Appendix I: A list of instructions for the first night, presumably written by R. Daniel
Frisch:

Appendix II: “The Wedding Day Letter” (Mikhtav yom hahupa).

*Shovavim* [the period of reading the Torah portions of Shemot through Mishpatim] 5716.

A heart to heart letter, to a groom on his wedding day:

My beloved student, the precious and honored groom: On this, the greatest and holiest day of your life – your wedding day – may the Lord grace you, my son, and may He charge His angels to watch over you on all of your paths. May the spirit of sanctity and purity which our holy masters from Lekhavitsh, Kobryn, and Slonim, may their merit protect us, instilled in the hearts of those who wish to follow in their ways, envelope you. May your God rejoice over you at the time when the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so that there be joy above on your wedding day below, “and the beauty of the Lord be upon you.”

A.

 Because of my everlasting love for you, and so that it may be eternally good for you, I will comment and enlighten your heart at this favorable time and propitious moment, as stated by our Sages of blessed memory, by means of the true words found in the statements of our holy masters, may their merit protect us, relating to this sacred day. For if marriage is like building a faithful house in Israel, then this day resembles laying the foundation on which that house rests: The deeper and sturdier is the foundation, the larger and sturdier the house built upon it. Our Sages of blessed memory stated concerning the verse, “and it [the sun] is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber:” This is one of those verses in which that which was supposed shed light on other matters is clarified instead: A groom coming out of his chamber must resemble the sun, which emerges in all of its light, strength and power.

 On this day, on which all of the [groom’s]sins are forgiven, and Heaven grants him the opportunity for the past defects of his youth to neither dim his light nor stand in his way, nor prevent him from rising higher than all of the rungs of exceptional sanctity and purity. He should not be a foolish king who squanders that which is given him, being satisfied with a pittance, even if it is to stir his heart through prayer and repentance. Rather, he should be renewed as a new creature. In spite of his knowing and recognizing the great and arduous battle which lies ahead, he should fortify himself with sacred, heavenly strength and delve deeper into his future path in life, to make him rise to the exalted level of his obligation and duty in life. As our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, stated concerning the verse, “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God:” A person must say to his worldly interests, to his lusts, and desires: I did not come to this world for you, but rather to carry out my task, to fulfill God’s will. This day is the catalyst, on which one is capable of making a resolute decision, from which he will not budge throughout all the days of his life. One who does so is like a king, who “may breach a fence, and no one can object.” Even in matters in which he is akin to a captive and is fenced in by them, he can breach them and rise above all of his negative propensities and habits.

B.

 The first order of this day is repentance. It states in tractate Kiddushin that if one says: “You are betrothed to me on the condition that I am a perfectly righteous man,” we consider the possibility that the betrothal is valid, even if he was entirely wicked. This is because it is possible that he repented in his mind. The well-known question – namely, “how is it possible for one to be entirely wicked, possessing so many sins minor and major, and yet by means of contemplating repentance in his mind, without having corrected anything, is considered a righteous man?” – is cited by the author of *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*, may his merit protect us. He answered, typically, that there is an aspect of repentance which is determined by the brain. By means of his intellect, he knows that he acted improperly, and he will, therefore, not repeat this action. There is, also, an aspect of repentance which comes from the heart: He repents driven by an internal sense of bitterness in his heart, and he understands that he acted improperly. Neither aspect renders one a perfect penitent on its own. This can only be achieved along the lines of the nuance of the formula “perhaps he contemplated repentance in his mind.” For intellect is the brain and the insight is the heart, and it is knowledge which connects them. It is only when his repentance is so deep that both the brain and the heart, the intellect and the emotions, are subjugated to God, may He be blessed, that it is perfect repentance. It is one who “contemplates repentance in his mind” who is transformed from a wicked person to a righteous one.

 I also heard and saw that this sort of repentance refers specifically to a groom. When one betroths a woman and all of his sins are forgiven, he can be transformed from a totally wicked person to a righteous one by means of repentance. The explanation for this is the following: That which is said concerning a groom surpasses that which is said about Yom Kippur’s atonement for sins. For in the case of grave sins, repentance suspends the punishment in conjunction with Yom Kippur, but suffering and death are still required, may the Merciful One spare us. However, we do not find any stipulations in the case of a groom being forgiven. Rather, all is forgiven him. This time is, therefore, propitious for even a totally wicked man to become a righteous one. This is in accordance with what the holy rabbi, Rabbi Haim Vital of blessed memory, wrote in *Eitz Hadaat Tov*, namely that this is why we derive the principle of a groom’s absolution [*mehila*] for his sins from Esau’s marriage to Mahlat, the daughter of Ishmael. This teaches us that even a groom such as Esau, who is filled with sins and defects, is forgiven on this day. This day atones even for the grave sins for which Yom Kippur does not atone. Therefore, he can be transformed into a perfectly righteous person by means of his repentance.

 It states in the sacred work, *Degel Mahane Efraim*, Parashat Bo (s.v. *E. Y. Ulekhol Bnei Yisrael*): “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon.” This refers to a groom, who is akin to a king, etc. “With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him.” This indicates that the groom attains an aspect of ‘the heavenly mother,’ as all of his sins are forgiven, together with those of everyone associated with him, etc. And when is this? On his wedding day. And this contains a deep secret. For there are five prayers on Yom Kippur, which is the secret of ‘the heavenly mother,’ and there are five sounds relating to a groom, “the sound of joy etc.” It is an even greater aspect than that of Yom Kippur. Understand this. Therefore, let not a foreign [*zar*] element adulterate our joy, lest we turn that which is *zar* [foreign] into *or* [light, *or* having the same numerical value as *zar*]. Understand all of this, as these are ancient matters. End quote. We see how far he goes in stressing the greatness of this day’s sanctity, to the point where he claims that it is even greater than Yom Kippur and that it even absolves the sins of those associated with the groom.

C.

