

Letters From the Rebbe

- Written originally in English -

Issue 4

- Behaalosecha 5783 -

The Parsha - Making Aliya - Newly Released

ב"ה

FORWARD

We are proud to present the fourth installment of *Letters from the Rebbe*, a selection of the Rebbe's English letters.

The letters found in this publication were originally authored (or edited) by the Rebbe in English. The vast sea of the Rebbe's English letters contains a wealth of guidance and perspective on myriads of topics in a style relatable to Jews from all walks of life. These letters, as well as over 5,000 more, can be viewed on the Rebbe Responsa app.

In this week's issue are letters on the Parsha, as well as two newly discovered letters on the subject of South African Jewry and the Rebbe's stance on making Aliya to the Holy Land.

The Rebbe Responsa Team

1

Jewish Education – Kindling Souls¹

By the Grace of G-d
 Erev Shabbos-Kodesh
 p. Bha'alosecho, 5728
 Brooklyn N.Y.

To the Graduates of Beth Chana

Blessing and Greeting:

On the occasion of your forthcoming Graduation, I send you my prayerful wishes to go from strength to strength in your studies and spiritual development.

Inasmuch as the Sidra Bha'alosecho will be read this Shabbos, prior to your Graduation, I trust you will derive lasting inspiration from this meaningful and significant Torah portion, which begins with the Mitzva of **Lighting the Menorah**.

According to the explanation of the Alter Rebbe,² author of the **Tanya** and **Shulchan Aruch**, and founder of Chabad, the “Lighting of the Menorah” – in the practical application in the Jew’s daily life means lighting up the soul, which is symbolized by the Menorah, as it is written, “G-d’s Lamp is the Soul of Man”³ - to illuminate it with the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth, for “a Mitzvah is a Lamp, and the Torah is Light.”⁴

This, indeed, is the purpose of **Chinuch** – which means not only education but also dedication. To kindle the souls of Jewish

¹ See *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 25, letters 9,507-8 (pp. 163-166), for letters with a similar theme. For additional letters to Beis Chana see Rebbe Resposa, letters dated: 15 Sivan, 5729 (graduation); 13 Cheshvan, 5731 (New Haven, Conn.).

² See *Likkutei Torah*, Parshas Beha'alosecha 29c ff., 33b ff.

³ *Mishlei* 20:27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6:23.

children with Torah and Mitzvoth, so that they would be dedicated “Sanctuaries” for the Divine Shechinah.

Moreover, this “kindling” is to be done in a manner that the “flame rises up of its own accord,” as Rashi comments on the word Bha’alosecho.⁵ This is to say, to fire the student with such enthusiasm and eagerness for steady advancement in Torah and Mitzvoth as to attain the level of the teacher, and even rise above it.

And as the purpose of the Menorah in the Sanctuary was to illuminate the whole world, so it is the purpose of Lubavitcher students to spread the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth all around them, near and far. Indeed, this has been made the specific task of all those who are fortunate to come under Lubavitch Chinuch, as the great and saintly founder of the first Lubavitcher Yeshiva expressed it: The students shall be **neros l’ho’ir**⁶ – shining lights, radiating the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth, permeated with the light and warmth of Chasidus, all around them.

With blessing for Hatzlocho and good tidings,

M. Schneerson

⁵ Bamidbar 8:2.

⁶ See *Sefer HaSichos - Toras Shalom*, pp. 75ff. *Kuntres Eitz Chaim* chapter 22.

Lubavitch
770 Eastern Parkway
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NYcinc14 3-9250

בית מדרש חסידים
ברוקלין

770 אסטון פארקווי
ברוקלין 13

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shabbos-kodesh
p. Bha'aloesecho, 5728
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This, indeed, is the purpose of Chinuch - which means not only education, but also dedication: To kindle the souls of Jewish children with Torah and Mitzvoth, so that they would be dedicated "Sanctuaries" for the Divine Shechinah.

Moreover, this "kindling" is to be done in a manner that the "Flame rises up of its own accord," as Rashi comments on the word Bha'aloesecho. This is to say, to fire the student with such enthusiasm and eagerness for steady advancement in Torah and Mitzvoth as to attain the level of the teacher, and even rise above it.

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With blessing for Hatzlocho
and good tidings,

M. Schwartz

2

Follow the Ark of the Covenant; without Miriam the Jews are Stalled

FREE TRANSLATION⁷

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shabbos-Kodesh B'haalosecho
("By the word of G-d they rested
and by the word of G-d they journeyed"⁸)
5724. Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Participants in the
Annual Convention of the
Nshei uBnois Chabad⁹

G-d bless you all

Blessing and Greeting:

One of the highlights of this week's portion, B'haalosecho, is the description of the manner in which the Jewish people journeyed through the wilderness: "By the word of G-d they rested and by the word of G-d they journeyed; the Divine observance they observed, at G-d's command through Moshe" (9:23). On all their sojourns, the Ark of the Divine Covenant went before them to find for them a place of rest (10:33).

