

RABBI

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By the Grace of G-d
17th of Shevat, 5732
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To the Participants in the Tenth
Annual Midwinter Convention of
the Neshei u'Bnos Chabad
Miami Beach, Fla.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Convention, taking place during the auspicious weekend of Parshas ואלה המשפטים.

Commenting on the first verse of this Sedra, Rashi quotes our Sages: "Just as the previous laws (the Ten Commandments in the preceding Sedra of Mattan Torah) were given by G-d at Sinai, so are these (משפטים) from Sinai."

In view of the fact that Mishpatim ("Judgments," dealing mainly with inter-human relations) are so-called "rational" laws, which human reason can understand and appreciate, the question arises, why is it necessary for our Sages to emphasize that these too are Divine laws coming direct from Sinai?

The answer is: Precisely because they are "rational," they must have the force of Divine authority. For, it is clear, and experience has amply borne it out, that inasmuch as a human being is partial to himself, he cannot be objective in his judgment where his relationship to others is concerned. He may easily be blinded by self-interest, to the extent of completely misinterpreting and corrupting such "rational" judgments, so much so that he may mistake iniquity for justice and justice for iniquity -- or, to quote a well known Posuk - "Call light - darkness, and darkness - light."

Consequently, so-called "rational" laws cannot have validity unless they are derived from the Divine source, and are accountable to G-d, the Creator and Master of the world, whose Hashgocho Protis extends to each and every detail in the daily life of each and every individual.

Indeed, this is also indicated in the Ten Commandments, where the "rational" laws of "Honor your father and mother," "You shall not steal," etc., can have validity only if their source and foundation is "I am G-d your G-d," "You shall

Jewish life, both insofar as our people as a whole is concerned, as well as the individual, is based on this very fundamental concept that the Mitzvoh pertaining to man's duties to G-d and the Mitzvoh pertaining to man's duties to fellow man, are inseparable and of equal Divine authority. This is also the basis of Jewish home life. It is the absolute loyalty and adherence to this principle in the daily life that is the key to Jewish survival throughout the ages and under all conditions.

As has often been mentioned before, the Jewish woman has a particular role in the preservation of the Torah and Mitzvoh, as has also been emphasized by the fact that before the Ten Commandments and the Torah and Mitzvoh in general were given to all the Jewish people, G-d told Moshe Rabbenu to speak first to the women, and only afterwards to the men.

I send my prayerful wishes that the Convention be carried out with the utmost Hatzlocho, and that it will stimulate the Neshei u'Bnos Chabad everywhere to greater practical accomplishments in meeting the challenges of our day by strengthening and spreading the observance of the Torah and Mitzvoh permeated with Chasidic light and vitality, both within the family and in the environment at large.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson