

FORTY YEARS }

FORTY YEARS AGO, THE REBBE CALLED UPON CHASSIDIM TO BRING THE SPECIAL MITZVAH OF NEIROS SHABBOS KODESH TO EVERY JEWISH WOMAN AND GIRL ACROSS THE GLOBE. IN A SWEEPING CAMPAIGN OVER THE ENSUING FORTY YEARS, MILLIONS OF SMALL FLAMES HAVE ACCUMULATED INTO A ONE GIANT TORCH, SLOWLY DISPELLING THE DARKNESS OF GOLUS AND USHERING IN THE GREAT LIGHT OF THE GEULAH.

A CHASSIDISHER DERHER MET WITH THE LEADING FIGURES WHO TOOK CHARGE OF THE CAMPAIGN THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, AND THEY SHED MUCH VALUABLE INFORMATION WITH US, SUPPLYING SOME NEVER BEFORE SEEN MANUSCRIPTS AND DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THIS ACCOUNT.

A CANDLE OF HER OWN

THE STORY OF MIUTZA NESHER

”א ליכטיקען שטורעם“



Dedicated by
The Shul of Bal Harbour Community
To achieve a “Chassidisher Derher” this year.



EREV PESACH 5735. As the Jewish community was feverishly preparing for the onset of Yom-Tov, Lubavitchers around the world were focusing on something else entirely. On the previous night, the Rebbe called a group of activist for an unexpected *yechidus* and launched an urgent campaign which was to last until the moment Yom Tov began; a total of just one day. In an interview with *A Chassidisher Derher*, Mrs. Esther Sternberg, who was present at this *yechidus* relates what transpired:

“It was the afternoon of *bedikas chometz*, and I was with my children in a local eatery as not to bring *chometz* into the house, when one of Rabbi Groner’s sons burst through the door, giving me a message that I should be at “770” in fifteen minutes. I asked him why, but he didn’t know.

“I quickly made my way to 770 and was directed by Rabbi Klein to wait in Gan Eden Hatachton. ‘The Rebbe wants to see you.’ In Gan Eden Hatachton I saw Reb Yosef Wineberg standing in one corner and Reb Dovid Raskin in the other. Both were wearing a *gartel*. I was utterly puzzled at what this was all about. Suddenly Reb Yaakov Yehuda Hecht walked in, he too was wearing a *gartel*! It struck me that they were preparing for a *yechidus*.

“After ten minutes of waiting, the Rebbe walked in followed by Rabbis Hodakov and Groner, nodded at us, and continued into his room. We were then summoned into the Rebbe’s room. I was in total shock at this unexpected *yechidus*!

“The Rebbe began by saying that in truth he should have made ‘*a lichtiger farbrengen*’ to generate ‘*a lichtigen shturem*’ about Neiros Shabbos Kodesh, for this year Pesach falls out Wednesday and Thursday night, followed immediately by Shabbos, giving women a chance to light the candles three nights in a row. The Rebbe explained that it would be halachically questionable to hold a *farbrengen* as it may prevent people from doing *bedikas chometz*, so therefore he is giving it over to us to implement this *Lichtigen Shturem*.

“The Rebbe instructed us to do it with great *harchava*; a sweeping campaign, not to spare any expense and not hesitate to exploit any means to reach people. The Rebbe instructed to use radio, television, the newspapers etc.

“I then understood what we were all doing there: Rabbi Hecht was there since he hosted a radio show; Rabbi Wineberg delivered the Tanya *shiurim* on the radio; Rabbi Raskin headed Tzach and would be able to mobilize the Mitzvah Tanks and the bochurim; and I was there due to my role in Mivtza Neshek.

“We were all very shocked. It was Erev Pesach, we were all extremely busy, but the Rebbe wanted an extensive far-

reaching campaign. Knowing that he gave us a challenging task, the Rebbe initialed



THE MATCHBOOK THE REBBE INITIALED FOR THOSE PRESENT AT THE UNEXPECTED YECHIDUS EREV PESACH 5735.



IT STRUCK ME THAT THEY WERE PREPARING FOR A YECHIDUS.

matchbooks printed with the words “נרות שבת קודש - י"א ניסן” (these were given to the Rebbe as a gift sometime earlier). We each approached the Rebbe by age order, and the Rebbe gave us each a matchbook, thanked us and gave us a *brocho* for much success.”

Thus, Mivtza Neshek burst forward with a new wave of energy.

To properly appreciate this remarkable event, we must go back half a year earlier, when the Rebbe launched a brand new *mivtza*, *Mivtza Neiros Shabbos Kodesh v'Yom Tov*.

A MIVTZA IS BORN

Wednesday, 24 Elul 5734. Tishrei was in the air in “770,” as myriads of guests were arriving daily to spend the festive month with the Rebbe.

That day a *sicha* for N'shei Ubnos Chabad² was scheduled to take place, when the Rebbe would speak exclusively for women and girls, as he would several times a year. The Rebbe first spoke on Achdus Yisroel and the woman's role in



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influencing her home, but then the Rebbe went on to speak of the deteriorating moral state of the world, how the world is deteriorating into darkness, and the need to illuminate our surroundings.

The Rebbe suggested a simple solution: ensure that all women, girls before their marriage, and even children before *bas mitzvah*, light Shabbos and Yom-Tov candles.³



With this, *Mivtza Neiros Shabbos Kodesh V'yom Tov* was born.

(The term NESHEK (abbreviation for *Neiros Shabbos Kodesh* and Hebrew for weapon) was only coined later that year⁴. For practical purposes, we will henceforth refer to the mivtza throughout this article as “Neshek,” though it may not have been introduced yet at the specified time).

The next day, Thursday, 25 Elul, while the Rebbe was at the *Ohel*, rumors spread that there may be a *farbrengen* that night, an unusual occurrence. Chassidim were elated upon hearing later that night that indeed the Rebbe would *farbreng*! The *shul* filled quickly with the ever-growing number of guests, eager to join this unexpected *farbrengen*. In explaining the reason for the impromptu *farbrengen*, the Rebbe mentioned that it was to discuss the newly founded *mivtza*. Additionally, it would be an opportune time to welcome the new arrival of guests.