⁷ This letter was sent to the convention on the Rebbe's stationary. Although this letter is titled "Free Translation", such letters were looked over, and many times edited, by the Rebbe (see, for example, the Rebbe's edits on the letter to the Annual Governor's Dinner of Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim Montreal (Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5736) On the Rebbe Responsa app).

The Yiddish version of this letter is printed in *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 23, letter 8,836.

⁸ *Bamidbar* 9:18.

⁹ N'shei Chabad (Lubavitch Women's Organization) was established by the Rebbe in 1955. The Rebbe would send a letter to their annual convention which would occur in the summer months (many times around Parshas Behaalosecha).

The holy Torah which is eternal, as all its teachings are eternal and valid everywhere and at all times - emphasizes that only when the Jewish people follow the Ark of the Divine Covenant, namely the holy Torah, can Jews enjoy rest and be sheltered in the terrible wilderness filled with deadly dangers. So has it always been throughout the long Golus-history of our people, and on all the wanderings which we Jews had, and still have, to make until we reach the end of our journey when true rest and redemption await us through our righteous Moshiach.¹⁰

As in all crucial moments in Jewish life, so also - and especially so - during the time of sojourn, the Jewish woman occupies a central place. This is indicated at the conclusion of this week's portion, where the Torah tells us that the whole people waited for Miriam and did not move without her.¹¹ Thus, when the Jewish people are on the move, it is not sufficient that Moshe and Aharon should accompany it; Miriam must also be there. Without Miriam the people are stalled! Our Sages of blessed memory declare that Miriam merited the honor of the whole people, with the holy Ark and the Clouds of Glory, etc., waiting for her - because she too waited and saved Moshe Rabbenu when he lay in a basket on the River.

We are living at a time when our people cannot move forward towards the Divinely promised "rest and inheritance"¹² without the active participation of our Jewish women in the work of spreading the Torah and Mitzvoth in the daily life. In every branch of Jewish life, especially in the field of Chinuch al-tahas-hakodesh Jewish women and daughters must fulfill the task which Divine Providence has bestowed upon them. This is the duty of all Jewish women and daughters, particularly of Nshei uBnois Chabad, who have the Zechus of sharing in the

¹⁰ See also Rebbe Responsa, letter dated 10 Sivan, 5724.

¹¹ *Bamidbar* 12:15.

¹² *Sotah* 9b.

illumination and inspiration of the teachings of Chabad and of the Nesiei Chabad.¹³

I pray that the Convention should fulfill all expectations and should be blessed with Hatzlocho to accomplish in actual reality all that must be accomplished by the Convention as a whole, and by each member of the Nshei uBnois Chabad in particular.

Wishing you Hatzlocho in your affairs, both private and general

Signed /Menachem Schneerson/

3

Light Up the World

By the Grace of G-d
23rd of Sivan, 5732
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Profs. Abraham S. & E. H. Luchins¹⁴
53 Fordham Court
Albany N.Y. 12209

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge with thanks receipt of your two volumes of Wertheimer's Seminars Revisited: *Social Influences and Power*, 1971, and *Problems in Social Psychology II*, 1972. I appreciate indeed your thoughtfulness in sending me these important volumes.

¹³ See *Devarim* 12:9.

¹⁴ Abraham S. (Avrohom Shmuel) Luchins (March 8, 1914, Brooklyn, N.Y. – December 27, 2005, N.Y.) was an American Gestalt Psychologist and a pioneer of group psychotherapy. From 1962 on he was professor of psychology at the University of Albany, State University of New York, and professor emeritus from 1984.

For additional letters to Dr. and Mrs. Luchins, see Rebbe Responsa, letters dated: 14 Teves 5731; Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5732.

This also gives me the opportunity to express again the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Luchins at the Convention of Neshei Chabad. For, after having met you and the children, it was only natural that I should be interested to meet also the Akeres Habayis.

Inasmuch as we have just read the Sedra of B'haalos'cho, may G-d grant that for many years to come you will continue to spread the light, of the Torah and Mitzvoth in your immediate as well as wider environment, as symbolized by the Mitzvo of lighting the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdosh of old. For, although the Mitzvo pertains to a specific time and place, and was the function of the Kohanim, it is in its inner and essential aspect eternal in making it the duty of every Jew, man and woman, to light up the Divine Soul within themselves and in other Jews, and to do so in a manner of B'haalos'cho, namely that the flame would continue to rise up of its own accord.¹⁵ Moreover, since we received the Torah at Sinai, all of the Jewish people has been raised to the status of a "Kingdom of Kohanim and a Holy Nation."¹⁶

If every Jew is to be a "Lamp-lighter", to light up the soul which is the "Lamp of G-d"¹⁷ with the Ner - Mitzvo, v'Torah - Or,¹⁸ this is particularly incumbent upon those who have a prominent position and a wide sphere of influence, especially with the young generation, and whose personal life therefore serves as an example for others to emulate.

