

# PERSONAL AND PUBLIC

## *Mivtza Yom Huledes*



THE UNEXPECTED SICHA ON 25 ADAR 5748 CREDITS: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

Things seemed to have been going just about as they would on an average morning in the *shnas hoaveilus* of 5748. Shacharis had just finished in the Rebbe's home and the Rebbe had already gone up to the second floor, while the crowd slowly dispersed. A handful of bochorim and Anash remained, finishing off the final parts of davening and removing their Tallis and Tefillin. Suddenly they were caught by surprise: the Rebbe was descending the staircase again; the reason unknown!

Reaching the shtender, the Rebbe began reciting a *sicha* during which he would launch a new fascinating *mivtza*.

### THE GREATEST Z'CHUS

It was Chof Hey Adar, 5748; the Rebbetzin's 87<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>1</sup> Progressing on the theme the Rebbe had spoken so much about over the past month since the Rebbetzin's *histalkus*; "והחי יתן אל לבו", the Rebbe suggested that this day, being the Rebbetzin's birthday, was an opportune time to focus on the customs befitting each and every individual's personal birthday. Thus began "*Mivtza Yom Huledes*".

Of all the *mivtzoim* the Rebbe initiat-

ed, this one is quite unique. It was very rare that the Rebbe should suggest that a specific *mivtza* should be done in honor or in memory of one individual. *Mivtza Yom Huledes*, on the other hand, was explicitly connected with the Rebbetzin, as the Rebbe said, "Those who wish to do so can take this upon themselves in hon-

dates many times, in letters, *sichos*, and *yechidus*. This is found as far back as in "Hayom Yom"<sup>3</sup> published by the Rebbe in 5703, the Rebbe describes one's birthday as a day for *cheshbon nefesh* and *teshuvah*.

Nevertheless, the Rebbe added a major focal point: that on one's birthday he is

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or of [the Rebbetzin]..."<sup>2</sup>

Even the terms the Rebbe used were extraordinary: "ס'ועט זיין די גרעסטע זכות" ...פאר די נשמה... adding that an "*aliya*" for her *neshoma* entails an "*aliya*" for all other *neshomos* as well. It was clear that this *mivtza* was something very special.

### TIME FOR CELEBRATION

In truth, throughout the Nesius the Rebbe spoke about the concept of *Yom Huledes* and the proper conduct it man-

to celebrate joyfully, thanking Hashem for the gift of life. The words the Rebbe used were "מ'זאל אנהויבן פראווען יום הולדת" - we should start **celebrating** our birthdays.

A farbrengen should be held on one's birthday where he gathers together his friends and family members, and together they say a special Le'chaim—"אן אמת'ן לחיים; א חסידיש'ן לחיים"—a true, *chassidische* Le'chaim. The atmosphere at a farbrengen is also conducive to accept new *hachlotos* upon oneself, ensuring

that they will be meaningful and long-lasting.<sup>4</sup>

The Rebbe also made emphasis on the importance of teaching children to properly celebrate their own birthdays. In fact, when children would pass by for dollars and notify the Rebbe of their upcoming birthdays, the Rebbe would often instruct them to make “a party”!

#### PROTOCOL

One month later at the farbrengen of Acharon shel Pesach, the Rebbe discussed the matter even further, citing many Torah sources that support the notion of celebrating ones birthday.

Shortly thereafter, a detailed list of appropriate customs for a birthday based on the Rebbe’s letters and sichos throughout the years was prepared and edited by the Rebbe, consisting of ten sections.<sup>5</sup>

#### TO THE WORLD

Needless to say, Chassidim immediately took to the task of publicizing and spreading the Rebbe’s new initiative to the broadest audience possible.

Full-page ads adorned newspapers, touting the message to readers across the globe.

