

Banquet 5748

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

ליוכאוויטש

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ברוקלין, נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d
12th of Adar, 5748
Year of Hakhel
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the Annual
Banquet of Chabad of the Valley
Encino, California

Greeting and Blessing!

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming annual event taking place on the 24th of Adar. I take pleasure in extending congratulations and prayerful wishes to the worthy honorees, distinguished guests, and all participants in this event. May it be blessed with a full measure of achievement both materially and spiritually, especially as it is taking place in the year of Hakhel.

The Mitzvah of Hakhel, as ordained in the Torah, is that at the end of every seven years, immediately after the year of Shemittah, when Jews make their pilgrimage to the Bais Hamikdosh (Temple), during the festival of Succos, all Jews had to be gathered (Hakhel) - the men, and the women, and the children even babies, and the king read to them sections from the Torah, selected for their content to stimulate Jews in the observance of Mitzvos and strengthen them in their faith and in Yiddishkeit, and it made a profound impression on them, as if they heard it from G-d himself.

Although the Mitzvah of Hakhel, in its concrete and plain form, is connected with the time of the Bais Hamikdosh, there is the well known principle that all matters that are connected with the Beis Hamikdosh, such as sacrifices and the like, are in their spiritual content relevant at all times. This is why the daily prayers, which have been enacted in the place of the sacrifices, substitute for them. A Jew prays with all his heart, offers himself completely in submission to his Creator, and is ready to sacrifice the best of his possessions and his most passionate interests (the "fat and the blood") to the will of G-d - and it is acceptable to G-d as a "burnt offering" in the Beis Hamikdosh. indeed, also during the times when Jews had a central Sanctuary and Mikdosh and actually offered sacrifices there, it was the Jewish heart that he desired most, in accordance with His imperative, request, and promise: "Let them make Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell within them" - in their innermost Jewish hearts.

It is also obvious how strongly the Mitzvah of Hakhel emphasizes

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the Torah-education of our children. It follows that also those who are grown in years but still "children" in Yiddishkeit; all those "who know not," who, for one reason or another, did not get the proper Jewish education, and even those who belong to the category of "one who knows not to ask," namely, those who do not know, and do not feel, that they miss something and should ask and seek help - these also must be assembled to let them hear and learn what Torah is, what a Mitzvah is, in a manner of learning that would imbue them with fear of G-d, and, most importantly, that they should "observe and do all the words of this Torah," the Torah from Sinai that shall never be changed - all of the above with such impact, "as if they heard it from G-d himself."

Chabad of the Valley, as Chabad-Lubavitch everywhere else - has, with the help of G-d, and of its dedicated friends, made substantial achievements in helping Jews become even more fully and intimately aware of Torah and Mitzvos in their everyday experience, and is committed to continue this vital activity in a consistently growing measure. I am confident that everyone of you will increase still further your active participation in the vital activities and programs to keep the light of Torah shining even more brightly.

Hashem will surely bless you with Hatzlocho in this endeavor, as well as in all your needs, both materially and spiritually.

With esteem and blessing

