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Dear Younger Abba,

A daunting task awaits you. You will be rubbing shoulders with power and influence while advocating on behalf of Torah Jewry. You will be representing Torah values to the outside world while engaged in activities that will profoundly affect your community. But you are an anomaly, a dark suit and beard among the blazers and clean-shaven faces. You'll bring a different perspective, distinct priorities. You are not the Jew, and yours is not the Judaism, that Washington has known. Will you be perceived as irrelevant? An outcast? Will you succeed in this milieu?

Know that "success" comes in many forms.

There is the kind of success that comes when you help shape legislation or public policy beneficial to your community. But there is also an intangible form of success, the *kiddush Hashem* that comes through words and action, character and comportment.

Sometimes you'll accomplish a task simply by making an "effort." Indeed, you are called a *shtadlan*— one who tries — because in a world that is run by a Higher Force, we are here simply to give our best shot. And success does not always involve grandiose "*klal*" achievements; you might simply be asked to ease the burden of just one suffering Jew. That might bring the greatest satisfaction of all.

Know, also, the standards by which true success is judged.

Be truthful and sincere, principled and consistent. Respect others and express appreciation. Being a mensch is more important than anything on your résumé: It will gain you the trust and respect of those in the highest echelons of government. Beware, too, the glitz, glamour, and power of Washington. Don't be beguiled. Your work is not about your honor, image, or influence, but about representing Torah values and serving the communal good.

Who and what you represent must always be at your work's core. Don't say what you shouldn't; don't go where you shouldn't; don't distort your views to make them more palatable to others. Some will say that your code of social conduct puts you at a lobbying disadvantage. The exact opposite is true. Torah adherence *helps* you in your work. Government officials want Jews to be Jewish.

Remember that you will be scrutinized by both friends and adversaries. Stay far from the inappropriate and unseemly. The possibility for *chillul Hashem* hovers above and the consequences are inestimable. They will ultimately reflect on the community and Torah Judaism itself. No justification, no possible benefit, can outweigh the tragedy caused by *chillul Hashem*.

Above all, you must love all Jews. Much success!



RABBI ABBA COHEN

For the past 27 years, Rabbi Abba Cohen has served as Washington representative for Agudath Israel of America, which opened the first Orthodox Jewish advocacy office in the nation's capital. He advocates on a wide range of foreign and domestic issues.



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than anything on your résumé"*