and grief and self-recrimination," Wilson later wrote. Most of his day was spent in bed watching television or penning articles about his bleak life. "There are plenty of depressed people who like reading stories about depressed people," he thought.

Finally, at the urging of a friend, Wilson began to act on the Rebbe's advice. He started leading a class in Talmud, and, as he later put it, it was then that his restoration to soundness and self-respect began. "The Rebbe obviously understood that to heal from depression, I needed to start giving to others," Wilson concluded.⁷

Similarly, a handwritten response to a woman who evidently went through a lot in her life reads as follows:

Many people whose life experiences are similar to yours (with regard to suffering, etc.) have found relief through regularly and consistently devoting their energy, time, and *emotional attention* to assisting others who find themselves in distress or in a state of confusion. This has helped them perceive and value their life in an *entirely* new way (their joy of living increased, their self-confidence increased, they found new meaning in life, etc.).⁸

A Liberating Effect

ONE OF THE IMPORTANT ways helping others can improve our wellbeing is by freeing our minds.

“You are much too wrapped up with yourself,” reads a letter to a young man who wrote of his dark ruminations, with your own emotions and feelings and aspirations.... You must get away from yourself, and begin to think of others. It is time to begin an active participation in society; to give, and give generously. The opportunities are many, and the need is great.⁹

Our minds can sometimes get locked into negative, self-absorbed thought patterns. We may obsess about our real or imagined shortcomings (“I’m so lazy and incompetent”). We may overthink our relationships (“Do they really love me?”) or our unfulfilled dreams (“I thought I would be in a different place by this age”) and so on. It can be hard to break out of these ruminations.

But thinking of what *other people* might need and how we can actively help *them* has the potential to set off an internal liberation. It lifts us from the narrow tensions of our own little worlds and transports us, for the moment, to the broader horizons of giving to others. As our minds become absorbed with enhancing the life of a friend, the chains of our own psychological prisons begin to loosen.



IN THE WINTER OF 1950, Berel Junik, a Russian-born twenty-two-year-old, finally made it to New York. He had just es-

caped the Iron Curtain by the skin of his teeth, and was now planning to study under the auspices of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn—the spiritual leader of the Chabad movement at the time.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak had been sentenced to death in 1927 by the Soviets for his efforts in keeping Judaism alive, but after a worldwide uproar his sentence was commuted and he was compelled to leave the country. This geographic distance created a nearly impenetrable wall between him and his many disciples, who were still engaged in a desperate struggle for survival in the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Chasidim managed to maintain a secret line of communication with their mentor, Junik and his friends had never actually met Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, and they dreamed of the day they would be together in person. Now, at long last, this dream was coming to fruition.

However, only ten days after he arrived in New York, Junik’s world collapsed: Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak passed away.

In the ensuing months of mourning, the Rebbe (who was Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak’s son-in-law and confidante) adamantly refused to take on the mantle of spiritual leadership. To those who exhorted him not to “leave the flock without a shepherd,” he would explain that he felt unworthy to take the place of his revered father-in-law.

But Junik wanted guidance. So, despite these refusals, he mustered the courage one night to knock on the Rebbe’s office door and declare that he sorely needed a *yechidus* (a term reserved in Chasidic tradition for a private audience with a Rebbe). Upon hearing his request, the Rebbe became very serious. He walked over to the window, closed the blinds, sat down by the table, and began to cry.

Junik has since passed, but his journal contains a tran-

script of this audience along with the Rebbe's edits on it (evidently he gave his transcript to the Rebbe to ensure he had understood what had been said correctly). The following is an excerpt (the Rebbe's edits are in italics):

I relayed that while I have good periods, other times I find myself feeling down over my [spiritual] state of being. The Rebbe responded,

“If there are changes above (i.e., even in Heaven), will there not be changes below (i.e., in a human being here on earth)?

