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(Excerpt from a letter)

By the Grace of G-d

Greeting and Blessing

...To start off with a general, yet essential, observation. Jews have always been a minority, and as in the case of all minorities which find themselves under the pressures of the environment, it is necessary to make special efforts to preserve the identity of the minority. This is true especially in a country where there is freedom in every respect, inasmuch as the natural forces of assimilation are very strong, not only in regard to the young generation, but even the older ones. Therefore, even from the point of view of self-preservation, it is necessary to do everything possible to counteract these forces if the minority is not to be submerged by the majority. One of the ways to do this is to emphasize the good and intrinsic qualities which the minority possesses, while not exaggerating those good qualities which are common to both, especially where there is no need to do so.

Unfortunately, my observation of the attitudes and policy of many Rabbis, and spiritual and lay leaders, leads me to the conclusion that part of them generally make the mistake of believing that they could best impress their audiences, or their readers, by displaying a proficiency in non-Jewish literature and culture. This is evident from the tendency of supporting their views by quotations from non-Jewish sources in preference to Jewish sources. Even at public affairs in support of Jewish institutions, when the emphasis should be on the purity of the Jewish tradition, efforts are made to have some prominent gentile as an honored guest or speaker. If taken to task, the explanation given is that such a policy is good for the mutual relationship and is in accord with the injunction of Jeremiah "Pray for the welfare of the country wherein you live."

In the light of the above, I trust you will not take it amiss when I mention that I was disappointed to see in your reprinted sermon so many quotations from other than our own sacred sources. To be sure, the principle "Accept the truth from whatever source it comes," is a valid one, nevertheless, in the light of what I have said earlier, I firmly believe that spiritual leaders should emphasize the greater values from our own great and sacred sources.

Another general observation, which I have emphasized in one of my public addresses, is to the effect that where a person has a special Mitzvah, function or duty which cannot be fulfilled by others, it is not right that that person should engage in a Mitzvah which can

be done by others. I have in mind the propagation of those values which should properly be the topic of a spiritual leader, and he should not take up his time with general topics which are discussed by others whose function lies in those areas. If this rule is valid at all times, it is even more so especially on such a sacred occasion as the Solemn Days, in the sacred place of the synagogue, and in the sacred time of prayer, when the main topic of the day is, as our Sages have said, "that you accept My Sovereignty upon yourselves."

Rosh Hashana and its theme in Jewish life should not be left in the realm of abstraction, or as if it is something temporary and fleeting, and has no further commitment for the rest of the year when people can say "Let's be like all the gentiles." The significance of Rosh Hashana, especially explained in Chassidus, is that it is the "head" (Rosh) of the Year, indicating that its place in Jewish life is analogous to the place of the head in the physical organism, which is the nerve center of the entire body. The main theme of Rosh Hashana, therefore, is "Extend Thy Majesty over all the world in Thy Glory." This calls for our accepting G-d's Sovereignty, not only on the day of Rosh Hashana, but throughout every day of the year, expressed in our practical observance of the Mitzvoth. The latter is especially to be emphasized. In the final analysis the essential thing is the actual practice and fulfillment of the Mitzvoth, as the Mishna clearly states: **לא המדרש עיקר אלא המעשה.**

Fortunately, one can observe a gratifying change in the attitude of the young generation of American Jews, in that they are not afraid of commitment to the truth, if the full truth be presented to them. Even though some are not yet prepared to accept all the commandments, they at least consider themselves mature enough to be given the truth about Yiddishkeit straight from the shoulder, and resent being treated as children who can only swallow a pill if it is sugarcoated. No doubt in your dealings with young people you have noticed this yourself. At the same time it does not mean that the approach is that of "either-or," that is to say, either he accepts all the Mitzvoth, or else I will have nothing to do with him. It should be explained that even if he is not yet prepared to accept all the commandments as a total commitment, he is not free from the obligation to observe and fulfill all those commandments which he can, until he will gradually reach the maximum which is incumbent upon him as a Jew, which is facilitated by the fact that "one Mitzvah brings another in its train". Underlying it all is the conviction, as explained at length in the Tanya, that every Jew possesses a Divine soul which is truly a spark of G-d above. This Divine soul gives him the ability to overcome all obstacles in his way to fulfill his duties and obligations as a Jew, which, if he fulfills them, are the channels and vessels to receive and enjoy G-d's blessings, both materially and spiritually...

With blessing

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