

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
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By the Grace of G-d
5th of Teveth, 5735
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Students of the
Ladow Yeshiva Center
Miami Beach, Fla.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your letter in connection with the Yom Tov of Yud-Tes Kislev. I see from your writing that you know the story of the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment for his work to strengthen the learning of Torah and doing Mitzvoth with Chasidic inspiration, and why the day of his miraculous release from prison is so important for all of us, children as well as grown-ups.

I trust you also know of the special concern of the Baal-ha-Geuloh for Jewish children. Indeed, this was so uppermost in his mind that he opens the very first of his ~~new~~ books which he published, namely, Hilchos Talmud Torah, "The Laws of Torah-Study," with the duty of every Jewish parent to begin the child's Torah education as soon as the child begins to speak. These are his words:

מצות-עשה מן התורה על האב ללמד בנו הקטן תורה כו' ומאימתי
אביו חייב ללמדו - משיחיל לדבר מלמדו תורה צוה לנו משה וגו'
ופסוק ראשון מפרשת שמע ישראל כו'.

It is a 'do-Mitzvah' of the Torah for the father to teach his little child Torah... And when does this duty begin? - As soon as the child begins to speak, father teaches him to recite the verse, 'The Torah which Mosheh commanded us is the inheritance of the Jewish people,' and also the first verse of Shma Yisroel. ...

No doubt you have also heard the story of "The Cry of a Child" - of the child whose Torah education has been sadly neglected.

I am sure you realize how privileged you are in that you receive the proper Torah education. However, this places on you a responsibility for those underprivileged children, whose souls cry out for Torah and Mitzvoth, but do not know what treasure they are missing. Actually, this responsibility is in itself a privilege - the privilege to fulfil the great Mitzvah of V'ohavto lre'acho komocho: to show your loving care for those underprivileged children

by encouraging them to do Mitzvoth and to learn Torah. The best way to do this is by showing a shining example, in addition to speaking to them about the great joy and satisfaction of doing G-d's Mitzvoth and learning G-d's Torah.

This, indeed, has been the fervent hope of all our Rebbes - of the Alter Rebbe and the Rebbes who followed him - who have urged privileged boys and girls like yourselves to serve as "shining lights" to set alight and aglow other Jewish children with the light and joy of Torah and Mitzvoth.

May G-d grant that you should achieve the above in an ever growing measure, in accordance with the message of Chanukah which we have just celebrated - a message that serves as a guiding light and inspiration to all of us throughout the entire year.

With love and with blessings *M. Schwartz*