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FREE TRANSLATION

By the Grace of G-d
Erev¹ Chai Elul,² 5741
Year of Hakhel
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
our People Israel, Everywhere—

G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

The month of Elul—as is well known—is the month of spiritual stocktaking³ for the outgoing year, with a view to rectifying and making good any deficiencies, and ensuring that the new year—may it be a good and blessed one for all of us and our people Israel—will be (even) a better one, much better, in all aspects of the everyday Torah life, both in regard to everyone personally and the near ones, and also the entire environment.⁴

Needless to say, the “balance sheet” must be an accurate one⁵—“neither more nor less,”⁶ in order that the required rectification could be complete, and also the anticipated increase in the coming year (in keeping with the imperative⁷ that “things of holiness should be kept on the ascendancy”) should likewise be complete.

So also in regard to the Mitzvos and their fulfillment (the very object of the said stocktaking), there is the directive “You shall not add to it, nor detract from it.”⁸

At first glance it is not quite clear. Granted that if one overestimates one’s achievements in the past year one will not fully make up any deficiency, nor do Teshuvah and make amends, while, in addition, it may give one a sense of false pride or complacency.⁹ But what could be so wrong if one underestimates one’s achievements, since this will only spur one to do more good deeds in the next year, and the anticipated increase in matters of holiness will be correspondingly greater?

The question is even stronger in regard to the performance of the Mitzvos. Why does the Torah enjoin us,¹⁰ “You shall not add to it,” as mentioned, which is seemingly in contradiction with another Torah imperative, namely, “with all your might”—a phrase which is interpreted, among other interpretations, also in the sense,¹¹ of “with your very utmost”—without measure and constraints?



One of the explanations of the above is as follows:

If a person should rely on his own feelings and inclinations, one can easily make a mistake and do exactly the *opposite* of what had to be done. This is true not only in a situation in which one is personally involved—considering that “a person is partial to himself”¹² and cannot be entirely objective; but also in regard to another person—inasmuch as the evaluation of one’s performance of Mitzvos which one has to make at this time includes, and must include, the Great Rule of the Torah, *V’ohavto l’re’acho komocho* (“You shall love your fellow as yourself”).¹³ The imperative, “You shall not add, nor detract,” applies also to the Great Rule of the Torah and its actual observance.

The said Rule requires that one should love a fellow Jew “as yourself.” Self-love does not depend on any reason (such as discovering in oneself extraordinary admirable qualities, and the like). Such should also be the love for “your fellow,” as explained at length in various sources.¹⁴

At the same time it is coupled with the imperative that in certain cases “You shall not add” (overdo) in loving your fellow as yourself. For it is possible that because of this extra measure of love (“love distorts judgment”)¹⁵ he may be inclined to help a fellow commit a transgression, G-d forbid, especially a “small transgression,” etc.

Or when it comes to the Mitzvah of “You shall admonish your friend”¹⁶ (particularly a juvenile, whether in knowledge

of true Yiddishkeit, or in age), it is possible that because of misplaced love, having stretched it too far, he may refrain from admonishing his friend even privately (tête-à-tête). Hence the injunction “You shall not add to it,” lest he fails to carry out his duty of “You shall admonish.”

Similarly, at the other end: One may feel impelled to embark upon the Mitzvah of admonishing from the start in a stormy and abusive manner, in public, exposing one to shame, and the like. Hence the injunction “You shall not detract” from your love for your fellow, for the Torah requires that the admonition be administered first “in privacy, gently, and in soft-spoken language,” and only afterwards, if the offender does not take it to heart, one is justified to admonish his fellow publicly,¹⁷ etc.



The main purpose of all discussions is, of course, to bring out the essential thing which is the action,¹⁸ in terms of actual conduct in the everyday life. Hence this reminder that now is the high time, particularly in the days from Chai (18) Elul to Rosh Hashanah (each day corresponding to a month of the year¹⁹), to take stock of all activities of the daily life, bearing in mind that of a Jew it is demanded that “All your actions should be for the sake of Heaven,” and “Know Him in all your ways.”²⁰ And in all this, one is assured of G-d’s help.²¹

Especially, and most importantly—in the matter of *Ahavas Yisroel*, to the end of being implemented literally: loving each Jew individually,²² and not merely the Jewish people as a whole, and getting involved in the individual’s needs,²³ material and certainly the spiritual, doing one’s utmost to be of help, and in a practical way.

However, one should be mindful of the said basic points in the exercise of this love (“the right hand draws near, the left hand restrains”)²⁴ that it be in complete harmony with *Toras Chayim* (“instruction in living”) and *Toras Emes* (“truthful instruction”), particularly as set forth in the Shulchan Aruch, part *Orach Chayim*, and part *Choshen Mishpot*.²⁵

And to use one’s influence to encourage every Jew one can reach to do likewise, and also in accord with the principle that “things of holiness should be on the ascendancy.” (Even if there is a doubt²⁶ whether the effort will succeed, it should nevertheless be made, since it concerns a Great Rule in the Torah and an explicit Mitzvah in the Torah.)