 Indeed, there are certain well-known sins and defects, may the Merciful One spare us, mentioned in the sacred works, for which normal repentance is not effective and heavenly repentance is required. The statement, “a groom is forgiven all of his sins” implies that even these sins are included. This is to be understood based on that which is cited in the sacred works in the name of the holy rabbi, Rabbi Nahum of Chernobyl, of blessed memory: The opinion which holds that Yom Kippur atones even for those who do not repent, does not refer to one who does not repent, God forbid. Rather, it refers to defects of the holy covenant, for which repentance is ineffective. If one repents for these on Yom Kippur, the sanctity of the day elevates his repentance to the level of heavenly repentance, and it absolves even these sins. The same is true in the case of a groom. He is able to repent and correct even the well-known defects by means of the day’s sanctity. He can, thereby, correct all that he transgressed and marred in his youth, and enter into this new stage of life pure, by means of inner repentance in his mind and heart, intellect and emotion, and with a commitment for the future to conduct himself with extreme holiness and purity.

 An interpretation of the verse: “Thou shalt not delay tooffer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors [*dim’akha*], the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me” is cited in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, may his merit protect us. It was his wont to insist that all matters of divine service be performed in a mode of joy; repentance must also be performed in a mode of joy. However, the youthful sin, the defect of futile [spilling of one’s seed], may the Merciful One spare us, can only be corrected by means of weeping. He must weep profusely to the Holy One, blessed be He, out of repentance for the past and commitment regarding the future.

And this is the meaning of “Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors [dim’akha]”: ‘Thy ripe fruits’ means that if [you spilled your seed futilely], may the Merciful One spare us, it is advisable that you ‘not delay… your tears [dim’akha],’ cry profusely. And then, ‘the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me,’ you will thereby retrieve all of the sacred sparks which scattered from you and fell into the abyss of impurity. This is one of the tasks of this holy day, which is propitious and suitable for purifying the past. A person must recognize the extent of his own defects and rally every fiber of his soul to plead for mercy, so that he not sink in deep mire, along the lines of what was said: “Heaven and Earth plead for mercy on my behalf.” For “if not now, when? And if I am not for myself, who will be for me?” He must pray to the Lord that he succeed in living a holy and pure life from now on, a life which is in accordance with the will of the Lord and the will of those who fear Him, namely our holy masters throughout the generations, may their merit protect us, that he not be as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, as is known. **[?]**

D.

 Know, my dear, that just as we find that the more sacred a place is, the more devastated it is, because Satan is specifically most assertive in the place of sanctity, so too we know that it is specifically on the holiest of days in a person’s life that the evil inclination asserts itself to confound and distract him with matters of body and soul. This serves to prevent him from rising to the exalted level of his duty and his great destiny in terms of this time. Therefore, the truly pious [i.e. the Hassidic Masters] said that usually, when it is time for a person to pass away, at this great moment when he leaves this world, he is lying unconscious, senseless and unaware. The same is true, to a large degree, of a groom. As our Sages of blessed memory taught that “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found” refers to these times. For one needs special merit at these times, in order to succeed in rising to the heights and knowing what the Lord demands of him.

 We find in the Holy Torah that when Jacob was going to take a wife, God showed him the “ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” Our holy masters, may their merit protect us, said that this alludes to the concept of God’s oneness, which is a ‘ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.’ It is ostensibly an earthly matter, yet its apex reaches heavenward. “And behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it,” all of the ascensions and descents of the Lord’s servants are contingent solely on this issue. “And, behold, the Lord stood above it” to protect him from all harm. And this is the meaning of that which is written: “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place:” Even in the case of this issue, which is ostensibly physical, its top can reach to heaven, if he succeeds in acting for the sake of heaven. Much caution and heavenly mercy is necessary, lest “any man fall from thence” to the lowest hell, as in the following narrative: Our master from Lekhavitsh, may his merit protect us, lavishly praised a certain groom. The next day, he declared in Russian: “The goat fell into the wolf’s mouth.” This is along the lines of the teaching of our master, the author of *Ba’alei Brit Avraham*, may his merit protect us: This obligation is similar to supervised matzo. The flour is constantly guarded against contact with water and moisture, and it is guarded against any heat. However, when it is time to bake the matzot, one mixes it with water and puts it into the oven, and this is precisely what we are commanded to do with it. However, the essential issue is to be vigilant about swiftness and speed, so that it does leaven. This is sufficient for understanding the matter.

E.

 Because of my affection for you, I will write some additional gems from our holy masters, may their merit protect us. Our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, was accustomed to explain the statement “A groom is like a king” in the following way: When a king goes to war, he pays no attention to the great honor accorded him. For he knows that his primary goal is to mortally defeat his enemy. If, God forbid, he is not victorious and instead suffers defeat, then all of the honor accorded him will be transformed into shame and humiliation. His thoughts are, therefore, entirely focused on planning and plotting ways to subdue the enemy. A groom is similar to a king in this way.

 Our master from Kobryn, may his merit protect us, related to his grandson, Rabbi N. , of blessed memory, on his wedding night, that the holy rabbi, Rabbi Boruch of Medzhybizh, may his merit protect us, told his grandson on his wedding day: I can see that you are not the sort of groom that I was. At that time, I concentrated on all of the mystical intentions that relate to a groom, bride and the wedding party. When the time came to be secluded with the bride, I wept extensively over the descent to mundane matters. Finally, my master, my grandfather, the holy rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov, may his merit protect us, came from the heavenly realms and counseled me in this matter: You are not on this level. It is revealed and known before the Creator that I know all of the actions and thoughts of this entire congregation which you see. However, the Torah conceals them and you are revealing them. But I say to you that if you do not behave properly, I will tell all of them.

 A certain young scholar related to me that he heard the following from Rabbi Abraham Pinehas, of blessed memory: When he was a young scholar, he approached our master, Rabbi S., may his merit protect us, to seek religious guidance. The master, of blessed memory, cited the following verse to him with great exuberance: “Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed, etc. until I find out a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” (He transmitted to me the manner and form in which the master said this, word for word, in such a way that it penetrated the depths of one’s soul.) Rabbi Abraham Pinehas did not need to hear anything more and left completely shaken. May these words be on your heart and in your heart.

