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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Adar Sheni,
5744. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your (undated) letter, enclosing a number of poems. *Thanks.*

[...]

To be sure, you find some excuse for this, because of the fact that you were born and raised in Soviet Russia. However, I trust you will not mind my saying that according to the impression that remained with me after our personal meeting, I thought that no encountered difficulty in matters of Yiddishkeit would be any problem here in the U.S.A. Especially considering that you desired to get out of there, which was no easy matter and entailed difficulties and sacrifices, and was motivated primarily, if not solely, in order to be free to live the true Jewish life which Jews are committed to do.

We have just recently observed Purim and read in the Megillah that although in those days, as nowadays, Jews were spread and scattered among the nations of the world, facing all kinds of difficulties as Jews, nevertheless, they clung to their Jewish way of life, as the Megillah says, "Their Laws were different from those of other peoples." However, because of their determined and proud stance as Jews, to quote the Megillah again, "Mordecai the Jew" and the "People of Mordecai" would not "Bend their knees nor bow down" before anyone or anything that challenged their Jewish commitment - precisely this is what brought about that "For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor," meaning also honor and admiration for the Jews on the part of their erstwhile enemies.

You surely remember the difficulties and problems you and other Jews faced in the Soviet Union and the Mesiras Nefesh which was necessary there, so that any difficulty that a Jew faces in the so-called free countries are surely negligible by comparison. In any case, HaShem provides the necessary capacities to overcome whatever tests and trials a Jew has to face. If one seems to experience an extra measure of such trials, it is in itself proof that he or she has been provided with extra capacities to overcome them.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is mainly a matter of one's own will and determination, if one does not simply look for an easier way out and does not allow himself to give in to temptation. And then one has the satisfaction of having overcome those tests, by having drawn upon one's inner strength and capacities of which one may not even have been aware before, and after having discovered them, they can be added to the arsenal of one's capacities and strength to use in the fullest measure for the benefit of one's self, one's family and of the Jewish people as a whole.

Of course, it is not my intention to sermonize, but to suggest to you the proper guidelines both in regard to the past and future. In simple terms - we have the assurance of the Torah that "Nothing stands in the way of Teshuvo (return)," namely, regretting past failures and making the strongest resolve to live up to the Jewish way in the fullest possible measure, and, indeed, to do so with joy and gladness of heart.

I would also like to add a relevant point, which is sometimes overlooked. This is that, as you surely know, the representatives of the Kremlin attempt to defend their discriminatory policy and persecution of the Jews by claiming that the Jews in that country are not interested in Jewish matters, Jewish religion, Jewish education, etc., etc. In support of this "defense" they cite the fact that Jews who leave the Soviet Union and find themselves in the free countries, where they have every facility and possibility to live the Jewish way in the fullest possible measure, do not do so. Thus, a Jew that comes out from behind the Iron Curtain and immediately begins to live the Jewish way, regardless of temptations or other distractions, refutes thereby that false claim and contention which helps the regime in the U.S.S.R. to perpetuate their policy of hate and persecution of our people.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on all above. So I will conclude on the pleasant topic of expressing my prayerful hope and confidence that you will very soon be able to write to me good news that your everyday life and conduct is getting more and more in accord with true Yiddishkeit, and that you are indeed showing a living example of how a Jew should live, with dignity, pride and true happiness.

With blessing,

M. Schreiber

P.S. Because it is technically easier for our office to write in English than in Russian, the reply comes here in English. However, you may continue to write to me in Russian, but please indicate if you have a preference to receive your reply in English, Yiddish or Hebrew.