In addressing the current world situation, the Rebbe said, “No one knows what may be in a half-hour or in an hour and people walk around worried about what tomorrow may bring. They are forgetting that ‘ישן שומר’ לא ינום ולא יישן שומר! The solution is the light of a young girl’s candle, a special power bestowed upon her by the Aibershter to literally illuminate the world (spiritually, and as a result also) physically. The Rebbe called upon Chassidim to immediately reach out to women and girls to light the Shabbos candles. The call of Neshek must reach even the most remote corners

of the globe so young Jewish girls the world over will insist that their parents provide them with candles for lighting before Shabbos. This is why, the Rebbe explained, this is not being spoken of on Shabbos (when a *Farbrengen* would routinely be held), in order that results be achieved already before Shabbos.

The Rebbe concluded: “*Yehi ratzon* that all the small flames (ליכטעלאך) should merge into a large torch, and from a torch

DON'T WAIT

Though the Rebbe’s call, for Jewish girls well before Bas Mitzvah to light Shabbos candles, first began on 24 Elul 5734, we present here one exceptional occasion where the Rebbe instructed a young girl to begin lighting Shabbos candles a year and a half before the Mivtza was launched.

Reb Shlomo Besser relates:

In Adar 5733, I visited the Rebbe for a Yechidus in honor of my birthday. At the end of my *pan*, I wrote that my oldest daughter will be celebrating her fifth birthday on Yud Alef Nissan.

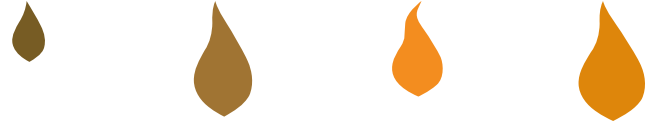
After the Rebbe finished reading my *pan*, I mustered up enough courage and asked: Is there any significance in me taking on a *Hiddur Mitzva* in honor of her birthday, or maybe we should wait until her Bas Mitzvah, and then she will take upon herself to add in good deeds?



The Rebbe looked at me and said: “If you wouldn’t have asked, then I wouldn’t have mentioned anything. But since you asked me, I advise that from now on she should start lighting Shabbos candles”.

Struck by emotion from this special response, I was thinking of how I could introduce this new *minhag* into my house. Straight away the Rebbe said “if this *minhag* will effect *sholom bayis*, then consider it as if I didn’t say anything”. The Rebbe continued to ask however, that I explain to my wife that these candles will add extra light and holiness in the house, and added that he researched and found that in several Chasidic courts, in addition to “*Beis Harav*”, girls have customarily lit Shabbos candles before their marriage.

At the end of the Yechidus, the Rebbe discussed the question of if a girl should recite a *Shehechyanu* the first time she fulfills a Mitzvah, and concluded that in my daughter’s case this would not be a problem, as the first time she will light candles after her birthday will be on Pesach (when *Shehechyanu* is recited regardless).



into a large fire which will burn down the remainder of *golus* [and as the *posuk* says] “And Hashem will be for you an everlasting light”⁵.

The Rebbe issued an urgent call; Jewish women and girls needed to hear about the Shabbos candles with results before tomorrow evening!

Following the launch of the *mivtza*, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Groner to reach out to N’shei Chabad. Mrs. Sternberg recounts:

“Reb Groner requested of me to work on an advertisement for the Morgan Journal, telling me of the Rebbe’s directive to have the advertisement published already before Yom-Tov. He contacted me, as I was actively involved with N’shei Ubnos Chabad. Of course we prepared the advertisement and it appeared in the newspaper before Rosh Hashanah.”

This was her first of a lifetime endeavor as head of Mivtza Neshek.

ADDED FORCE

Over the following days and weeks, the Rebbe spoke of the *mivtza* time and time again, speaking with great fervor about this new initiative, constantly adding new details and insight.

On Shabbos Nitzavim, 27 Elul, the Rebbe mentioned the Mivtza Neshek once again, mentioning that lighting the Yom Tov candles of Rosh Hashanah presents a unique opportunity for those that have never lit them before, as it



THE REBBE UNEXPECTEDLY AND UNCHARACTERISTICALLY BEGAN A SICHA.

can unquestionably be said with a *Shecheyanu* (since this *brocha* is recited on Yom Yov regardless).⁶ The Rebbe then gave cake to Reb Yosef Wineberg to be distributed to the women involved in the new *mitvza*.

During the Rosh Hashanah *farbrengen*, Neshek was once again in the spotlight. The Rebbe explained why only now we are focusing on Neshek, and its addition to the general education of girls.

After *havdalah*, as the Rebbe stood up for the commencement of Kos Shel Brocho, the Rebbe unexpectedly and uncharacteristically began a *sicha*. Speaking with closed eyes, the Rebbe said that any woman, throughout the entire world, which will accept this mitzvah upon themselves henceforth, will receive from *mazkirus* two dimes – one as a shliach to give to *tzedaka* (as the *minhag* is to give *tzedaka* before lighting the Shabbos candles), and one for her to use to her heart's desire. With this announcement, the festive Kos Shel Brocho began.

Immediately, Jewish communities throughout the world heard of the Rebbe's announcement. Many women were influenced to utilize the opportunity and accept upon themselves the *mitvza*.

Mrs. Sternberg told us of the efforts in the New York area:

"Since I was contacted regarding the advertisements, Rabbi Hodakov requested of me to arrange the distribution of the dimes. On Friday, there was a non-stop stream of teachers and Rabbis of communities coming to my home to receive the dimes. I asked them to leave me with the names of the women and girls so I can give them in to the Rebbe.

"On Erev Yom Kippur when I went by for *lekach*⁷, the Rebbe asked me if there were any remaining dimes, to which I answered that there were few left. Pulling out a handful of coins from his pocket, the Rebbe told me that if we would need more I should turn to *mazkirus*.

"Indeed, *mazkirus* replenished the ongoing distribution of dimes."

However in Eretz Yisroel, they continued this practice for many years, giving ten *Agurot* to all women which accepted the Mitzvah. The Rebbe instructed that the funds for these coins come from Kupas Rabbeinu, a special fund of Machne Israel used for the Rebbe's *inyonim*.

ANOTHER SURPRISE FARBRENGEN!

Though there was much excitement over the new *mitvza*, it had yet to make big waves with even further reach.

After Sukkos, the Rebbe's *Mazkirus* turned to Mrs. Sternberg requesting a report of the activities of the *mitvza*.



A NEW ELEMENT

The *farbrengen* of Vov Tishrei 5735 is known as an amazing and heavenly Farbrengen, with the Rebbe addressing the story of Miryam bas Bilgah, crying profusely during the Sichah (See Derher Magazine issue 12 (Tishrei 5774) for a recount of that Sichah). The Rebbe learned from this story: if a young Jewish girl was able to have a negative affect, not just on her entire family, but on her family's entire *Mishmor*, how much more so will the positive affect a Jewish girl lighting Shabbos candles be on her entire family, community and the entire world!

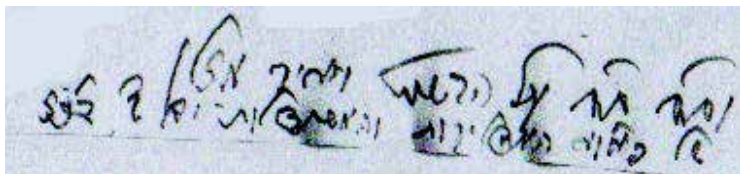
During this Farbrengen, the topic of Neshek was addressed at great length, spanning through three of the Sichos. The Rebbe also responded to several questions asked about Mivtza Neshek.

The Rebbe then added a new element to the Mivtza:

“When a girl is told that just as she has her own candle, she will have her own Pushka as well, to give *tzedaka* before *bentching licht*, just as her mother does – and it is near her candle and Pushka that her father, brothers, and those who learn in Kolel and Yeshiva who are big scholars, will eat Seudas Shabbos and sing Zemiros – this will have a lasting impression on her *Chinuch*, lifting her beyond our expectations! For children, a feeling as this will have a deep impression (איינגעקריצט) upon her entire life!”



ON A REPORT OF MIVTZA NESHEK THE REBBE RESPONDED:



ות"ח ת"ח על הבשור"ט ויאיר מזלן של כאו"א המדליקות והמשתדלות-ים שי' בכ"ז

Many thanks on the good news. May the Mazal shine of all those that light and are part of this endeavor Sheyichyu.

tonight, to discuss Mivtza Neshek. And since a Melave Malka for men was already announced for 10 o'clock tonight, we will make the *farbrengen* earlier, approximately 8:30-8:45. We will then speak some words, and hopefully this will jolt everyone (א שאקל טאן) for the *mivtza*."

"I was honestly embarrassed to write to the Rebbe," Mrs. Sternberg recalls. "I knew that the Rebbe wanted more to be done. I was hesitant to write the report. But after another reminder from Mazkirus, I finally sat down to write up a report. I submitted to Mazkirus on Friday afternoon, 25 Tishrei, and shortly after I arrived home Rabbi Groner telephoned me with the following answer from the Rebbe:

"ת"ח ת"ח על הבשור"ט אודות הדלקת נרות שבת שהגיע אלי כמה רגעים לפני זמן הדלקת נרות.

"Many thanks for the good report about Hadlokas Neiros Shabbos, which I received moments before the time of hadlokas neiros.

"From then on, every Friday I would write a report to the Rebbe of that week's activities. I merited to many responses from the Rebbe through the years."

The next day, 26 Tishrei, at the Shabbos Bereishis *farbrengen*, the Rebbe made a surprising announcement:⁸

"Before one embarks on an endeavor one must study the subject to be properly prepared (as is the *minhag* before one marries). Therefore we will do something exceptional tonight: We will make a special *farbrengen* for women

The news spread like wildfire, and droves of women could be seen heading to "770" for the second *sicha* specifically for them in one month! The Rebbe spoke of the *mivtza*, explaining the benefits of Neiros Shabbos Kodesh. The added light, the Rebbe explained, is a necessity especially these days when the world is becoming "madder and darker," and Jewish homes are being ensnared in the world's new ideas. It is the Divine light of a Jewish girl's candle that combats these new threats.

This *sicha* would become the primary source for Mivtza Neshek, subsequently being reviewed by the Rebbe and published at the very beginning of Likkutei Sichos vol. 9, a highly unusual occurrence.

It was clear that the Rebbe wanted more done, and indeed over the ensuing months, Mivtza Neshek soared to great heights, with an immense surge in public awareness.

A NOVEL MIVTZA

The launching of this *mivtza* was met with much excitement by Chasidim; fueled by the Rebbe's constant encouragement for more to be done. Yet, some groups of *frum* Jews displayed



The following are the Rebbe's corrections to a press release prepared about the Mivtza. Where they had written: "even young girls from the age of three" – the Rebbe added "לערך" – approximately.

Where they had written "every Friday night", the Rebbe corrected it with "eve?"

The Sabbath day has always been a central, fundamental theme in the Jewish home for all members of the family. But it is the Jewish woman who has the honor and privilege of ushering in the Sabbath on Friday night by lighting the Sabbath candles.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, has launched a massive world-wide campaign urging ~~that~~ all Jewish women, and even young girls from the age of three, to kindle the Sabbath candles at the proper time, about eighteen minutes before sunset.

Sabbath candles brighten the home, bring peace and harmony and deepen the family relationship.

Every Friday night, ~~at~~ ^{לערך} ~~the~~ Jewish mother and daughter should fulfill her blessed obligation to light the Sabbath candles.

Do so this evening. This should be done no later than _____.

1) לערך
2) eve?

an icy reaction to this fiery initiative. Mainly they opposed the Rebbe's call for every girl, from the youngest age of comprehension, to begin lighting the candles. Conventional practice was for a woman to begin lighting Shabbos candles after her marriage. The Rebbe even called on Jewish girls to recite the *brocha* when they lit their candle. The Rebbe insisted that the custom of unmarried women and girls lighting Shabbos candles was quite prevalent in previous generations; a *minhag* that was somehow forgotten, and this was just call to Jewish communities to reinstate this precious custom.

