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FREE TRANSLATION

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

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ברוקלין, נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d
Prev Shabbos-Kodesh p. Vayechi,
12 Teves, 5741
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the Annual Dinner
for the Central Yeshiva Tomchei-Tmimim Lubavitch
G-d bless you all

Greeting and Blessing:

This year the Annual Dinner is taking place a few days after the Fast of the Tenth of Teves. And since we have to derive some useful lesson from everything in our experience, especially from an event of historic importance such as is commemorated by this annual Fast Day, let us reflect for a moment on its relevance to the present occasion.

The Tenth of Teves commemorates the day when Jerusalem came under siege, which marked the beginning of the Churban, the Destruction of our Holy City and of the Beis Hamikdash. We fast on this day not only to express our sorrow, but, more importantly, to be urgently reminded that we must increase our efforts to rectify the cause of the Destruction and Exile, namely, in the words of our familiar prayer: "Because of our sins (neglect of Torah and Mitzvos) we have been exiled from our land."

One of the basic lessons of the Tenth of Teves is that had our ancestors in those days been truly moved by the siege to change their complacent attitude towards the threatening danger (even if it were slow in coming), the whole Churban could have been averted from the start.

We must remember this lesson whenever a situation arises that threatens to have undesirable consequences. Immediate action must be taken to forestall the danger, while the ability to do so is still strong and the situation has not gotten out of hand.

There is surely no need to point out that our Jewish people everywhere is ^{spiritually} besieged on all sides. But nothing is more threatened than the future of our young generation - the future of our Jewish people. The only answer to it is Torah-true education. It must begin at the earliest age, and continue consistently in every aspect, without compromise. Sometimes it may appear that a particular detail is not all that important to insist on it strongly, or that there is time to deal with it later on. But the truth is that the slightest neglect at an early stage becomes a serious problem later, and conversely on the positive side: every little extra care and benefit in the early years is multiplied manifold in later life.