 Because of my love for you, I will transcribe for you additional teachings which I saw in a manuscript by our master, Rabbi S., may his merit protect us: He once blessed a groom that the joy should be perfect and that no foreign element adulterate his joy. The meaning of this concept of ‘perfect joy’ is based on the fact that there is no joy like that of conquest. Since this issue involves a powerful evil inclination, there is joy commensurate with the degree to which he conquers it. On the other hand, if he is defeated, God forbid, then his joy is adulterated with the evil inclination. We ask concerning this, that no foreign element – Satan – adulterate our joy. This commandment is the first one in the Torah, because it is the foundation of the entire Torah. The sturdier is the foundation, the larger is the house of many stories which can be built on it. So too, to the degree that a Jew fulfills this commandment with sanctity, it will serve as a sturdy foundation for the entire Torah. Therefore, the attribute of Joseph the righteous is ‘foundation.’ By overcoming his lust and resisting temptation, he acquired this attribute innately. Furthermore, one finds the following interpretation of the verse “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave, etc.” ‘His father’ refers to the initial beginning of a thought, whereas ‘his mother’ refers to the thought itself once a person contemplates it before it reaches fruition. This is an aspect of the mother, who conceives and eventually gives birth to the baby. And this is the intent: ‘Therefore shall a man leave’ his initial thought, as well as the thought itself. That is to say, he should not think about this act itself at all in advance, only at the time when he fulfills the commandment.

G.

 And know, my friend, that the primary task during the very precious initial phase following the wedding is to create an atmosphere of a life of sanctity and purity in the home. For then the home is an aspect of a minor temple, in line with the statement of our Sages of blessed memory: “If a husband and wife merit, the Divine Presence dwells among them.” This is an aspect of “designation is effective” for the groom on his wedding day. If he declares that this home will be a sacred home, then sanctity rests on the home. But if he declares that this home will be a place for satisfying his animalistic desires, then, God forbid, [the opposite] rests etc. Even in proper times, the level of a young scholar after his wedding was primarily contingent on the degree to which he lived a life of sanctity and sanctified himself by abstaining from that which is permitted. How much more so in our age, when outstanding individuals and the spiritually elite are rare, and even the religious Jews – who are meticulous about even the minutia of Jewish Law – do not jump to embrace the commandment ‘be holy,’ and even disparage it. The holy Zohar, Parashat Vayetze, contains the following comment on the verse “I will serve thee seven years for thy younger daughter, etc.” Benjamin is called a righteous person; each day he refrained from sinning in terms of the sign of the holy covenant etc. For Benjamin said: My brother Joseph is our father’s completion, as the covenant is the conclusion of the body. Since he is missing, I will guard my brother’s place. We need to view every Hasidic student as an aspect of Benjamin. It is incumbent on him to take the place of his brother Joseph, the sacred, pure young scholars of the past generation who are no longer with us. A life of sanctity and purity opens up the gates of the mind and heart for Torah and divine service, light and joy. This is along the lines of the teaching of the author of *Ba’alei Brit Avraham*, concerning the Sage’s statement that “if a person sanctifies themselves below, he is sanctified from above”: If he sanctifies himself in terms of the lower organs, wherein dwell one’s desires and animalistic soul, then he is sanctified from above and his mind and heart are opened up. If, God forbid, a person renders himself impure below, etc., then he is rendered impure from above and his mind and heart are impure, may the Merciful One spare us.

 The first of the laws of awakening in the morning is that one should strengthen oneself like a lion to serve his creator etc. Similarly, this is one’s task as he takes his first step in life, to strengthen himself like a lion etc. He must internalize the notion that the great king, the Holy One, blessed be He, whose presence fills the entire world, stands over him and observes his actions. As it says: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.” Even when he lies in bed, he must realize before whom he lies, and then he will “ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place.” For the mighty forces of Satan overpower the young scholar who wishes to purify himself and attain heavenly sanctity, and he goes through severe turmoil which threatens to break his spirit. He needs extreme strengthening, encouragement and joy to stand up them. Then “all of the of the winds in the world will be unable to uproot him.” His path will be one of life, certain to rise up and advance. The only solution when he experiences spiritual decline is to “pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.” You will then be strengthened and renewed as a new creature.

H

 It is well known that joy and sorrow are inseparable friends. This is particularly true of a groom on his wedding day. On the one hand there is weeping and sorrow, due to the recognition and knowledge of his obligation on this great day in his life, and the magnitude of his responsibility to fashion the form of his life, which depends so heavily on this day. On the other hand, the order of the day and its commandment is joy. As our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, wrote, even the groom is obligated to gladden the groom. Even the sorrow must be in the mode of joy. The reason that our Sages of blessed memory were so lavish in extoling the commandment to gladden the groom and bride is that joy is “the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.” Joy is the gate through which it is possible to enter and approach any sacred matter. It especially serves as a talisman with respect to the safeguarding of the holy covenant. For sadness is Satan’s gate, being the source of defects of the holy covenant. This is in line with the well known teaching concerning the verse “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.” [This is interpreted to mean:] Defects of spilling one’s seed, may the Merciful One spare us, are the result of sadness. The meaning of joy is clarity of faith, to the extent that even one’s heart feels that his Heavenly Father watches over and protects him from all harm, and that everything happens through divine providence and for his welfare. The believer will then have no concerns and experience life’s joy and bliss. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” whether physically or in terms of spiritual matters, “I will fear no evil, for You are with me.” His merciful Heavenly Father is by his side to assist and support him. It is only by means of this sense that he is able to overcome all of the obstacles and stumbling blocks that the evil inclination places before him. The groom’s talisman is, therefore, his being joyous, confident and steadfast, to enter through the gate into which the righteous enter and fix it firmly in his heart. As the verse states: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You art with me.” This issue is referred to as ‘the valley of the shadow of death,’ as it is written, “Her feet go down etc.” These defects are called ‘evil.’ But if ‘You art with me,’ I fear nothing.