Reaching out to the *frum* community was a new twist unique to this *mivtza*, as most of the Rebbe's *mivtzoim* mainly





IN EFFECT; THE LEGENDARY NESHEK CANDLEHOLDER WAS ESSENTIALLY DESIGNED BY THE REBBE HIMSELF!

targeted non-observant Jews. For this reason, the organizers had to conceive of new methods of reaching the masses in the most effective form possible.

Mivtza Neshek was truly a novel *mivtza*, forging new ground in *Hafotzas Hayahadus* and reinstating a forgotten *minhag*.

THE CANDLESTICKS

“N’shei Chabad began brainstorming different approaches of how to reach the masses,” shares Mrs. Sternberg. “One day I received a call from Rabbi Rubin who wanted to encourage the 90 girls in his school to begin lighting the Shabbos

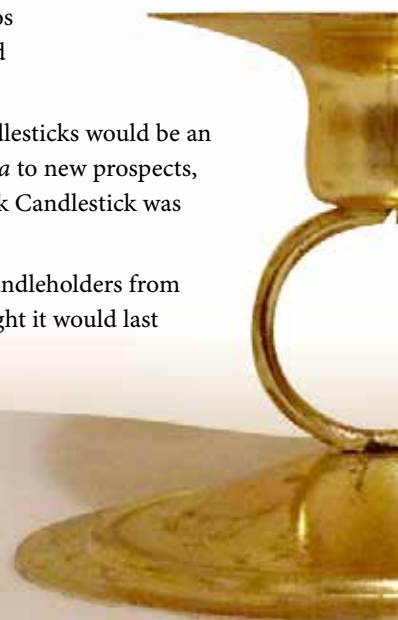
candles. His idea was to promote the campaign by giving each girl a candlestick, and he asked for our help in obtaining them. He suggested that while he could obtain his own candlesticks, he felt it would have much impact if it came directly from Lubavitch.

“The problem was that we weren’t distributing candlesticks as part of the *mivtza*. We nevertheless didn’t turn him down, and we supplied him with 100 candlesticks, complete with stickers displaying the candle-lighting time for that Friday. Naturally, my weekly report to the Rebbe included this detail.

“The following week he called me again, asking for an additional 100 candlesticks! I was shocked; he only had 90 girls in his school, why would he need more? Rabbi Rubin explained that his students were so excited with candle lighting that they spoke to their friends about lighting Shabbos candles too, and now the girls need candlesticks for their friends!

“We realized that distributing candlesticks would be an effective way of bringing the *mivtza* to new prospects, and with that the legendary Neshek Candlestick was first introduced.

“Straightaway, we ordered 2,000 candleholders from a company in California. We thought it would last for many





weeks, but it was used up quite quickly. At this point we already had secured, through Reb Dovid Raskin A”H, a special deal for 10,000 candlesticks through a manufacturer named Mr. Teddy Kuperstein. He created for us a new design which would suit our needs, but he insisted on a tall and thin prototype, saying that this was the modern look. We weren’t too happy with the model, but he was insisting that this would be the best product.”

The Rebbe also requested of them that they add a sticker to the candlestick, upon which the receiver can write their name, thereby personalizing the mitzvah.

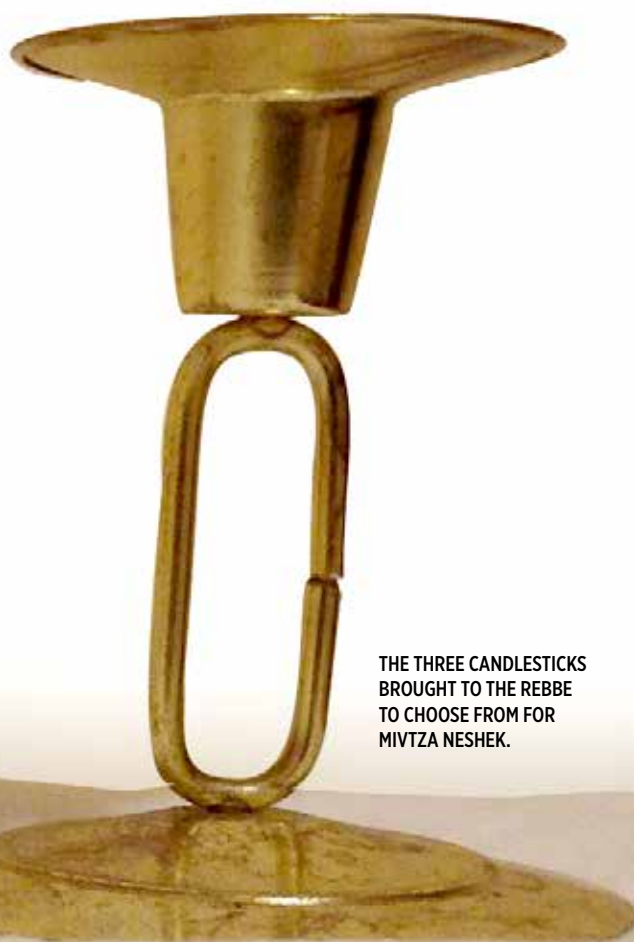
When they submitted the sample candlestick and sticker to the Rebbe, the Rebbe commented on both items:

Regarding the candlestick, the Rebbe said, since its construction was slender and thus unstable, it wouldn’t be safe for use. Regarding the sticker, the Rebbe instructed to add an illustration of *challah* and a *becher* on the sticker.

With the existing prototype candleholder rejected, they brought another three samples to the Rebbe to choose from. Interestingly, the Rebbe chose separate parts from those samples (see images). In effect: the legendary Neshek candleholder was essentially designed by the Rebbe himself!

Until today, it is this exact design which is used for Mivtza Neshek.

Mrs. Sternberg told us another few episodes on the Rebbe’s involvement on the type of candlestick:



THE THREE CANDLESTICKS
BROUGHT TO THE REBBE
TO CHOOSE FROM FOR
MIVTZA NESHEK.



