

Banquet 5746

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Shevat, 5746
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants
in the Annual Banquet
of Chabad of the Valley
Encino, Ca. 91316

Greeting and Blessing:

It is significant that this year's Annual Banquet is taking place on the day after Shabbos Parshas Ki-Thisso; the day which happens to be also the first day of the week of Parshas Shekolim. Since Parshas Shekolim constitutes the opening portion of Ki-Thisso, we have the unusual situation of reading the same Torah portion on two consecutive Shabbosim. This circumstance lends added emphasis to the eternal message of the "Half-Shekel" (Machtzis HaShekel) - the central theme of Parshas Shekolim.

Our Sages relate that when HaShem told Moshe Rabbeinu about the Mitzvo of the Half-Shekel contribution which was to be given by rich and poor alike as an "atonement for the soul," Moshe wondered how a small silver coin could be an atonement or "ransom" as it were, for one's soul. Whereupon HaShem produced a "coin of fire" from beneath His Throne of Glory, showed it to Moshe, and declared, "This is what they have to give."

The lesson of it, our Sages explain, is to show how a Jew - every Jew, rich and poor - can convert a silver coin - in itself an inanimate object of small value, and one that has not even the organic life of a plant, not to mention that of a living creature, let alone a human being - into something like a coin of fire, originated from under the Throne of Glory of the Holy One, blessed be He - when he uses this coin for a cause that is connected with Torah and Mitzvoth, and gives it with warmth, joy, and inspiration.

Such is the cause for which you are gathered on this occasion, to celebrate the Thirteenth Anniversary of Chabad of the Valley's dedicated service to the Valley Jewish community.

Each and all of you participating in this cause through financial support and personal involvement, are sharing in the great Zechus of the Machtzis HaShekel Mitzvo, which, in a real sense, goes to "ransom" many a Jewish soul held captive by forces of a "Chinuch-deficient syndrome," bringing it back to a healthier and more vigorous state of Jewish identity and experience, illuminated with the light of Torah and Mitzvoth in a steadily growing measure.

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May you all - Chabad of the Valley and all friends and supporters - continue from strength to strength in this concerted effort, with all the Divine blessings that go with it, both materially and spiritually, as the "other half" of the Half-Shekel Mitzvo.

With prayerful wishes for much Hatzlocho in all above, and

With esteem and
blessing,

M. Schneerson