The Yiddish Algemeiner Journal presented a special memo, edited by the

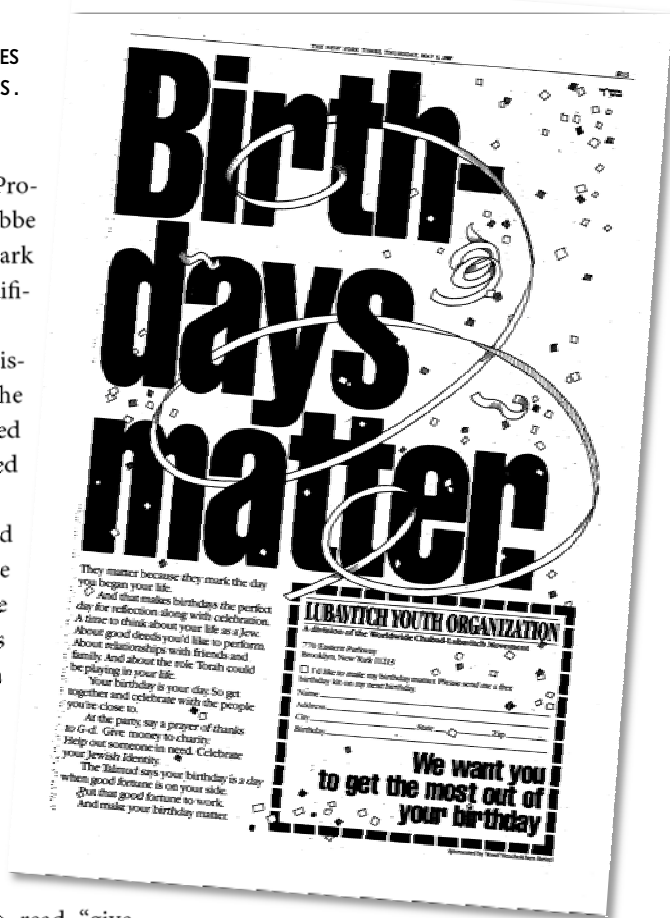
Rebbe, under the title “A Proposal by the Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita”, calling upon all to mark their birthday with the significance it deserves.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, Tzach displayed a full-page ad in the New York Times, also edited by the Rebbe, entitled “Birthdays Matter”.

Interestingly, before the ad was published, the Rebbe made one correction to the text: One of the instructions given by the Rebbe for a birthday is to increase in Tzedoka. Originally, the ad said that one should “give some money to charity”. The Rebbe amended the text by crossing out the word “some” and left it to read “give money to charity”.

#### FINALLY OURS

To us as Chassidim, the Rebbe’s *Mivtza Yom Huledes* bears special meaning, in its being a project attributed by the Rebbe to the *aliya* and *z’chus* of the Rebbetzin. Additionally, the Rebbe explained that although the concept of celebrating a birthday did exist in previous generations, it was only in our time when



it was made public for all to take part in.

One of the reasons given by the Rebbe for this: As members of the last generation of galus, it is our task to transform all the mundane areas of life into holiness. By marking one’s birthday properly, he is transforming what could have been an ordinary weekday into a Yom Tov.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, transforming the *gashmiyus* of this world into *ruchniyus* will bring about the *Geulah Shleima, teikef umiyad Mammosh!* ■

## CAREFUL CELEBRATION

Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky once attended a wedding of an acquaintance which so happened to take place on the night of Yud Aleph Nissan, 5748, just a few weeks after the Rebbe launched the *Mivtza Yom Huledes*.

In the midst of the celebration, the chosson’s family presented a magnificent birthday cake holding 86 candles and an inscription reading “Happy Birthday Lubavitcher Rebbe”.

When noting this in his *Duch* to the Rebbe, the Rebbe commented in his holy handwriting:

“הערה כללית בזה, אומרים שבקצתם חשש של חלב. וק”ל”

“As a general note: they say that some of them [birthday candles] may contain *cheilev*...”

(See *Ksav Yad Kodesh as it appears in the Kotlarsky-Hertz teshura; Cheshvan 5774*)

1. It is interesting to note: The Rebbetzin was born in the year 5661, which contained only one month of Adar. When she was asked in which Adar she celebrated her birthday in a leap-year, Rishon or Sheini, the Rebbetzin responded: “My husband visits the Ohel on both days...”

2. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 1 p. 332

3. See Hayom Yom of Yud Alef Nissan.

4. Sefer Hasichos *ibid.* footnote 22

5. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2 p. 406

6. The manuscript of the Rebbe’s corrections in his holy handwriting is published in Tzaddik LaMelech vol. 1 page 143.

7. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2 p. 380