 And now, my dear, as you conclude the period of your adolescence, with all of the failures and successes which you’ve had, you are once again entering a new phase in your life, a more difficult battle than the previous one. Once more you stand at the crossroads. Two paths stand before you: To be one of those who eats his Paschal offering for the sake of the commandment, concerning whom the verse says, “and the just shall walk in them,” or, God forbid, to be one of those who eats for the sake of gluttony, concerning whom the verse says, “but the transgressors shall fall therein.” Both eat the same thing, and on the surface, there is no discernable difference between them, even though the difference between them is actually so great. For only He who knows all mysteries knows who deserves the title ‘just’ and who deserves the title ‘transgressor.’ Two paths stand before you: To be one of the spiritual elite who transform a physical act into the height of spirituality, or, God forbid, to be one of those young scholars who turn their spirituality into the satisfaction of physical, animalistic pleasures, concerning whom the following statement by are Sages of blessed memory is said: “People who are intellectually clever, but perform animalistic acts.” These two paths are before you. At this time, it is in your hands to place yourself on the highest level, such that angels and seraphs will envy you, or, God forbid, such that even those lowly humans who have not ruined their sense of smell will not be able to bear standing in your presence.

 As a true friend who is devoted to your physical and spiritual welfare, I say to you and advise you: CHOOSE LIFE! It is true that this demands much commitment and sacrifice. But the teaching which our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, is well known. He used to say that the holy rabbi, Rabbi Joseph of Kojdanow, always repeated the following: God assists, the righteous [i.e. the Hassidic Masters] of the upper realms assist, the righteous of this world assist. They will always stand on your right to assist you and save you from all evil. You must stand firm at your post and “go forward using this strength” and may your path in life be successful.

 “And may God Almighty give you mercy,” that you may build a faithful house for the Lord and His Torah, in accordance with God’s will and the will of those who fear Him, our holy masters from Lekhavitsh, Kobryn, and Slonim, may their merit protect us. May it be a house in which all of life’s aspirations are for a sacred life, a pure life, a life of Torah which is God fearing, a house in which the husband sanctifies his wife and instills sanctity in her, a house which produces Torah and Hasidism, a house which is a source of splendor and glory for our community. May the decisions and commitments which you take upon yourself today accompany you on your path in life, for your welfare all of your days, including the nights.

 When you enter the tent of your home etc. you should state explicitly, as a Jew states before Rosh Hashanah: I hereby affirm etc. and indicate my intention and full-hearted wish, that it is will and desire and intent to serve our Creator, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Israel with perfect service, in thought, speech and action, in awe love. To only bring Him satisfaction. Everything is for the sake of the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He, with awe and reverence, to perfectly unify the name Yud Hey with Vav Hey, in the name of all of Israel and in accordance with the will of Rabbi Simon b. Yochai and his son, R. Elazar and the will of R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi of blessed memory and the will of our master, Israel Baal Shem Tov and his students, and their students, our holy masters throughout the generations. I wish to establish the tent of my home in accordance with their will and intent, and may I attain in their merit that the statement “the Divine Presence dwells among a husband and wife” by fulfilled with respect to us. May you, the Lord, protect me, that I be sheltered under the shadow of Your wings.

He who seeks your success and happiness, in body and soul,

Who prays that I may rejoice in your salvation.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,” with the admonition not to copy and to return promptly.

Appendix III: "The Three Months Letter" (*Mikhtav gimel hodashim*)

A

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.”

This is prohibited, restricted and secret

Except for those to whom it was given

With God’s help. *Shovavim*, 5717.

With heartfelt blessings to you, my dear, beloved student, congratulations on the occasion of your wedding, the blessings of the heavens above and of true friends below. And may you increasingly add light “unto the utmost bound etc.” but not inclusive (this is the formulation of our master, teacher, and rabbi, Rabbi Solomon David Joshua, may his merit protect us). “And the beauty of the Lord be upon you.”

A.

 Love warps one’s judgment. I am not qualified or suited to write that which I plan on writing to you below, as it is against my nature to write about these matters. However, my heart goes out to you, my dear, who I have – with God’s help –raised, nurtured, and brought to this point, to safely pass through adolescence. And now that you are a young scholar, I see you once again standing isolated and lonely in the confusion of battle. This battle is more difficult than the previous one, as that was prohibited, and this is permitted. “She has cast down many wounded,” many fell and many more will fall. Only outstanding individuals, who the Holy One blessed be He saved and implanted in each generation, come out of this battle with radiant gains and victories. As a result, they continue to shine in all areas. I pray that you too, my dear, be counted among them. Because of my affection for you, I decided to atypically transcribe some of the teachings which I am familiar with and which I heard from our holy masters, may their merit protect us, some of which are famous and some of which are known only to outstanding individuals. I saw others in writings and in letters written by my uncle, R. Abraham Pinehas, of blessed memory. I am placing a truly great treasure in your possession, so that you can be content for your entire life. And at every ‘time when thou mayest be found’ – as our Sages taught, that every one that is godly and desires to be close to God should pray about this – you should review one of these teachings. It will be like a bandage on your heart, so that you “need fear neither heat nor cold.” That is to say, not that which the evil inclination heats up when it aught to be cool, nor that which the evil inclination cools down when it aught to be hot. And the two are interdependent. Since it is hot when it aught to be cold, when it aught to be hot, in Torah study and prayer, it is cold. May my words find favor, to awaken within you a true desire to enjoy life’s light and bliss, as per the teaching of our master from Kobryn may his merit protect us: --- May I be assisted from the heavens concerning God’s honor, to be connected to all of this. – And see that I have admonished you that I prohibit you from showing this letter to anyone else, except those who receive my permission.

B.

 “And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy.” The following is cited in the name of our holy masters, may their merit protect us: The numerical value of ‘Zion’ is equivalent to that of ‘Joseph,’ whose attribute is ‘foundation.’ Jerusalem is the attribute of faith. These two concepts are the primary elements of the service of a Jew who wishes to come close to God. A person who possesses these two qualities is considered sacred. They also are interdependent. For if he safeguards the holy covenant, he merits pure faith and will not be confused by false thoughts, may the Merciful One spare us. As our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, stated concerning the verse, “So the Lord alone [*badad*] did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.” *BaDaD* is an acronym for *B’khol Derakhehka Da’ehu* [know Him in all your ways]. If one is on the level of knowing God in all of his ways, then even when he is alone and there is no one with him, he merits that ‘there is no strange god with him,’ he is not confounded by harmful notions in matters of faith. Similarly, to the degree that one’s faith that God is present and observes his actions – and that there is no difference for Him between darkness and light – is pure and clear, to that degree he merits safeguarding the holy covenant. Our master from Lekhavitsh, may his merit protect us, stated concerning the verse, “The Lord is great in Zion.” As was mentioned, Zion is the attribute of ‘foundation.’ For one who safeguards the holy covenant, God is great. “And he is high above all the people.” This attribute is greater and more exalted than all the other attributes and levels with which a Jew may serve God. All good qualities have many people who jump on them. But for this attribute, which no one knows about and is only known to God, there are only outstanding individuals. Also, the evil inclination’s effort in this battle is very intense. It is like a raging fire, in its attempts to contaminate him. For this defect is immediate, but also effects future generations. As the holy rabbi of Kozhnitz, may his merit protect us, said: “If one’s sole intention in performing this commandment is the satisfaction of his desire, and a child is only born from it incidentally, this is referred to as sons who are evildoers, may the Merciful One spare us, as his intent was not for the offspring. But if one intends to produce children for the service of the Lord, who is called ‘the God of truth,’ then they are called ‘a right seed’.” End quote. Therefore, our holy masters, may their merit protect us, established the attribute of ‘foundation’ as the quintessential foundation in divine service.