“This is a problem for many of our young people—they analyze themselves too much. It is necessary to think about others for at least an hour a day. *This was one of the ideas the Rebbe [Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak] exhorted [us to do] in his teachings and letters, etc.—to work with others.*

“When a thought about your state enters your mind, *and you see that it is disturbing you from what you should be doing, increases a feeling of dejection, etc.—* you should push the thought away. *If you do not have a way to dispel the depressing thought, because you're not in a good state [and so you have reason to be dejected], you should remind yourself of the obligation to help others. Think about others and how you can make things better for them.*”¹⁰

Junik is advised here to spend time bettering a friend's life for two reasons—as an imperative in its own right (“exhorted in teachings and letters”) and as a means to liberate his mind from the shackles of his depressing thoughts, by turning his attention (for at least an hour a day) to someone else.

And there are always people who can use our help.

Practically Speaking

“THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE,” concludes a response encouraging a widowed woman to discover the healing power in helping others, “in every city and circle who need support (materially or spiritually). Even though some of them are embarrassed to speak of their needs—those individuals deserve even more compassion.”¹¹

There are people around us (“in every city and circle”) who need financial assistance—getting set up with a job, a loan to buy a house, help with covering medical bills, and so on. Others might need emotional support—companionship to dispel loneliness, a listening ear, a mentor to help fight an addiction, or simply to be seen for who they are. Still others can use spiritual help in their existential journey for meaning and faith in a turbulent and confusing world. Some might ask for help, but many will be too ashamed to even reach out (“those individuals deserve even more sympathy”).

We don’t need to get creative, travel abroad, or make awkward cold calls to find opportunities to help. A little sensitive reflection on our extended family, friends, and neighbors will usually open our eyes to those who can really use assistance. As one response puts it:

As much as possible, try to minimize thoughts such as, “How am I feeling?” “Am I afraid of something?” *and so on*. Replace these thoughts with *contemplation* as to how you can assist and see to the needs of your neighbors or relatives; surely you will find many such matters. And one who acts with kindness toward one’s friend is rewarded with G-d’s kindness to a much greater degree.¹²

Another effective option can be to volunteer or work for an institution dedicated to helping people in need.

“Although I have made the suggestion to you before,” reads a 1952 letter,

I want to repeat that you ought to engage in some social or welfare work to bring benefit to others. The usefulness of this kind of work is two-fold: a) It is the best therapeutic treatment for nerves, through diverting attention from the self to the needs of others; b) G-d regards all mankind as his children, and when one tries to do good to His other children, He compensates such a person manyfold by blessing them and their children.

Needless to say, this is not intended to rule out medical advice. But the best medicine is preventive medicine, and such medicine has the additional benefit of doing good even in ill-health.

I am sure that if you make up your mind earnestly, you will find such useful work, and in dealing with other peoples' problems you will soon forget your own and certainly will be capable of resolving them.¹³



Let's conclude with a story:

Taibel Lipskier was born to a Russian Jewish family in the tumultuous first years of Communist Russia. Her mother died at a young age, leaving her to care for her younger

siblings. Eventually she married, and after years of hardship, the couple and their children escaped the Soviet Union. After spending time in various displaced persons camps, they finally made it to the United States.

Life as new immigrants wasn't easy. After a failed attempt at farming in New Jersey, they relocated to Brooklyn. Making a living sufficient to sustain a family was a constant challenge—by then there were ten children. Naturally, the upheavals of her life took their toll on Lipskier, and she suffered from anxiety and depression. She decided to consult the Rebbe for guidance on how to improve her psychological and emotional state.

The Rebbe gave her unexpected advice: “Go to as many weddings as possible and dance, and inspire other people to dance too.”

As it happens, Lipskier was an exceptionally skilled dancer. She followed the Rebbe's advice, and for decades she would go to every possible wedding and dance the night away.

“She lived in Brooklyn,” her grandson explained, “where at the time there were many young women getting married who had little or no family in attendance. My grandmother would show up and dance, sometimes for hours, with the bride and her friends, bringing immense joy to the wedding.”

Rishe Deitsch was a young girl of fourteen when she moved out of her parents' home in Massachusetts to go study in Brooklyn. The pace of New York living, and the frenetic energy of its weddings, were entirely new to her.

“One night,” she later recalled, “I was at a wedding and I was wallflowering it. I didn't know these dances, and the speed and noise were all new to me. I knew I couldn't keep up, so I didn't even try. Suddenly this older woman, this whirlwind dancer, grabbed my two hands with her two hands and

pulled me into the center of the circle. I tried to pull away and explain I'm-from-Worcester-I-don't-dance, but she couldn't hear me anyway. And she had me with an iron grip. So I took my only option, other than to faint: I danced!

“It would not be an exaggeration to say I had more fun in that one dance than I had ever had in my whole life up until that point. She whirled me around, she flipped me this way and that way, and I just followed her lead, since I had absolutely zero choice in the matter (remember: iron grip). After it was over, she asked me my name. I was way too shy to ask her name, but later someone told me it was Mrs. Taibel Lipskier.

“I always remembered the dance, but I didn't know there was something deeper to it. It was only many years later that I heard the story of what she went through and the Rebbe's guidance to her.”¹⁴

“It wasn't like she was outgoing by nature,” her grandson observed. “It was actually quite contrary to her nature. But she constantly did it, and she did it with every fiber of her being. And ultimately, we saw how the joy she brought to hundreds and thousands of people over long decades came back to her; we saw how it gave her so much joy and strength and fortitude and resilience.”

Thinking about it all these years later, he reflected: “Many of us are dealing with unresolved wounds. We want to extricate all that darkness from our system, from our psyche, from our environment and home. But sometimes the most effective solution is not to fight the darkness, but to kindle a flame of joy—by dancing and inspiring other people to dance. In that dance, with the pure intent of bringing joy to others, a passion of fire and warmth is created in us and around us, allowing the darkness to dissipate and be banished.”¹⁵

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Kislev, 5730
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I duly received your letter in which you write about your daughter. Please write to me also the Hebrew name and mother's Hebrew name of her fiance, and I will remember them in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, in accordance with the contents of your letter.

I do not know whether the doctor has such a pessimistic view, but there have been similar cases where positive results were accomplished through getting the person interested in some outside activity to help others. Thus, it would be well if some suitable youth group or organization would approach her with a request to help out in its activities, in an area compatible with her ability, appealing to her for her help. This would give her a stimulus to overcome her present frame of mind, even if she would not make the effort to get out of her own shell for her own sake. Perhaps it would be advisable to discuss this with your family doctor, in order to ascertain what activity would be most suitable for her. Needless to say, this should be done in a way that would not arouse her suspicion that it was all prearranged, but that she should really believe that her aid is needed. As a matter of fact, it may well be possible to find an activity where she could really make a positive contribution.

Needless to say, especially as you are a communal worker, you are no doubt aware of all that is going on in the community.

Judging by your writing, it is unnecessary to emphasize to you at length the need to spread Torah-true Yiddishkeit in your immediate environment, as well as in the community at large. Indeed, this is the obligation of every Jew, for we are commanded to keep all things of holiness on the ascendancy. And no matter how satisfactory things may be at any particular time, there is always room for improvement in matters of goodness and holiness, which are infinite, since they derive from the Infinite.

- 2 -

I would suggest that the Tefillin and Mezuzoth should be checked to make sure they are Kosher, if this has not been done within the past twelve months.

With blessing *m. Schneerson*

Takeaway

Becoming a giver is key to inner health and resilience.

Open your mind and heart to see those around you. Be sensitive to their needs, and try to brighten their lives.

If you feel down or dispirited and inclined to retreat inward (“Once I feel better about myself I’ll be able to start thinking about others”), caring for others is an effective way to refresh your own emotional state.

(Needless to say, this is but an *additional* benefit derived from fulfilling our intrinsic responsibility toward one another.)



But where can you find strength to be a giver? The next chapter will offer some perspective.

Endnotes

Guide to the Endnotes

The Rebbe would send patients to me. But I would also send patients to the Rebbe. I saw the psychological impact he had on people. Whether he specifically studied psychology—I don't know. But he clearly had knowledge in human psychology. Perhaps he got it all from the Torah, the ultimate source.