With all good wishes for continued Hatzlocho, and for good tidings, materially and spiritually.

With Blessing,

M. Schneerson

¹⁵ See *Rashi* on *Bamidbar* 8:2.

¹⁶ *Shemos* 19:6.

¹⁷ *Mishlei* 20:27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6:23.

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
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תורת מנחם מנדל שניאורסאהן

ליובאוויטש

770 אסטריין פארקוויי

ברוקלין 13 נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d
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If every Jew is to be a "Lamp-lighter" to light up the soul which is the "Lamp of G-d" with the "Ner - Mitzvo, v'Torah - Or," this is particularly incumbent upon those who have a prominent position and a wide sphere of influence, especially with the young generation, and whose personal life therefore serves as an example for others to emulate.

With all good wishes for continued Hatzlocho, and for good tidings, materially and spiritually,

With blessing, *M. Schneerson*

4 Shining Inward

By the Grace of G-d
1st day of the Week of Noso,
Isru-Chag Shovuos, 5739
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the Chabad Celebration
Sponsored by Chabad of Northern California
G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

I am pleased to be informed about the forthcoming Chabad Celebration and take this opportunity of extending congratulations to the Guests of Honor, and prayerful wishes to each and all of you for a joyous and inspiring evening.

There is a well known dictum by the Founder of Chabad - the Alter Rebbe, author of the **Tanya** and (Rav's) **Shulchan Aruch**: "A Jew should live with the time."¹⁹ What he meant, he explained, was not the changing times as commonly understood by this phrase, but the eternal "time-piece" of the Torah, namely, the current Sedrah of the week (by which Jews often date letters and events). For, the Sedrah of the week not only marks the time, but, more importantly, sheds Divine light on the events taking place in that week, especially important public events. In other words, we can, and should, derive timely instruction from that section of the Torah for all that happens that week - as everything is, of course, by Divine Providence. Indeed, the word "Torah" means "instruction," "guidance." Moreover, since the weekly Sedrah is divided into seven portions, corresponding to the seven days of the week, each portion illuminates more specifically the events of that particular day.

¹⁹ *HaYom Yom*, 2 Cheshvan.

In light of the above, it is significant that the Chabad Celebration is taking place on the first day of the Sedrah **B'ha'alo secho**, which begins with the commandment to light the Menorah ("When you light the lamps,"²⁰ etc.).

While this lighting refers to the Menorah in the Sanctuary of old, the Divine instructions contained in this commandment go deeper and beyond the physical Sanctuary and physical Menorah. For, all instructions of the Torah, like the Torah itself, are eternal; they are timeless in their deeper spiritual aspects, guiding and inspiring Jewish life at all times and in all places.

The Torah tells us that corresponding to the physical Sanctuary and physical Menorah (**Ner Tamid**²¹) there is the spiritual "sanctuary" that is in the heart and soul of every Jew, and the soul itself is the Eternal Lamp of G-d, as it is written, "the soul of man is the Lamp of G-d," (**Ner Hashem nishmas odom**).²² Hence, in a deeper sense, the commandment to light the Menorah in the Sanctuary implies the obligation of every Jew, man or woman, to illuminate his (or her) soul with the Divine light of Torah and Mitzvos (Ner - Mitzvah, vTorah - Or).²³

Moreover, one of the specific instructions concerning the lighting of the Menorah is that its seven lamps "shall shine toward the face (**pnei**) of the Menorah." Commenting on this - and inasmuch as the word for "face" in our Holy Tongue (**Panim**) also means "inwardness," since a person's face usually reflects his inner personality, the soul with its seven attributes - the Alter Rebbe explains²⁴ that the said instruction implies that a Jew should strive to light up his soul so completely, and with such total dedication and fervor, as to be always fully attuned to the very inwardness and core of his Jewish essence - that

²⁰ *Bamidbar* 8:2.

²¹ *Shemos* 27:20.

²² *Mishlei* 20:27.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6:23.

²⁴ See *Likkutei Torah*, Parshas Beha'alo secha 29d.

"Pintele Yid" which always remains intact and unaffected by the vicissitudes of the material world, regardless of the environment in which he lives.

Now, further relating the above to the present event, it is emphasized in Chassidic teachings that what particularly stimulates, inspires and elevates the soul is a Chassidic **nigun** (melody). In a state of inner illumination, when words are **too** poor and constraining to express one's soulful yearning for G-dliness, and the deepest joy of feeling the nearness of G-d - it is in melody and song that these sublime feelings are expressed. Which is why song and melody have such an important place in Chassidic life.

I trust that the experience of this very special event of joyous song and dance will be a source of lasting inspiration for each and all of you, and, what is most essential, that this inspiration will be translated into active Jewish experience - the experience of sanctifying all aspects of the everyday life with Torah and Mitzvos, since "the essential thing is the deed."²⁵

Moreover, there is no need to tell you that there are, sad to say, many "lost" Jewish souls that need to be kindled and illuminated. I sincerely hope, therefore, that every one of you will join the ranks of the Chabad "Lamp Lighters" who are doing just that, to help spread the light and life of Torah and Mitzvos in your surroundings, until the whole environment is permeated with this light and vitality.

With esteem and blessing for Hatzlocho in all above

M. Schneerson

²⁵ See *Avos* 1:17.

5

Jewish Women Are Lamplighters

FREE RENDITION

By the Grace of G-d
 Erev Shabbos-Kodesh Mevorchim
 Chodesh Sivan, 5740

Brooklyn, N.Y.
 To All Participants in the
 25th Annual Convention of the
 National Council of Nshei uBnos Chabad
 Brooklyn N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This year's Convention is taking place in the days connected with Shabbos Parshas **Beha'alocho**. And, as has been often pointed out, it is possible - hence, required - to derive instructive Torah-lessons (Torah meaning "instruction") from the weekly Sedra that have a special relevance to the events and happenings of the particular week.

In light of the above, it is significant that right in the beginning of the Sedra - **Beha'alocho es haneros**²⁶ - there is a clear instruction that a Jew has to "kindle lights" to illuminate the surroundings. In this, too, a Jew has to emulate, so to speak, the Creator, Who, immediately after creating heaven and earth, gave the order, "**Let there be light!**"²⁷

The essential thing about a candle (in the ordinary sense) is that it should give forth light and illuminate its surroundings. An unlighted, or extinguished, candle brings no benefit and has no meaning in that state **per se**. Only when it gives light and shines

²⁶ *Bamidbar* 8:2.

²⁷ *Bereishis* 1:3.

does it fulfill its purpose. And its purpose is to serve man, by enabling him to see by its light what is doing around him, and by illuminating his way, he should not stumble in darkness, and generally to help him to do and accomplish what he must.

The nature of a candle is that when one puts a flame to its wick, even a small flame - so long as he does it effectively, the flame catches on, and then it continues to give off light on its own. This, too, is indicated in the text, as our Sages comment: **When you light the lamps** (of the Menorah) - "(light them so) that the flame goes up on its own."²⁸

The instruction is this:

G-d has endowed the human being with a soul, a Divine "lamp," as it is written, "The soul of man is the lamp of G-d"²⁹ - to illuminate his (or her) path in life, and to illuminate the world. But this soul-lamp, or candle, has first to be ignited with the flame of Torah in order that it should shine forth with its true light, the light of **Ner Mitzva vTorah Or**.³⁰

And this is the task and purpose of every Jew: To be a brightly shining lamp and to kindle, or add brightness to, every Divine "lamp" - Jewish soul - with which he or she comes in contact. And one must do this to completeness, in a way that the lamps they light should likewise continue to shine brightly on their own, and should also become "lamp-lighters," kindling other souls, "from candle to candle," in a continuous chain.

Needless to say, though the instruction **Beha'alosecho es haneros** was given to Aharon haKohen, it includes all Jews, in their spiritual life, since every Jew is a member of **Mamleches kohanim** ("Kingdom of G-d's servants").³¹ Moreover, there is the exhortation: "Be of the disciples of Aharon... loving the creatures

²⁸ See *Rashi, Bamidbar*, op. cit. (based on *Shabbos* 21a).

²⁹ *Mishlei* 20:27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6:23.

³¹ *Shemos* 19:6.

and bringing them closer to Torah."³² To be a disciple of Aharon one must be permeated with Ahavas Yisroel and spread Yiddishkeit.

If the above pertains to every Jew and all Jews, it is even more emphatically relevant to the Jewish woman, for she is the **actual** candle-lighter, who was given the special Divine assignment, extraordinary privilege, and bright Mitzva of lighting the candles for the holy Shabbos and Yom Tov. And in a deeper spiritual sense:

In her role as **Akeres Habayis** it is her Zechus to light up the Jewish home and everyone in it - also her husband and children, and the friends and visitors who come into the home; and in her role as **Eim habonim** (Mother of the children)³³ she is the first to light up the young Neshomelach of the infants, until they begin to shine on their own. Thus she has a very important share in making her house, and the House of Israel as a whole - a fitting home for the Divine Shechinah, in accordance with G-d's design and desire - "**that I may dwell among (and within) them.**"³⁴

There is no need to emphasize at length that in order to fulfil these most important tasks, Jewish daughters must be thoroughly prepared with a Torah-true education **al taharas hakodesh**, from the cradle to the Chuppah, and also later, assuming the duties of **Akeres Habayis** and **Eim habonim**, they must continue to deepen and advance their chinuch, so that they can illuminate and brighten their Jewish house and the whole House of Israel with the light and vitality of Ner Mitzva vTorah Or in the fullest measure.

³² *Avos* 1:12.

³³ Based on *Tehillim* 113:9.

³⁴ *Shemos* 25:8. For the addition of the parenthesis See *Shalah*, Terumah 325b; 326b.

May G-d grant that the Convention of Nshei uBnos Chabad - especially being the 25th ³⁵ כה יעשה ה' וכה יוסיף - will inspire even more enthusiasm and more vitality in all abovementioned aspects, stimulated still more by the assurance that G-d **acts** (יעשה) and **increases** (יוסיף) His help in providing the necessary strength, coupled with His blessings, to be matzliach in all above in the fullest measure, with Chabad-Chassidic light, inspiration and joy.

With blessing for much Hatzlocho and good tidings in all above,

/Signed: Menachem Schneerson/³⁶

³⁵ *Melachim I*2:23. The numerical value of the word *Ko* is 25.

³⁶ For more of the Rebbe's English letters on Parshas Behaalosecha, see Rebbe Responsa, letters dated: 27 Sivan 5719; 19 Sivan 5724; p. Behaalosecha 5728; 15 Sivan 5729; 28 Iyar 5742; 18 Iyar 5745; 8 Sivan 5745; 21 Sivan 5748.

Newly Released

–Aliya to the Holy Land–

6

By the Grace of G-d
29th of Kislev, 5740
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. I. Kalmanowitz
Chairman
S. A. Zionist Federation

Mr. I. Abramowitz
Chairman
S. A. Jewish Board of Deputies

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to confirm receipt of your letter of Nov. 9th, received with considerable delay.³⁷

³⁷ Below is an excerpt of their letter:

“...As you are aware, the Lubavitch Organisation of Johannesburg has currently embarked on a major and costly school-building project... While we fully appreciate the important role played by the Lubavitch Movement in Jewish spiritual and educational life worldwide, and not least here in South Africa, we earnestly believe that this current project is ill-timed in terms of the community’s very limited human and financial resources which at present are stretched to breaking point.

South African Jewry is a dwindling community, very well serviced by a comprehensive network of day schools, all of which are in a parlous financial state since they are in receipt of no subscriptions from government...

Accordingly, we strenuously urge you to contact the Lubavitch Movement in Johannesburg to reconsider the present project, and we give you our firm assurance that no effort will be spared on the part of the organisations we represent to ensure that the educational requirements of the Lubavitch Movement here in Johannesburg are met through the existing available facilities...

Needless to say, it is difficult for me to go into the specific aspects of a situation overseas. However, knowing personally the people in charge of the Lubavitcher organization in your country and city, their dedication to service and their concern for the best interests of the community they serve, I am confident that a candid personal discussion with them will bring about the proper solution, one that will be doubly good - tov lashomayim v'tov labriyos.³⁸

I am impelled, however, to take a position in regard to one point in your letter which is almost independent of the issues. I refer to your basic premise that "South African Jewry is a dwindling community."

To be sure, going by bare statistics, the statement reflects the situation as it is at this moment. However, the mere fact of an existing situation need not be accepted as irreversible, hence to be dealt with accordingly. There are situations in our present day and age which call for a contrary response, in an all-out effort to reverse the trend. That this approach is both right and effective has been borne out by experience in similar situations in the U.S.A. and other countries, where the tide of dwindling communities and dwindling neighborhoods has not only been arrested, but also reversed, with notable success, though varying in degree.

With all due respect to your expertise and intimate knowledge of the S.A. Jewish community, I must take issue with your premise that a dwindling Jewish community must inevitably curtail its educational facilities. In most Jewish communities, including JHB, there are hundreds of Jewish children who are going astray and on the road to total assimilation for lack of adequate Jewish education. They constitute an untapped reserve, for whom existing facilities should not only be sustained, but also expanded.

³⁸ *Kiddushin* 40a.

As for the quality of Jewish education, there is surely no need to point out to you that in order to achieve its purpose, Jewish education must be in keeping with the basic principle enunciated by the Wisest of All Men, King Solomon, who counseled: "Educate the lad according to his way, so that when he grows old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

In other words, whatever the advantages of a uniform educational system **may** be, or one that is limited to two of three streams at the most, it cannot compensate for the overriding benefits of a diversified system reflecting the pluralistic nature of most communities in our present day and age, and offering the best possible and most natural appeal to every child individually.

Virtually every Jewish community, including S. A. Jewry, comprises a variety of groups, each with a distinct identity in terms of ancestral heritage and traditions, as exemplified also in different synagogues, with different rites and customs, such as Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Yemenite, etc. All of them existing and flourishing side by side contribute to the advancement of the Jewish community as a whole. It is within this frame of educating the lad "according to his way" - that Jewish education can succeed most, provided, of course, the basics of Torah education, common to them all, are upheld.