C.

 Our master of Lekhavitsh said, concerning the formula in the holy Zohar, “foundation is the conclusion of the body,” that it is impossible to aquire this attribute unless one finishes off the body by starving it. The explanation for this is as follows: In war, there are local victories and there are decisive victories which allows one to vanquish the enemy. The latter can only be won after difficult battles and many sacrifices. Similarly, in the case of many observant Jews, matters of divine service and spiritual life are like something secondary relative to something primary. They want to enjoy this world and arrange a pleasant life for themselves, with “a beautiful wife, dwelling and furnishings.” At the same time, they are not prepared to forego, God forbid, the world to come and their share in the Garden of Eden. However, there is a principle that the physical and spiritual lives cannot coexist in one person, both being primary. Rather, when one falls, the other rises. “Tyre was built specifically from the ruins of Jerusalem.” The following teaching of our master of Lekhavitsh, may his merit protect us, applies to a person such as this who wishes to enjoy animalistic pleasures – even in a permissible fashion: He will not be comprehended by those who the body obtains. One who wants the body to obtain him, will not comprehend God’s greatness, and he will not be counted among the fellowship of Hasidim. Even if he is a great person in terms of Torah knowledge and good deeds, he will, nonetheless, be delivered into the hands of the contemptible one [the evil inclination], who controls him and does with him as he wishes. For such a person, all of his triumphs over the evil inclination are merely local victories. However, when it comes to matters of safeguarding the holy covenant his standing is inferior. For in the decisive battle, namely the attribute of ‘foundation,’ no one can vanquish the enemy except one for whom all of the lusts and animalistic desires and worldly pleasures are uterly insignificant, and for whom his only aspiration and desire is his spiritual life, to cleave to the Creator, Who is pure and all of His servants are pure. As per the teaching of our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, that a person must say to his worldly interests: “It was not you that sent me hither, but God:” I did not come to this world for you, but rather to comprehend the Divine. He will flee from any worldly matter, even permissible pleasure, as he would flee from a fire burning his body and soul, if he is afraid that it will distance him from cleaving to God, which is his life’s sole desire. His battle is a difficult one, as it is not over a known detail, rather it is about his main desire to subjugate his enemy. He finishes off his body as a mourner and reaches the attribute of ‘foundation,’ which is victory on all fronts, and continues to shine in terms of all the attributes.

D.

 And now my dear, we will address how one enters the sacred parlor. The commandment of “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,” is explained by Nahmanides to mean that one should be abstemious even with respect to the permissible. One must not be a vile individual with the Torah’s sanction, even in terms of that which the Torah permitted him. Rather he should refrain from extravagances when they are unnecessary for the fulfillment of the commandment and he only wishes to indulge in pleasures of the flesh. “For I the Lord your God am holy,” and it is impossible to cleave to the sacred, unless one acts with sanctity. Our holy masters from Lekhavitsh, Kobryn, and Slonim, may their merit protect us, spoke lavishly about the sanctity of this matter, and placed it on such a high level, that one may infer from their teachings that there is absolutely no neutral situation of permissibility in this matter. Rather, one possibility is that it is a case of “a husband and wife, the Divine Presence dwells among them.” The house is like a miniature Temple filled with an atmosphere of awe of heaven, sanctity and purity, a dwelling for the Divine Presence. The table is like an altar, and the bed is like the sanctum sanctorum, and he is like the High Priest who enters the inner sanctum to offer sacrifices, incense, burnt offerings and sweet savor offerings. As per what my uncle, R. Abraham Pinehas, of blessed memory, wrote in the name of our master, Rabbi S., may his merit protect us, that more precious to the Holy One, blessed be He, is a blood-filled flask and a pot filled with etc. as per the teaching of our Sages of blessed memory, than all of the sacrifices which a Jew offers before the Holy One, blessed be He. But if this is not the case, and he constructs his house as a place for physical pleasures and enjoyment, then it is like a dwelling for Satan, God forbid. In that case, “fire consumes them.” They also stated, may their memory be blessed, “if your portion is with the adulterers,” that even in the portion which the Torah permitted to you, you are committing adultery, may the Merciful One spare us. They also stated, may their memory be blessed, with respect to the verse: “None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness.” ‘near of kin’ refers to his wife. If his intentions are not for the sake of heaven, then it is included in the prohibition of “None of you shall approach.” Similarly, any unnecessary physical contact is included in the prohibition of “None of you shall approach.” They further said about the teaching of our Sages of blessed memory: “For He spoke, and it was done – this refers to woman.” But “he commanded, and it stood fast,” to maintain himself, but not to transgress the prohibition of adding to commandments. They also stated, may their memory be blessed, “And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.” Good mornings are the free offerings which a young scholar brings to God. “Even tomorrow the Lord will make known who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near [*v’hikriv*] unto him.” God knows who is his etc., by means of the morning free offerings.” Therefore, as soon as a Jew betroths a woman we recite the blessing “that He created everything for his honor.” And this was the primary service for all those who wished to follow in the footsteps of our holy masters, may their merit protect us. They invested their stringencies, enhancements and meticulous care in performing the commandments into the enhancement of the commandment of “Ye shall be holy” more than any other commandment or attribute.

E.

