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# BIRTH OF A YOM TOV

EARLY YUD-ALEPH NISSAN CELEBRATIONS

5662-5731





# What is the joy of Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe's birthday?

Seemingly, the essence of a person is his *neshama*, and the Rebbe's *neshama* existed before birth. So what is the significance of the physical birthday?

In the farbengen of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5722 the Rebbe explains that when the *neshama* is born, it immediately starts its *avoda* in the world. Thus, on the Rebbe's birthday we celebrate a world-changing event — the day the Rebbe's glow entered the world.

“Regarding Moshe Rabbeinu, the Torah says, ‘And she [Yocheved, his mother] saw that he was good.’ Rashi explains that ‘the house was filled with light when he was born.’

“But Moshe's *neshama* was in the house before he was born, albeit in his mother's womb. So why does Rashi say that the house was filled with light only after he was born? This is because, before Moshe was born, the house—and in a broader sense, the world—was dark; he had yet to impact the world. Only when he was born was ‘the house filled with light.’

“This idea extends itself further. Before birth, while the *neshama* is in the mother's womb, a *malach* teaches it the entire Torah, and thus the

*neshama* reaches the deepest levels of *limmud haTorah*. Yet, only when the *neshama* is finally born does it begin its *avoda* in the world.

“Similarly, on Yud-Beis Tammuz when the [Frierdiker] Rebbe was born, that is when he began his *avoda* of giving *koach* to all Yidden—and especially to his Chassidim and *mekusharim*—to accomplish their *avoda* of making a *dirah b'tachtonim*, to make the ‘house filled with light.’

“This is the reason that the Rebbe's birth was such a monumental event,” the Rebbe concluded.

“As we read in the Megillah, “הימים האלה נזכרים, ונועשים” — These days are remembered and celebrated, every year. Every year the Rebbe's birthday is an occasion for immense joy and celebration, not only for those who had the *zechus* to learn the Rebbe's Torah, but for every single Yid, because this is the day that the Rebbe began lighting up the world.”

In the following pages, we will go through the early years of Yud-Aleph Nissan, the years when the Rebbe's light had just begun to shine and illuminate the world.

# “The Home Filled with Light”

11 Nissan 5662\*

“Jewish date of birth: 11 Nissan. Circumcised, 18. Place of Birth: Nikolayev. Parents’ Names and Rank: Father – Hereditary Honored Citizen Levi son of Zalman, Schneerson. Mother – Chana. Name and gender of child: Boy, Menachem Mendel.”

These are words inscribed in the Nikolayev Jewish community’s Registration Book of Jewish Births of 1902-1903, recording the Rebbe’s birth on Yud-Aleph Nissan 5662\*.

Surrounding the period of the Rebbe’s birth, Harav Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe’s father, received six telegrams from the Rebbe Rashab with detailed instructions regarding the care of the newborn baby.

“From the day of his birth,” described Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe’s mother, to Reb Berel Junik, “my husband instructed me that whenever my newborn son awoke, I should wash *negel vasser* with him before nursing him, something he didn’t instruct me to do for the other



THE REBBE'S BIRTH RECORD IN NIKOLAYEV

children. This was apparently on instruction of the Rebbe Rashab.”

It was later revealed that the Rebbe Rashab’s involvement began even prior to the Rebbe’s birth. Reb Zalman Duchman once wrote to the Rebbe that he had heard some unknown information (“באהאלטענע” “זאכן”) from Rebbetzin Chana. As an example he writes that he was told that the Rebbe was born from a *bracha* of the Rebbe Rashab<sup>1</sup>.

The Rebbe’s *bris* took place on the fourth day of Pesach, Yud-Ches Nissan, in the home of Rebbetzin Chana’s father, Harav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky. Incidentally, this day was also the birthday of Harav Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe’s father. The Rebbe did not have a *pidyon haben*, as Rebbetzin Chana was a *bas-Levi*.

