

Dear Kallah of Late March 2020,

I want to apologize and I want to thank you but mostly I want to tell you that it's ok to cry and I am crying with you.

I'll explain, but in reverse order.

While I hope that you have taken this all well, that you laugh through this letter and continue to laugh until Moshiach's arrival, in case you're falling apart inside because you're human, I wanted to write to you.

Please - Cry away, Kallah.

You were young and full of youthful blissful hope and suddenly you were old and grown and called upon to be the most mature of your whole wedding party.

Overnight your dream wedding became illegal.

You suffered such a private pain at such a public event (although not as public as it was originally planned to be). No one could relate - neither your married sisters who each had their own gorgeous Galus wedding or your younger sisters who are bound for gorgeous Geulah weddings. And you were somehow chosen against your will to be part of the "Birthpangs Weddings."

You never wanted to be the nebuch case bride with people doing all they could to compensate and make you happy. You wanted to be the proud bride who graciously welcomed the overwhelming masses to your huge event. Your event was surely "talk of the town" though not how you'd imagined. You know that people whisper about you in the street now.

Growing up, you knew the legends of the 9/11 weddings and the Blackout weddings, but they had nothing to do with you. When you got engaged, you breathed a sigh of relief that your wedding did not fall out in the unpredictable winter but in good weather season. You tried not to worry too much about getting married right before Pesach.

You planned to have "Im Eshkocheich" sung at your Chupah to express longing for the Beis Hamikdash, but never wanted your entire wedding to be such an expression.

For years, the most impoverished fathers went to the most shameful measures in order to save their daughters from having such shame as you may feel right now.

I hope Moshiach arrives before your painful prints do. But until then, cry away.

Our Chazal who tell us that pulling the wrong coin out of your pocket is classified as Yesurim would surely be saying it's alright to cry.

Your Creator who fashioned you, your emotions and these confusing current events would surely be saying it's alright to cry.

## Why am I sorry?

I'm sorry that we're all "on such a high" from your event.

It's ok for you to be on a high but it's not ok for anyone else to be on a high about your suffering, however meaningful it may have felt.

I watch as emails come in describing the latest wedding, gushing about how real the Simcha was and how simple the spread was. And I know that behind that event is very likely a Jewish woman who is crying into her pillow when her new husband is not looking.

I'm sorry that your privacy and especially your private pain have been publicized through videos taken and forwarded by amused passerby.

I'm sorry that your pain feels lost somewhere in a jumble of Matzah orders, rubber gloves, Zoom meetings, children singing "Paroh in Pajamas," levayos and egg shortages.

**But mostly, I am sorry that we raised your generation on weekly magazines with six-page spreads showing Kiddush, Chanuka and Birthday celebrations that outdid your wedding.**

Enough said, but I'm not yet done here.

## Why must I thank you?

Thank you for modeling to all of us true Emunas Chachomim.

You listened to your family Rav who paskened that we don't push off weddings. What was your reaction? Did you curl up into a ball and cry yourself to sleep? Did you scream and feel angry? I'm scared to know how you crumbled inside but I wish to know how you managed to pull yourself together enough to show up in makeup.

Thank you for choosing Klal Yisrael's continuance.

Similar to the women in Mitzrayim who used their mirrors to prepare and approach their husbands, to bring children into an unpredictable world, you too dressed for your wedding, slipped your arms into your parents and walked to your Chosson. Your actions screamed out: our family begins not tomorrow but today. We will start a new family in Klal Yisrael today, yes even in this unpredictable world and economy.

Thank you for the smile you put on.

I know it seemed like your wedding suddenly turned into a chessed wedding and it's true- it did but not because of the free kallah chair and all the last-minute generosity. A chessed wedding it was because every smile you gave was a chesed you needed to summon courage in order to give to those trying to be mesamayach you.

YOU were the generous one.

Thank you for your generous donation to Klal Yisrael.

You gave us no doubt a huge Kaparah for all the jealousy-inducing weddings we made. For the weddings that were surely illegal in G-d's eyes.

Descendant of Yitzchak Avinu, you willingly reached out your neck for sacrifice, when you stepped into your dream dress and stepped into your nightmare wedding. Thank you for donating the ashes of your dreams. Two decades of dreams.

I'm sure that both the tears you cried and the tears you didn't cry (to protect your parents) are similar to seeds in both shape and power. I hope you will be comforted by the sprouts and soon.

Please, promise...

Promise me that you feel Hashem's huge love for you. Promise me that not even for one second do you feel hated by Him. Promise me that you're trying your best to be Dan L'Kaf Zchus Him. That if it wasn't going to bring you (and klal yisrael) something much better, He would never have caused you any pain on your special day.

He could have easily pushed this whole ordeal off another month so that it fell out during wedding-free Sefirah. You could have easily gotten engaged three months earlier or three months later. Your wedding could have been scheduled for three nights earlier before all this happened. But no - instead Hashem chose the two of you and called upon you to step up together and prepare to usher in the next generation, amidst all the chaos. Not in three more months - not in another month - now.

I hope you'll have extra Siyata Dishmaya bonding with your husband, even though your launching was far from breath-taking. In the best-case scenario, he is reading this over your shoulders and cackling with you about how dramatic I'm being because you guys are totally ok. But probably, you're both suffering and differently (while you probably don't yet know how differently men and woman grieve/show emotions, you'll know soon enough 😊). With your bittersweet beginning, please don't get frustrated or scared if he wants to grieve the bitter in moments where you want to celebrate the sweet and he wants to celebrate the sweet when you need to grieve the bitter.

My Tefilah for you ironically is **עוד ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים**. Can we wonder if **עוד** implies "again"? Can it be your Kol that we refer to when we say Kol Chosson and Kol Kallah? I hope so. I hope that we will celebrate again and give you the celebration you deserve.

One more wish for you before I go. I know other people reading this will gasp and might even write off this entire message because of this, but I know you'll find it a non-exaggeration and appropriate to say here. Because only you know how, in your heart of hearts (where our priorities are not yet as lined up as we wish them to be) there were moments during your week of Sheva Brachos that felt more like a week of Shivah. How can I compare you to a mourner when people are truly mourning loved ones? I should not. But I can say that the pain of the mourners of life, the pain of the mourners of fortunes, the pain of the mourners of plans and of dreams is all part of the same excruciating national pain. And so, as you mourn the dreams we raised you on, I dare say -

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבילי ציון וירושלים