 The early Hasidim of the previous generation, who we merited seeing, invested their fat and blood to combat the pleasure of excess, they fought against commandments which involve physical pleasure. They interpreted the teaching of our Sages of blessed memory “and love her like his own body,” but not like his soul. --- was exceedingly ascetic. Someone said to him that he was forfeiting his share in the world to come. He replied that it is worth losing his share in the world to come as long as I don’t benefit from this world. There were those who soaked their pillows with abundant tears when the night of ritual immersion arrived. They repented for the necessity, the way a penitent repents for a grave sin, for fear that perhaps the body derived pleasure. They were more concerned about a permissible impurity than a prohibited one. There was an aspect for them of “weeping may endure at night,” and they, thereby, merited “joy cometh in the morning,” as their hearts opened in learning Torah and in prayer. They interpreted the verse “And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh” in the following manner: Jacob is an aspect of Torah, as the verse states: “Give truth to Jacob,” and the power of Torah shields and protects. He saw that he could not lead him astray in terms of that which is prohibited. “He touched the hollow of his thigh,” to lead him astray in terms of permissible pleasure. This overpowers and trips up even those who learn Torah, may God protect us. Our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, related that R. Michal Sofer of Kobryn did not realize that his wife was lame three years after his wedding. Such was their sanctity. What can those who have abandoned the chambers of their hearts and are feeble minded answer after them? When the heart is asleep, then the liver – the home and dwelling of evil desires – controls the body and heat of the blind blood intensifies and the evil inclination burns like fire. Even for those who occupy themselves with Torah and commandments all day, the situation is an aspect of that which our master, Rabbi S., may his merit protect us, described: “I have cried day and night before thee.” During the day he cries out to God, and at night he acts against His will. If the earlier generations were like angels, or at least like people, then we are like donkeys. The solution for this, in order to extinguish the fire and the boiling of the blood, is pouring out his heart like water in prayer and pleas. As per the verse: “Pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord.” As Our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, said about the midrash’s teaching: “Just as the Holy One, blessed be He’s praise rises up from the righteous who are in the Garden of Eden, so too, the Holy One, blessed be He’s praise rises from the wicked in Hell, as they cool Hell off with their tears.” The Holy One, blessed be He’s praise which rises up from the righteous who are in the Garden of Eden refers to Torah, prayer and good deeds. His praise similarly rises up from the wicked in Hell. This refers to the fact that when he is all alone in the dark and the evil inclination incites him and burns within him like the fire of Hell, and he has no recourse, he beseeches and begs the Holy One, blessed be He to save him. The Holy One, blessed be He’s praise rises up from the fact that Hell is cooled down by means of their tears. That is to say the flames of the evil inclination are extinguished by means of their tears. This aspect is more significant than the service of the angels and the seraphs, who have no evil inclination. This is exclusively God’s, for no one else knows besides Him, blessed be He, and no one is aware of the fat and blood which one gives for His honor, blessed be He.

F.

 The solution in these matters is to cultivate an internal awe of heaven. As per the teaching of our master from Lekhavitsh, may his merit protect us: “A woman that feareth the Lord,” the suggestion for combating desire for women is cultivate fear of God. He further stated, “fear suppresses blood.” One must cultivate awe of heaven and fear which suppresses blood in order to deal with desire which is caused by the boiling of impure blood. As per the teaching of our master. Rabbi S., may his merit protect us: “And by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light [*lehair*]; to go by day and night.” When one is completely alone at night, and desire burns with in him like a fire, the solution is *lehair*, which are the letters of awe [*yirah*], to begin from simple awe. “To go by day and night,” the day follows the night. If he overcomes his desires at night, then his mouth and heart are opened in Torah learning and prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He. As per the teaching of the righteous ones: “Remember and observe [*shamor*] were said as one, anyone who is included in observance is included in remembrance.” If one safeguards [*shomer*] the holy covenant, he remembers the Holy One, blessed be He, and he remembers the Torah which he learns, as forgetfulness results from defects in the holy covenant. They also stated, may their memory be blessed, “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire,” the Holy One, blessed be He’s consumption, so to speak, is what a Jew gives over in his name, may it be blessed, which burns within the person like a flame. That is what comes up with acceptance and as a sweet savor offering before Him, may he be blessed. They further explained “is a consuming fire,” as follows: Only those actions which a Jew performs with enthusiasm and sacred fire comes up before Him, may he be blessed.

 Another piece of advice, as per the teaching of our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, “Vinegar [*hometz*] is beneficial for a heat wave.” In the time of a heat wave, when it burns within him and there is no escape, he should restrain himself and allow it to pass --- until the fury and potency of the evil inclination abates. And as they stated, may their memory be blessed, --- As per what our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, stated concerning the *shalshelet* [a biblical cantillation symbol] which appears on the words “he lingered,” “he refused,” and “he slaughtered.” At first one must linger, then refuse, and afterwards slaughter. “And he shall kill it on the side of the altar,” to slaughter his evil inclination.

 In general, the proper way and the divine counsel is not to battle the desires and evil urges directly. Rather one should “turn the battle to the gate,” turning back the urges back to their sources, channeling all of his desires to God, may He be blessed, like a son snuggling on his father, and all of the evil loves which are in his stomach into love of God and his brethren and fellows. As per that which is cited in their sacred teachings, may their merit protect us, that the Jewish soul emanates from the world of pleasure and seeks out pleasure. When it is deprived of the sacred pleasure of learning Torah and fulfilling the commandments, and the holy Sabbath, then it seeks cheap pleasures from the animalistic soul to quench the thirst of its heart. As per the teaching of our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, concerning the verse, “The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” A soul which is full of sacred pleasures and the holy Sabbath ‘loatheth a honeycomb,’ all pleasures which appear like a honeycomb. Honey [*devash*] has the same numerical value as woman [*ishah*]. All of the pleasures of the animalistic soul are as if nothing to him. However, for ‘the hungry soul’ who does not experience sacred pleasure and is hungry, may the Merciful One spare us, ‘every bitter thing is sweet.’ As per that which the verse states: “And I find more bitter than death the woman,” and yet he considers it sweet. We ask concerning this “satisfy us from your goodness.” As per his teaching, may his memory be blessed, “When I am brought a light and you are covered with shame.” When God, may He be blessed, assists a Jew and opens his eyes to see God’s pleasantness, then “you are covered with shame,” all of the desires and delights of the animalistic soul are as if nothing, “what is your greatness considered etc.”