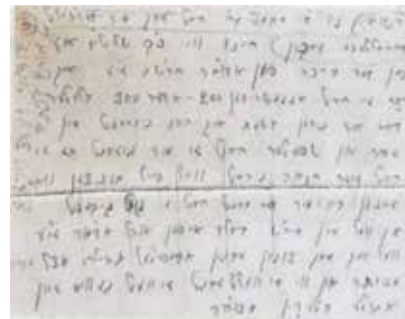
## A Communal Celebration

5675\*-Bar Mitzvah

*If the birthday of a Rebbe is an important day every year, his bar mitzvah day – a pivotal day in the life of every Yid—must definitely hold a tremendous significance.*

*The Rebbe once said<sup>2</sup> about the Frierdiker Rebbe’s bar mitzvah, that on this day he became a fully-grown Yid, and it served as a preparation for all his accomplishments later on in his life, including his leadership as nossi.*

It was a Shabbos to be remembered. Friday, Yud-Aleph Nissan 5675\* was the bar mitzvah of the Rebbe. The entire community showed up to the celebration in honor of their spiritual leader — the rav of Yekaterinoslav — Harav Levi Yitzchok. A few years prior, in the early years of Harav Levi Yitzchak’s tenure, there was some opposition from the *misnagdim* and Zionist communities to his appointment as the city’s rav. By now however, seven years later, Harav Levi



## “UNDISCLOSED”

The Rebbe responds to a letter from Reb Zalman Duchman, an elderly Chossid who, with the Rebbe’s steadfast encouragement, meticulously recorded his recollections of what he heard and saw in previous generations.

Here he writes to the Rebbe about the many stories and facts he heard from the Rebbe’s mother, Rebbetzin Chana, referring to them as “באהאלטענע זאכן” — undisclosed things.”

As an example, he cites the fact that the Rebbe was born as a result of a *bracha* from the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe circles the words “באהאלטענע זאכן” and comments:

בודאי יעלה וירשום אותם בכתב

You will certainly transcribe and commit them to writing.

Yitzchok was most respected and beloved by his community, and all came to participate in their esteemed rav’s celebration. A festive *seudah* was held on Shabbos afternoon continuing much past Shabbos and into the following Sunday morning, 13 Nissan, *yom hilula* of the Tzemach Tzedek, namesake of the Rebbe.

The house filled to capacity with well-wishers young and old, with the guests including people from all types of backgrounds. The Rebbe’s *zeide*,



## NULLIFIED IN A MIRACULOUS WAY

On the second night of Pesach 5699\*, the Frierdiker Rebbe related the following while explaining the *haggadah*:

“In the year 5662\*, there were horrible decrees [made] on *klal yisroel* (ל"ר), and before Pesach they were nullified in a miraculous way. [During the Seder on that year] my father (the Rebbe Rashab) said while reciting the *haggadah*: ‘*Vacharei chein yaitzue b'rechush gadol*’ - the ‘*rechush gadol*’ [refers to] the revelation of *gadol havaye...*”

One is amazed by the fact that in that same year, the Rebbe was born right before Pesach, on Yud Aleph Nissan 5662\*.

Harav Boruch Shneur Schneerson, had traveled to Yekaterinoslav especially for the celebration. This was a pleasant surprise, especially as he had brought with him the holy *bracha* of the Rebbe Rashab. “Hashem should help that he should be an *ehrlicher Yid*,” the Rebbe

Rashab had told Harav Boruch Shneur before leaving for Yekatrinnislov. “[Reb] Levik [the Rebbe’s father] should have *nachas* from him and from the other children as well.”

On his father’s signal, the Rebbe began a lengthy discourse, wowing all the assembled. He spoke for a while delving into the deepest parts of Chassidus as his father looked on, deriving much *nachas* from his eldest son. Most of the crowd was unable to follow the long and deep *drasha*.

After concluding the lengthy address in Chassidus, with the crowd still sitting in disbelief, the Rebbe began speaking yet again, this time in *nigleh*. The exceptional impression made on the audience would never be forgotten.

Unfortunately, not much more has been recorded about this historic event. One memorable moment — told over in later years by Rabbi Moshe Leib Schapiro — was during the address of Harav Levi Yitzchok, the father of the bar mitzvah boy. It was in the middle of his address when he suddenly turned to the Rebbe and asked: “Do you understand the significance this day has for you?” The Rebbe’s response took the form of tears, something that left an emotional impact on all those present.



REBBETZIN CHANA'S RESHIMOS

One more, perhaps heavenly event, is recorded in the diary of the Rebbe’s mother, Rebbetzin Chana<sup>3</sup>:

“... All the bar mitzvahs of our sons were celebrated by us in a fine manner. But my older son’s was something special, extraordinary, on a highly sublime level. It was our family’s first personal celebration.

“... It was held on a Shabbos, and many guests attended. At that time we had a large home, and all its rooms were packed. Because it was so crowded, there was a constant interchange of guests, with some leaving while new ones came to take their place. I had many female guests, and there were also many young people. All these groups included guests from all sorts of backgrounds.