In light of the commentary also of our Sages of blessed memory²⁷ that “V’ohavto *le’re’acho komocho*” alludes to, and embraces, the Jews’ love for G-d, who is referred to as “re’acho v’re’a ovicho” (“your friend and your father’s friend”),²⁸ which invokes and strengthens even more G-d’s love for the Jews, who are called “achim v’re’im” (brothers and friends), so to speak, of G-d,²⁹

May G-d grant that His love for the Jews be materialized also in practical terms of everyone’s needs, in blessings of “children, health and ample sustenance,”

And may we see very soon the fulfillment of our prayer,³⁰ “Hashem, G-d of Hosts, restore us, light up Your countenance, and we shall be delivered,”

And each and everyone, in the midst of our people Israel, be blessed with a Kesivo vachasimo toivo for a good and sweet year, both materially and spiritually.

With esteem and blessing for Hatzlocho in all above, and

With prayerful wishes for a
Kesivo vachasimo toivo,
for a good and sweet year,

/signed/ MENACHEM SCHNEERSON

(1) זמן הכנה לח"י אלול, ע"ד מרז"ל מי שטרח בע"ש יאכל בשבת (ע"ז ג, א). (2) יום הולדת את שני המאורות הגדולים: הבעש"ט (בשנת נח"ת) ורבנו הזקן (בשנת קה"ת) — ספר השיחות תש"ג ע' 141 ואילך. (3) ראה סה"מ אידיש ע' 75. שם ע' 129. וראה לקוטי מהרי"ל הל' ימים הנוראים. ל"ת להאריז"ל עה"פ (תצא כא, יג) ובכחה גוי ירח ימים (וראה גם אוה"ת נ"ך כרך ב ס"ע א' ובשוה"ג שם). טור או"ח ר"ס תקפא. (4) שהרי כל מי שיש בידו למחות ואינו מוחה כו' (שבת נד, ב. ע"ז יח, א. שבועות לט, סע"א וריש ע"ב). ומזה מובן למי שיש בידו ליכות את הרבים. (5) להעיר מפתגם כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר (בשם אביו כ"ק אדמו"ר (מהורש"ב) נ"ע): אזוי ווי מען דארף וויסן די חסרונות, אזוי דארף מען וויסן די אייגענע מעלות — לקו"ד כרך ד תקפא, א. וראה גם סה"מ תרפ"ח ע' קצט. "היום יום" ס"ע קז. (6) להעיר מפרש"י עה"ת (נשא ז, פה. מספרי שם): למדך שהיו כלי המקדש כו'. (7) ברכות כה, א. וש"נ. (8) ראה יג, א. וראה ואתהנן ד, ב. — וראה לקו"ש חי"ד ע' 179 ה' 6. (9) ולהעיר מצוואת הריב"ש (הוצאת קה"ת) סי"ב. קונטרס ומעין מט"רטז. (10) ואתהנן ו, ה. (11) הראב"ע שם. ובארוכה — תו"א מקץ ל, סע"ג. לקו"ת שלח מב, ג. דרמ"צ קנב, ב. קס, ב. וראה ספר הערכים"ח ערך אהבת ה' — בכל לבבך, נפשך ומאדך ס"ד סק"א. וש"נ. (12) סנהדרין ט, סע"ב. וש"נ. (13) תו"כ (הובא בפרש"י) עה"פ קדושים יט, יח. (14) ראה קונטרס אהבת ישראל. וש"נ. וראה סה"מ תר"ל ע' ח: והאדם נברא בצלם אלקים וע"כ צריך לאהוב את רעך כמוך ממש, כי אם הוא מבזה את חבירו הוא מבזה הצלם אלקים ע"כ ואהבת כו'. (15) ב"ר פני"ה, ח. פס"ז ופרש"י עה"פ וירא כב, ג. (16) קדושים שם, יז. שו"ע אדה"ז או"ח סקנ"ו ס"ז ואילך. וש"נ. וראה או"ת להה"מ עה"פ (הוצאת קה"ת — מא, ב). (17) שו"ע אדה"ז שם ס"ח (הל' אונאה ס"ל). וש"נ. — וראה שם: וכי"ז בעבירה כו'. ולהעיר משו"ע שם הל' נזקי גו"נ סט"ז. (18) אבות פ"א מי"ז. (19) סה"ש תש"ג ע' 177. שם ע' 179. (20) אבות פ"ב מי"ב. משלי ג, ו. וראה רמב"ם הל' דעות ספ"ג. טושו"ע או"ח סרל"א. שו"ע אדה"ז או"ח סקנ"ו ס"ב. (21) ראה קידושין ל, ב. סוכה נב, ריש ע"ב. (22) להעיר מכש"ט (הוצאת קה"ת) הוספות סי' קל. וש"נ. (23) ראה סה"ש קיץ ה'ש"ת ע' 157. ובכ"מ. (24) סוטה מז, א. סנהדרין קז, ב. (25) ראה שו"ע אדה"ז שם, ובמ"מ וציונים לשם (מג"א סו"ס קנו. רמ"א ומג"א סתר"ח. רמ"א וסמ"ע לשו"ע חו"מ סרכ"ח). (26) ולהעיר מתניא פרק לב (מא, ב): לא הפסיד שכר מצות אהבת ריעים. (27) פרש"י ד"ה דעלך — שבת לא, א. (28) משלי כז, י. שמו"ר רפכ"ז. זח"ב נה, ב. פרש"י עה"פ. (29) כמ"ש (תהלים קכב, ח) "למען אחי ורעי גוי". זח"ב שם. זח"ג ז, ב. ועוד. וראה סידור שער הק"ש (עו, ד ואילך), תו"ח שמות תנן, א ואילך. סה"מ תר"ל ע' ז' בסופו ואילך. (30) תהלים פ, ב.