You surely know that Gedolei Yisroel in all generations scrupulously upheld the validity of tradition in regard to the Nusach of Tefilah, tracing its variety to the original Twelve Tribes of Israel.

A case in point: When Lubavitch came to North Africa and established there Yeshivos and educational institutions, my predecessor, my father-in-law of saintly memory, who initiated the broad program, gave clear directives not to encroach upon the customs and rites of the local Jewish communities, though for themselves the Lubavitch personnel had their own Minyan to follow their own Nusach. This approach immediately won the trust of the community leaders and had a salutary effect on the success of the educational process.

Needless to say, parents are free to choose the type of school they prefer for their children, and even change their Nusach. But it must be voluntary. Experience has shown that whenever a uniform educational system has been imposed on a multi-faceted community, it inevitably proved **disastrous**.

I have expanded somewhat on the subject of Jewish education, because I believe that the principles outlined above are universal in their application, and may be helpful to clarify the issues. This is all I can say from a distance, especially since I am convinced that a heart-to-heart discussion can easily solve the problem, **if** there is one, as mentioned above. All the more so, in view of the fact that all parties are sincerely concerned for the best interests of the community.

In light of the above, the most practical purpose of my writing is what follows next, and this, too, pertains to the problem of S. African Jewry being a dwindling community, to quote you again.

Before concluding this letter, permit me to turn my attention, and yours, to another aspect of the problem of South African Jewry as a "dwindling community." Though this aspect is independent of the subject matter of your letter, it has serious implications far beyond the state of the community itself, and I would be remiss if I were not to take this opportunity of bringing it to your attention.

As you know, the RSA is one of the very few remaining friends of the Land of Israel in the present international arena. While common interests are, of course, important factors in international relations, there can be no doubt that the South African Jewish community and its leaders have had a significant part in developing and fostering this good relationship.

Needless to say, a healthy, vigorous and flourishing Jewish community is required in order to exert maximum influence on the government, and, clearly, such influence is bound to suffer if the community is allowed to dwindle, whether physically or spiritually, or both. Hence, if there is still a dwindling trend, it

must be halted, and, indeed, reversed. I hope and trust, therefore, that if any communal leader, or influential member of the community, or any Jew with roots in the South African community contemplates leaving it, they will seriously reconsider it, bearing in mind the impact not only on the community itself, but also how it would affect their fellow-Jews everywhere, and in Eretz Yisroel in particular, inasmuch as כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.³⁹

Closer home, the South African Jewish community must surely be aware of its impact on neighboring smaller Jewish communities, particularly in Rhodesia, where despite recent erosion there is a firm determination to maintain a viable and normal Jewish existence and development. Obviously, the future of the South African Jewish community will have a great impact on these, as well as more distant Jewish communities faced with similar problems.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above vital points.

With esteem and blessing,

M. Schneerson

³⁹ *Shavuos* 39a.

By the Grace of G-d
9th of Sivan, 5741
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Prof. M. Arkin, Director-General
SAZF
34 De Villiers St.
13 Johannesburg 2000
South Africa

Greeting and Blessing

This is to confirm receipt of your letter of March 30, 1981,⁴⁰ which reached me with some delay. I regret that because of pressure of duties, this acknowledgment has been unavoidably delayed.

With regard to the subject matter of your letter, namely, a request for clarification of my view on Aliyah, I had hoped that in view of the fact that Aliyah is not an academic question, but has been going on for many years, the factual results would speak for themselves, and there would be no need for expressing views and opinions. However, since you are still requesting my response to a letter of over a year ago (26, 3, 1980),⁴¹ I will summarize my views, after some prefatory remarks.

Insofar as Lubavitch is concerned, you surely know that there is a flourishing Chabad Village near Lod of immigrants from behind the Iron Curtain, and more recently, a second Kfar

⁴⁰ The letter reads: "Over a year ago, on 26 March 1980 the Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, Mr I Kalmanowitz wrote to you requesting clarification concerning your attitude towards Aliyah from South Africa. To date no response has been received to that letter and I enclose a copy herewith in case it went astray."

⁴¹ The letter reads: "...I would be most grateful if you would clarify what appears to be a somewhat ambiguous assertion. That is, when you state that Jews should reconsider leaving South Africa do you include Israel as a destination in that recommendation?"

Chabad is emerging with projects for additional hundreds of apartments. There is a Chabad settlement in Kiryat Malachi, Nachalat Har Chabad, and a Shikun Chabad in Jerusalem. There is also a rapidly expanding Kiryat Chabad in Safed. This organized Chabad Aliyah is, of course, in addition to the old Chabad Yishuvim since the time of the Founder of the Chabad movement (some 200 years ago). There have also been many individual families, not necessarily Chabad (Lubavitch), that have sought advice and have been encouraged to settle in Eretz Yisroel on their own merits.

