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By the Grace of G-d
24th of Kislev, 5735
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I was pleased to receive the good news that you began lighting a candle for Shabbos. No doubt you will do the same also for Yom Tov.

Although, as you mention, you have not yet reached the age of Bas-Mitzvah, you surely know that the Mitzvah of Chinuch - training in the practice of Mitzvos - begins quite early in Jewish life. It not only prepares for Bar-Mitzvah and Bas-Mitzvah, but lays the foundation for the entire life. This is what the Wisest of All Men, King Solomon, meant, when he said, "Train (chanoch) the youngster in his right way, so that he will not depart from it also when he grows old." (Proverbs 22:6). Needless to say, though the verse speaks of a boy (na'ar), girls are included, as in many similar verses in the Torah.

A Mitzvah should, of course, be fulfilled for its own sake, because G-d commanded it, and without thought for reward. Nevertheless, each Mitzvah contains many lessons and carries with it G-d's blessings in many ways. This is especially true in the case of the Mitzvah of Ner-Shabbos, as explained by our Sages (in the Gemorrah Shabbos 23b, and elsewhere), that it is connected with the verse, Ner-Mitzvah, vTorah - Or, meaning that lighting the Shabbos candle brings the light of Torah - the whole Torah! - into the home.

A further point about Ner-Shabbos has to do with the "practical" reason of lighting up the house so that no one would stumble in darkness and get hurt, G-d forbid. But in a deeper sense, the Shabbos candles light up the house and every member of the family with the light of Torah, to walk safely through the path of life which is full of dangerous pitfalls.

In addition, lighting a candle in honour of Shabbos and Yom Tov betokens the lighting up of one's Mazel, to be blessed by G-d also in all material needs.

My G-d grant that all the great spiritual and material blessings that go with Ner-Shabbos should be fulfilled in you and shared by all in your home.

It is especially gratifying to receive the good news, and to acknowledge it, in these days close to Chanukah. For Chanukah further emphasizes the significance of candle-lighting in Jewish life. One of the important details of the Chanukah lights is that they should be seen also outside, so that those who are still "outside" should also be inspired by the lesson of Chanukah.

Another important detail about the Chanukah lights is that, although the Mitzvah of Ner-Chanukah is fulfilled to perfection by lighting one candle the first night, we are called upon to light two candles the second night, three the following night, and so on, adding one more candle each night. This teaches us that however satisfactory our religious observance is today, we must do better tomorrow, and better still the day after, for there is no limit to goodness and holiness.

In light of the above, I trust that you will not only go from strength to strength in all matters of Yiddishkeit in your personal life and daily conduct, but will also be a shining example to other girls, especially those who are not as privileged as you, and know little or nothing about the Mitzvos. A good way of helping those underprivileged girls is by starting them on candle-lighting in honour of Shabbos and Yom Tov, and gradually kindling many other Ner-Mitzvos. For such is the beauty of light, that a little flame of a candle can ignite many candles, and the light can be shared by all who are within sight.

Wishing you a bright Chanukah.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson