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Free Rendition

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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Nissan, 5720
Brooklyn, New York

To our Brethren Everywhere
G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

On the occasion of the forthcoming festival of Pesach, I send my blessing to my brethren everywhere, the blessing of a "Kosher and joyous festival of Pesach, the Season of our Freedom."

True freedom must be complete freedom. It must comprise both freedom of the individual per se (as a microcosm) and as a component of the surrounding world. In other words, it must be a two-fold freedom: liberation of the inner self from the innate or acquired handicaps; and liberation also from the external limitations imposed by the environment.

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Our Sages, of blessed memory, who would express a profound doctrine in a brief dictum, expressed the above concept in a few words, while also pointing out the way and the means of attaining such freedom. Said they, interpreting the words (Exod. 32:16) chorus al ha-luchos ("engraved on the Tablets"): "(It means) freedom (cherus) from enslavement to the nations of the world; freedom from poverty, stupidity, pain and pressures."

The Ten Commandments engraved on the Tablets, epitomizing all the Divine precepts, begin with the words, "I am G-d, thy G-d, (Elokecho) Who brought thee out from the land of Egypt (Eretz Mitzraim); from the house of bondage (Beis Avodim)."

The primary and most basic principle to be engraved in Jewish life, and which G-d addresses to each and every Jew and Jewess, is: "I am thy G-d" - the only G-d in your personal life, here and now.

The Divine Name (Elokecho) especially emphasizes the Omnipotent and Master of all powers. Hence the two-fold liberation: from "Eretz Mitzraim", implying the undesirable characteristics acquired under the influence of life in "Mitzraim," and from "Beis Avodim," i.e. the bondage imposed by the external world.

Hence also the two-fold injunction - concerning the internal and external aspects of life - addressed to each and every one: Thou shalt have no other gods - there should be no worship of anything but G-d; Remember the Shabbos day to keep it holy, etc. - do not become subservient to the order and way of life of the external world.

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The Torah, likewise, comprises the two aspects: the inner aspect, or soul, of the Torah (Pninius ha-Torah), and that part of it which is directly concerned with performance, i.e. the study and practice of the Torah and Mitzvoth (Nigleh d'Torah); the inner aspect, the soul, animating the outer aspect, the action.

Pninius ha-Torah has in recent generations been broadly expounded and disseminated through the teachings of Chassidus, founded by the Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory; this year marking the 200th anniversary of his Histalkus (demise).

One of the teachings of Chassidus which the Baal Shem Tov repeatedly emphasized is: I visualize (lit. equate) G-d before me constantly (Ps. 16:8) - every Jew must be conscious of G-d's presence to such a degree as to be equally indifferent to everything else in relation to G-d. This should be constantly, not only when he is reciting the Shemone-esrei, the culminating point of the daily prayers, and not only at certain times of the day, or the beginning thereof. The full "equation" will not be achieved thereby, consequently neither complete liberation from the mastery of the world affecting, as it does, both the internal and external life of the individual; since at other times he may lapse into bondage, victim to his own nature or to the overpowering environment. The consciousness of "G-d before me" must be constant, in the fullest sense of the word, so that it permeates every action and movement of the individual, down to the simple acts of eating and drinking and conversation, etc. Only then will the individual be able to overcome the internal and external limitations and attain the fullest measure of freedom in both areas of "Eretz Mitzraim" and "Beis Avodim", as defined above.

Such continuous and uninterrupted awareness of G-d leads the Jew not only to serve G-d with a total commitment embracing both aspects of life, as mentioned above; but the Divine service will be carried out with joy and gladness of heart. As the Old Rebbe, the author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, has explained it at length: When the Jew contemplates how the Almighty is associated with every Jew, gives him His Torah and Mitzvoth, and constantly desires, as it were, to dwell in the heart of every Jew - his heart must be filled to overflowing with joy and inspiration.

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May G-d grant that each and everyone attain this true and complete freedom, both spiritually and physically, and that such personal liberation bring about also the complete and true Liberation through our Righteous Moshiach, speedily in our very days.

With the blessing for a
Kosher and Joyous Pesach,

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson