

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

HYacinth 3-9250

FREE TRANSLATION

מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקוויי
ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Selichos, 5727
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
Our People Israel, Everywhere
G-d bless you all

Greeting and Blessing:

We stand at the conclusion of the year 5727, a year of Hakhel - the special Mitzvah which was observed once in seven years, in the post-Shemittah year, requiring the gathering ("Hakhel") of the people, men, women and children, in the Beth Hamikdosh, for the purpose of strengthening and stimulating them, in their adherence to Torah and Mitzvos with Yiras-Shomayim.¹

Like all matters of Torah, Toras Chayim ("instruction in living"), the precept of Hakhel, too, is reflected in various aspects of the daily life. One such aspect will be the subject of this message - in connection with the present days of introspection leading to conclusions and resolutions which are the prerequisites for the new and better year in all respects. But first, some prefatory remarks:

* * *

Human life expresses itself in three general forms of activity: thought, word, and deed.²

There is an accepted rule that no thing can become totally extinct. It applies also to human thought, word, and deed.³ This is to say that the thoughts, words, and deeds of yesterday, and of the day before, and prior to that, do not vanish without a trace; their influence lingers on, affecting the shape of things of today and tomorrow, as evidenced in actual results, both in regard to the self and to the environment.

Another point in this connection is this: Although at first glance it may appear that an action in the past is no longer under human control: the past is gone, and no person can retrieve it and alter it -- this is really not so. For G-d has given man a Divine power - by means of Teshuvah - to alter not only the course of the future, but also the power directly to affect the past as well: to change it, even to the extent of reversing it altogether, so much so that "willful transgressions are deemed as inadvertencies"⁴ and can, moreover, be converted into positive accomplishments.

Finally, yet another point. There are things which - at certain times - are expressed with more vitality and feeling than at other times. And this brings us to the special significance of Hakhel at this moment.

* * *

Every year at this time the Jew is called upon to take account of all his thoughts, words and deeds during the outgoing year, with a view to preparing himself for Rosh Hashana - when he accepts upon himself the absolute soverrignty of the Creator of the World and King of the World. If such preparedness is called for in any year, surely this should be done with even greater dedication and devotion at the conclusion of the Hakhel-Year. For the significance of Hakhel, in a spiritual sense, is that it indicates⁵ and demands the gathering of all one's thoughts, words and deeds⁵, in order to orientate them toward, and place them in, one's inner "Beth Hamikdosh"⁶, with wholehearted submission to the King's command - the Will of G-d.

This year, at the conclusion of the Hakhel-Year, every Jew must undertake a special "stock-taking" in the spirit of Hakhel, with a firm resolve to:

Change those thoughts, words, and deeds in the daily life which require a change;

Repair and improve those which require more perfection;

And instill more enthusiasm and vitality into those which, though accomplished to perfection in relation to the spiritual level in commonplace months, are yet to be revitalized in the spirit of the present moment, on the eve of the "Coronation" of The King,⁸ when all thoughts, words, and deeds must be on quite a different plane of exultation,

To the extent of realizing the full revelation of G-dliness in the personal life, in the environment, and in the world at large --⁹

In accord with our prayer: "O, extend Thy reign upon all the world, that [every creature] know.. understand.. and declare: G-d, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kingship ruleth over all!"

Reflecting deeply on the truth that nothing need be given up as a total loss, one can see that there is no basis for sadness and despair, not only in relation to the future, but even not in relation to the past. On the contrary, in the fullest assurance that G-d watches over each and every one, and aidsevery good intention and deed,¹¹ everyone can embark upon his, or her, preparedness for the new year with complete confidence.¹² And even if certain matters in the bygone year give cause for profound regret, there is, at the same time, the overriding joy in the realization that the Almighty has given man the ability to convert even willful transgressions (G-d forbid) into accomplishments. It is also self evident that when something is done with joy and confidence, it is accomplished with a greater measure of success.

May the Almighty help each and everyone, man and woman, in the midst of all our people Israel, to take advantage of this opportunity in the fullest measure, and with joy and gladness of heart.

With the blessing of Kesivo vaChasimo Toivo
For a happy and sweet year,

/Signed: Menachem Schneerson/

- (1) ראה וילך (לא, יב): הקהל גו' ולמען ילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם ושפרו לעשות גו'. וברמב"ם (הל' חגיגה רפ"ג): מ"ע להקהיל כו' ולקרות כו' פרשיות שהן מזרזות אותן במצות ומחזקות ידיהם בדת האמת.
- (2) ראה תניא רפ"ד ורפ"ו.
- (3) ראה תניא פכ"ט (לו, ב ושם) אגרת התשובה פ"ו. ובכ"מ. ובזח"ג (לא, ב. קכא, ב) שהזכיר רק עובדא ומלה, י"ל ע"פ מש"כ בריש קו"א לתניא בבי"החמ"ג (קה, א) ועצ"ע.
- (4) יומא פו, ב. וברש"י ד"ה כאן (פו, א): נעקר עונו מתחלתו. וכפס"ד דהלכה אחר קידושין אצל חכם והתירה מקודשת למפרע (כתובות עד, ב).
- (5) ראה לקו"ת תצא (לו, א. לז, א).
- (6) כמש"נ ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם (ראה של"ה ש" האותיות אות ל'. ובכ"מ). ירמי' ז, ד (לקו"ת ר"פ פקודי).
- (7) להעיר שמצות הקהל היא לשמוע קריאת המלך "ויראה עצמו כאילו..מפי הגבורה שומעת שהמלך שליח הוא להשמיע דברי הא-ל" (רמב"ם סוף הל' חגיגה).
- (8) שזהו בר"ה (ר"ה טז, סע"א) וכמו שהי' בר"ה הראשון (שם לא, רע"א. פדר"א פי"א).
- (9) כל העולמות - עשי' יצירה בריאה אצילות וגם בקליפות להכניעם (משנת חסידים מס' ליל ר"ה פ"ח מ"ב).
- (10) ראה תניא פכ"ו ואילך.
- (11) יומא לח, סע"ב: בא לטהר מסייעין אותו.
- (12) להעיר שמצות הקהל זמנה בחג זמן שמחתנו. ובל' החינוך (מצוה תריב): משרשי המצוה..שיקהלו..ויזכו לטובה וישמח הש"י במעשיו.