(2) אגודת ק"מ (אגודת)
 חתונות - אגודת חתונות
 שבתות ופסחים
 נבר מוכנו זל הקלובת נשי תב"ז
 Labels שבת ימינו אלה וזל
 100,000 זל
 כדור
 כדור

“At one point⁹ we ran out of our standard candlesticks and we urgently needed to replenish, and after considering other options, we found glass candlesticks for a good price. After a full night of negotiating with the company and securing the candlesticks, we wrote to the Rebbe about the last minute crunch and the temporary resolution, but the Rebbe said we shouldn’t do it, for the glass may shatter if it gets too hot.

“Another episode: There was a certain man whose daughter embraced *yiddishkeit* as a result of Neiros Shabbos, and he subsequently became a friend of Lubavitch and supporter of the *mitvza*. One day he approached me and offered to get candlesticks from a friend of his in Israel which manufactures small candlesticks. He additionally offered to pay for half of the expenses! We were ecstatic with the proposal, but when we mentioned it to the Rebbe, the Rebbe didn’t approve. He said the candlestick is too low and it is dangerous.”

THE BROCHURE

Once the candlestick campaign was underway, the idea arose to prepare a pamphlet to go along with it. The very first brochure produced was thoroughly edited and reedited by the Rebbe, making sure that every detail was perfect. Throughout the years, more promotional material was made, all under the Rebbe’s constant guidance.

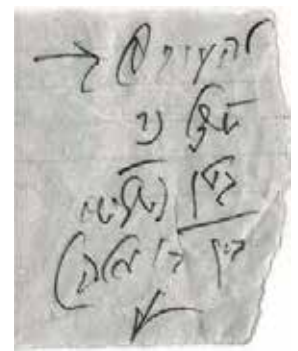
Throughout the years, there were many different *horaos* from the Rebbe regarding these promotional brochures and flyers. Below are a few of them:

- On a report that Mrs. Sternberg wrote to the Rebbe of her printing labels and brochures, the Rebbe circled the word “printing” and wrote (see Ksav Yad):

בודאי ביופי (שגם “החיצוניות” ימשיך להדה"נ)

Certainly beautifully (so that the “esthetics” too will draw one to Hadlokas Neiros)

- The Rebbe also instructed that a note be prominently added stating that if one couldn’t light the candles in its specified time, it’s better not to light them at all, as it is contrary to the holiness of Shabbos. He gave an analogy of one that goes to greet and honor a queen from a distant land, when at the same moment she acts against her will. Whenever speaking of Neshek, the Rebbe wanted the above to be mentioned.
- At one point a bumper-sticker was produced to advertise the *mitvza*, stating “Jewish mothers and daughters, light



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN
INSTRUCTION ABOUT THE BUMPER
STICKER, AND THE CORRECTED
VERSION WITH AN ADDED THIRD
SMALLER CANDLE.





THE BOOKLET PREPARED FOR THE NSHEI CHABAD CONVENTION 5740.
RIGHT, THE POSTCARD INCLUDING A THIRD CANDLE AS PER THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTION.

Shabbos candles!” including an artwork of two candles. Mrs. Sternberg shares that since they didn’t receive the Rebbe’s consent they didn’t print it. However more than a year later the Rebbe answered (see Ksav Yad):

להעיר שצ"ל נר קטן (שלישי בין ב' אלה)

*There should be a (third) **smaller candle** (between these two) [the Rebbe then made an arrow to the artwork, see Ksav Yad].*

The third smaller candle was to symbolize the candle of a young child. After correcting the artwork, the bumperstickers were printed.

- Rabbi Moshe Feller, Head Shliach of the state of Minnesota relates: We were privileged to host the Nshei u'bnos Chabad convention of 5740 in Minnesota. On the cover of the journal we published for the convention, we featured a color photograph depicting two Shabbos candle sticks lit in the snow, characterizing Yiddishkeit in Minnesota's frozen terrain. After the convention we proudly submitted the journal to the Rebbe with our report. Imagine our shock and the disappointment we felt in ourselves when the Rebbe's only comment was "I have stated many times that when depicting a candle lighting scene, a third candle should always be present". We immediately had the scene reproduced with three candlesticks and sent it out as a postcard to all those who received the journal.

- On an image of a mother helping her daughter light the Shabbos candles, the Rebbe instructed that the mother's two candles should not be lit, pointing out that the girl must light first, in case she needs her mother's assistance.

THE CAMPAIGN HITS THE STREETS!

Soon school visitation program was developed to publicize the campaign. When the Rebbe was notified that presenters will visit schools and personally speak about Neshek and distribute the packets to the girls, the Rebbe strongly encouraged this plan, adding that this will also be a "זכות לנוסעות" -- a merit to those traveling to visit the schools.

Within a few short years, more than a million-and-a-half candlesticks and brochures had been distributed! There was constant feedback and requests coming to the Neshek office (Mrs. Sternberg's home), and the Rebbe always demanded that more and more be done.

Throughout the first few months, the Rebbe spoke very often about this *mitvza*, in public and in private. Often, when a young girl would come with her family to *yechidus*, the Rebbe would ask her if she lights Shabbos candles. (It should be noted that in the later years, during "dollars," the Rebbe often did the same).



A MATCHBOOK
PREPARED AS PART OF
MIVTZA NESHEK.

In early winter 5735 the Merkos Linyonei Chinuch received an interesting request from Yeshivas Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan in New York (a division of Yeshiva University). As they were preparing a scholarly journal, and they wanted to include a chapter on the newly launched Mivtza Neshek and were seeking assistance in obtaining the Rebbe's *sichos* on the topic for publication.

Mrs. Sternberg relates: "I enlisted the help of Reb Shmuel Greisman, who was still *bochur* at "770," to compile and type up the Rebbe's *sichos* on the topic. By then there were quite a few *sichos*, and they were published in the journal. This helped raise much awareness of the *mivtza* specifically in the religious communities, especially as it wasn't coming directly from Lubavitch."

