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By the Grace of G-d
2nd day of Nissan, 5716
Brooklyn, New York

To my brethren, everywhere, and
to those active in education, in
particular,

G-d bless you

Sholom uBrocho:

The festival of Pesach, the first festival given to us, is prominently associated with the question of education, both in regard to our people as a whole, and particularly in regard to each individual parent.

Insofar as our people as a whole is concerned, the liberation from Egypt meant the birth of our nation, and the beginning of its education and preparation to receive the Torah. The "Torah" itself essentially means "instruction", for it instructs and educates us in our way of life.

As for each individual parent, Pesach is a time of "thou shalt tell thy child", hence the Haggadah and Seder which form an integral part of the Pesach celebration and observance.

Thus, Pesach is a most auspicious time for us to re-examine the problems of religious education and its practical application, particularly in relation to our festivals.

We must bear in mind that our festivals, and Pesach especially, are associated with numerous laws and customs, the importance of which is not confined to the time of their performance, inasmuch as their influence must extend through the year, to inspire our day-to-day living.

Important as this is for every Jew, it is much more so for our youths and, especially, children.

In practice, however, due to various reasons, we find that instead of taking advantage of the festival season with a view to intensifying their influence on the children, they, the boys and girls, are inevitably released from the Yeshivah, Yeshivah-ketanoth and the Talmud-Torahs, not only for the festival itself, but also for a number of days preceding it.

In the "old country" the practice of releasing the children for "inter-terminal" vacations ("Bein-haZmanim") had no ill effect on their upbringing, since the environment, and particularly the home, was replete with a living warm atmosphere of Yiddishkeit. The purpose of the educational institutions could be narrowed down to the process of increasing the child's knowledge of our Torah.

In our time, however, particularly in this country, the purpose of our educational institutions is not merely to disseminate knowledge, but - above

all - to implant in the child a feeling for our faith and for the observance of the Mitzvot in daily life, in the fullest measure.

Under our present conditions, therefore, the releasing of the children during these festival periods in effect deprives them of a vital influence at a time when they should receive it in the greatest degree.

I therefore urge all those who are active in Jewish education, and all parents in general, to reappraise the situation and take appropriate steps to remedy the regrettable educational loss. I suggest, in particular:

(a) To provide an opportunity for the children to meet on Erev-Yom-Tov, or at least in close proximity to Yom-Tov, for the purpose of going over the laws and customs pertaining to the festival its meaning, significance and message.

(b) It is particularly necessary that also during the days of the festival, at any rate during Chol-Hamoed, teachers and instructors should meet with the children at a suitable time and place, for the purpose of taking advantage of these precious days to inspire the children with the spirit of the festival and its translation in practical terms of every-day life.

I am not unmindful of the technical problems involved, such as distances and the dispersion of the students, and the like. But ways and means can surely be found to overcome them, since the meeting place need not necessarily be the Yeshivah premises, nor is it essential for this purpose to adhere strictly to age groups or classes, and their specific teachers, etc., as what we have in mind is a general and broad program of instruction relating to the festival.

(c) I urge Jewish parents not to rely entirely on the educational institutions, bearing in mind the influence of the environment to which the child is exposed during his vacation; on the other hand, the child's absence from school imposes a special obligation on the parent, at the same time giving him also a rare opportunity for the parental guidance and training.

May G-d help us gather all Jewish boys and girls, irrespective to which of the four categories mentioned in the Haggadah they belong at present, so that all observe the "testimonies, statutes and laws which G-d, our G-d commanded us"; that they be interested inquirers bent on learning and following the true answer of the Torah.

May the "gathering of the exiles", including the erring and straying children, hasten the final gathering of the exiles of all our people and our true and complete Redemption, through our Righteous Messiah.

With the blessing of a kosher
and happy Pesach

signed /Menachem Schneerson/