Now with regard to Aliyah in general - aside from situations where there is a compelling need for emigration, as from Arab lands, the Soviet Union, etc., and aside also special cases such as reunification of families, and the like - it is clear that in order that Aliyah should achieve its goal, **and not be counter productive**, and in view of the limited resources, there must be a set of priorities as to what kind of Aliyah should be concentrated on. Several basic factors must be taken into account:

1) That the new immigrant in Eretz Yisroel should be able to contribute towards the development and well-being of Eretz Yisroel; certainly not be detrimental to it.

2) The new immigrant should be able to be integrated into the economy of the land, and not become a burden on the already **overburdened economy**.

3) Even where the said conditions (1) and (2) are in order, the gain of a new immigrant, or group of immigrants, should be weighed against the loss which their emigration from their present country would cause to the local Jewish community. If the person happens to be a leader in his community, whose departure would seriously affect the well-being of the community, spiritually, economically, or politically - thereby weakening that community's support for Eretz Yisroel, the gain would be more than offset by the loss. We have seen this happen time and again, when the leaders of a community have been

persuaded to make Aliyah, with the inevitable result that the community dwindled rapidly, physically and spiritually. In a small community, the departure of a single influential member, whether a Rabbi or layman, may make all the difference.

If there was a time, **decades ago**, when the above considerations (to which I have consistently called attention) were considered conjectural, the long-term effects of ill-conceived Aliyah no longer leave room for any doubts as to what kind of Aliyah is constructive. Far too long have those who are concerned with Aliyah, with all good intentions, considered only the immediate gain and ignored the loss in the longer run. Others, in their zeal to produce quick "achievements", have unwittingly or otherwise resorted to propaganda methods, etc., which were even more inimical to **all** concerned - Eretz Yisroel, the Diaspora, and the immigrants themselves, which has contributed, in no small measure, to the inordinate Yeridah.

A classical example is the emigration from Morocco, The Aliyah campaign was concentrated on the group of least resistance - the spiritual leaders, despite my warnings, behind the scenes,⁴² of the disastrous consequences of despoiling the local communities of their leadership. The basic argument was that "the leaders must show the way; the flock will follow." What happened was that the leaders did, by and large, make Aliyah, but the local communities became largely demoralized. In the end, hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews emigrated, **not** to the Land of Israel, but to France, to be exposed to forces of assimilation they had not known before. [**N.b.** -⁴³] This was done despite the fact that Morocco was the most benign of Arab countries (as it still is, which is something of a miracle).

Needless to say, it is not enough to get someone to be an **oleh**; it is necessary to make sure, to the extent that this is possible, that the **oleh** will not become a **yored**, sooner or later. Surely there is

⁴² See for example *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 22, letter 8,643 (pp. 468f.).

⁴³ Nota bene (translated as "note well" or "pay attention") - the Rebbe's handwritten addition on the margins of these last three lines.

no point - and it is not merely an exercise in futility but in squandering of limited resources - to persuade someone who is a 51% potential **yored** to make Aliyah, not to mention one who is 90% a potential **yored**. Yet, it is a matter of record, that all too often Aliyah activists have ignored this basic principle, either through wishful thinking, or more deplorably, through setting up for themselves "quotas" to be fulfilled by all means, etc.

Of course, the inordinate **Yeridah**, especially in recent years, is not due solely to the lack of proper screening or selectivity, or the exaggerated promises and prospects offered to would-be **olim**. A very substantial number of the **Yordim** are native-born, which is painful subject in itself. We are speaking here of **olim** that have turned **yordim**, and/or their children who grew up there. The disenchantment of some **olim** is not always rooted in economics, though the situation would have been much better if there would be a closer coordination between the **Aliyah** department and the **kelitah** (absorption) agencies. Ultimately it is not the promise of a nicer apartment, a better job, and higher standard of living that will satisfy an **oleh** from the free countries, but the fact that Eretz Yisroel is uniquely different for a Jew; its uniqueness being its spiritual quality, being the **Holy** Land. If all the accent will be on the material aspects of life, with total disregard of the essential point, namely, that true and lasting Aliyah is inseparable from a spiritual Aliyah, there will inevitably be **yordim**, or, at any rate, disgruntled and embittered "foreigners" whose hearts and minds are elsewhere. Such an **oleh** is not likely to recommend to relatives and friends back in his country of origin to follow in his footsteps.

A case in point - which is also one of the basic factors responsible for the so-called **Neshirah** ("drop-outs") - is the policy of separating the younger generation from their parents that has been practised among such groups of **olim** where family ties and traditions have been very strong in their native countries. Ostensibly this was done for the purpose of hastening the process of "integration," but in fact it has proved disastrous in terms of, on the one hand, juvenile delinquency, etc., and on

the other - in terms of the feedback of the parents that have been terribly hurt by it.