 And there is another general piece of advice cited by our Sages, of blessed memory: “If this contemptible one [the evil inclination] accosts you, drag him to the study hall.” The explanation of this matter is as is stated with respect to *hag’alah* [making dishes kosher by immersion in boiling water]: “Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire,” and “steam removes steam.” He should be excited in his prayer with the same enthusiasm as he has for his desires. As per the teaching of our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us: “A Psalm of David… after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” He said the psalm with the same passion and feeling. He should channel the prurient flame into the fire of Torah, “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord.” He should immerse his mind completely in the holy Torah. The evil inclination only exerts control in a heart devoid of wisdom. As our master, the author of *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*, may his merit protect us, said, when he was a young scholar he was unfamiliar with struggling against desires. For he greatly immersed his mind in the study of Torah, such that there was no room for evil thoughts. He would fall asleep at night in the sweet sleep of one who labors. Our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, thereby explained the verse “If ye walk in my statutes.” Rashi interprets this to mean “that you exert yourselves in Torah study.” That is to say, you should exert yourselves so much in Torah study that you thereby distance yourselves from desires and “walk in my statutes.”

G.

 The main work and effort with respect to this attribute is during the first year, which molds the spiritual character of the family life for their entire lifetime. This is especially true in the first months which are the beginning of the beginning and the foundation of the foundation, and “if not now, then when?” One who wishes to follow in the footsteps of our holy masters, may their merit protect us, will not rest or be still. But everything must be carried out with extreme intelligence and wisdom, as it is prohibited to, God forbid, spoil the atmosphere of the home, an atmosphere of love, brotherhood and peace and friendship. As per the teaching of our master from Kobryn, that when the opponent [Satan/ the evil inclination] sees a young scholar who is rising and advancing in the service of God, he causes discord between him and his wife, and then he is able to take control of him in all matters. As per that which our master stated in *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda* concerning his son-in-law, the holy rabbi, Rabbi Moses Mordechai of Kobryn of blessed memory: My Moses is not like other young scholars, who act angrily during the day and reconcile at night. In his case it is the opposite. Our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, wrote that all of the gates of light are opened for him during the first year. This year is the decisive year in his life. It determines whether it will be a life of sanctity and purity, so that he becomes one of the outstanding individuals of his generation, or the life of an animal, “such as a horse or a mule that has no understanding.” As per the teaching of the righteous concerning the verse “he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife.” The meaning is along the lines of the teaching of our Sages of blessed memory concerning the verse “but the owner of the ox shall be free,” “as when people say that so and so went free from his possessions and he has no pleasure from them.” Then, “he shall cheer up his wife.” The atmosphere of sanctity in the house brings about an atmosphere of joy and bliss. Concerning this they said, may their memory be blessed, ‘happy going forward’ to perform the act and ‘joyful arriving,’ because during the act itself ‘they fulfill their Creator’s will with trepidation.’ However, for one who causes defects, may the Merciful One spare us, it is a case of “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.” I heard from R. ??? in the name of our master, Rabbi S., may his merit protect us, “If he came in by himself,” meaning, if he is merely acting out of obligation and “as one possessed,” then “he shall go out by himself. “That is to say that afterwards he returns to his original level and His service, may He be blessed. However, “if he were married [*ba’al*],” that is to say, if he is like a proprietor [*ba’alim*] who is completely immersed in thinking about his business, then “his wife shall go out with him.” That is to say, wherever he goes, praying and serving God, his wife accompanies him, he is filled with evil thoughts and contemplations. They also stated, may their memory be blessed, that if “weeping endures at night,” as he is faced by all sorts of physical and emotional temptations on the one hand, and compassion and the like on the other, and he withstands all of this with self-sacrifice, and “the words of Torah only exist within one who kills himself,” and becomes cruel to himself and his family, then “joy cometh in the morning.” His mouth and heart open in Torah and prayer.

H.

 Our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, was accustomed to explain the statement that Joseph “refrained himself, and said, set on bread.” in the following way: As a result of a Jew restraining himself from satisfying his pleasures and desires, the Holy One, blessed be He, declares, ‘set on bread,’ give him abundant livelihood. For it is decreed in heaven how much pleasure and how much suffering and pain one is to receive. A fool receives all of his allotted pleasure and enjoyment from the fulfillment of his desires. Then, when it comes to deriving spiritual pleasure from Torah study and performing the commandments, all pleasure is closed off to him and he experiences none. Similarly, when he tries to make a living, all of the gates of livelihood are closed off to him. However, one who restrains himself from satisfying his desires, overcoming his suffering, already received his allotment of suffering. Now the gates of light and livelihood are open to him. Therefore, “Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land.” All of the conduits of abundance pass through him. You may ask: But don’t we observe many evildoers before whom all physical benefit is open? The answer is along the line of that which is cited in the early commentaries as a response to the question raised by Tosafot: We see that there are people who are liable for excision, who live a long life. In the time of the Temple, the Jewish people were nourished exclusively by the sacred source. When one transgressed a prohibition for which the penalty was excision, his life source was terminated, and he would inevitably perish. However, now – through our abundance of sins – they are nourished by Satan, and their entire longevity and livelihood derive from the impure source, may God protect us. In these matters, a person must periodically be an accountant, --- As the righteous say regarding the verse: “Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; Your little ones, your wives.” ‘Your little ones’ alludes to drops, ‘your wives’ [*neshekhem*] has both the connotation of forgetting and the connotation of women. It means that even what has already been forgotten and even what was permissible are included. All stand before the Lord, your God, and a person will ultimately have to give a reckoning for all of them before the One who knows all hidden things. I heard the following from our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, who spoke about the sacred name Y’B’K’: It is an acronym for *Yihud Kedushah Berachah* [unification, sanctity and blessing]. This is the reason that we do not recite a blessing on performing this commandment: If the unification was performed in sanctity, it is essentially a blessing and a source of blessing. And if, God forbid, it is lacking in sanctity, it is forbidden to recite a blessing, may God protect us.

I.