"In Israel, Reb Yisroel Glitsenstein (then a *bochur*) was feverishly working on ways to spread the word to all Jewish women. Once, while on the phone with Rabbi Hodakov, he reported that they had manufactured two million matchbooks with an advertisement for Neshek printed on it. Suddenly he heard the Rebbe's voice astonishingly ask "two million?!"

"The Rebbe then asked through Rabbi Hodakov how they plan on distributing so many matchbooks, to which Reb Yisroel answered that they will be sold in stores throughout Eretz Yisroel.

"Mrs. Raizel Estulin from Israel, who visited a local hospital every week and tried to encourage women to begin lighting

candles, once asked the Rebbe in *yechidus*, what can she tell those women don't readily agree and sometimes even laugh her off.

The Rebbe answered: "The next time you meet a woman which doesn't agree, tell her that you are performing my *shlichus*".

Once, Mrs. Esther Weinberg notified the Rebbe that she wasn't feeling well. The Rebbe answered her to involve herself in Mivtza Neshek, and that should help her feel better.

BSUROS TOVOS

"I once wrote that we gave out 'many' candlesticks," recounts Mrs. Sternberg, "to which the Rebbe answered 'how much is many'? From then on, I began writing each week the specific amount of candlesticks distributed.

"I would also send to the Rebbe any feedback or letters that I received from those reached through the *mivtza*. The Rebbe had great pleasure from seeing these, and eventually instructed me to publish a book (see below).

"Once, it was during the month of Elul, and I decided that I didn't want to bother the Rebbe so often with these trivial episodes, since the Rebbe is surely busy now preparing for Rosh Hashanah. I decided I would only write once every three weeks instead of every week. When the three weeks were almost up, I received a phone call from Reb Binyomin Klein: 'The Rebbe wants me to remind you that it's been almost three weeks since the last *duch* from Mivtza Neshek'. It amazed me that with all the Rebbe had going on, especially



THE FARBRENGEN OF VOV TISHREI 5736, WHERE THE REBBE SPOKE
AT LENGTH OF THE RESULTS OF MITZA NESHEK.

א קליינע ליכטעלע

אז די מוטער און דער פאטער וכו' האבן דערזען אז ס'איז ניט קיין געוואלד, איז אויף דעם פרייטיק לאחר זי האט מען איר געלאזן אנצינדן אן קיינע שטורעמס, אבער זי האט עס געטאן מיט דער זעלבער פייערליכקייט און הארציקייט, און דאס האט אויכעט משפיע געווען אויף שאר בני הבית.

אז ס'איז דורכגעגאנגען א פאר שבתים, האט דער מוטער געזאגט צו דער פאטער (צי דער פאטער צום מוטער) אז ס'האט עפעס קיין ארט ניט צו אנשטעלן די טעלעוויזשאן בשעת די קליינע מיידעלע גייט ארום און זינגט אז דאס איז א הייליקער שבת און די ליכט ברענט נאך, איז כל זמן די ליכט ברענט אויפן טיש קאן ער בא זיך ניט פועל'ן צו אנשטעלן דעם טעלעוויזשאן. דערנאך איז געווען א טעלעפאן איז די מוטער ניט געגאנגען ענטפערן.

דערנאך האט זיך די מוטער ארומגעקוקט האט זי זיך באטראכט אז ס'זעט עפעס אויס מאדנע: בשעת עס גייט אריין א שכל'טע צי א פריינט זעט מען אז ס'ברענט איין ליכטל, און די קליינע טאכטער אירע איז מלא שמחה וואס זי האט אנגעצונדן א שבת'דיקע ליכט און טענה'ט אז דאס איז א נר קדוש און א יום קדוש וכו', און זי גייט ארום אין א וואכעדיקער קליידל? ס'האט עפעס קיין ארט ניט.

האט זי זיך מיישב געווען אז יהי מה - זי וועט אויך אנהויבן צינדן ליכט.

אז זי האט אנגעהויבן צינדן ליכט האט זי דערנאך ביי זיך ניט געקענט פועל'ן אנצינדן דעם פייער אין אויוון: זי האט ערשט אנגעצונדן א נר של שבת קודש, און האט געזאגט א ברכה אז דאס איז שבת קודש, איז וואס הייסט אז נאך דערויף וועט זי גיין ארויסנעמען די וועטשערע און דערביי אנצינדן צי פארלעשן וכו',

מ'קאן דאך אבער ניט עסן סתם אזוי קיין קאלטע, האט מען אנגעהויבן מאכן טשאלנט, און אז מ'האט אנגעהויבן מאכן טשאלנט האט דאס שוין געהאט א ווירקונג אויף דער מארגענ'דיקער סעודה אויכעט...

און אזוי האט זיך איבערגעשטעלט די גאנצע הויז!

פון וואס האט זיך דאס גענומען? פון א נר של שבת וואס די מיידעלע האט אנגעצונדן, טאקע מצד חינוך, אבער דערפון איז ארויס ניט נאר דער חינוך פון דעד קליינער מיידעלע (אז בשעת זי וועט ווערן בת-מצוה וועט זי מקיים זיין די מצוה בשלימותה), נאר דורך דערויף האט זי מחנך געווען דער גאנצער הויז! (התועדות ו' תשרי תשל"ו)

די משפחה האט א קליינע מיידעלע פון פינף-זעקס יאר וואס איז געגאנגען אין ביה"ס - ניט קיין "דתי" - אין ארה"ק, און דארט איז געקומען א צווייטע מיידעלע און האט דערציילט אז ס'איז דא א מצוה פון הדלקת נרות שבת קודש, און אעפ"י וואס די וואס האט איר דערציילט איז נאך פאר בת-מצוה, עאכ"כ די צו וועמען זי האט דאס דערציילט (וואס זיי זיינען נאך פינף-זעקס יאר אדער נאך אינגער), אעפ"כ קאנען זיי אויך (מצד ענין החינוך) מצד שליחותו של הקב"ה מקיים זיין אט די מצוה און זאגן אט די ברכה, און אויב זיי ווילן - געבן נאך א פרוטה לצדקה, און דורכדעם וועט זי אריינפירן דעם טאג פון שבת.

