

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Purim, 5729
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleasantly surprised to note in your editorial column in the issue of February 28th excerpts of letters from your son , as well as the spirit of your commentaries in this connection. Inasmuch as there is no end to the good, I trust that there will be a continuity in this direction and that, moreover, the good influence of your son will create a chain reaction infecting and affecting all the members of your family.

I am reminded of the well known verse (end of Malachi), "And he (Elijah) will turn the heart of parents to the children," which, according to Rashi, means "Through the children - he will induce the children, with love and good will, to go and speak to their parents to follow in the ways of G-d." And although I trust that in any case the parents are following the way of G-d, there is, as mentioned above, no end to the good, and always room for improvement in all matters of goodness and holiness, which are infinite, since they derive from the Infinite.

You and your wife are particularly privileged in that each of you has a substantial circle of readers, a considerable number of whom undoubtedly are influenced by your writings. Clearly, Divine Providence has bestowed upon you also a special responsibility. There is surely no need to elaborate on this to you.

May G-d grant that everything should be in accordance with the text and spirit of the Megillah - "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor," in the fullest sense of these meaningful words.

Wishing you and yours a happy and inspiring Purim,

With blessing,

P.S. In accordance with Jewish custom to offer a comment on a printed word, I will take the liberty to do so also in reference to the above mentioned editorial, all the more so to avoid a misunderstanding that I fully agree with all that was said there. I trust you will not take amiss my remarks.

... I wish to take issue with you in the matter of your youngest daughter who, as you write, is eleven years old, and resisted starting Hebrew school, but you "did not force the issue." You can well imagine my reaction to this. For surely, if your eleven year old daughter would have resisted going to school altogether, you would have found it necessary to "force" the issue - if the term "force" can be applied here. Certainly, insofar as a Jewish child is concerned, her Hebrew education is at least as important to her as a general education. This has been generally recognized throughout the ages, but it should be particularly recognized in our own day and age. For we have seen many of the greatest and saintliest of our people exterminated by a vicious enemy. Consequently, all of us who have been fortunate enough to survive, must make up for this tremendous loss. On the other hand, the forces of complete assimilation have grown much stronger in the free and democratic countries. Worse still, in recent years assimilation has found expression not only with another people, but very often with such groups which have discarded all pretenses to morality and ethics, etc., etc.

You may consider my reference to your daughter's attitude, and to your attitude in this connection, no longer relevant, since you write that she has agreed to begin Hebrew school, though you immediately point out (with apparent satisfaction) that the method of instruction is "Habet Ushma" - a system which obviously does not aim to lead to "Vaaseh". Surely there is no need to emphasize to you the fact that when the Torah was given to our people, "Naaseh" was not only a condition of acceptance of the Torah, but a prior condition - "Naaseh" before "v'Nishmah". Our Sages of blessed memory pointed out that Jewish identity and the very basis of Jewish existence, for the individual as well as for the people as a whole, lies in this great principle of "Naaseh" before "v'Nishmah". Certainly this is the way to train and educate a Jewish child.

To refer, again, to the Megillah at this time on the eve of Purim, we note that Haman argued, "There is one people, dispersed and divided among the nations, and their laws are different from those of any other people. Therefore, it is not worth for the king to spare them." Indeed, there were then, as there have been at all times, misguided individuals or groups who shared Haman's view that the trouble with Jews was their separate identity and otherliness, and that the only solution is to do away with Jewish identity and separateness, and to assimilate. However, the truth of the matter is, as we see also from the events related in the Megillah, that in order to avert the threat of Haman, Esther and Mordecai ordered the gathering of all the Jews together to emphasize their identity and strengthen their observance of their "dif-

danger and, on the contrary, raised the esteem and respect of the Jews in the eyes of their former enemies, to the extent that Mordecai the Jew who "did not bend his knee nor bow down," became the Viceroy of the entire Persian empire.

Since the Torah is eternal, and the Megillah is part of the Torah, its message is eternal and always relevant. Thus, what was true for the Jews and their destiny in the days of Mordecai and Esther, is true for the Jews in the U.S.A. and the Holy Land and elsewhere. And just as the Jews could not take comfort and security from the fact that they had some influence at the Court through Esther the Queen, and Mordecai who had access to the Palace, which did not stop the enemies of the Jews from plotting the extermination of the Jewish people, so nowadays Jews cannot rely on any influence they can muster in the capitals of the world. But, in the final analysis, it is the Jewish adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth - the source of their life and strength, that will topple all Hamans and bring "Light, joy, gladness and honor."

It is not my custom to engage in homiletics, etc. The *long and the* purpose of the above observations is a practical one, namely that the curriculum of your youngest daughter, as well as of all the family, will not be limited to "Habet Ushma", but will also include "Aseh" and, indeed, the basic Jewish approach of ~~doing~~ *being* before even understanding. May G-d grant you and your wife true Yiddish Nachas from all your children.