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FREE RENDITION

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
5th Chanukah Light, 5734
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
Our People Israel, Everywhere -
G-d bless you.

Greeting and Blessing:

The Shaloh¹ observes that Chanukah has a bearing and effect on the entire world. In his words:

Chanukah, when the rededication of the Beth Hamikdosh took place, has to do with the renewal of the world,² for the world was created for the sake of the Torah and the fulfillment of the Mitzvoth. The Greeks attempted to abolish the Torah and Mitzvoth among the Jewish people. When the Chasmonoim prevailed over them, the Torah and Mitzvoth prevailed and thus the world was renewed.....And just as Creation began with "Let there be light,"³ so the Mitzvah of Chanukah begins with the lighting of candles.

The connection of Chanukah with the lighting of candles may further be elaborated on the basis of the special quality of the Mitzvah of the Chanukah Light, as has been discussed elsewhere at length. Briefly:

All Mitzvoth produce effects in the world (as indicated in the Shaloh, above), but the effect is not always discernable to the physical eye or not discernable immediately upon the performance of the Mitzvah.

For example, the Mitzvah of Tzedoko, which is the "core"⁴ of all the Mitzvoth, carries the reward of life⁵ and sustenance to the giver of Tzedoko and to his family, and brings vitality to the world. But this does not come about in the direct manner of cause and effect as in the case of planting and reaping, and the like, and is certainly not plainly evident to the physical eye, or understood by "secular" thinking.⁶

Similarly in regard to the general performance of each and every Mitzvah, whereby the Light of the En Sof (The Infinite) is suffused in the world, as indicated in the verse, "for a Mitzvah is a candle and the Torah is light." It is not the kind of light that is visible to the physical eye.

There is a preeminence in the Mitzvoth connected with lighting candles⁷ - such as in the Beth Hamikdosh of old, and the Shabbos and Yom Tov candles in the home, etc. - in that the effect of the action, the appearance of light, is immediately visible; indeed it has to be visible to all⁸ who are in the house, which is actually illuminated by this light.

Among these latter Mitzvoth, the Mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah Light is unique⁹ in that it is required to be displayed to the outside, in accordance with the rule that it should be placed "at the entrance of the home, outside," (if possible, or in the window). Thus every bypasser, including non-Jews, immediately notices the effect of the light, which illuminates the outside and the environment. Moreover, it becomes common knowledge in advance that Chanukah is coming and Jews everywhere will observe the precept of lighting candles that will illuminate the darkness of the night (since lighting time of the Chanukah lamp is after sunset),⁹ lighting up the outside.¹⁰

From what has been said above about the physical effects of the Chanukah candles, it becomes apparent what their spiritual effects are: The Chanukah Light has the special quality of illuminating the darkness of the spiritual "outside," the Golus (Exile) in its plain sense, as well as the inner "Golus," namely, the darkness of sin and of the Yetzer Hara"¹¹ (they alone being the cause of the Golus, in the ordinary sense, as it is written, "Because of our sins we have been exiled from our land"); and this act of illumination takes immediate effect, without requiring any prior explanation (i.e. even without preparation on the part of the "outside").

* * *

Inasmuch as the concept of Chanukah is a most comprehensive one, and, as quoted above, it has to do with the "renewal (restoration and perfection)"¹² of the world, it is clear that the Mitzvoth connected with Chanukah contain special comprehensive instructions, that is, practical teachings for the daily life and conduct, and also the order in which the Chanukah Mitzvoth are observed indicates a general and essential guiding principle. Some of them are as follows:

(1) The essential thing is the deed.¹³ First and foremost must come the practical act, the first Mitzvah of Chanukah being the lighting of the candles, the time of which is immediately after sunset on the day before Chanukah.

(2) The effect of every human act must also contribute a measure of light to illuminate the "outside"¹⁴ - as indicated by the Chanukah Light which is placed "at the entrance of the home, outside."

(3) The meaning of this light and illumination:

To be sure, a candle is a material thing. But "these lights are holy"; symbolizing what the Holy Scriptures call true light, namely the Torah and Mitzvoth,¹⁵ as it is written, "A Mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light."

(4) The motivation and purpose of every human act should be only to fulfill the Will¹⁶ of the Holy One, blessed be He. Thereby one partakes, so to speak, of the holiness¹⁷ of the Holy One, as the first blessing before the lighting reads: "...Who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah Light".

(5) 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," he does not lose heart nor does he feel discouraged by difficulties and hindrances, for "the history of the fathers is the guideline for the children"¹⁸ our G-d, King of the Universe, performs miracles for us as He performed miracles for our forefathers in those days at this time.

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

Which, although it is said only before the first lighting, its content is related also to all the lightings¹⁹ 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 one fulfills the Torah and Mitzvoth with joy and gladness of heart, blesses and thanks G-d for the opportunity, ability and strength which G-d provides to carry out His commandment.

(7) 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 the days of Chanukah - V'Al Hanissim.

