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FREE RENDITION

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Chanukah, 5733
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To the Sons and Daughters
of our People Israel, Everywhere
G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

Many are the interpretations and lessons derived from these Chanukah days. Basically, the essential significance of Chanukah is the dedication¹ of the Mizbe'ach (Altar) and of the Beth Hamikdosh, as explained in the special prayer of "V'al Hanissim": "Then Your children entered the Sanctuary of Your House, cleansed Your Sanctuary and purified Your Mikdosh, and kindled lights in Your holy Courts²."

Hence it is also the event of the dedication of the Beth Hamikdosh that contains basic instructions for every Jew, man or woman³, at all times and in all places,

Since the purpose of all commemorative days in the life of our people is to teach us practical lessons from "those days" - "at this time."

The essence of every Jewish home and its fulfilment is to serve as an abode and sanctuary for the Shechinah (Divine Presence). More particularly - every Jew, man or woman, is a sanctuary and abode for G-d's Presence. This is what our Sages⁴ of blessed memory taught us by their commentary on the verse, "Let them make Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in them" - "in each and every Jew." Meaning, that the end purpose of every act and service in connection with the Mikdosh is to draw and bring in G-dliness into each and every Jew⁵.

Since the Beth Hamikdosh was destroyed "because of our sins" - it is through Teshuvah and good deeds, through the performance of the Mitzvot throughout the duration of the Exile⁶ by each and every Jew, that the sanctuary within each of us is built and fortified, while bringing closer the redemption of our Jewish people by our righteous Moshiach, who will also restore the central Beth Hamikdosh on its site, and on an even higher level⁷.

What happened with the Beth Hamikdosh in the time of Mattisyohu ben Yochanon Kohen Godol⁸ is (on the spiritual level) relevant to the "Sanctuary" that is within every Jew, here and now. The environment, society, etc. often "cause them to forget Your Torah and lead them astray from the statutes of Your Will⁹" -

as

With emphasis on Your Torah - studying the Torah because it is, and it is, G-d's Torah; an infinitely higher concept than that described as "your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations."¹⁰ Similarly, the "statutes of Your Will" - performing all the Mitzvoth¹¹, including the so-called rational precepts, on their highest level as G-d-given statutes, with the sole intent to do the Will of G-d¹².

It therefore behooves everyone who has G-d at heart to follow the example of those dedicated Hasmoneans, to the point of Mesiras Nefesh, disregarding the overwhelming odds of "(physically) weak and few against the mighty and many." And in the end G-d will take up his cause and ensure his everlasting triumph, and he will celebrate Chanukah - the dedication of his inner Beth Hamikdosh - "to give thanks and praise to His great Name."

* * *

Now, among the Mitzvoth of Chanukah - viz., reciting the whole Hallel every day, reciting V'al Hanissim, reading of the Torah, prohibition of eulogizing (the dead) and fasting, and lighting the candles - it is the last which comes first in time (although the victory on the battlefield preceded the miracle with the cruss of oil). It is with this Mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah Lights that the festival of Chanukah is ushered in - for the time of the lighting begins at sunset. Moreover, it is the traditional practice¹³ (Minhag - which is also part of Torah) to "ascend in holiness"¹⁴, to increase the number of candles from day to day.

Thus, the emphasis on the Chanukah Lights underscores a great and essential principle, namely, that it is necessary to scrutinize even "the oils that are in the Sanctuary"¹⁵ to make sure that the oil has not been defiled. Be it noted that the oil in question was not intended for consumption, but for lighting, and one would have thought that it did not matter if it was momentarily defiled. Yet, absolute purity is essential.

And it is for this miracle with the oil that the festival of Chanukah was instituted¹⁶. This pointedly teaches us that the light which illuminates the Beth Hamikdosh (the general as well as individual "Beth Hamikdosh") must be pure, without the slightest defilement.

The light that illuminates the way of the Jew, man and woman, in their daily life, is defined as "a Mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light." This lamp and light must be carefully guarded that it be not contaminated, and then the road will be secure.

For our Sages¹⁷ of blessed memory assured us that these lights will never cease, meaning also that their lesson is eternal, for all times and places, and, as mentioned, for every Jewish home, and every Jew and Jewess.

To the end that the entire conduct of the house and of every person living in it, particularly in regard to the education of the sons and daughters (Chanukah and Chinuch¹⁸ being derived from the same root¹⁹), should be illuminated and

permeated with the light of the Torah, pure light, and in a steadily growing measure, until it will illuminate also the darkness outside, as is also indicated by the Chanukah Lights which are kindled at the entrance of the house, outside. So that one be justly able to declare: "I have been like a wonderful example to many, for You are my stronghold²⁰". And as it was in those days at this time, when "You stood up for them in the time of their distress, fought their battle, etc. and accomplished great deliverance and redemption."

