



THE ULTIMATE

HOW TO CELEBRATE A SIMCHA

לזכות

הת' ר' יוסף שאול הלוי בן אסתר  
לרפואה שלימה וקרובה בכל רמ"ח  
איבריו ושס"ה גידיו

נדפס

הרה"ת ר' יצחק יהודה וזוגתו מרת חנה  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
קופפר



MATE

## What's Most Important

**T**he time of a *simcha*, especially a wedding, is a very special milestone in a person's life. Chassidus explains that the joy brought out in a person on the day he marries off a child is great enough to do away with all the external constraints of life, even his very nature.

For example: A person who is usually known to be frugal, at times going to extremes to save even a small amount of money, is suddenly able to splurge many thousands of dollars on a wedding feast for his child. The reason is that the sense of *simcha* reaches the deepest recesses of the *nefesh*, and its power is powerful enough to change even the longest standing nature of a person.<sup>1</sup>

A powerful occasion as it is, the time of a *simcha* is also a holy time for the celebrant and their family. A bar or bas mitzvah marks the time that the *neshamah* completes its entry into the body. A wedding is a day that the *chosson* and *kallah* are united into an everlasting covenant, along with Hashem, to build an everlasting home within the Jewish nation. *Chazal* say that a *chosson* on the day of his wedding is absolved of all his prior sins, and sources compare the day of a *chupah* to a miniature Yom Kippur for the couple.

The Rebbe famously signed and sent a letter to each and every family celebrating a *simcha*, whether a birth, upshernish, bar or bas mitzvah, or wedding, wishing “*mazal tov*” and offering his *brachos*.

Obviously then, the time of a *simcha* is supposed to be utilized in an appropriate manner. It's a holy time to draw on the heavenly energy available to the celebrants to bring the greatest *brachos* for the rest of their lives.

Below we will present some of the Rebbe's instructions as to how to (and how not to) prepare for and celebrate a *simcha* in the best possible way.

# How to Spend

"You ask about how to arrange the upcoming wedding," the Rebbe writes in a letter. "Whether to invite a large crowd, which according to your letter will saddle you with much debt. I don't think it's a good idea. The Rambam's ruling is well known: The best path to take is always at the middle of the road. This is understood according to Chassidus, which explains that only the middle line of the *sefiros* [*Daas, Tiferes, Yesod*] is the one that penetrates all levels and ascends all the way upwards..."<sup>2</sup>

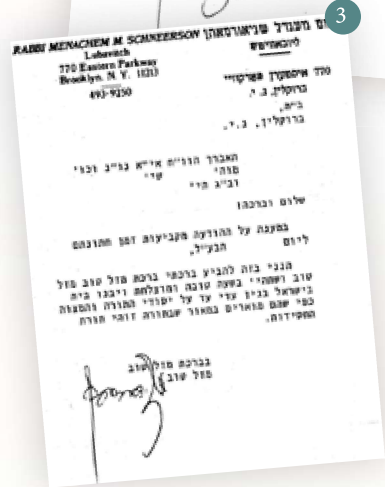
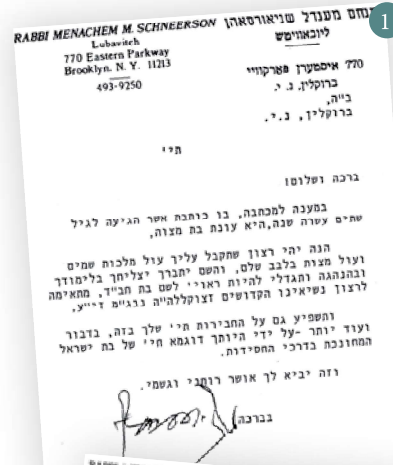
In another letter, the Rebbe writes:

"As a general rule, I am displeased by those who waste money on renting a hall and other such expenses, which serve no real purpose, even in the material sense. Although *Chazal* extolled the virtue of bringing joy to a *chosson* and *kallah*, obligating every person to join in, nevertheless, we see that greater joy is attained by doing a wedding not in a fancy hall that comes with a huge price tag, but in a much simpler manner. Obviously though, this decision must be done in a peaceful and pleasant way, with both sides in agreement."<sup>3</sup>

