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FREE RENDITION

By the Grace of G-d
15th of Tammuz, 5723
Brooklyn, New York

To the Annual Convention of the
Rabbinical Alliance of America

Greeting and Blessing:

I acknowledge the receipt of your invitation to your annual convention taking place, please G-d, on Tammuz 22 - 25.

I hope that the convention agenda will include items which can be practically and expeditiously implemented to take full advantage of the opportune moment now at hand. An opportunity stemming from the spiritual reawakening now exciting large segments of our people, and particularly our youth.

Those who are sincerely concerned with the development and future of our youth, are cognizant of the fact that this spiritual ardor is caused in part by a realization of the shallowness and emptiness of philosophies alien to traditional Jewish thinking, and inability of these foregin ideas to cope with the problems of our times. Many who are imbued with this new spiritual eagerness lack definitive purpose and direction; others have a somewhat greater understanding of their religious experiences and have acquired an awareness of their bonds with the founts of traditional Judaism. In both cases, the spiritual resurgence has created a situation whereby large segments of our people are once more amenable and responsive to being guided along the true and righteous path - the way of Torah and Mitzvos.

Unfortunately, the opportunity has not been duly exploited and far too many are still groping in the darkness lacking proper direction and influence, proper leadership and guidance to proceed along the path of G-d, and especially lacking knowledge of the course of action one should pursue in his daily life.

The problem is of particular importance when it concerns our youth for they instinctively respond with zeal and determination to ideas which are novel to them. They are unafraid to alter the course of their lives if they believe that that which is being offered to them is the unadulterated truth.

More particularly, the attention should be focused on the young boys and girls of school age about whom the Torah instructs: You shall teach your children diligently. This commandment is recited

in our daily prayers in the first paragraph of the Shema which is bound up with the recognition and submission to the yoke of heaven. This verse is then repeated in the second paragraph of the Shema to stress the importance of giving the children a Jewish education in general and especially - the study of Torah which is the most important "of all the good deeds".

It is incumbent to exert every effort so that each and every Jewish child should study in an all-day Yeshiva or when this is not feasible, that every Jewish child should attend a Hebrew all-day school. But although this is the aim, we must recognize the fact that far too many Jewish children do not study Torah all day nor do they even attend Hebrew all-day schools. A vast number attend public schools and to these children we must also turn our attention for we must not despair nor may we neglect them. The circumstances requires that a supreme effort be made to preserve the spark of Jewishness in each child so that it will not be extinguished, G-d forbid. At the very least, these children should recite a "proper prayer" each day so that the "name of G-d will be fluent on their lips".

It goes without saying that this is not the ultimate objective, for as stated above, the ideal situation would be for all and every Jewish child to study in a Yeshiva. But since this is not yet achieved, we must not make light of having the children in the public schools at least recite a proper prayer. While the performance of the Mitzvah of 'proper prayer' in only a minimum, it must not be disregarded. Especially as there are some people who are waging a battle against the mere mention of G-d's name in the public schools and thus, regardless of their intentions, creating an appalling Hilul Hashem.

It is superfluous to emphasize again and again that what is referred to here, is a non-denominational prayer. And to insure that the non-denominational aspect is heeded in all the schools, Bible-reading in Public schools should be ruled out to prevent introduction of religious subjects non-acceptable to many.

The following precedent established by the saintly Baal Shem Tov will serve to discard the wrong stand of some misguided people, as well as those who oppose the mention of G-d's name in the public schools, supposedly, in deference to the Shulchan Aruch!

One of the Baal Shem Tov's 'holy tasks' was to use every opportunity to cause people, men, women and children, to bless G-d's name. He would ask them how they are, so that they would reply: "Thank G-d", etc. My father-in-law of sainted memory, emphasized that the Baal Shem Tov would do so not only in the synagogue and at home, but also in the street and stores, and places of work; at every time and in every place.

Also in the matter of Federal Aid for Parochial schools, I have spoken many times about this great need, and there is no basis for opposition to it. On the contrary, it is a holy obligation on the part of everyone to expressly demand this help.

May the members of the Rabbinical Alliance, the spiritual leaders of many Jewish communities, and the Annual Convention in particular, take a clear and firm stand on all the abovementioned matters, with realistic and effective action.

May you achieve success in your endeavors to enhance the position of Torah and Mitzvos in the daily life, each in your community. And in matters of holiness there is always room for improvement, for their source is the Infinite, blessed be He.

May the almighty grant that you act with the fitting warmth and inner-joy in the conviction that you are in the service of G-d, and may others learn from you and follow your example.

With esteem and blessing for
abundant success

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