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FREE RENDITION

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
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ברוקלין, נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Elul, 5718
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To my Brethern,
Sons and Daughters of our People,
Wherever you are -
G-d be gracious unto you -

Sincere Greetings and Blessing:

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The month of Elul, especially the Days of Selichoth and the Ten Days of Repentance - this is the time dedicated to sincere introspection and a careful and honest examination of the record of the outgoing year, with a view to the proper deductions and resolutions which are to regulate one's personal daily life, as well as that of his home, and all his affairs in the year to come.

Moreover, these are exceptionally propitious days, days permeated with the core of the Psalm recited twice daily: "Search my inwardness; Thy inner essence, O G-d, do I seek" (Ps. 27:8). They call and demand:

Search for the innermost and the profound within you; seek out also the inwardness of everything around you, the soul of the universe; search for and bring to light the G-dliness that animates and pervades the world!

Both aspects - the honest self-appraisal and the search for the inner essence of things - are interrelated and interdependent.

In evaluating the results of the outgoing year, one is very prone to err by taking into account only the external, both in himself and in the environment. In doing so, one is on equally treacherous grounds in regard to setting the pattern of daily living in the year to come.

To forestall this misleading approach, these auspicious days sound their message and challenge:

Do not sell yourself short! Do not underestimate your capacities and abilities!

For no matter what your spiritual "stock-in-trade" is, your "visible assets" - the existing possibilities that you have to conduct your life in accord with the teachings of our Torah, Torath Chayyim (the Law of Life); no matter how formidable is your strength of character and your ability to cope with a frustrating environment, and with undaunted perseverance to follow your path of Torah and Precept -

Much greater and richer are your "hidden reserves" of powers to create new possibilities, and of inner qualities giving you the ability to overcome obstacles and to shape your life and the life around you to be in harmony with Truth and Goodness.

In order to reveal and apply these powers, however, it is necessary that you search for and release your potential forces. But you are promised: "You will discover - because you will search with all your heart and soul" (Deut. 4:29).

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What has been said above is more especially and more fully applicable to those who occupy positions of spiritual leadership and influence, from the Rabbi of the community down to the individual father who sets the pace of the spiritual life of his household and family.

All too often do we see them stymied by doubt and fear, afraid to use, what seems to them, a strong word or excessive demand lest they might alienate, instead of attract.

To them these days address themselves with this message and challenge:

Search inwardly: seek deeply and you will unravel the innermost treasures of those whom you would lead and inspire; evaluate them not externally, but according to their inner resources, according to the capacity of their soul, the veritable spark of G-dliness from Above³ -

For with the right approach and by indefatigable effort you will be able to uncover and activate in everyone⁴ his inner spiritual resources⁵, so that they begin to animate his daily life. -

Have confidence in your fellow-Jew and give him what he, as Jew, truly expects from you: the whole Torah with all its precepts, unvarnished and untarnished, as it was given from Sinai, in its true eternity, for the Torah is eternal for all times and places.

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Only through this approach can one attain a true estimation of the self and of those who look up to you for guidance and leadership -

A true estimation that will make the next year a full year - full in content and achievement commensurate with your fullest resources, and thus also full of G-d's blessings, materially and spiritually.

With prayerful wishes for a happy and sweet year

/Signed/ MENACHEM SCHNEERSON

1. Cf. Tur, Orach Chayyim, beg. of par. 581
2. Alshikh; Tzemach Tzedek, on verse; Likutei Torah, Re'eh 32b.
3. Job 31:2, with emphasis - Tanya, beg. ch. 2
4. Cf. Maimonides, Hil. Gerushin, end of ch. 2: "He (every Jew) desires to be Jewish and desires to fulfil all the precepts and avoid transgressions" etc.
5. Comp. Baal-Shem- Tov's doctrine, expounding the verse "For you shall be unto Me a desirable land" (Mal. 3:12): "No one, not even the wisest of men, can fully fathom the vast treasures buried within all Jews, who are G-d's own 'desirable land'" - from the writings of my saintly father-in-law, quoted in Hayom Yom, p. 54.