

Wedding Celebration of Yisroel & Chanie Pickarshi - Adar 25, 5761

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Cheshvan, 5733
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Miss L.

Rd.
Monsey, N. Y. 10952

Blessing and Greeting:

I duly received your letter of October 22nd. May G-d grant that the problems which you mention in your letter should resolve themselves satisfactorily.

With regard to your writing about the question of performing the Mitzvoth with Kavono, you are certainly right, for it reflects the well known saying that, "A Mitzvo without Kavono is like a body without a Neshomo." However, it is important to bear in mind that the Kavono of Mitzvoth must not be a prior condition of fulfilling them. In other words, it is not right to postpone the fulfillment of Mitzvoth until such time as the person will become knowledgeable and will be able to perform the Mitzvoth with Kavono. As a matter of fact, if for some reason the Kavono is lacking, the performance of the Mitzvoth (even without due Kavono) itself goes a long way to open the intuitive and inborn channels of the soul, making the attainment of Kavono easier and more certain. Certainly, since you write that you feel the need of Kavono, this should leave you without a doubt that, with your proper effort, you will eventually attain also the proper Kavono.

As you surely know, Chasidus, especially Chabad, places a great deal of emphasis on Kavono, vitality and inspiration in prayer and Mitzvoth. This is clearly evident in the basic and classical work of Chabad, the Tanya, by the Alter Rebbe, Founder of Chabad. There we will also find the citation of the above mentioned saying ("A Mitzvo without Kavono is like a body without a Neshomo"). At the same time, however, the author explains at great length that the essential thing is the actual performance of the Mitzvo, so much so that the very purpose of the descent of the Neshomo to this mundane world is essentially for the actual performance. One of the simplest proofs of that is that before the soul's descent to earth, it was in an infinitely better position insofar as Ruchnius is concerned, for it was not subject there to the distractions and limitations imposed upon the soul during its sojourn on earth in a physical body, even under the best of circumstances. What it lacked in the world of the spirit Above was actual performance of Mitzvoth for, as it is written, "The Torah is not in Heaven," but it was given precisely to be observed and practiced here on earth. All this is explained at great length in Chabad, but even the few

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Miss L.

lines above should suffice to see how important the actual performance of the Mitzvoth is. But since you write that you spent three years in Eretz Yisroel, you are no doubt able to read the Tanya in its original, and in any case there is also an English translation available. I requested the office to send you the Tanya in English, in case you have not got it, and knowing of your family background and tradition, I am confident that you will take time to study it properly. The important thing is that it should be the kind of study that leads to action, as our Sages pointed out, and as the Tanya itself emphasizes at length, as mentioned above.

Please convey my regards to your parents, as well as my prayerful wishes that they should have true Yiddish Torah Nachas from you.

With blessing,

Machwilek