"Even if money is not an issue," the Rebbe says, "these funds could have been used for much better purposes. If you want to make a 'great feast,' *Chazal* say that it must be made in the presence of 'the greatest of all the worlds'—Hashem Himself. If you will do it in a proper spiritual manner, inspiring everyone to strengthen their commitment to Torah and mitzvos, and especially the new couple, to establish their home as a Chassidische home in all respects, then certainly the 'greatest of all the worlds' will grace the event with His presence and bestow His blessings upon it in all matters necessary..."<sup>4</sup>

In a lengthy and fascinating discussion in *yechidus* with the venerated *mashpia* Reb Nissan Nemanov, the Rebbe bemoaned the lavish style that has become commonplace when celebrating *simchos* in America, asking Reb Nissan to publicize his words on the subject as much as possible:

"In America, people make weddings in a big hall, necessitating huge loans to pay for them, making people work hard for long periods of time afterwards to pay up the loans. Then there is another consequence: Attendees at the wedding feel obliged to bring a big check as a gift. Even if the husband feels he cannot afford it, his wife will be embarrassed to go without the check. So one of two things will happen: Either they will not go to the wedding at all, missing out on a beautiful opportunity to celebrate a *simcha* with their friends, or they will go and he will force himself to write a check that is not within their budget, taking on debt that he cannot handle.



1. THE REBBE'S STANDARD LETTER OF BRACHOS FOR A BAS MITZVAH
2. THE REBBE'S STANDARD LETTER OF BRACHOS FOR A BAR MITZVAH
3. THE REBBE'S STANDARD LETTER OF BRACHOS FOR A WEDDING

"Then there is the issue of renting a big hall and making the right table placements: If you assign one of the important guests to the wrong table, they will be very offended. So the *baal hasimcha* has to be busy with figuring out how to place everyone at the right table.

"Just imagine: When people are so preoccupied with all these types of issues, what kind of Chassidische *farbrengen* will become of their *simcha*?

"In previous generations, a Chassidische *simcha*



would naturally turn into a meaningful Chassidishe farbrengen, inspiring all the participants in the spirit of Chassidus. The atmosphere at a *simcha*, when everyone was happy and in good spirits, was a most opportune time for a good Chassidishe farbrengen. But with all the petty issues at the weddings nowadays, no Chassidishe farbrengen will be happening at all!

“This is a problem not only with ordinary *yungeleit*. It is an issue even with some of the more advanced, respectable Chassidim. The ones who daven at length and know how to study Chassidus, etc.

“I can’t simply tell individuals to refrain from doing this, because I don’t want to single out one person to go against the tide.

“...This and other materialistic issues that preoccupy the minds of Chassidim in America lead to a double problem: a) People tire themselves out with petty things and bring on unnecessary stress into their lives, which is a bad enough thing in and of itself. b) Every person only has a finite amount of time and energy. When one’s mind is busy with things like this, he obviously does not have time to learn *nigleh* and Chassidus, etc.”

## Photos of the First Wedding

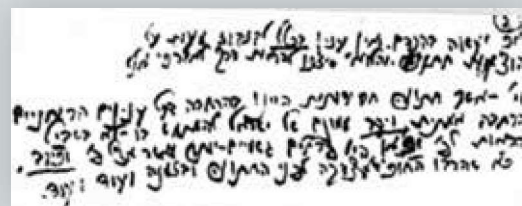
Many aspects of American culture that crept into the Chassidishe community bothered the Rebbe immensely. One of these items is the obsession with taking photos at a wedding, going to great lengths to

have colored photos, at a time that is supposed to be so holy and pure for the *chosson* and *kallah*. In the earlier years when the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin* at many of the weddings of *anash*, he made a condition that only two, at most three, photos were allowed to be taken at the *chupah*.

In *yechidus* with Reb Pinye Korf before his wedding, the Rebbe mentioned with regret that “with the money spent on pictures at

## A CHASSIDISHE WEDDING

A response written in the Rebbe’s *ksav yad kodesh* from Cheshvan 5731\* about what is important for a Chassidishe wedding (Igros Kodesh vol. 27, p. 11):



א”כ יעשוה בהקדם. ואין ענין בכלל לבזבז מעות על הוצאות חתונה. והלואי שיזכו להראות דרך לאברכי אנ”ש שי’ - אשר חתונה חסידותית היינו בהרחבה בכל ענינים הרוחניים והרחבה אמיתית, ויקר ממנו של ישראל להשתמש בו - לא בשביל להראות לפ’ שכאן היו פרחים גשמיים - יותר מאשר אצל פ’ וכיו”ב. כ”א שהרבו החו”כ שי’ בצדקה לפני החתונה ובזמנה ועוד ועוד.