“I don’t remember exactly when it

THE VARIOUS RESIDENCES OF THE REBBE'S FAMILY IN YEKATRINOSLAV, L-R: 31 BOLNICHNAYA STREET, 1908-1913; 2 MOSTOVAYA STREET, 1914-1921; 20 ZHELZHNYA STREET, 1921-1934.

started, probably around 12:00 noon, after the conclusion of prayers at shul. The men sat in the large hall, while we women were in the large dining room. Of course, the tables were beautifully set with abundant food, for both the men and the women.

“Around 3:00-4:00 p.m. we saw some of the male guests, both old and young, emerging with weeping faces. I tried looking inside the main hall to discover the reason for their tears, but it was so crowded in there that I couldn’t see through all the heads.

“When I asked those who had been inside, they told me that the father—my husband—had requested our son (long may he live) to promise him something. I wasn’t inside, so I don’t know the actual course of events. But our son’s reply, apparently, wasn’t immediate. Everyone was amazed by the great character of such a young boy, that he was so guarded and cautious about giving his reply.

“I don’t know the details of what actually happened there, but around 6:00-7:00 p.m.—I remember it wasn’t so light any more—the weeping faces I had previously seen became very happy. Now from inside we heard the sound of such joyous dancing and singing, and the joy became so intense that it affected those outside, too.

“One sensed that the enthusiastic rejoicing held some deep significance, and that both the nature of the request and the one who gave his reply would remain memorable for a long time.”

Years later, in an interview with Mr. Nissan Gordon, Rebbetzin Chana expressed that already when the Rebbe became Bar Mitzvah, he already was a *gaon oilam*. “She related this in a certain tone,” Mr. Gordon wrote in the article, “one could see that her words were counted and exact, as if she didn’t want to stray from the words she had most probably heard from her great husband...”

## A Yom Tov is Born The Early Years

The entry for Yud-Aleph Nissan in Hayom Yom, published in 5703\* reads: “ביום ההולדת, על האדם להתבודד, ולהעלות זכרונותיו ולהתבונן בהם, והצריכים תקון ותשובה ישוב ויתקנם”. [On one’s birthday, he should spend time in seclusion, recalling his experiences and thinking deeply into them. He should then repent and correct those (of his past deeds) that need correction and repentance]. At the time of publication, one could have wondered why the date chosen for this

entry wasn’t Yud-Beis Tammuz—the birthday of the Frierdiker Rebbe, or even Chof Cheshvan—the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab. Only later did Chassidim realize that the date the Rebbe had chosen to describe the appropriate behavior on a birthday was his own birthday.

At the time however, the date of the Rebbe’s birthday was unknown to Chassidim.

Many years later, with the publication of the writings of the Rebbe’s father in “Likkutei Levi Yitzchak,” some more early mentions of Yud-Aleph Nissan were discovered. In these volumes, some of Harav Levi Yitzchak’s correspondence with the Rebbe was published, including letters written in honor of the Rebbe’s birthday.

In honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan 5692\*—the Rebbe’s thirtieth birthday—Harav Levi Yitzchak wrote a most heartfelt letter *bentching* his eldest son. Although most of his letters are hard to decipher being that they discuss deep Kabbalistic concepts, in this specific letter, heartfelt emotions flow from Harav Levi Yitzchak’s pen as he tells the Rebbe of his longing to see him once again. (The Rebbe left home four years earlier prior to his *chasuna* in 5689\*







THE REBBE REUNITES WITH REBBETZIN CHANA IN PARIS, 5707.

and had not returned since then.)

Another interesting fact found in these letters, is a topic that the Rebbe would discuss during Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengens in the years to come. In a letter written before Yud-Aleph Nissan 5698\*, Harav Levi Yitzchak explains at length the significance Yud-Aleph Nissan has as the day that the *nossi* of *shevet Asher* brought his *korbanos* during *chanukas hamizbeach*. The Rebbe would later speak about this point many times, even mentioning it in the Pesach *michtovim klotim*.

Interestingly, the exact date of the Rebbe's birthday was revealed to a select group of Chassidim even before the start of the Rebbe's *nesius*. It was 5707\* when the Rebbe traveled to Paris to greet his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, who had recently escaped the clutches of the Soviets. The Jewish community of Paris, filled with Chassidim of different backgrounds—as well as a large Chabad community—used the opportunity to farbreng with Rebbe (known then as the Ramash),

and spend time in his presence.

