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HYcath 3-2220

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Sivan, 5720
Brooklyn, N. Y.

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

Mr. Nisan Plotkin
c/o Lubavitcher Yeshiva
5265 Park Ave.
Montreal

Greeting and Blessing:

After the long interval, I received your letter of the 18th of Iyar. I am sure you know that that is the day of Lag B'Omer and that you fully realize its significance.

As for the contents of your letter and the problem of working with non-religious groups, in a way that such cooperation would not weaken the religious convictions of your own groups, etc., needless to say, it is impossible to make hard and fast rules about such cooperation that would apply to all instances. For a great deal depends on the atmosphere and circumstances of such meetings.

However, one general principle should be borne in mind, according to the teachings of our Sages in the Mishna (Pirke Ovos 1:12) "Hillel says 'Be of the disciples of Aaron...loving the creatures and bringing them closer to the Torah!'" This means that one should always practise the love of fellow-Jews, even to such who have no other merit except that they are "creatures" of G-d, as explained in the Tanya, Chapter 32. At the same time, this should be coupled with the precaution that it should be for the purpose of "bringing them closer to the Torah," and not making the Torah suit to their standards. In other words, it is necessary to make certain that while trying to influence others towards a fuller appreciation of the Torah and Mitzvot, one should not be influenced in the other direction, nor make any concession. I can only suggest, therefore, that you keep this guiding principle in mind.

Precisely this year, being the 200th anniversary of the Histalkus of the Baal Shem Tov, which we observed on the first day of Shavuoth, has much to say on this question, since the Baal Shem Tov taught and personified what should be our aim and purpose in life. For he taught that Ahavas Yisroel means loving even the Jew who is at the other end of the world, which includes not only geographical distance but also spiritual distance. At the same time he demanded that the observance of the Torah and Mitzvot should be with animation and inner inspiration and with every possible Hibur. I trust that among your Lubavitcher acquaintances in Montreal there are some who could help you get a deeper insight into the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and how to apply them in daily life.

In connection with the above, I trust you will find the enclosed copy of my Shavuoth message stimulating and useful.

Mr. Nisan Plotkin

- 2 -

18th of Sivan, 5720

I hope that since writing to me last, you have practised the injunction of our Sages that "All things of holiness should be on the ascendancy," also in your personal life, and there is nothing that stands in the way of will and determination.

Hoping to hear good news from you always,

With blessings,

M. Schmerson