*If so, you should have it [the wedding] as soon as possible. And in general, there is no point whatsoever in splurging money to pay for a wedding. If only you would merit to [be the one who] shows the young people of anash sheyichyu that a Chassidishe wedding is done with abundance of all matters spiritual; a true abundance. A Jew’s money is precious and should not be used merely to show off to so-and-so that we had real flowers, more than so-and-so, etc. Rather, [it should be used to show that] the chosson and kallah gave vast amounts of tzedakah before the wedding and at the time of [the wedding], etc. etc.*

one wedding, we could support a full *cheder* in Morocco!”

When discussing the issue at a farbrengen, the Rebbe explained:

“Instead of being preoccupied with all the externalities of the wedding, worrying about the flowers and the pictures—nowadays people don’t suffice with black and white photos, they must have colored pictures only, *Rachmana litzlan*—it would be a better use of the time to do teshuvah over all of one’s past deeds and increase in Torah and mitzvos.

“The story is told about the Mittlerer Rebbe, when he was asked about which *shidduch* he preferred, he said that he wishes to go with whichever one can be finalized quicker. He knew that the Alter Rebbe would say additional Chassidus in honor of the occasion and he could not wait to hear it...

“Today’s *chassanim* aren’t expected to be at

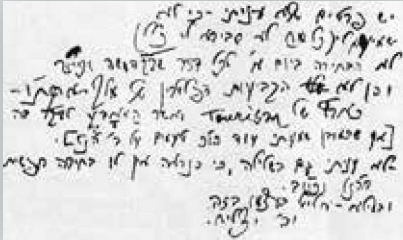


\* 5731-1970



## THE WAY TO CELEBRATE

Part of a response the Rebbe wrote to the question of whether it is appropriate to celebrate a bar mitzvah in Eretz Yisroel a few days after the actual birthday:



יש פרטים שלא עניתי - כי לא שמיעא לי  
(כלומר לא סבירא לי כלל)  
לא הבחירה ביום א' לכל דבר שבקדושה  
וכיו"ב  
וכן לא הקביעות דפלטריין של מלך -  
אהקת"ו - כארץ של tourism ואשר המאדע  
לבקר בה  
[אף שכמובן שמעתי עוד כו"כ טעמים על  
ב' הנ"ל].  
- לא עניתי גם בשלילה (כי כנראה אין לו  
בחירה חפשית בהנ"ל וכיו"ב).  
ובמילא - יחליט בעצמו בזה  
וה' יצליח.

*There are some details [of the issue]  
to which I have not responded, because  
I am not fond (at all) of the fact that:*

*[Many people] choose Sunday as  
the day for holy matters and the like.  
Also, [I am not fond of] designating  
the king's palace—Eretz Yisroel—as  
a land for tourism and a fashionable  
place to visit. [Though I have obviously  
heard many more explanations  
for these two phenomena.]*

*[On the other hand]—I have also  
not responded in the negative (because  
as it seems, you do not have full control  
over the above issues and the like).*

*Therefore, you should  
decide on your own.*

*May Hashem grant [you] success.*

*(Igros Kodesh vol. 26, p. 348)*

that level. Nevertheless, they can still prepare themselves for their wedding in a proper way... And if he is worried that his wedding will not be as 'nice' as all his friends, he should know that at the first wedding in history—that of Adam Harishon, there were no colored pictures, and not even any black and white ones, and the wedding still seems to have been a success..."<sup>5</sup>

## Traveling

In a lengthy *sicha* directed primarily at the *yeshiva bochurim* (although the Rebbe mentions that even others should make similar considerations), the Rebbe bemoans the fact that people constantly write to him, asking for "permission" to travel across the world for a family *simcha*.

"The Torah is very meticulous about Yidden's money," the Rebbe said. "Even if you find all the best discounts, traveling overseas is a big expense..."

"I am receiving letters non-stop, asking for permission to travel to a *simcha* of a cousin, or a second cousin, or a friend who once learned with him. They want me to be the one to take away the pleasure of traveling overseas to participate in this *simcha*. The real question is: Since when is this a thing, that every time there is a *bris* somewhere overseas, all the cousins must travel to participate?"