Rabbi Nochum Aharon Yakobovitz related:

On Yud-Aleph Nissan, several Chassidim were sitting together on the second floor of the home of Reb Zalman Schneerson, Rebbetzin Chana's host during her stay in Paris. Unexpectedly Rebbetzin Chana suddenly appeared in the doorway. "Did you know that today is Yud-Aleph Nissan?" she asked. The Chassidim had no clue as to what she was referring to. "Yud-Aleph Nissan is my son's birthday," Rebbetzin Chana explained. "Perhaps you should ask him to farbreng." The Chassidim, led by Reb Bentzion Shemtov, approached the Rebbe and asked him to farbreng. The Rebbe responded: "*Avadeh, a gleiche zach* (—Certainly, a most appropriate idea)." A table was immediately brought, and the first Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengen took place<sup>4</sup>.

Rebbetzin Chana later said about this farbrengen: "It was then that the Russian Jews [Chassidim]

first realized who he is...and from then on, they haven't left him..."

This is the first reference we have making note of Yud-Aleph Nissan as the Rebbe's birthday. From then on, we find several references to this special day. Slowly but surely, a Yom Tov was born.

As the Rebbe stood at the helm of Kehot Publication Society, he would publish *kuntreisim* of the Friediker Rebbe's *maamarim* before each Yom Tov. Beginning in 5708\*, the Rebbe signed the preface of the Pesach *kuntreisim* with the date "11 Nissan." [Interestingly, in the preface to the Beis Nissan *kuntreisim* the date signed was "25 Adar"—the birthday of the Rebbetzin.]

In the *kuntres* published for Pesach 5709\*, a *sicha* the Friediker Rebbe said to Reb Shlomo Aharon Kazarnovsky on Yud-Aleph Nissan of that year was included. The *sicha* discusses the chain of Chassidus Chabad throughout the generations, and the transition between one *nossi* to the next. After Rabbi Kazarnovsky

left the Frierdiker Rebbe's room, he met the Rebbe and repeated the *sicha*. The Rebbe immediately instructed that the *sicha* be included in the *kuntres* to be published for Pesach, which was being printed that very day!

On Yud-Aleph Nissan 5710\*, mere months following the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, several Chassidim gathered the courage and wrote a letter to the Rebbe, wishing him *brachos* in honor of his birthday. The Rebbe answered: "In response to your letter, may those who bless be blessed from Hashem, as promised in the Torah, 'Va'avarcha mevarachecha,' with the overflow of Hashem's blessing adding more than the principal."

Even after Yud Shevat 5711\* when the Rebbe officially accepted the *nesius*, few Chassidim knew the exact date of the Rebbe's birthday. This fact is expressed in the following anecdote:

Around Beis Nissan time of 5711\*, Reb Shmuel Levitin asked the Rebbe if he would be traveling to the Ohel on Beis Nissan in connection with the Rebbe Rashab's *yahrzeit*. The Rebbe answered that he would not, but that he would in fact be going ten days later. In answer to Reb Shmuel's question as to why the Rebbe would be going to the Ohel on that particular day, the Rebbe answered: "For a personal matter."

On Yud-Aleph Nissan, just before the Rebbe left for the Ohel, Rabbi Leibel Groner (then still a *bochur*) exited the Rebbe's room with the following message: "Those who wish to give themselves over and follow without asking questions, should sign a note with their name and their mother's name. There is nothing to

fear, as there will not be anything [requested] such as 'ascending to heaven,' etc., however those who sign must know that they must follow." The Rebbe added: "This is not a playful matter." Many *bochurim* immediately signed their name and handed in their notes. When the Rebbe saw the many signatures he said: "This is a serious thing," but then added again: "Though it will not be demanded 'to ascend to heaven.'"

Shortly thereafter, the Rebbe left for the Ohel. Chassidim noticed that while standing at the *tziyun* the Rebbe said over the *maamar* "*Basi Legani*" he had said on Yud Shevat. Upon returning from the Ohel, the Rebbe instructed that the *maamar* be published together with footnotes and many edits made by the Rebbe himself. The Rebbe cautioned that it should not be printed in an official way, rather in typewriter format on onionskin paper. Before publishing, the Rebbe was shown the *kuntres* together with its *sha'ar blatt*, where the title "*Kevod Kedushas Admu'r M'Lubavitch*" was written. The Rebbe agreed for it to be published so, and instructed that the *kuntres* be printed before 13 Nissan. Indeed, already on 13 Nissan the *kuntreisim* were being sold in 770...

Historically, this was the first *sicha* or *maamar* to be published with the Rebbe's *sha'ar blatt*. It is also noteworthy that just like the first *maamar* of the Rebbe was published on Yud-Aleph Nissan, the first volume of *Likkutei Sichos* bears the date "11 Nissan 5722\*," as well as the first volume of *Igros Kodesh*—"11 Nissan 5746\*."

