

The Sentence After Please



Illustration coming soon

For ages 15-18



Chapter 1: A Very Small Yes

"He'll get better," Yehoyada's friend says.

The sentence arrives at exactly the right moment to be dangerous.

Yehoyada is seventeen. His grandfather is ill, and the adults have been speaking with the medical team. Tatty tells the family what he can share, makes the visits appropriate, and handles the practical arrangements. Yehoyada has no medical decision to make.

He does have a grandfather he wants at the supper table.

For three days, he prays for him and waits for news. The waiting does not have a useful job attached. He can finish a page of study, eat lunch, and discover that the afternoon still contains the same unknown.

Now his friend says, "We pray. Hashem listens. He'll get better."

Yehoyada hears the comfort before he hears the promise.

"Yes," he says.

It is a very small yes. It is supposed to hold a very large thing.





Chapter 2: The News That Does Not Move

At home, Tatty says there is no clear improvement yet.

He does not supply medical detail Yehoyada does not need. He does say the adults are in contact with the team and will let the children know about any appropriate visit.

Yehoyada listens.

No clear improvement yet sounds like an answer his friend does not make room for.

At supper, Mama asks whether he wants more soup.

Yehoyada almost says she should not be asking about soup.

Then his younger sister asks whether Grandpa knows about the absurd hat in the book they are reading. Mama says they can ask Tatty about sharing a suitable message.

The soup, the book, and the illness are in the same kitchen. Yehoyada wants them in separate rooms so he can know which one he is supposed to attend to.

He eats the soup. Afterward, he prays again.





When he gets to the part he says quietly in his own words,
Yehoyada prays, "Please let him get well."

Then Yehoyada thinks to himself, "What if he doesn't?"

Yehoyada stops.

He dislikes the question more than the waiting.





Chapter 3: A Wrong Thought?

The next morning, the friend asks whether the news is better.

"Not yet."

"Keep praying."

"I am."

"Then don't think the worst."

Yehoyada wants to ask whether a question counts as the worst.

Instead, he asks, "How do you know he'll recover?"

The friend's face changes.

"You have to have faith."

"I want him to get better."

"So don't say he won't."

"I didn't."

The friend looks relieved by that answer.

Yehoyada does not.





He never said Grandpa would not get better. He wonders whether he might not. The difference seems important, and he cannot find room for it in this conversation.

During study, he notices the question returning.

He tries to shove it out before opening the page. The harder he checks whether it is gone, the more often he hears it.

At break, he decides not to mention the illness again. The friend has given him the correct-sounding sentence. If it does not fit, perhaps Yehoyada is the part that needs hiding.





Chapter 4: The Question on the Page

Tatty notices he is quieter after supper.

"Do you need different information about Grandpa?"

"I need to know if I'm allowed to ask something."

Tatty puts down the cloth he is using to dry a plate.

"You can ask me."

Yehoyada describes the friend's promise, the prayer, and the sentence after please.

He expects Tatty to judge the size of his faith. Tatty asks what the question means to him.

"I don't want to stop hoping. I don't know how to pretend I know."

Tatty listens to the whole answer.

"We can speak with your teacher about the religious question. I don't want to give you a quick sentence that adds another burden. And nobody in your class is responsible for predicting the medical outcome."





Yehoyada feels grateful and slightly disappointed. He wants permission stamped so firmly that the question never frightens him again.

Tatty offers help having the conversation instead.

Together they write the question plainly, so Yehoyada does not have to improvise while embarrassed:

How can I pray and hope for Grandpa without pretending I know whether he will recover?

Tatty asks whether he wants company for the conversation.

"At the beginning," Yehoyada says. "Then maybe I can stay."

They make that arrangement.





Chapter 5: No Forecast in the Study Room

The trusted teacher reads the question.

"I'm glad you brought it," he says. "Tell me what you're being asked to pretend."

Yehoyada describes the friend's certainty and his fear that wondering is itself a failure.

The teacher does not turn the conversation into a test the boy can pass only by choosing a reassuring sentence. He speaks with Yehoyada about his own religious question, in the context of their community and family. He asks whether the difference between a question and a prediction matters. The teacher asks him to explain which part he is afraid to say aloud. They take their time.

He also makes one limit clear: he will not promise a medical outcome, and a peer's promise does not become one because it sounds comforting.

"Your family and the medical team handle the information and care," he says. "Don't put a prediction in their place."





Yehoyada asks questions slowly. Some answers help. Some need more conversation. He says when he does not understand instead of nodding to finish faster.

Near the end, he admits he feels guilty when he laughs at something while Grandpa is ill.

The teacher asks whether anyone has told him Grandpa requires a grandson who never laughs.

"No."

"Then talk with your father about the place ordinary life can have while you're worried. You don't have to make yourself the medical watch."

Tatty returns at the agreed time. They arrange another conversation if Yehoyada wants it. The question is not closed by the sound of a chair moving.





Chapter 6: A Friend Without a Promise

Yehoyada speaks to his friend after the supervised study session.

"I know you want to help. But when you say he'll definitely get better, I don't know what to do with news that stays uncertain."

The friend looks troubled.

"I don't want you to lose hope."

"I don't either. I just can't use a promise neither of us can make."

"What should I say?"

Yehoyada thinks.

"You can ask how I am. You can hope with me. You can keep me company without telling me what will happen."

The friend does not immediately find a beautiful response.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I thought certainty would help."

"It did for a minute. Then I felt like I was doing something wrong when I wondered."

The friend nods.





They go back inside to collect their books. He asks whether Yehoyada wants to work on the same passage tomorrow.

Yehoyada does.

It is a promise his friend can actually make.





Chapter 7: A Visit With Its Own Length

Later in the week, Tatty arranges a short visit according to the family's and medical team's guidance.

Yehoyada is told what the adults want him to know and follows their instructions. He is not asked to watch medical equipment, assess symptoms, or judge whether Grandpa is improving.

Grandpa is tired. He wants to hear about the book with the absurd hat.

Yehoyada tells him the part his sister likes. Grandpa smiles. Then he rests.

The visit ends when the adults say it should. Yehoyada wants another few minutes to prove he does not mind the tiredness.

Tatty's plan is not a measure of how devoted he looks.

They leave.

On the way home, Yehoyada says he cannot tell whether the smile means anything about recovery.

"It means he smiled at the story," Tatty says. "The medical team will tell us what they can about the illness."





Yehoyada keeps the smile anyway. It can be a moment with Grandpa without becoming evidence in a prediction.

That evening, he tells his sister Grandpa enjoyed her book.

"Which part?"

He tells her.

They laugh at the hat together. Yehoyada notices the guilt, remembers the conversation, and does not turn off the laugh to prove the visit matters.





Chapter 8: A Page He Can Open

There is still no neat ending to the news.

Some information changes. Some questions stay open. The adults continue the care and arrangements. Yehoyada continues to tell Tatty when the uncertainty becomes hard to carry, and he can return to the trusted teacher with questions.

At the study table, his friend asks how he is.

"Worried today."

"Do you want to talk first or read?"

"Talk for a bit."

The friend listens. He does not answer uncertainty with a promise.

Afterward, they open the passage they agreed to study.

Yehoyada thinks of Grandpa twice while reading. He does not need to call the thought a failure or pretend the page cures it.

At home, he prays for Grandpa. The question after please may still appear. He knows whom he can ask about it without staging certainty for a classmate.

Later, Mama asks him to put the bowls on the table. He does.





His sister brings the hat book downstairs.

"There's another ridiculous one."

Yehoyada reads the page with her. If a suitable message or visit is possible, the adults will arrange it.