—Dr. A.J. Twerski

THE REBBE DEEPLY BELIEVED in G-d and the wisdom He conveyed to humanity on Mount Sinai. His innovative thinking was anchored in thousands of years of Jewish thought passed on from generation to generation. The teachings of the Talmudic sages and the spirit of the Chasidic masters were the ground on which he rooted his timely guidance. It was from this fertile soil that he drew his steadfast faith in the individual, the resilient divine soul, and the unique, indispensable role each one of us has.

A primary goal of the endnotes is to highlight the times the Rebbe revealed the roots for his advice in the Torah—to give you some background on that Talmudic, Kabbalistic, or Chasidic source, and to allow you to follow the fascinating evolution from an age-old quotation to the Rebbe's modern-day application.

Another goal of the endnotes is to enable you to further explore a given counseling point throughout the wide corpus

of the Rebbe's letters. While in the chapters themselves the overriding consideration was clarity and concision, in the endnotes the goal was the opposite: to provide an array of examples for a given idea so you can journey beyond the scope of this book independently.

The final goal is to include the themes, letters, and stories that didn't make it into the book, but are nevertheless integral to the subject at hand.

In summary, while the guiding principle in composing the chapters was "when in doubt—take out," in the endnotes that principle was flipped. Thus, some notes have a research bent with many references in succession, while others include poignant lessons and stories. Some notes trace how the Rebbe derived his outlook from an esoteric discussion in the Talmud or Kabbalah, while others address our everyday human experience.

I hope this gives you some orientation for the windy section ahead. Browse as you wish; enjoy as you like. Safe travels.

E N D N O T E S

1. *To Know and To Care* (SIE), Vol. 1, chapter 1; accessible at chabad.org/78391. The Rebbe conveyed a similar lesson learned from the sun and black holes to Prof. Vevl Greene, a scientist for NASA. See his interview in the JEM documentary *The Honest Truth*.
2. For what follows, see *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 33b; *Siddur Im Dach* 97:c; *Maamar Az Yashir Yisrael* 5666; *Sichah of Purim Katan* 5746.
3. See, for example, *Torat Menachem* 5750, Vol. 2, p. 172; *Michtav Klali* dated 6 Tishrei, 5738. For another practical application of both the sun and the moon in a person's life—the sun representing stability and the moon representing change—see *Michtav Klali* dated 6 Tishrei, 5744 (included in *Likkutei Sichot*, Vol. 24, p. 633).

A 1956 letter (*Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 13, p. 234 (chabad.org/4994397)), to a certain Dr. Elkana—who seems to have had socialist leanings—explains how, in the Rebbe's vision, the ultimate utopian society lies not in an erasure of all differences between people, but in a harmonic interplay of giver and receiver. The letter states that G-d Himself is also both a receiver and giver. Following is an excerpt:

“You conclude your letter by stating that redemption cannot be complete until ‘there will be no poor man in the land’ [Deuteronomy 15:11] and all people will work in joint labor and shared responsibility with no divisions of poor and rich.

“I beg to differ. It is human nature that a sense of true happiness and fulfillment comes with the capacity to help another. And this is possible only when one is ‘rich’ and the other ‘poor.’

“However, in no way does this contradict your justified revolt against the injustice found in the very existence of such divisions [between rich and poor]. Chasidic teachings explain that every creation, if only their behavior aligns with their created design, functions as both a receiver and a giver. Put differently, if they are ‘poor’ in one area, they are to be ‘rich’ in another.

“It is wondrous that even in regards to G-d, the Creator of the universe and its conductor, the Torah says that He too

is sometimes a ‘receiver.’ As Chasidic teachings [*Yahel Ohr, Miluim* 132:5] deduce from the verse, ‘You yearn for the work of your hands’ [Job 14:15]. [Similarly,] our Sages taught that service [of man fills] a divine need’ [*Shelah, Shaar Hagadol*, 29b].”