## A Birthday Maamar

5712\*-5722\*

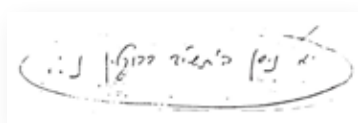
It was in Yud-Aleph Nissan 5712\*, the Rebbe's fiftieth birthday, when

## "MY BIRTHDAY IS ALSO IN NISSAN"

Interestingly, there is one prior reference made by the Rebbe to his birthday, a few days before Rebbetzin Chana revealed it to the Chassidim.

Rabbi Shmuel Butman related that his father, Reb Zalman Butman merited to be in Paris in 5707\* when the Rebbe was there. A few days before Pesach, he approached the Rebbe and asked for a *brocha* for his upcoming birthday. "Which year were you born?" the Rebbe asked. Reb Zalman replied that he was born in the year 5663\*. "You are from 5663 and I am from 5662\*" the Rebbe told him. The Rebbe then inquired as to exactly which day in Nissan Reb Zalman's birthday was, and Reb Zalman replied that it was on Rosh Chodesh. "My birthday is also in Nissan," the Rebbe said. Reb Zalman delicately inquired if he may ask the Rebbe which day his birthday is. The Rebbe answered, "Yud Aleph, and eleven days a year we say the same *kapitel* [Tehillim]"...

this Yom Tov began to take its present form. On Yud-Aleph Nissan in the evening, after the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, the small group of the "*Vaad Chazaras Dach*" (a committee devoted to spreading Chassidus by speaking weekly in shuls) was invited into the Rebbe's room for a short *sicha*. Following the *sicha*, Rabbi Hodakov invited some 20 people, pre-selected by the Rebbe in a written note, to enter the Rebbe's room. The list included a number of elder Chassidim



THE REBBE WRITES THE DATE OF THE PESACH DAVAR OF KUNTRES CHAG HAPESACH 5712\*: YUD-ALEPH NISSAN 5712 BROOKLYN N.Y.





and some *bochurim* from the “*Vaad Chazaras Dach*.” It was before them that the Rebbe delivered the first Yud-Aleph Nissan *maamar*, *dibbur hamaschil* “*A-dnai Sefasai Tiftach*.” The *maamar* was based on a *possuk* from *kapitel* 51, the *kapitel* the Rebbe—and Chassidim—began saying on that very day, the Rebbe’s fiftieth birthday.

Towards the end of the *maamar* the Rebbe wept as he spoke about the demand of a Yid, who in a state of total *bittul* “beseeches from the depths of his heart, as the *mizmor* continues ‘*lev tahor b’ra li Elokim . . . Al tashlicheini m’lefanecha . . . Hashiva li seson yishecha . . .*”

After the *maamar* Reb Shmuel Levitin approached the Rebbe’s desk to give the Rebbe a *bracha*. He concluded by saying: “As the *mizmor* says: “*Tashmi’eini sasson v’simcha*—let me hear tidings of joy and gladness.” The Rebbe answered him with a smile: “The *mizmor* also continues ‘*Tageilna atzamos dikisa*—let the bones You have crushed exult’...”

This was the first official *farbrengen* held in honor of the Rebbe’s birthday. The *maamar* said, the explanations on the new *kapitel*, and the *brachos* given

to the Rebbe, opened the flood-gates, ultimately becoming a Yud-Aleph Nissan tradition for years to come.

On Yud-Aleph Nissan of the following year, 5713\*, several Chassidim entered the Rebbe’s room and asked the Rebbe to say a *maamar*. The Rebbe said he was unprepared, but will segway into the *inyan* during the *maamar* on Acharon Shel Pesach. Sure enough, during the *maamar* on Acharon Shel Pesach, the Rebbe spoke on the new *kapitel* (52). In years following, the Rebbe continued to explain *pesukim* from the new *kapitel* in the *maamar* on Acharon Shel Pesach.

Usually during the *maamar* said on Acharon Shel Pesach, the Rebbe would expound on the new *kapitel*. However in the year 5717\*, on Shabbos Hagadol, Chassidim were surprised to hear a *dibbur hamaschil* to the words “*Pada Veshalom*.” After some time Chassidim realized that the Rebbe was speaking on the outgoing *kapitel*, *mizmor* 55. During the *farbrengen* of Shabbos Hagadol 5724\* the Rebbe said two *maamarim*: one expounding on the outgoing *kapitel* (62), and one on the new, incoming *kapitel* (63).

Although the Rebbe would not make any official mention of Yud Aleph Nissan after 5712\* for the next ten years, Chassidim would still do their part in doing what they felt they should be doing on the Rebbe’s birthday.