Now with regard to the specific question of Aliyah from the RSA. I regret to say that - certainly in retrospect - it has been a disaster both for Eretz Yisroel and for the S.A. Jewish community. Suffice it to mention that a **substantial** number of **olim** from S.A. are now in the U.S.A. and Canada, and, worse still, the majority of them comprises the most productive **younger** element. In other words, not only has the S.A. Jewish community paid a heavy price in terms of its own viability, but Eretz Yisroel has benefitted little from this Aliyah even in the short term, not to mention the long term loss resulting from a weakened S.A. community.

In this case, too, when the Aliyah campaign began in S.A., I warned against creating a panic as a means of spurring Aliyah. Aside from this being contrary to the Torah, especially when not absolutely justified by an imminent threat, it would adversely affect the good relationship of the S.A. government towards the Jewish community, as well as towards Eretz Yisroel. I further pointed out that the RSA was one of a very few friendly governments that consistently maintained its friendly policy. I believe that to some extent I succeeded in averting a stampede, but I have not succeeded in halting the trend altogether. Certainly in the present world situation, one would have expected it to be self-evident that it is not in the interests of Eretz Yisroel to press for a mass Aliyah from S. A., considering that the RSA is one of only two friends Eretz Yisroel has in the whole world, and the one which - relatively speaking - is more consistent and stable⁴⁴ than the U.S.A. It is something of a **miracle** that despite the attempts of certain persons to create a panic among S.A. Jewry, the relationship has not suffered substantially - at a time when other countries around the world

⁴⁴ The Rebbe's handwritten addition to these words is illegible in this copy of the letter.

have found it expedient to turn their backs on the beleaguered Yishuv and support its mortal enemies.

In summary, it may be said that the underlying problem of Aliyah has been the mistaken premise and inclination to "write off" the Diaspora Jews, and to use all possible means to encourage indiscriminate Aliyah, regardless of the inevitable "fallout." This has reached a point where even non-Jews are encouraged to settle in Eretz Yisroel (especially where there is a Jewish spouse), without requiring them to undergo Geyrut (conversion) according to the Halachah - the only kind of conversion that is valid, of course. Under this ill-conceived policy of "Aliyah at all costs," many a healthy and thriving Jewish community in the Diaspora has been seriously weakened, and in some cases destroyed, by despoiling them of their leaders, religious and lay, and men of means and influence, who were not only the mainstay of their communities, but **pillars of support for Eretz Yisroel**, and whose usefulness as such diminished or ceased in their role as **olim**. Clearly, a great deal of the effort and resources spent on futile, or even harmful Aliyah, would be better spent on strengthening communities in the Diaspora, through Torah education, fighting assimilation, and so on. A healthy **Jewish** community - **Jewish** not in name only - in the Diaspora is the best **asset for Eretz Yisroel**, as well as a source of truly good and permanent **olim**.

I trust you will accept the above remarks in the spirit they have been made, namely, not, G-d forbid, as rebuke or criticism for its own sake, nor as preachment, but in the sincere hope that this exchange of correspondence will induce some deep reflection and rethinking, and, more importantly, will stimulate concrete action for the real benefit of Jews, both in Eretz Yisroel and in the Diaspora.

Much more could be said on the subject matter, but I trust the above will suffice.

In conclusion, I would like to reciprocate with a request of my own - not for a clarification of your position on Aliyah in general,

and on any of the points raised in this letter in particular, but - since "action is the essential thing"⁴⁵ - what **action** you have taken, or plan to take, in connection with this matter and with what results.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

P.S. Inasmuch as certain sections of this letter ought to be treated with confidence, I trust you will use your discretion in sharing them only with appropriate persons for whom it will serve a useful purpose.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See *Avos* 1:17.

⁴⁶ A copy of this correspondence was sent by the SAZF to President Yitzchok Navon and can be found in the state archives.

For more on the Rebbe's stance and opinion on Aliya and moving to the Holy Land, see Rebbe Responsa, letters dated: 16 Cheshvan 5734 (regarding South Africa); 3 Sivan 5717; 30 Tishrei 5720; 19 Adar 5721; 10 Tammuz 5729; 19 Elul 5729; 3 Kislev 5730; 5730 (Tel Aviv); 19 Tammuz 5731; 24 Tammuz 5732; 26 Tishrei 5734; 2 Av 5734; 5734 (Southfield, Michigan); 3 Shevat 5736; 17 Av 5737; 18 Shevat 5738; 21 Adar II 5738; 15 Av 5738; 5730 (London); 15 Cheshvan 5740; 11 Tishrei 5741; 14 Teves 5741; 14 Tammuz 5741; 5741 (Australia); 19 Cheshvan 5742; Shevat 5742; 16 Kislev 5743; 19 Iyar 5743; 5743 (Scottsdale, Arizona); 18 Sivan 5744; 15 Elul 5744.

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With blessing, *[Handwritten Signature]*

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Rebbe
Responsa