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By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Sivan,
5735. Brooklyn, N.Y.

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Blessing and Greeting:

This is in reply to your letter of the 17th of Iyar, in which you inquire about the significance of the dollar bill you received in connection with the Candle Lighting Campaign.

Actually there are many aspects involved, but I must limit myself here to one or two. But first a few words leading up to the subject.

As you know, Jews are commanded to remember and do all the Mitzvoth of our Torah, Toras Chaim (the practical guide in our daily life). But there are certain Mitzvoth which the Torah specifically emphasizes by the command זכור - "Remember!" Such, to mention a familiar example, is one of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Shabbos, day to keep it holy." So also the commandment to remember Yetzias Mitzraim every day of the year, and so other commandments. The most central of all such remembrances is to remember the day of our receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, which we are to celebrate soon on Shavuot: "Remember ~~the~~ the day when you stood before G-d your G-d at Chorev (Sinai), lest you forget the things which your eyes saw."

It is self evident why the Torah commands us to remember those very important events, for a Jew lives in a world which hustles and bustles with all sorts of material things, which distract his attention from the truly important and eternal things. We are speaking, of course, even of "Kosher" things such as eating and drinking and doing business, etc. - all in accordance with the Shulchan Aruch. Yet, inasmuch as a person is inevitably involved with such things for the most part of the day, day after day in a routine manner, he may become too much absorbed in them so as to forget the very important and essential things which the Torah wants us to remember particularly.

It is also a matter of common experience that when people want to make sure they will not forget certain matters, they do all sorts of things to help them remember.

In light of the above, the Torah has given us certain Mitz-

voth which, in addition to all other meanings, are notable "reminders." Again, to mention a familiar example, the Mezuzo (in addition to everything else) reminds the Jew upon leaving and returning home that G-d Who is our very life and strength is One, etc., as in the portion of Shema which the Mezuzo contains. Similarly upon arising from sleep in the morning, we recite a prayer in which we declare that our soul, which G-d returns to us every morning, is pure, etc. And so there are many Mitzvoth which constantly help us to remember our real purpose in life - to serve G-d in all our ways. There are Mitzvoth which serve as reminders to all Jews, since all Jews are equal in regard to the observance of those Mitzvoth. But there are also Mitzvoth which apply to certain groups only, such as Kohanim. In each case there are specific reminders for those concerned.

This brings us to the subject matter of your letter.

One of the most important and most beautiful Mitzvoth is the lighting of the candles before Shabbos and Yom Tov, and it was given as a special privilege to Jewish women, mothers and daughters, to do it not only for themselves, but also for the whole family and household. Obviously, everyone in the home enjoys the advantages of the light of the candles, illuminating the home as well as the table at which the members of the family sit down for the Shabbos and Yom Tov meal.

The importance of this Mitzvo goes deeper than merely illuminating the home in the plain sense, for it makes it a bright home also spiritually, in accordance with the text of the blessing recited before lighting the candles - "...Who sanctified us with His commandments." Hence it is highly desirable that such an important Mitzvo should have a special "reminder" that would further emphasize the deeper significance of this Mitzvo. There could be various things which could serve as reminders of the Mitzvo. The most suitable one would be a reminder that is not too cumbersome, yet at the same time expresses the significance of such a great Mitzvo as lighting the candles. Thus the most suitable way is to connect it with money, since money is the medium wherewith one fulfills the Mitzvo of Tzedoko, it being an especially great Mitzvo since the giver could have used the money to buy his own needs, yet gives it selflessly to a needy person, and thereby does an act of lifesaving, as our Sages have emphasized.

The special relevance of Tzedoko to the lighting of candles before Shabbos and Yom Tov is in the fact that, as our Sages relate, lighting the candles is an act of rectification of a wrongdoing committed by the first woman and mother of all mankind, namely Chava (Eve), who caused "the candle of G-d which is the soul of man" - of Adam - to be extinguished through the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. By lighting the candles, the Jewish mother and daughter rectified the act of putting out the said "candle." It is therefore particularly relevant to associate candle lighting with Tzedoko, for Tzedoko too is an act of life-

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saving, as mentioned above.

This, then, is briefly one of the meanings for the dime or dollar bill which accompanied the Candle Lighting Campaign, and which is intended for Tzedoko, or, if one wants to keep that particular dime or dollar bill as a memento, one has to substitute it by an equal amount for Tzedoko. All this is intended to call attention and emphasize the importance of the lighting of the candles for the person lighting them and for the whole Jewish home.

May G-d grant that you should fulfill this great Mitzvo with joy and inspiration. And inasmuch as the great principle of our Torah is V'Ohavto L'Reacho Komocho, you will surely use your good influence with friends and neighbors that they too observe this great Mitzvo in a similar way.

At this time before Shovuos, the Festival of Mattan Torah, I extend to you and all your family my prayerful wishes for a happy and inspiring Yom Tov, and the traditional blessing of receiving the Torah with joy and inwardness. May the joy and inspiration of this great Yom Tov be with you throughout the year.

With blessing,

M. Schwartz

P.S. In connection with the above, I want to emphasize a very important point, namely that however important that dime or dollar bill is, it is still Muktza and not to be touched on Shabbos and Yom Tov, like any other money.