Almost every year on Yud Aleph Nissan throughout the next ten years, a group of elder chassidim would enter the Rebbe’s room to *bentch* him in honor of the day. The Rebbe would always acknowledge their *brochos*, and would answer with a *brocha* of his own.

## “Yoma Tava L’Rabbanan” 5722\*-60 Years

As the years went on, the Yom Tov of Yud-Aleph Nissan became more known and thus more celebrated. Every year Chassidim would gather together, rejoicing and *farbenging* with each other in honor of this special day. However, the celebrations were done privately, in an almost secret manner. Chassidim felt nearly ashamed to publicly celebrate the Rebbe’s personal day.

Reb Gershon Mendel Garelik related, that when he and his friends were *bochurim* in the early 5710s\* they would farbreng together in the dormitory of the yeshiva on Yud-Aleph Nissan, and wish each other that the day will yet come when the entire world will join in the celebration...

The hope in the heart of all Chassidim was, obviously, that the Rebbe himself would celebrate with them, giving the Yom Tov an unequivocal “approval” from on high.

It was on Yud-Aleph Nissan 5721\*, as a group of Chassidim farbrenged together in the small *zal* of 770, saying “*lchaim*” and wishing that their high hopes—of the Rebbe farbrenging in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan—would become a reality. In the midst of the *chassidishe* farbrengen Sholom (Sydney) Hecht approached the table. “I am about to enter the Rebbe’s room,” he said. “If you wish, I can pass on a message to the Rebbe.” The Chassidim sitting there gathered the courage and made the following request: “Give over to the Rebbe,” they said, “that a group of Chassidim are farbrenging in the main shul, and it is our deepest wish that the Rebbe participate in the celebration by holding a farbrengen.” The Rebbe’s answer was short but to the point: “I will farbreng myself here, they will farbreng there, and the ‘*Kol Yachol*’ [—Hashem] will connect us.” It was only a year later, 5722\*, that the first official Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengen took place, and this time not just for a few people gathered in the Rebbe’s room, but in the main shul of 770 for all who wished to participate.

As the day of Yud-Aleph Nissan—the Rebbe’s 60th birthday—drew closer, the energy felt by Chassidim throughout the world grew. Although ideas for new initiatives and revolutionary projects were broached, they were quickly silenced. After all, nothing was done on such

a large scale back then, so who knew if the Rebbe would approve.

Rabbi Leibel Alevsky related<sup>5</sup>: In those years, the *hanhala* of Tzach would hold a meeting every Motzei Shabbos, with the results of the meeting being reported to the Rebbe. As the weeks went by, and Yud-Aleph Nissan approached, discussions were held about the upcoming milestone and ideas were discussed as to how it should be marked. With much trepidation, they recorded their ideas and submitted them in their weekly *duch* to the Rebbe, hoping for an approval. The Rebbe did not give a positive or negative answer. Taking this as a green light—as the Rebbe had not rejected what they had written—preparations went into high gear.

Immediately, letters were sent to Chassidim around the world, calling on them to begin preparing for the upcoming milestone. Suggestions included: To add in Torah, *avodah* and *gemilus chassadim* with an emphasis on the number 60; to give tzedakah in increments of 60; to learn 60 lines of *Tanya baal peh*; and more.

Every Chossid was requested to send back his resolutions to the central Tzach office in New York. As the days went on, letters began pouring in from the world over to the offices of Tzach. Incidentally, some of the envelopes mistakenly found their way to the Rebbe’s desk. On the first two envelopes the Rebbe wrote “*shayach l’Tzach*” (this should be forwarded to Tzach), on the third envelope the Rebbe wrote “*shyach l’keren hashishim*” (this should be forwarded to the “60 fund”). This was definitely a most pleasant surprise! The Rebbe had now (somewhat) officially endorsed the *hachanos* of the Chassidim.

Although nothing was confirmed, a hopeful yet tense feeling—perhaps of anticipation—filled the air as Yud-Aleph Nissan drew close. For some reason many Chassidim felt

that the Rebbe would finally hold a public farbrengen marking this special day. On Yud-Aleph Nissan itself, before the Rebbe left for the Ohel, the Chassidim presented *duchos* containing their *hachlatos* in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan. They also presented to the Rebbe a large sum of tzedakah money — \$22,000 — to be used at the Rebbe’s discretion. After returning from the Ohel and davening Mincha and Maariv, Rabbi Hodakov came out of the Rebbe’s room and announced that a farbrengen would take place in the main shul. Many saw the farbrengen as a direct result of the *hisorerus* of the Chassidim.