בשעת זי איז געקומען אהיים און האט עס דערציילט דער מוטער, האט די מוטער געזאגט אז זי ווייסט ניט פון די גאנצע זאך, [ווארום זי איז אוסגעוואקסן אין א מקום וואו ס'איז געווען תנוקות שנשבו בין העכו"ם כו'] און וואו איז עס געהערט געווארן אז די עקרת הבית די מוטער וועט דאס ניט טאן און די קליינע מיידעלע וועט-איר לערנען, איינפירן נייע סדרים אין הויז?

דער דרך פון קטנים און קטנות איז דאך (ווי עס שטייט אין חסידות) אז תיכף ומיד ווערט ער אויפגערעגט און ס'איז ניט שייך צו זאגן - אן קיינע הגבלות, האט זי אנגעהויבן וויינען, און זי האט געבעטן - וואס ארט דאס דער מוטער? זי בעט בא איר קיין זאך ניט - מערניט ווי דער רשיון אז זי זאל דאס קאנען טאן, ווארום א לייכטער האט מען איר געגעבן, און זי ווייסט די ברכה, [דארטן דארף מען דאך ניט לערנען די שפראך, ווארום דאס איז דאך זייער שפראך מקטנותם].

בשעת זי האט געמאכט א געוואלד, און מיט בכיות, האט די מוטער געזאגט אז זי זאל אויפהערן וויינען און טאן וואס זי וויל און איר - די מוטער - לאזן צורוען.

איז זי געווארן בשמחה גדולה ביותר, און אזוי ווי מ'האט איר אנגעזאגט ווען די צייט איז אויף צו אנצינדן די נרות שבת קודש און זי האט געהאט אן אייגענעם לייכטער מיט אן אייגענעם ליכטל, האט זי אוועקגעשטעלט דעם ליכטל אויף דעם שולחן וואו מ'האט געגעסן, האט אליין אנגעצונדן און געמאכט אליין די ברכה, איז זי געווען ביי זיך לעילא ולעילא. און אזוי ווי מ'האט איר אנגעזאגט אז שבת טאר מען דאס ניט רירן און ניט פירן און ניט שאקלען וכו' איז זי ארומגעגאנגען און האט אנגעזאגט דער גאנצער הויז אז מ'זאל ניט טשעפען די ליכט, און אז מ'זאל ניט בלאזן אויף איר וכו'.



RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN GURARY DISTRIBUTES MASHKE FROM THE REBBE TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE MELAVE MALKA BENEFITING MIVTZA NESHEK.



DR. IRA WEISS ADDRESSES A MELAVE MALKA BENEFITING MIVTZA NESHEK.

in such a busy month, the Rebbe still remembered that I had not written.

“So I wrote the *duch*, and concluded by apologizing for taking up the Rebbe’s time, and that’s why I have not written these past few weeks. Shortly thereafter I received an answer:

איך עולה בדעתה שהיא לוקחת את הזמן, והרי מדובר בעניין שמביא פירות עד סוף כל הדורות!

How did it occur to you that you are taking up my time? After all, we are dealing with something that has repercussions for all of eternity!

“Another very interesting episode: The morning after the first *melave malka* fundraiser we organized, Rabbi Hodakov called me asking for a report, saying that the Rebbe requested a report before leaving to the Ohel.



JEW/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 6792

“TWELVE HOURS HAVE PASSED WITHOUT A REPORT”.
RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN GURARY GOES BY FOR SUNDAY DOLLARS.

“Years later, after one of the *melava malkas*, I decided to forgo writing a report immediately, and instead report to the Rebbe about it the next day by ‘dollars’. The next day when my father, Reb Schneur Zalman Gurary, went by for dollars, the Rebbe first asked him how the event went. Then the Rebbe asked him with a warm smile ‘already twelve hours have passed, and I still have not received a report’.”

“א ליכטיקען שטורעם!”

After the select group had the impromptu *yechidus* with the Rebbe (see beginning of this article), they implemented an immediate plan of action.

Rabbis Hecht and Wineberg assumed the responsibility to create a radio segment about the campaign for their respective radio shows. Rabbi Raskin took charge of mobilizing the *bochurim* to go out on *mivtzoim* Erev Pesach with added vigor. And Mrs. Sternberg agreed to spend the day of *erev Yom-Tov* overseeing advertisement and activity for the campaign, the day which is certainly the busiest for a Jewish mother!

In the midst of a whirlwind of activity, Rabbi Hodakov telephoned Mrs. Sternberg with an idea: Many families traveled out to the country to celebrate Pesach in a hotel, and it would be an opportune place to further the campaign’s reach.

Immediately a group of *bochurim* were mobilized to head upstate, equipped with candlesticks and candles. Indeed,



these efforts bore fruit, as the entire supply of candlesticks were exhausted by mid-day.



Not leaving any stone unturned, a helicopter with a banner in tow announcing candle lighting times was spotted flying throughout the greater New York area, reminding Jewish mothers and girls to light the Yom Tov candles. Additionally, a TV station arrived in Crown Heights to film a Lubavitcher family prepare for the Yom Tov, with the program focusing on the Yom Tov candles. By the afternoon, the program was aired live. Yet another of the activities of the campaign.

With just hours left to Yom-Tov, one would have imagined the day's campaigning had come to a successful close. But the group entrusted by the Rebbe to see this שטורעם to fruition knew that the Rebbe wanted more done.

IN A DUCH DATED SHEVAT 5735, THE REBBE UNDERLINED TWICE WHERE MRS. STERNBERG WROTE THAT IN THE PAST WEEK OVER 6000 CANDLEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED.

The Rebbe then wrote:

כהנ"ל נת' ות"ח (כולל על גודל הנח"ר וכו'). אזכיר עה"צ להוספה בהמבצע ובהתוצאות והפירות.

The above was received, and many thanks (including the great pleasure etc.). I will mention this at the [Friediker Rebbe's] Tziyon for added [Brochos] for the Mivtza and its results.



New York Jews traditionally leaned towards the Democratic Party. Within no time, the organizers secured a list of the Democratic Party members, and a team of women tackled the list, calling each Jewish-sounding name, reminding them to light the Yom-Tov candles.

