

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

HYacinth 3-9250

FREE TRANSLATION

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Chanukah, 5734
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To Each and All of the Boys,
and Each and All of the Girls,
of pre-Bar (Bas) Mitzvah Age,
Everywhere,

G-d bless you!

Greeting and Blessing:

In connection with the forthcoming days of Chanukah,

You surely know that the purpose of all the festivals and special days which we observe in remembrance of events and miracles that occurred to our forefathers is to think deeply about the meaning of this observance, so as to relive them in a personal way, as if we are in the very midst of those events and see and feel all that is happening "in those days as this season." This purpose is clearly spelled out in connection with our first festival, Pesach, as we declare at the Seder of Pesach: "If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought our forefathers out of Egypt, then we and our children, and our children's children, would have still been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt," etc. "A Jew is compelled to see himself as if he personally was released from Egypt." From it we learn the same idea in regard to all other festivals and special days.

You surely also understand that everything connected with our Torah provides instruction (Torah means "instruction") regarding our life and conduct not only by its general content, but also by each and all the details related to it, so that even their order is meaningful and instructive.

The same is true, of course, in regard to Chanukah, the history of which you surely know, and will further increase your wisdom, understanding and knowledge of it by inquiring from your parents and teachers, in order to observe, do, and fulfil all the instructions of Chanukah.

These include also the following, in their order:

(1) Chanukah is ushered in, first of all, by a practical act: the lighting of the Chanukah candle.

(2) The meaning of this act is to light up the room and the house, in a special way, as explained later. If possible, the lighting should be "at the entrance of the house, outside," to light up also those outside, the whole environment.

(3) What is the meaning of this light and illumination?

To be sure, a candle is a material thing. But "these lights are holy" as we declare before kindling the Chanukah lights! "...Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah Light."

The Chanukah candle and light symbolize the true light, in accordance with the words of the Holy Scriptures: "A mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light." This means - we are commanded to light up the Jewish home (and all in it) as well as the outside (those who are outside) with the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth.

(4) Then follows a second blessing: "...Who wrought miracles for our forefathers in those days at this season." This means that even where a Jew finds himself in a situation which, in the natural order of things, makes it difficult for him to carry out the goal of "A mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light," A Jew does not lose heart nor feels discouraged by difficulties and hindrances, for G-d performs miracles for us just as He performed miracles for our forefathers in those days at this time.

(5) After the two said blessings follows a third -

And although this blessing is said only before the first lighting, its content related also to all the lightings on the subsequent nights of Chanukah -

This is the blessing: "...Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season." The meaning of it is that we thank G-d for making it possible for us to carry out His commandment, and in this way we also declare and make known to all the miracles which He has performed for our forefathers and for us in every generation.

(6) After performing the Mitzvah act with the blessings preceding it and the recital after it, follows the Evening Prayer (for the lighting of the Chanukah Lamp comes before Maariv), which includes a special prayer of praise to G-d during Chanukah - V'Al Hanissim.

In it it is emphasized that although we are "weak" and "few" in a material sense, we are children of a holy nation, "pure and righteous and engaged in Your (G-d's) Torah," and therefore G-d performs for us a "great salvation and deliverance," so as to thank and praise Your great Name."

The said prayer of praise V'Al Hanissim further teaches us: Although a Jew has to do what he can in the natural way, he must at the same time realize that the essential thing is to have absolute trust in G-d, for success is from G-d, as we say in Hallel, "This came from G-d; it is wondrous in our eyes." So it was also in the days of Mattisyohu, when the Jews did their part, but with absolute faith in G-d; hence they did not engage in calculations as to how great the odds are against them in terms of physical power and numbers.

All the said instructions of Chanukah are practical instructions for each and every Jew, old and young,, that is to say, instructions to live by in life. It is all a matter of one's will and determination. Moreover, G-d helps every Jew, man and woman, boy and girl, to carry out the said instructions, and in the fullest measure.

And although you have not yet reached the age of duty to fulfil the Mitzvoh like adult Jews,

Precisely for this reason you have an opportunity to show how precious, dear and beloved the Mitzvoh in general and the Mitzvah of Ner Chanukah in particular is to you, by observing it and carrying out all its instructions in the fullest measure,

And thus be a living example and a good influence both at home and outside,

And to be in this, as in all matters of the Torah and Mitzvoh - "Shining Lights."

Wishing you Hatzlocho in all above,
and a bright and happy Chanukah

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson