

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, N. Y. 11213

Hyacinth 3-9250

חנוכה מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Nissan, 5734
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants in the
Presentation of the Aron-Kodesh
On the Occasion of the 11th of
Nissan, 5734

Greeting and Blessing:

The Presentation of such a sacred and meaningful object, as well as the time and place of the event, call for a special reflection. All the more so in the light of the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov to the effect that everything that happens in life can, and therefore should, serve as a practical lesson to the thinking person in his daily life and conduct. The basis for this is the fact that everything that happens comes to pass, of course, by Hashgocho Protis - Divine Providence in every detail.

Thus, the said Presentation provides a great deal of food for thought, some of which I wish to share with you in this letter.

A human being is called a "world in miniature" (micro-cosm). Our Sages point out that this is not merely a phrase, but that the analogy corresponds in many details, even minute details.

The idea behind this analogy is that man and the world in which he lives are intimately bound up and mutually affect one another.

The idea of an Aron-Kodesh (Holy Ark) is that it is a physical thing, made of wood, or metal, or other material, and is consecrated to house a Sefer Torah, which is also made of material things (parchment inscribed by quill and ink), but is holy because the writing is the word of G-d, the ultimate of all that is spiritual and sacred. Because the Aron-Kodesh is such a holy thing by reason of its housing the holiest of all sacred objects, the Sefer Torah, it is customary to make it beautiful - as is, indeed, the case with the one which has been presented. Even when an Aron-Kodesh has lower compartments, these are used exclusively for keeping other sacred objects.

A human being is like an Aron-Kodesh. The body, consist-

ing of tissue, bone, etc., is physical, but it houses the soul which is spiritual, sacred and pure. Consequently, the body, too, must be kept holy, as an Ark housing a Sefer Torah.

Indeed, the analogy may be extended to the whole world at large, wherein G-d commanded to construct a Mikdash, a Sanctuary, from which G-d's light and holiness should spread to, and permeate, the whole world.

brain) → In like manner, an individual must endeavor to make his heart and (mind) - though they are made of physical substances - "sanctuaries," that is, sacred depositories for even more sacred contents and qualities, attuned to the supreme holiness and perfection which G-d revealed in His Torah and Mitzvoh. So much so, that even the "lower compartments," i.e. when the mind and heart are applied on a lower level, namely, to such material things as business or job, these are not to be an end in themselves, but a means to a better and higher spiritual level, thereby giving the mundane occupations a different complexion, a higher meaning and value. This would then correspond to the Sanctuary which G-d commanded to be erected in this material world, the Sanctuary to which the Jewish people contributed such material things as gold, silver and brass, whereby they elevated to sanctity not only the contributions themselves, but also the effort that went into the acquisition of all their material things, including the major share that is used for personal and family needs.

Both sanctuaries - the "sanctuary" that is within every Jew, man and woman, and the Sanctuary which G-d commanded to be built as a dwelling place for Him on earth, are mentioned in one and the same sentence in the Torah: "They shall make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell within them" - "Within each and every one of them," as our Sages interpret this verse. In other words, the ultimate purpose of the Sanctuary built for G-d is to make every Jewish heart and mind a fitting abode for G-d to dwell in.

The immediate inference from the above is that although, at this time, the Sanctuary, the Bet Hamikdash, is not in existence, and will be rebuilt when Moshiach will come, the sanctuary which is within the Jew, man or woman, is always there, and it is very much up to himself and herself to cultivate and make it effective in sanctifying the whole daily life.

In light of the above, together with my heartfelt appreciation of the sentiments that accompanied the Presentation, I wish to express my prayerful hope that it will stimulate all participants to strengthen the determination to make an "Aron-Kodesh" of his and her personal life, an "Aron-Kodesh" of the family, to the extent of permeating also the children with the same spirit and dedication. With such resolve, Divine assistance is assured, and may G-d grant that it should be accom-

plished in the spirit of these days, when the Presentation was made, namely in the spirit of true freedom from all distractions material and spiritual.

Moreover, the place of the Presentation is likewise auspicious, for it has been here that my saintly father-in-law made his "Sanctuary" - a sacred House of Prayer and of Study - during the last decade of his life on earth, a Sanctuary which is continued in the same spirit.

Wishing you and all yours a Kosher and inspiring Pesach,

With blessing, *M. Schwartz*