The fulfilment of the Mitzvoth (rectifying "our sins" which are the cause of the Exile), and the Mitzvah of the Chanukah Lights in particular²¹, brings closer the fulfilment of the Divine promise of the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach and the restoration of the Beth Hamikdosh²².

May G-d grant that it should be so speedily in our own time.

With blessing for brightly illuminated
Chanukah days, illuminating also all
the days of the year - with an ever increasing
light.

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson

(1) ראה מגלת תענית פ"ט. יל"ש מלכים סוף רמז קפד. רש"י מגילה ל, סע"ב.
מרדכי ואו"ז הובאו בדרכי משה לטאו"ח (ורמ"א) רסתר"ע. חדא"ג מהרש"א לשבת
(כא, ב). וראה ג"כ תו"א (ושערי אורה) סד"ה בכ"ה בכסלו. סידור חנוכה ד"ה
מזמור שיר חנוכה. ורד"ה נ"ח, תרנ"ט: שהי' אז חנוכה הבית דביהמ"ק וחנוכה
המזבח. - ומש"כ במור וקציעה סתר"ע שזהו זכרון לחנוכה הבית בימי חגי לא
זכיתי להבין, שהרי כל השנים שעד החשמונאים לא הזכירו זה! ומה שהקשו דקדושה
הקודמת לא בטלה וא"צ חינוך (ועד"ז ג"כ ברד"ה זאת חנוכה, תר"ם וראה שם ספ"ט)
- י"ל דאין כאן הכוונה כבדין עבודתן מחנכתן (שבועות טו, א), כ"א כפשוטו -
התחלה לאחר הפסק ארוך ולאחרי שפינו וסיהרו וכו'. ועפ"ז יומתק ג"כ הל'
וקבעו ח' ימי חנוכה אלו (רק וע"י) להודות ולהלל. ואכ"מ. (2) ידועה הקושיא
נרות בחצר מאי בעי. וי"ל דנמשך לאחריו דכשראו הנסים הדליקו נרות (של שמחה
וכבוד שכינה - ע"ד נרות דשמחת בית השואבה בעזרת נשים (סוכה נא, א). ונרות
ביהכנ"ס (ברכות נג, א). וכל אלו א"א בהיכל, כ"א) בחצרות קדש ו(גם) קבעו כו'.
(3) שהרי גם נשים חייבות בנ"ח (טושו"ע או"ח סתר"ע, ס"ג. ולהעיר שלא הובא
זה בר"ס תרע"א). ואפילו עני (שם ר"ס תרע"א). (4) ר"ח ש' האהבה פ"ו. של"ה שער
האותיות אות ל'. ובכ"מ. ועוד. (5) להעיר מסידור שם רעו, ב. (6) תניא רפל"ז. וראה
לקוטי לוי יצחק (שם). (7) ועד"ז הוא ג"כ בבנין "ביהמ"ק הפרטי לאחר חורבנו
וכמחז"ל שבמקום שבע"ת עומדין אין צד"ג יכולין לעמוד (ברכות לד, ב. רמב"ם הל'
תשובה פ"ז ה"ד). וראה או"ח לה"מ עה"פ ויאהב יצחק. (8) השייכות לנס חנוכה
ראה תו"א לד, א. ובכ"מ. (9) הודאת ועל הנסים. וראה ג"כ מאי חנוכה, תש"א.
(10) דברים ד, ו. (11) וכנוסח השווה בברכת כל המצות: קדשנו במצותיו וציוונו.
(12) להעיר מתורת הבעש"ט ד"ה ושבחתם וראיתם (כתר ש"ס סקנ"ד, הוצאת קה"ת).
(13) ובפרט שבנדוד"ד ה"ז "מנהג פשוט" (רמ"א שם רסתר"ע"א). (14) ראה תו"א מקץ
לד, א. (15) שבת כא, ב. וגליון הש"ס שם. (16) קש"י ד"ה מאי (שבת כא, ב). (17) במדב"ר
ותנחומא ר"פ בהעלתך ע"פ הרמב"ן שם. (18) תו"א סד"ה בכ"ה בכסלו. אוה"ת שם
בארוכה. (19) וגם ע"ש ש"חנו כה" (תקנ"ז תי"ג. טאו"ח סתר"ע. ובפרע"ח ש' החנוכה:
חנ"ה כ"ו). ועוד. ובכו"כ שמות כן הוא. ולהעיר מ"ל לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך - עקבה-
אף שמפורש "וידו אוהזת בעקב עמו ויקרא שמו יעקב" (בראשית לב, כט. שם כה, כו).
(20) תהלים עא, ו. (21) כמובן ממשנ"ת שע"ז כליא ריגלא דתרמודאי - אותיות
מורדת (אוה"ת חנוכה ע' תתקמא, ב. ובכ"מ). (22) להעיר דחנוכה ח' ימים, משיח
משמונה נסיכים וכנור דמקדש הג' דח' נימין (תו"א לד, א. לקו"ת תזריע כא, ד).