The Rebbe said that this is a question that should be asked to the *hanhala* of the yeshiva, or brought to a *rav* for a ruling. But in general, the Rebbe explained, wasting money and time on traveling to a *simcha* is not appropriate.

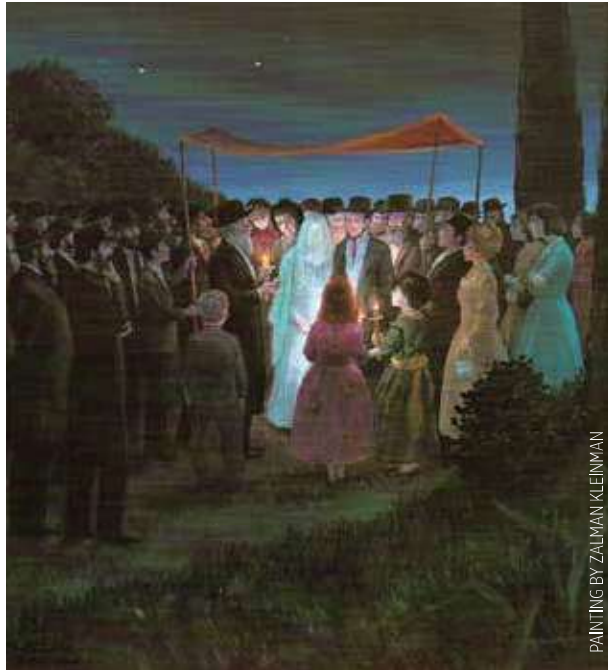
"A *bochur* goes to the *hanhala*, gets the permission he wants, and then he writes to me that he already has permission to go and he even has the money for it!

"Where he got the money, I don't know. Perhaps he borrowed it, maybe he sold his shoes. But let's say he won the lottery—so now he thinks that it is a sign from heaven that he should use this money for '*hachnasas kallah*' by traveling overseas for a wedding! There are cheaper ways to fulfil the mitzvah of *hachnasas kallah*, like participating in a wedding here in New York, by buying a subway token for 50 cents or a dollar. But he wants to spend \$500 on this mitzvah!"

The Rebbe elaborated on this point, explaining that every person needs to have the right priorities and use their time wisely, for learning Torah, and their money for useful purposes, like giving *tzedakah*.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, there were many times that the Rebbe did give brachos for people to travel to *simchos*, especially for close family members. Over the years, the Rebbe would not allow the *talmidim hashluchim* who were sent to Australia for a two-year shlichus to leave their post for any reason whatsoever. However, in the later years the Rebbe began allowing exceptions to be made, and in one written response the Rebbe even intimated that "נשתנו העתים בזה" (times have changed in this regard).<sup>7</sup>

It should also be noted that regarding making larger *simchos*, there is an interesting story of the Rebbe as related by Mrs. Sara Shemtov. Sara's father, Dr. Robert (Moshe) Feldman, had the *zechus*



PAINTING BY ZALMAN KLEINMAN

to serve the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin, and when Sara got engaged to Levi Yitzchak Shemtov, she was in touch with the Rebbetzin about the *simcha*.

She relates:

“Back then, in 5748\*, when we became officially engaged—on the Sunday after my visit to her—the Rebbetzin called. She wanted to shower us with blessings, and I wish that I had the presence of mind to remember everything that she said. What I do remember is the overall feeling—that a very loving grandmother wanted to wish us the absolute best.

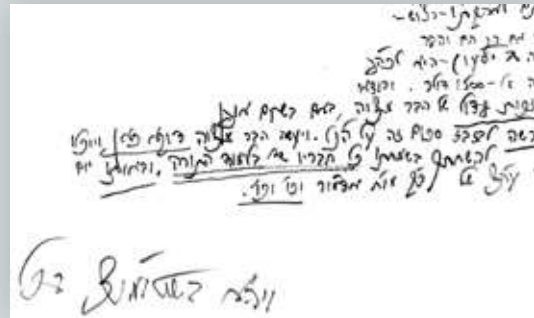
“I had hoped to bring [my *chosson*] Levi Yitzchak to meet the Rebbetzin, but that was not to be. Her health deteriorated, and she was rushed to the hospital.