In it it is emphasized that although we are "weak" and "few" in the 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 not only just miracles but - "miracles, deliverance, mighty acts, salvations, wonders,"²⁰ a "great salvation and deliverance,"²¹ so as "to thank and praise Your great Name."²²

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."²³

So it was also in the days of Mattisyohu, when the Jews did their part in the natural way, 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.

* * *

May G-d grant that each and every one of us, man or woman, carry out this Mitzvah and all the Mitzvoth in accordance with the said instructions and in their fullest measure,

To be in all matters of Torah and Mitzvot a living example throughout the whole year, both at home and outside,

Exemplifying the familiar expression "Shining Lights," to illuminate "from sea to sea and from the river to the end of the earth." 24

Wishing you a bright Chanukah,
brightening up all the days of the
year, and in a manner of steadily
increasing illumination 25 -

/Signed/ Menachem Schneerson

(1 חלק תושב"כ פ" וישב דרוש צאן יוסף בהג"ה. עיי"ש בארוכה. ובפדר"א פכ"ח
דיוון "החשיכה עיניהם של ישראל מכל מצות שבתורה" (בכמה דפוסים נשמט רוב
הפרק!). וברמב"ם הל' חנוכה רפ"ג: בטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסוק בתורה
ובמצות. וראה ב"ועל הנסים". (2 עייג"כ תו"א וישב כט, ד. שערי אורה ע" ל.
אוה"ת לבראשית ע" תרד וע" 1864. (3 הטעם מובן עפ"מ"כ באור תורה להה"מ
בתחילתו בפ" עולם חסד יבנה. ועיינן ב"ר רפ"ג. (4 לקו"ת ראה (כג, ג) ובכ"מ.
ובתניא פל"ז דבירושלמי נק' בשם מצוה סתם כו' (ראה ירוש' פאה בסופה). אגה"ק
סל"ב. (5 ראה תנחומא משפטים טו. וראה פסחים ח, סע"א. (6 משא"כ ע"פ שכל
דתורה. ראה תנחומא שם. *6) משלי ו, כג. פרש"י שם. (7 אבל כמה חילוקים ביניהם.
ראה ד"ה מצותה משתשקע, תר"ל. תרנ"ד, תרע"ח. ועוד. (8 וכמ"ל למאור, יאירו
(בביהמק"ד), ובשבת - שלום בית כו' (ראה שו"ע אדה"ז סרס"ג. ובכ"מ). (9 שבת
כא, ב. (10 להעיר מדברי הרמב"ם (חנוכה רפ"ג) דהיוונים "פשטו ידם בממונם" -
שזהו החוץ דהאדם. (11 שנקראים חושך (ב"ר פ"א, ו. ור"פ פט). ובזח"א (ד, א)
חשוכא מהפכן לנהורא. (12 שזהו ענין החינוך (וחנוכת המשכן וכו' - ראה תו"א
וכו' שם). (13 משא"כ בתחלת עבודת היום שעדיין אינו מוכשר למעשה שלם (כי
הנשמה (רק) באפו - ראה אוה"ת בראשית דף תת"ר) צ"ל מקודם תפלה ותורה - כפס"ד
השו"ע (או"ח סקנ"ה-ו). ולהעיר שגם תפלה ותורה - עקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה (עיינן
תניא רפ"ז. וראה שם קו"א (קנד, א). (14 להעיר מע"ח שכ"ו דהתלבשות הנשמה
בעוה"ז הוא רק לתקן הגוף כו' (הובא בתניא פל"ז) - שהם ה"חוף" דהנשמה. (15
וגם פנימיות התורה - הרי בדורות אלו. מצוה לגלות ו"יפקון בי" מן גלותא
ברחמים" (אגה"ק סכ"ו). וכאגה"ק דהבעש"ט הידועה - כש"יפוצו מעינותיך חוצה".
(16 ראה ד"ה שופר של ר"ה תש"ב ס"ב. (17 ראה תניא פמ"ו. אוה"פ ר"פ קדושים.
(18 כולל גם סיוע לבנים (ראה אוה"ת ר"פ ילך). ובחולין (צא, ב) תחת יעקב אבינו
שתהא נוחה ליכבש לבניו. (19 וראה ב"ח לטווא"ח ר"ס תרע"ו. (20 ביאור
ה' הלשונות - עיינן סידור מהרי"ד (ברדישוב, תרע"ג). (21 מדמוזכר לאחר תשועה
גדולה - מובן ש"פורקן" זה גדול עוד יותר. (22 ראה תוד"ה ועוניין ברכות (ג, א).
תו"א ר"פ שמות. תו"ח ואוה"ת שם. (23 שרק כשנפלאה אומרים הלל (שבת קיח, ב). צ"צ
לתהלים מ, ו סק"י. (24 תהלים עב, ח. (25 ראה ליקוטי לוי"צ לזח"א (ס"ע ריד).