4. English letter, dated Elul 5721, accessible at chabad.org/2308526.
5. This theme recurs in many letters. The following are a few specifics:

For a boost in self-confidence—see *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 15, p. 184 (chabad.org/5054354): “It might be worthwhile to mention to the doctor that, based on his evaluation of your son’s disposition, it would be very beneficial if your son would be given opportunities to help others... as this would increase his belief in himself.” *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 18, p. 407 (chabad.org/5100639); Vol. 19, p. 373 (chabad.org/5287796); Vol. 26, p. 158. See also *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 11, p. 344 (chabad.org/4929204).

To ease loneliness—see *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 17, p. 9 (chabad.org/5099896). The letter adds that, on a deeper level, when you invest effort to help another you gradually begin to feel your inherent spiritual interconnectivity with other people, thereby diminishing subtler loneliness, too. See also *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 27, p. 99, on loneliness connected to grief. In another response to a woman whose grown daughter died tragically, leaving little children, the Rebbe advised to focus her energy on how to “sweeten the life of the widower and the lives of the orphans” as a way to help her cope with her own grief and find some comfort.

To ease dejection and melancholy—see *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 10, p. 42 (chabad.org/4872091), and Vol. 27, p. 527.

To add warmth and positivity—see *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 18, p. 138 (chabad.org/5100390): “Increasing your efforts to help others—aside from fulfilling the commandment to ‘love your fellow as yourself’ [Leviticus 19:18]—will also grant you inner satisfaction when you see the fruits of your labor. This will, directly and indirectly, improve your health and your perspective on everything that happens within you and around you.” See also *Here’s My Story* (JEM), Jan. 14, 2015, accessible at chabad.org/2842569: “If you want to have a warm home,

see to it that you make it warm for the other, and then it will naturally be warm for you.”

To increase feelings of gratitude and contentment—see *Petakim*, Vol. 2, p. 120: “As it appears that you need an additional measure of proper *Bitachon*—that not only is G-d the conductor of the world in general, but also of each and every one of us individually, including your life and the lives of your family members—for you will then appreciate even more the revealed blessings with which you were blessed (your children that give you such *nachat* [satisfaction]), and you will lessen your angst about the non-positive things that happened to you, thus:

“It would be advisable for you to begin every weekday (*bli neder*)... with placing a couple of coins into a charity box. This will remind you that there are many people who are in a position where they need *your help*, and G-d chose you as *His emissary* to make help available to them....”

6. Leviticus 19:18. The Rebbe would often note that Rabbi Akiva (1st-2nd century CE) said that this commandment is a fundamental principle of the Torah (*Sifra* and *Rashi* on the verse; Jerusalem Talmud, *Nedarim* 9:3).

On a related note, in a private audience in the 1970s, the Rebbe asked his interlocutor:

“Why is it that the heart rests toward the body’s left? In Jewish tradition, good is usually associated with the right side. For example, *mitzvot* are supposed to be done specifically with the right hand [*Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 183:4, and *Taz* ad loc.; *Mishnah Berurah* 206:18]. So why is it that such a vital organ as the heart leans towards the left?”

The Rebbe went on to answer: “*Because it’s the right side of the person across from you; for your heart beats not for you but for the other, for the fellow whom you must love as yourself*” (*Here’s My Story* (JEM), “It’s Their Right,” accessible at chabad.org/3779581).

7. chabad.org/2757.
8. *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 26, p. 497.
9. English letter, 5721, accessible at chabad.org/2308526.
10. A photocopy of his transcript with the Rebbe’s edits is available

in *Techayenu*, no. 5, p. 76. The background story is recorded
ibid. no. 3, p. 78. The translation is adapted from *A Chassidisher
Derher*, no. 150.

11. *Igrot Kodesh*, Vol. 27, p. 99.
12. *Petakim*, Vol. 2, p. 130.
13. English letter, dated 23 Sivan, 5712.
14. *N'shei Chabad Newsletter*, Shvat 2022, p. 5.
15. Chanukah Day #2 | The Rebbe's Advice for Anxiety - TheYeshiva.Net.

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