The Rebbe entered the farbrengen with the first volume of Likkutei Sichos in his hand (this volume had been published in connection with Yud-Aleph Nissan), and began speaking about the *possuk* “כל הנשמה תהלל יה הללויה”<sup>6</sup>, expounding on the words of Chazal on this *possuk* that “one must thank Hashem for every breath.”

In the following *sichos* the Rebbe explained at length the story told over in the Gemara describing the *seuda* Reb Yosi held on his sixtieth birthday. The Rebbe explained that specifically Reb Yosi, whose life was clearly a spiritual one, marked his sixtieth birthday with a special celebration because he was certain that his *neshama* was still enlivening him just as before. This *sicha* was later edited by the Rebbe and published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 5.

The Rebbe also delivered a *hadran* on *Maseches Pesachim*. During the end of the *sicha* the Rebbe’s voice choked with tears as he spoke of the Yidden in *galus* and how Hashem will redeem us speedily. This *sicha* was also edited by the Rebbe and published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 11.

Another novelty of this farbrengen was that the Rebbe delivered two *maamarim*. The first *maamar* “*Acharei*

\* 5710S-1950S, 5721-1961, 5722-1962





*Mos Shnei B'nei Aharon*,” was followed by a few *sichos* and *niggunim*. The Rebbe thanked those who sent *brachos* in honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan, and mentioned the plight of Russian Jewry stranded behind the Iron Curtain. After the next *niggun*, a Chossid stood up to give the Rebbe a *bracha* in the name of all those assembled. Immediately following the *bracha*, the Rebbe began the second *maamar*, “*Gadol Ha'oneh Amen*,” (“Greater is the one who answers *amen* than the one who says the *brocha*...”) almost as a direct response to the *brocha* of the Chassidim.

It should be noted that some of the topics discussed in these *maamarim* seemed to share a theme with the *maamarim* of Yud Shvat. The Rebbe discussed the enormous *kochos* invested in our generation, as well as the general concept of *hiskashrus*, being dedicated to the Moshe Rabeinu of the generation.

As the farbrengen went on, the Rebbe remarked with a smile: It's a “*rachmanus oifen olam*,” acknowledging the lengthy *sichos*.

This farbrengen also marked

the first time a special *niggun* was sung with words of the Rebbe's new *kapitel* in the Rebbe's presence. The *niggun* was sung by Reb Yitzchok Dubov with the words “*Yamim al yemei melech tosif*” from *kapitel* 61.

Chassidim hoped that perhaps starting from this year the Rebbe would hold a farbrengen on Yud-Aleph Nissan annually. Sadly this was not to be and the next time the Rebbe would hold a Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengen would be nine years later, in 5731\*.

On the eve of Yud-Aleph Nissan 5723\*, the elder Chassidim entered the Rebbe's room to give the annual Yud-Aleph Nissan *brocha*. The Rebbe expressed to them his disappointment in the fact that Chassidim didn't prepare for Yud-Aleph Nissan as they should have. Since Yud-Aleph Nissan that year occurred on Friday, Reb Shmuel Levitin asked if the Rebbe would be saying a *maamar* on Friday night. The Rebbe replied, “*Es felt kainem nit ois*—no one will miss it.”

## A Surprise Farbrengen

5731\*

Yud-Aleph Nissan 5731\* marked the start of the annual Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengens. From then on, the Rebbe farbrenged every year on Yud-Aleph Nissan until 5745\*, the last year—*le'eis ata*—we were *zoche* to such a farbrengen. At the time however, the farbrengen came as a complete surprise. The Rebbe returned from the Ohel, washed his hands and told the *mazkir* that after Mincha a short farbrengen will take place. With Pesach just a few days away, 770 was completely unprepared; the shul was in the midst of being cleaned and prepared for Yom Tov!

The farbrengen was announced so suddenly that there wasn't even enough time to set up the sound system before the farbrengen started. In the middle of the *maamar* (the farbrengen began with a *maamar*) a technician came to set up the sound system. However, the speaker started

making noise and the Rebbe motioned for him to stop. Only towards the end of the *maamar*, did they manage to connect the microphone.

The farbrengen started off with the famous *maamar* “*B’yom Ashtei Asar*.” This *maamar* is unique not only in its remarkable depth but also in the special tune in which it was said. It was later edited by the Rebbe and published in *kuntres* Yud-Aleph Nissan 5749\*. It should be noted that this *maamar*, and the *maamar* of 5732\* which carries the same *dibbur hamaschil*, are the only Yud-Aleph Nissan *maamarim* that are not connected to the topic of Pesach specifically.

