

הת' מנחם מענדל ורינה גארדאן

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי

ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d

7 Adar, 5740

Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants in the Banquet of
Chabad-Lubavitch of the Valley
Encino, Cal. 91316

Greeting and Blessing:

This year's Banquet, like last year's, is taking place on the day after Shabbos Parshas Hachodesh. And although the basic teachings of Torah are eternal and constant from year to year, each year brings them to us with renewed force, new dimensions, and timely instructions that need to be implemented in the everyday life.

It has been pointed out that one of the instructive messages of Parshas Hachodesh is that the "rebirth" (molad) and renewal of the moon (unlike the constancy of the sun) is that it symbolizes the essence of our Jewish people and of the individual Jew. Like the moon, which receives its light from the sun and lights up the darkness of the night, a Jew reflects the constant light of the Torah and Mitzvos and illuminates with it his and her personal life and the whole environment.

The current year - 5740 - has the added dimension of being a Year of Shemittah, a Sabbatical Year, designated by the Torah as a "Shabbos unto G-d." During such a year, agricultural activity in the Holy Land is forbidden, and a Jew is expected to turn his attention from the field and vineyard to the home, and devote the released time to spiritual pursuits and advancement in Torah and Mitzvos - much in the same way as the holy Shabbos day, when all manner of work is forbidden, should be dedicated to the needs of the soul.

To be sure, the law of Shemittah pertaining to agricultural activity does not apply in the Diaspora, nor, in any case, is agriculture our principal occupation as in olden days. However, as in the case of all aspects of Torah which transcend time and place, the inner content of Shemittah and its practical teachings are indeed very relevant to each one of us here and now. We are reminded that this year, especially, we must renew and redouble our efforts in all matters of Yiddishkeit, both at home and in the community at large.

The annual banquet, as all other programs and activities of Chabad-Lubavitch, is the ideal forum and frame in which every Jew can participate, and ought to participate fully, to strengthen and spread Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvos, and to provide leadership and direction for the younger generation starving for Jewish identity and a meaningful life.

With esteem and blessing for Hatzlocho

M. Schneerson