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מוחם מענדל שניאורסאהר

16 Adar 5712 ז"ה
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rev. L. Sufrin
18, Catherine Road
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Sholom u'Brocho:

I have duly received your letter of the 8th of Shevat, but this is the first opportunity to answer it. Should there be any good news in the meantime, you will no doubt let me know.

You seem to be disturbed because you feel that you have not attained the proper level in Torah and Mitzvoth and cannot see the 'tachles' etc., which makes you downhearted.

Leaving the details of your complaints aside, I wish to make several observations:

1. A feeling of dissatisfaction with one's self is a good sign, for it indicates vitality and an urge to rise and improve one's self which is accomplished in a two-way method: withdrawal from the present state and turning to a higher level (see Sichah of my father-in-law of sainted memory, Pesach 5694).

2. If the urge to improve one's self leads to downheartedness and inertia, then it is the work of the Yetzer-hora whose job it is to use every means to prevent the Jew from carrying out good intentions connected with Torah and Mitzvoth. The false and misleading voice of the Yetzer-hora should be stifled and ignored. Besides, as the Baal Hatanya states (Ch. 25), even one single good deed creates an everlasting bond and communion with G-d (ibid, at length). Thus a feeling of despondency is not only out of place, but is a stumbling block in the worship of G-d, as is more fully explained in the above and subsequent chapters of Tanya.

3. With regard to understanding, or lack of understanding, of the 'tachles,' the important thing required of the Jew is contained in the words of the Torah: 'For the thing is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart (and the tachles is) * to do it.' Understanding is, generally, the second step. The first step is the practice of the Mitzvoth. (See enclosed copy of my message to a study group).

My prayerful wish to you, as you conclude your letter, is that the next one coming from you will be more cheerful.

With blessing

M. Schneerson