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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d

Lag B'Omer, 5746

Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants in the Thirty-first
Annual Convention of N'Shei uBnos Chabad
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This year's Convention is taking place in the Shabbos weekend preceding the Festival of Mattan Torah. This is particularly significant for an assembly of Jewish women, mothers and daughters, in view of the fact that Jewish women had such a major role in Kabolas HaTorah, as has often been emphasized.

The Torah tells us, and the Baal Shem Tov has emphasized it, that a Jew has always to keep his eyes and ears open to gain deeper insights into Avodas HaShem and improve it both in quantity and quality. Even things and events that are usually considered a natural phenomena and daily occurrences, bring us, on reflection, a useful message. Consider the call of our Prophet Isaiah (40:26): **שאו מרום עיניכם וראו מי ברא אלה** - "Lift up your eyes to heaven and see who created these!" Our holy sources tell us that the word Shema (**שמע** meaning, not only "hear" but - "understand"), is an acrostic of **שאו מרום עיניכם**, while **מי ברא אלה** spells the Name of Elokim (in reverse), meaning that the Unknowable and Hidden **מי** (Who) reveals Himself in **אלה** ("these") heavenly bodies we see with our very eyes.

The above is but a brief introduction to the point I wish to bring out here, namely, the fact that we are in a Leap Year, and what we have to learn from it.

Our Jewish Leap Year is a regular visitor, almost every other year. It has a plain explanation in terms of our unique Hebrew calendar, which is basically Lunar, but has to be "adjusted" to the Solar Year, in order to ensure that our festivals would occur in their due season of the year (Pesach in the spring month, Succos in the autumn, etc.).

The fact that according to the Torah we mark our calendar by the rotation of the moon around the earth, is in itself replete with meaning and instruction. The point I wish to emphasize here, however, is that a Leap Year makes up the deficiency (of some 11 days annually) of the Lunar Year vis-a-vis the Solar Year. But in doing so, the Leap Year does more than that: It considerably exceeds the Solar Year in the number of its days, and this serves to complete its falling behind not only in one year, but also in two years, and more; and some years it also serves as an "advance" on account of the year ahead.

The lesson of it in Avodas HaShem is clear: A Jew must strive not only to make up for the present and for any outstanding deficiency that has not yet been replenished, but also to "go over the top," since a Jew is expected never to be satisfied with a status quo, however satisfactory in itself, but

forge ahead dynamically from strength to strength in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvoth.

Let this be your basic motto in all your fruitful activities, to break through the constraints hindering Avodas HaShem in a manner of over and beyond measure and limits; being mindful of the fact that all that is good and holy is as unlimited in scope as the En Sof, the Infinite, the Source of all goodness and holiness, Torah and Mitzvoth.

This also brings the Divine reward: יש שכר לפעולתך - "There is a reward for your work" - in kind, namely, to break out of the Golus with its restraints, into true freedom and Geulo, in fulfillment of the Prophecy: ושבנו בנים לגבולם - "The children shall return home."

With prayerful wishes for ever growing Hatzlocho in all your good activities, and

With the traditional blessing to receive the Torah with joy and inwardness,

/Signed: Menachem Schneerson/