“My father was with her, of course, and the astounding, overwhelming thing to me is that although the Rebbetzin was within hours of her soul leaving this world, she did not seem concerned about herself at all. She didn’t ask about the prognosis or the treatment. Instead, she kept asking my father, ‘How is the young couple? How are they doing? Are they happy? When is the wedding?’

“After she passed away, and the shivah period ended, my father had an occasion to be with the Rebbe, who also asked about my engagement. When he heard that we were scaling down the celebration, the Rebbe said, ‘Everything should take place as scheduled, and I hope it will not be smaller than originally planned. In fact, it should be bigger. It shouldn’t be at home; it should be in a rented hall. It should be very joyful, and with live music. You should do this because this is how the Rebbetzin would have wanted it.’”<sup>8</sup>

## PROPER CELEBRATION

The following is the Rebbe’s response to a letter from a Chossid, dated Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5730\*, notifying the Rebbe of his plans to travel with his son to Eretz Yisroel for his bar mitzvah.



נסיעתם לאהקתו"ו - רצו"ש - (אפילו אם רק הם והבר מצוה שי' יסעו) - היא לכה"פ הוצאה של - 1500 דולר. ובודאי יהי זכות גדול של הבר מצוה, באם בשום אופן לא ירשה לבזבז סכום זה על הג"ל. ויעשה הבר מצוה דוקא כאן, ויוכלו להשתתף בשמחתו כל חבריו שי' בלימוד התורה, ובאותו יום יבקר עה"צ של כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר וכו' וכו'.

ויהא בשטומו"צ בכל

*Your visit to Eretz Yisroel (even if only you and the bar mitzvah boy sheyichyu would be traveling) will cost at least 1500 dollars. It would surely be a great zechus for the bar mitzvah boy, if he would not allow whatsoever the waste of such an amount on the above. Rather, the bar mitzvah should be celebrated specifically here, and all his friends sheyichyu who learn Torah with him would be able to partake in the simcha, and on that day he should visit the Ohel of the [Friediker] Rebbe, my father-in-law etc. etc.*

*May it be in an auspicious and good time in all aspects.*

(Igros Kodesh vol. 26, p. 247)

## A Good Avenue

As Chassidim, the Rebbe wants us to use every opportunity we have to further awareness of Yiddishkeit and *hafatzas hamaayanos*. Being such a potent and spiritual time, a *simcha* is the best opportunity to be utilized towards this end.

Firstly, the Rebbe encouraged families celebrating weddings to have a *tzedakah pushka* on the tables

\* 5748-1988, 5730-1969



at the wedding meal, especially on the tables where the *chosson* and *kallah* are seated.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, the Rebbe encouraged that the event itself, when possible, should be used to spread Yiddishkeit to the guests.

In a letter to someone celebrating a bar mitzvah, the Rebbe writes:

“It is surprising that you did not elaborate about the bar mitzvah of... You certainly utilized the gathering to inspire the hearts of the participants and to prompt them to take action...”<sup>10</sup>

In one instance, when asked by a family if they can make their son’s bar mitzvah celebration earlier than the actual date, the Rebbe responded:

“According to the Zohar Chadash p. 15d, which explains the reason for the great joy of a bar mitzvah [the day that a person begins their obligation to fulfill the mitzvos], it is obvious when the proper time to celebrate is [i.e. on the actual date]. However, if someone wishes to make a celebration... that will lead to increased Torah study and mitzvah observance, what could be wrong with that? Why would this avenue of strengthening Yiddishkeit be any less legitimate than all others?”<sup>11</sup>

Also when it comes to a bris, the Rebbe similarly instructed that the *seudah* should include a farbrengen inspiring the participants to strengthen their mitzvah observance. In this instance, the Rebbe ruled that the ability to have a farbrengen in this spirit trumps the need to make a bris first thing in the morning. For, as the Torah says, ultimately the purpose of every mitzvah is to bring more *yiras Shamayim*.<sup>12</sup>

The Rebbe often quoted the Zohar about the great celebration Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai made for his son on the day of his bar mitzvah, encouraging

everyone to follow his example and likewise celebrate their children’s bar mitzvah in a joyous manner.

When a father asked the Rebbe about keeping his son’s bar mitzvah a quiet affair, the Rebbe was astonished by the idea. However, the Rebbe did add an important qualification:

“In response to your letter from Motzei Shabbos, in which you ask about the bar mitzvah of your son in the upcoming month of Iyar, whether you should make it in private or public, but you did not offer a reason for either option.

“It would seem that when a Yid enters the age of mitzvos, there should be no justification to make it a private event. Even in previous generations [it was appropriate], and all the more so nowadays, in our spiritually low time, we must seize every opportunity to strengthen Torah and mitzvos, and to allow the memories of such an event to be engraved in the hearts and minds of the participants as much as possible.

“Obviously, my intention is not that you should waste money. Rather, you should conduct a Torah-true celebration in the Chassidische spirit, where all the participants will bless your son to grow up as a *yarei Shamayim*, Chossid, and *lamdan*. The statement of our Rabbeim is well known: What a Chassidische farbrengen can accomplish, even Malach Michael cannot...”<sup>13</sup>



THE REBBE LEAVES 770 WHILE A CHUPAH IS TAKING PLACE



Of course, the Rebbe also encouraged the bar mitzvah *bochur* to deliver words of Torah at the celebration, both in *nigleh* and Chassidus.

In one letter, the Rebbe writes:

"I was pleasantly surprised to see in the copy of your bar mitzvah speech that you learn Likkutei Sichos, and that you succeeded in repeating ideas from there in a manner that the crowd will understand..."<sup>14</sup>

## Participating in Their Simchos

With a *simcha* being such a pivotal moment in a person's life, every Chossid wishes for the Rebbe to be a part of their *simcha*, bestowing his holy *brachos* and participating in the *simcha* in his special way. And the Rebbe, from his part, blesses each and every person and indeed ensures that the moments should truly be a *se'ah tovah* ומוצלחת—a good and auspicious time.

At a farbrengen once, the Rebbe described the holiness of the shul in 770, as he often did, as the place where his father-in-law, the Frierdiker Rebbe lived and carried out his *avodah* for ten years. The words the Rebbe used on this occasion were: "כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו האט געלערנט און געדאווענט, און געבענטשט אידן, און מקבל געווען בקשות, און האט זיך מצטער געווען בצערן של ישראל, און משתתף געווען בשמחתן של ישראל וואס געפינען זיך בכל קצוי תבל..."

*"It was here that he learned and davened, blessed Yidden, received their requests, and felt the pain of all the Jewish people, and participated in the joys of Yidden all over the world..."*

On the audio recording of this farbrengen, one can hear how the Rebbe cries while speaking these words.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the Rebbe participates in all the *simchos* of Chassidim and bestows his eternal *brachos* upon each and every one.

The Rebbe once told Reb Shmuel Zalmanov that he would not have time to edit certain pages of a publication that evening because there was going to be a wedding. Reb Shmuel was surprised, because the Rebbe had already stopped being *mesader kiddushin* for a while, but the Rebbe explained: "Instead of being there in the physical sense, we must participate spiritually, and that requires even more work!" T



Reb Boruch Kievman related:

During *yechidus* before our wedding, the Rebbe promised the kalla that even though he would be visiting the Ohel on the day of the wedding, 23 Elul 5726\*, he would make sure to come back in time to be present (in his room) for the chupah.

As the kalla arrived under the chupah, the Rebbe's car pulled up at the curb outside 770 and the Rebbe went straight to his room for the chupah as he had said.

This beautiful photo was taken by the wedding photographer at the moment the Rebbe emerged from the car.

1. Samach Tesamach 5657, p. 226, et. al.

2. Igros Kodesh vol. 10, p. 131.

3. Ibid. vol. 19, p. 394.

4. Ibid. vol. 18, p. 207.

5. 20 Av 5714.

6. Motzei Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5739.

7. V'Nichbesha Ha'aretz p. 107.

8. Here's My Story, Erev Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5775. Chabad.org/2489427.

9. Yechidus 1 Cheshvan 5739, et. al.

10. Igros Kodesh vol. 10, p. 213.

11. Igros Kodesh vol. 16, p. 150.

12. Igros Kodesh vol. 4, p. 155.

13. Igros Kodesh vol. 10, p. 376.

14. Letter dated 3 Nissan 5738; Heichal Menachem vol. 1, p. 44.

15. 20 Cheshvan 5741, sicha 1.