The Rebbe then followed with a short *sicha* thanking those who sent their heartfelt wishes and *brachos* for Yud-Aleph Nissan, and asking that the time still remaining until Pesach be used out to distribute matzah to as many Jews as possible. The Rebbe then made a *bracha acharona* and

exited the shul after starting the niggun “*Al Achas Aamah Vekama*.”

Although the farbrengen was a surprise, some Chassidim did anticipate that the Rebbe might farbreng based on a remark the Rebbe had made sometime earlier. On 15 Shevat of that year, the Rebbe held a surprise farbrengen upon returning from the Ohel. It was then that the Rebbe famously announced: “The time has come to conquer the world through *limmud haTorah*.” On Shabbos Hagadol of that year (days before Yud-Aleph Nissan) the Rebbe spoke about that now famous farbrengen, saying: “At the time I was prompted (at the Ohel [i.e. by the Frierdiker Rebbe]) to farbreng and I didn’t understand for what purpose. But afterwards it was discussed [in America] whether or not the yeshiva *bochurim* should be drafted [to the army to fight in the Vietnam War], and this *hisorerus* [in *limmud haTorah*] turned out to be the *hakdama* of the *refuah l’makah*.”

The Rebbe ended off by saying that from now on, “אויב מ’שטופט, מייר, דארף מען נישט שפארן—If I will be prompted, I won’t look for a way out.” Chassidim understood that perhaps the Rebbe meant, if he will be “pushed” from the Ohel to do something that wasn’t usually done, he would accede to what was being asked of him. This expression lit a flicker of hope in the hearts of Chassidim that perhaps if they tried hard enough, they would merit a farbrengen of the Rebbe on Yud-Aleph Nissan.

1. See Early Years p. 21. *Early Years*, Derher Nissan 5777.
2. Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 p. 597.
3. Part 39. Translation copyrighted by Kehot Publication Society.
4. See *The Reunion*, Derher Adar II 5782.
5. See *Yud-Aleph Nissan with the Rebbe*, Derher Nissan 5772.
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 5, p. 106.
7. *Minhagei Yom Holedes*, Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2.

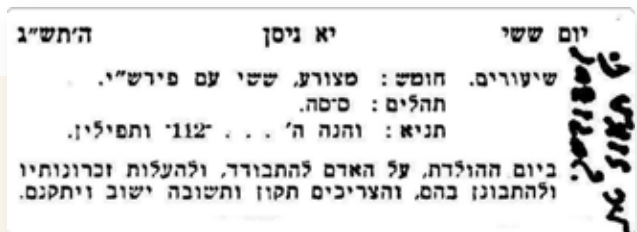
## A REBBE’S BIRTHDAY

It is well known the depth and hidden treasures that can be found in Hayom Yom. *Biurim*, *remazim*, and even lengthy *pilpulim* based on these short yet weighty *pisgamim* fill volumes.

The source of the Hayom Yom entry for Yud-Aleph Nissan sheds a unique light on the day’s *pisgam*:

Reb Shlomo Sudevsky wrote to the Frierdiker Rebbe about his declining state of health. The Frierdiker Rebbe responded<sup>6</sup>: “I received your letter on the day of my rejoice, the anniversary of Yud-Beis Tammuz. As it is brought in *sefarim* that on one’s birthday, he should spend time in seclusion. He should recall his experiences and think deeply about them. He should then repent and correct those of his past deeds that need correction and repentance.

“Upon opening your letter, I remembered your arrival in Lubavitch, your study of *nigleh* and Chassidus, my father [the Rebbe Rashab]’s words about you, his hope that you would eventually



IN HIS PERSONAL COPY, THE REBBE WROTE THE SOURCE FOR THE HAYOM YOM OF YUD ALEPH NISSAN.

aid in strengthening the ways of Chassidus just as the first students and *temimim*...”

Chassidim understood from this letter that perhaps the Frierdiker Rebbe is hinting at the thoughts of a Rebbe on his birthday. Indeed, it is the thoughts of Chassidim that fill the Rebbe’s mind on that special day. It is the Chossid’s upbringing and the hope that he will yet grow to join the ranks of the Rebbe’s Chassidim, that are being “thought about deeply.”

Fascinatingly, in a small footnote the Rebbe writes that the same thing is demanded of a Chossid on his birthday<sup>7</sup>: “To envision in his mind one of his *yechidusen*; what he asked and the answer he was given, and then to learn from his [the Rebbe’s] Torah.”