 However, all of these things apply when the brain is in control of one’s thoughts and the heart is control of its emotions. What is a person to do when his intellect is diminished, and his heart is blocked and dull, and control has passed to the liver – the place of the impure blood’s boiling and the dwelling of evil desires, when he is held captive and he is delivered into the hands of the contemptible one [the evil inclination], like putty in the hands of the artisan? At that time, besides the decline itself, there are two additional strikes against him: A. As per what the holy rabbi, Rabbi N. from Lekhavitsh, may his merit protect us, said to the author of *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*, who asked him, --- ? He answered: I am not so concerned about that. “I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up,” God, may He be blessed, will lift you up from your lowly state. The main issue is that in the meantime, during the time of lowliness, “and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me,” that the evil inclination not take advantage of the situation to grab hold of him. B. As per that which is cited in *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*. The main objective of the evil inclination is not to ensnare the person in the sin itself. Rather, its main wish is to cast him into despair, for then it can subjugate him, and he will fall into its hands. As per the teaching of our master, teacher and rabbi, may his merit protect us, concerning the verse “And she caught him by his garment [*bigdo*].” This has the connotation of betrayal [*begidah*]. In any case, you have betrayed God and gone against his will, so lie with me, since you are an evildoer regardless. Joseph outsmarted her and responded: On the contrary, “There is none greater in this house than I,” I am exceedingly pious and how can I do this great evil? This is the proper response. However, there are times when the heart is so broken that it is impossible to give such a reply. At such a time, a person needs to know the principle taught by our holy masters, may their merit protect us: Anyone who is incapable of starting to pray and pour his words out before Him, may He be blessed, and to feel that his Heavenly Father is with him even in his lowliness, because he is in a dreadfully lowly state, even if it is because he transgressed the prohibition of adultery, has not stepped foot on the threshold of the Hasidim. As per the teaching of the righteous rabbi of Ovruch, may his merit protect us: Anyone who does not believe that the Holy One, blessed be He, “dwells with them within their impurity” is also a heretic. As per the teaching of our master, teacher and rabbi of blessed memory, concerning the verse “behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron.” Due to the defects of his bedstead, an iron partition formed between him and his Heavenly Father. But “He brought us forth out of the iron furnace.” For “even an iron partition cannot divide between Israel and their Heavenly Father.” “The Lord is a man of war.” God, may He be blessed, comes to the aid of those who battle. “I will be that I will be.” God may He be blessed, promises that He will be with those who want Him to be with them and ask for His help. One can draw strength and encouragement from this knowledge under all circumstances. However, in a lowly state such as this, it is impossible to be one of those who presume to rise up, and to be like a fool who wishes to travel even in darkness. Rather, that is the time to ask for mercy and lenience from the treasury of free gifts, even though he is unworthy and undeserving. He should move worlds with his prayers, “heaven and earth ask mercy for me.” As per that which is cited at the conclusion of *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*: After considering all sorts of advice, no recommendation equals that of asking God for mercy and pleading before God, may He be blessed, etc. being fearful and then being strengthened etc., especially on the Sabbath and festivals. On the holy Sabbath, the Jewish people “take refuge under the shadow of Your wings.” One must grab onto the holy Sabbath like a person sinking in deep mire, the waters having come in unto his soul, who found a rescue plank. That is what the Sabbath is. One can thereby escape from any anguish of mind or spirit. Our master, teacher, and rabbi, may his merit protect us, said that the radiance of a person’s face during the week cannot compare to the radiance of his face on the holy Sabbath. The term his face [*panav*] has the connotation of turning [*peniyah*]. What a Jew can --- on the holy Sabbath is an entirely different matter. The holy Sabbath is renewal, a person can be renewed as a new creature, having no connection to any of his past. This is especially true when brethren sit together on the Sabbath eve and the third Sabbath meal. Those times are particularly suitable for coming closer to God, may He be blessed.

J.

 My dear and beloved student: We have spoken at length about military tactics, but “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.” When the enemy is at the gate, and all the more so when standing face to face with the enemy, rationalism and explanations are useless. As our master, the author of *Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda*, may his merit protect us, said: Evil cannot be uprooted by means of rationalism. At such a time, one must know to be a faithful soldier who will risk his life for victory, having no concern for his life, or that of his wife and children. It requires self-sacrifice, blood sweat and tears. It requires weapons, namely abundant Torah study and prayer. It requires an atmosphere of war, meaning that you must inundate the walls of your house and your family with the concept that a life of asceticism and purity is the bliss and joy in life and that spiritual life is superior to a life of physical, animalistic pleasure, as opposed to the aspiration that “a beautiful dwelling, wife and furnishings” occupy a central place in life.

 We did not discuss quantities, nor the fine points of the matter. For concerning these, our master, teacher, and rabbi, of blessed memory, stated that they are matters about which a person’s soul will instruct him how to evaluate his nature and temperament, and thereby calibrate his path. Along with this, he should ask for mercy, “Teach me thy way, O Lord,” rescue me from mire that I may not drown. May I not, God forbid, be one of those about who our Sages of blessed memory said: “If he satisfies it, it is hungry.” He, also, must make boundaries and safeguards for himself. Similarly, we did not discuss holy conduct during the prohibited period, in terms of both thought and speech. “And a person is even told about casual speech etc. on the day of judgment.” In particular, be careful about all matters of distancing [from your wife when she is menstruating] cited in the name of the righteous, which is a whole realm of teachings by itself, and not merely that as a result you will not sin, God forbid. I am confidant in my heart that you will place yourself on the proper level, conducting yourself with extreme sanctity, like an obedient soldier.

 Stand at your post, for God is standing by you and watching you on all of your paths, along with the righteous in the Garden of Eden, our holy masters, who promised that their ember will not be extinguished until the coming of the righteous redeemer. They will assist you, guarding you from all evil, God forbid. All of these words are to be on and in your heart always. For it is my fierce desire that you be of the fortunate individuals who are the nation’s remnant, whose souls descended to furnish contentment above, even in terms of the difficult matters, to elevate them to the most spiritual level. “Strengthen yourself and become a man.” “Be strong and of a good courage… for the Lord… is with thee…”

With faithful and devoted friendship,

praying that God protects you from all dross and defect.