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Rabbi M.M. Schneerson
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N.Y.

My Honored and Esteemed Rabbi Schneerson,

Remembering the famous folk song about "A Brivl zum Lubavitcher Rebbe" my imagination became suddenly overwhelmed with thoughts about the thousands upon thousands of complaints, pleas, and problems through the generations that must have started with the same words that introduce this note. And even only one day in the Merkos Office reinforced my impression of the overwhelming amount of correspondence with which you deal personally. It is with a certain hesitation, therefore, that I write now, not wanting to tax your eyes and time-- so overburdened even now-- with yet another communication.

At the outset I would like to express my gratitude for being able to attend the Farbreng on Shabbos Chazon. Even more than gratitude I feel the honor, albeit undeserved, for being included among the Orchim you recognized. In a way, I worry a little about this honor. I know not only the distance I must go to attain the level of Torah and Mitzvos which you would require of me, but recognize also the distance I must go before deciding unequivocally that it is necessary to attain that level of Torah and Mitzvos. I wonder if I am not being honored under false pretense. I accept the honor, therefore, in the name of my teacher and friend R' Moshe Feller, who is ultimately responsible for both my physical and psychological presence at your table. With his help both distances are being shortened.

I would also like you to be assured that I know before I came to Brooklyn that I would have no opportunity to speak with you privately. Being close enough to listen to your explanations of Torah, more importantly-- being able to understand a little more than I did on my first visit, and being able to spend two days in that strange and inspiring and warm world which you permeate-- these were all I desired, and I received more. I do sincerely appreciate these opportunities.

I tried to transmit some of what I experienced and learned during my visit at a Farbreng we held in Minneapolis last Sunday. It was difficult. Although I lecture at colleges all over the country on my strange and complicated research activities, I found it difficult, as a Jew speaking to other Jews to explain the simple attraction Chabad Hasidism has for me.

My secular background and my scientific training prevents my immediate and unquestioning acceptance of many of your concepts, for example some of those you have outlined in your famous letter on evolution, (although I agree completely that acceptance or non-acceptance of those concepts in no way modifies my obligation to perform mitzvos). My Jewish education and reading in Jewish History, my personal observation of Jewish life in all states of the Union, and my personal involvement in Zionist activities and Jewish Youth work sometime generate serious doubts about the contemporary relevance of the Orthodox movement in American Jewish life.

Nevertheless, I cannot but be influenced and motivated by the dedication and sincerity of the Chabad movement, and by its representatives. I am overwhelmed by the Ahavas Yisroel demonstrated-- a phenomenon I have never before encountered. Everywhere I go in the world, to be sure, I am greeted cordially. For a whole variety of reasons: Sometimes because of my role as lecturer, sometimes because of my work in science, sometimes because I am involved in Herzl Camp. Only at Lubavitch, and only by Lubavitcher Hasidim do I feel accepted and welcome simply because I am a Jew. Even further-- no one asked me what percentage of the 613 mitzvos I perform before I am welcomed. The time that could have easily been used to criticize my non-observance is spent on the more difficult task of showing me how to perform the mitzvos. The tacit implication is that one mitzva is better than none-- that two are better than one, and that it is the task of each Jew to help the other to learn and to observe than to stand sanctimoniously at a distance and blame him for his ignorance and non-observance.

This in essence was what I experienced and what I tried to convey. I also tried to transmit what little I could about the sichos on Shabbas Chazon and on the Rambam's description of Moshiach.

Despite my inability and inarticulateness, the Farbreng in Minneapolis was a gratifying experience. R' Moshe explained the role of simcha in Jewish life, young Stone and Rimler discussed the activities of the summer shlichim, Rabbi Smetana described the work at the Gan Yisroel Camp (which two of my children attend). We sang and danced and made L'chayim. I had brought some college students down from Camp Herzl and they participated enthusiastically. All in all, about 35 people attended-- mostly people who had never before been at any Hasidic affair, in addition to some of R' Moshe's staunch supporters. Significantly the affair, which should have been held at our home was transferred to the larger and air conditioned home of some friends', Mr. and Mrs. Elliot Royce-- a pillar of our largest Conservative synagogue, who had never before attended. Judging from the calls and comments since Sunday, the Farbreng was an extremely important Public Relation success as well as a spiritual uplift.

I hope to have a similar Farbreng in five weeks, and to invite all eighty of the staff members of Herzl Camp. After the camp season is over and before the chevre disperse to their colleges all across the country I thought they too should experience the same nachas ruach which was my privilege. The ones I have suggested this too are already looking forward to the day, and R' Moshe has indicated his desire to co-operate.

Again I want to express my gratitude for the hospitality and honor extended during my visit. I would like to wish you continued good health and hatzlochoh in your sacred work. My very best regards to Rabbi Krinsky and to Rabbi Hodakov.

With deep affection

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