

FREE TRANSLATION

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Selichoth
5726. Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
Our People Israel, Everywhere

G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

In addition to the perennial qualities which each festival, Rosh Hashanah included, brings with it from year to year -

Parenthetically, these, too, must be regarded and experienced as new,¹ like all matters of Torah and Mitzvoth which constitute the very life and vitality of a Jew (as it is written, "For these are our life and the length of our days"), life itself always being new and fresh, also for the person who has experienced life for many years -

There are certain qualities which are associated with certain years, and which therefore are of particular significance in the year of their occurrence.

The approaching year 5727 - may it bring good and blessing to all of us and to all our people Israel - has the distinction of being a "Post-Shemittah-Year." As such it is characterized by the additional special Mitzvah of Hakhel ("Gather together"), which is described as a "solid pillar and great honor to our faith"² (Sefer ha-Chinuch).

During the time of the Beth Hamikdosh it was required to gather the people - men, women, and children, including the very little ones³ - into the Beth Hamikdosh, in order that they hear certain selected Torah portions, which were read by the king. This event had to take place at the first⁴ opportunity in the new year (namely, Succoth, when Jews came to Jerusalem on their pilgrimage).

To be sure, since the Beth Hamikdosh was destroyed this Mitzvah is no longer practised - until the Beth Hamikdosh will be restored again, may it be speedily in our time. However, the Torah and Mitzvoth are eternal, so that also those Mitzvoth which were to be practised only during the time of the Beth Hamikdosh, by virtue of their eternal spiritual content, have a special significance in their appropriate day or year, which has to be expressed and fulfilled in an appropriate manner (e.g. prayers⁵ - at the time of day when the sacrifices were offered in the Beth Hamikdosh, etc.).

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The Mitzvah of Hakhel had two features which, at first glance, seem to be contradictory: On the one hand, it was required to "gather the people, men, women, small children and the stranger (ger) in thy gates" - indicating that everyone, regardless of his or her station in life and intelligence can and must be a participant in the event; and on the other hand, it was required that the portions of the Torah be read to them by the most august person of the nation, the King⁶).

One explanation is the following:

The Torah was given to us in order that it permeate⁷ and vitalize each and every Jew without exception - man, woman, child and ger - so thoroughly, and to such an extent and degree, that one's entire being, in all its aspects, senses and feelings, will become a Torah and Mitzvoth being.

And in order to attain this end, most deeply and fully,⁸ the Torah was read on that occasion by the King, whose awe-inspiring quality filled the audience with an overwhelming sense of tremor and subservience, to the extent of complete self-effacement⁹).

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The significance and instruction of the Mitzvah of Hakhel for each and everyone of us is, that it calls upon us to avail ourselves of the opportune awe-inspiring days of Tishrei, to gather our fellow-Jews - men, women, and children, including the very little ones - into the hallowed places of prayer and Torah, in an atmosphere of holiness and devoutness; and gather them for the purpose which was the very essence of the Mitzvah of Hakhel, as stated in the Torah: In order that they should listen and should learn, and should fear G-d, your G-d, and observe to do all the words of the Torah (Deut.31:12).

Particularly it is the duty of everyone who is a "king," a leader,¹⁰ in his circle - the spiritual leader in his congregation, the teacher in his classroom, the father in his family - to raise the voice of the Torah and Mitzvot, forcefully and earnestly, so that it produce a profound impression and an abiding influence in the audience, to be felt not only through the month of Tishrei, nor merely throughout the year, but throughout the seven years from the present Hakhel to the next; an influence that should be translated in the daily life, into conduct governed by the Torah and Mitzvot, with fear of Heaven, and, at the same time, with gladness of heart.

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May it please the One Above, Whom Jews crown on Rosh Hashanah as the "King of Israel" and "Sovereign Over All the Earth," to bless each man and woman in carrying out the said task, in the fullest measure, and this will also speed and bring closer the time when the Mitzvah of Hakhel will be fulfilled in all its details, in the Beth Hamikdash, with the appearance of our righteous Moshiach, speedily in our time.

With the blessing of
Kesivo vaChasimo Toivo
For a happy and sweet year,

/Signed: Menachem Schneerson/

- (1) ספרי דברים (ו, ו) - יותר מזה ברש"י שם (יא, יג. כו, טז) "חדשים".
- (2) וילך לא, יב. ס' החינוך שם. וברמב"ם סוף הל' חגיגה ש"קריאה זו.. לחזק דת האמת".
- (3) ראה רמב"ן עה"ת שם. גו"א (על פרש"י עה"ת). ובמנחת חינוך (שם) "נראה דחייב שיצאו מכלל נפל!" (ועפ"ז גם בספק צריך להביא - שה"ז מ"ע מה"ת) ועד"ז הוא בכלי יקר.
- (4) כפשוטו של מקרא "בבוא כל ישראל גו" - שמוסיף ומבאר הסעם.
- (5) ברכות כו, ב.
- (6) להעיר מסוף הענין. וברמב"ם (שם) "ויראה.. כאילו.. מפני הגבורה שומעה שהמלך שליח הוא להשמיע דברי הא-ל".
- (7) כי היא חיינו ובדוגמת חיות האדם כפשוטו. (8) קדושין לב, ב.
- (9) ראה חגיגה ה, ב: יחוי קמי מלכא. סהמ"צ לאדמו"ר הצמח צדק (שהשנה שנת המאה להסתלקות הילולא שלו) מצות מינוי מלך.
- (10) להעיר אשר לכמה דעות באם אין מלך בישראל הגדול שבדור הי' קורא פרשת הקהל. ובאזהרות רב סעדי' גאון (דיבור לא חשא): רב מהיר יקרא ספר במועד שמיטת (מנחת חינוך שם. ביאור להרב פערלא על ס' המצות לרס"ג, עשה ט"ז ופ' יו"ד).
- (11) להעיר מספרי ואתחנן (ו, ה) ואין אהבה במקום יראה כו' אלא כו'.
- (12) ראש השנה טז, א. וראה לקו"ת נצבים נא, ב. תקעו ה' חשא. ובכ"מ.
- (13) כמחז"ל (סנה' צח, א. זח"א קיז, ב): זכו אחישנה.