Indeed, by the time Yom-Tov was ushered in, a bright storm had been generated of unprecedented proportions.

SUMMER CAMPAIGN

As the summer months were approaching, the *mivtza* coordinators knew that with the close of schools for vacation they would have to shift focus. A feverish campaign was set in motion, reaching out to families in bungalow colonies and girls in summer camps.

In the weekly report to the Rebbe, Mrs. Sternberg wrote of the “strong campaign in the country,” and immediately, the Rebbe sent out 250 dollars, in the form of five, ten, twenty, and fifty-dollar bills, as a personal participation in the campaign. On Yud Beis Tammuz an event was held where the bills were sold for a respectable sum, raising much needed funding for the summer campaign, catalyzing the campaign to new heights, reaching out to thousands of women and girls over the summer months.

A few days earlier, on 9 Tammuz, Rabbi Hodakov told Mrs. Sternberg that the Rebbe wants the candlestick which would be given out next, to be on display on the Rebbe’s table during the Yud Beis Tammuz *farbrengen*.



THE GOLD-PLATED CANDLESTICK PRESENTED TO THE REBBE ON 12 TAMMUZ 5735. NOTE THE NUMBER ENGRAVED ON THE CANDLESTICK, 245,001.



“We felt it wouldn’t be proper to put the standard copper candlestick on the Rebbe’s table,” Mrs. Sternberg says, “so we manufactured a gold-plated candlestick. Since we had a count of the candlesticks already distributed during through the campaign, we decided to engrave that number on this candlestick.

“Consequently, that Friday there was a strong push to distribute as many candlesticks as possible, in order that the one presented to the Rebbe will bear the highest number possible.”

Until the last moment, candlesticks were distributed at a rapid pace, and just moments before the *Farbrengen* the number 245,001 was engraved on the Rebbe’s candlestick, a grand total reflecting the great success of *Mivtza Neshek*. Following the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe took the candlestick.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

A few years after the *Mivtza*’s launch, at the yearly *sicha* to N’shei U’bnos Chabad, the Rebbe spoke of the *mivtza* with great emphasis. Upon exiting the *shul* after the *sicha*, the Rebbe stopped to speak with Mrs. Sternberg. The Rebbe instructed her to “see to it that a prominent advertisement be printed in the New York Times for the correct candle lighting times.”

Indeed, an advertisement was immediately organized for the New York Times along with other leading newspapers. Eventually, a weekly advertisement ran on the bottom of the first page of the New York Times every Friday (the only advertisement to run on the front page!) stating the candle lighting times in the New York area, and leaving a number to call for other locations. With this small but prominent advertisement, virtually the entire world was reading about the mitzvah entrusted to Jewish women and girls to illuminate the world.

ANNUAL MELAVE MALKA

As the activities of *Neshek* grew by leaps and bounds, so did their budget. For this cause, an annual *Melave Malka* was arranged. The Rebbe would give a bottle of *mashke* to Reb Zalman Gurary to distribute to the assembled, and always requested a report of its success.

“A CANDLE OF MY OWN”

In winter 5737 after giving to the Rebbe a weekly report with the feedback and letters that have arrived, Mrs. Sternberg received a note from the Rebbe, adding a new element to the *mivtza*:

כדאי הי' להדפיס קובץ מכ' [תבים] כאלו (מכמה ב"ס) אחדים מכל סוג
(בדתיות) ופוטוסטאט ממקצתם. בצירוף תמונות. וכי'. ובהידור

*It would be ideal to publish a booklet of letters such as these
(from many schools), several from each level (of observance)*



LIGHTING UP THE FUTURE

In celebrating the new millennium in the secular year 2000, the New York Times marked the historic day by featuring a fictional front page, presuming what may be the front-page news in the year 2100.

The imagined front-page reported of robots demanding equality, of politicians misusing weather controlling satellites, and of sports games not yet played. But there, on the bottom right corner, was a small advertisement notifying Jewish women and girls of the candle lighting time in the New York area, instructing to “tap here” for times for other locations.

Mrs. Sternberg was pleasantly surprised to see this advertisement, as she had not paid for such an impressive ad! Upon contacting the management of the New York Times, she was told that a chosen group of the Times staff met to discuss this fictional front page. Everyone had a different opinion as to what to report about. But all in the room agreed on one thing: While no one can truly know what may be making world news in 2100, all agreed that Jewish women and girls will still be lighting the Shabbos candles on Friday eve.

Indeed, the Rebbe’s wish to have an advertisement in the New York Times, and that it be “prominently displayed,” could not have been fulfilled any better!



with images of some of the letters, together with photos etc. The book should be well-designed.

Additionally, the Rebbe instructed that they run a writing contest with prizes and incentives, urging Jewish girls to write

of their experiences and reactions to lighting their own Shabbos candle.

Immediately Jewish schools around the world were contacted, notifying them of the writing contest. Within no time, a steady flow of letters arrived from around the world, and at the Rebbe’s behest, a panel of reviewers examined all the letters, for only the best letters would be chosen for print.

As with all of Mivtza Neshek’s programs, the Rebbe was very involved in all aspects throughout the entire publishing of the book. The Rebbe additionally instructed that letters in foreign languages be printed in their original form with a translation.

Some time around Purim, the organizers received a note from the Rebbe:

אולי לערוך התחרות בזה מה טוב שיוכלו לחלקו בהקדם - ע"כ פנים לא
יאוחר מערב שבת הגדול שהוא ערב חג הפסח. אעה"צ

Perhaps a competition should be arranged Ideally in a way



VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE WORLD WAS READING ABOUT THE MITZVAH ENTRUSTED TO JEWISH WOMEN AND GIRLS

that it can distributed as soon as possible – no later than Erev Shabbos Hagadol, which is [also] Erev Pesach [this year]. I will mention this at the Ohel.

The competition to generate more and more submissions from girls around the world intensified. The workload was hectic: closing the competition, choosing the best submissions, and having the book designed and published – all in one month's time...!

Indeed, the book "A Candle of My Own" was published in time for Shabbos Hagadol, and the book was a great success, achieving much popularity.

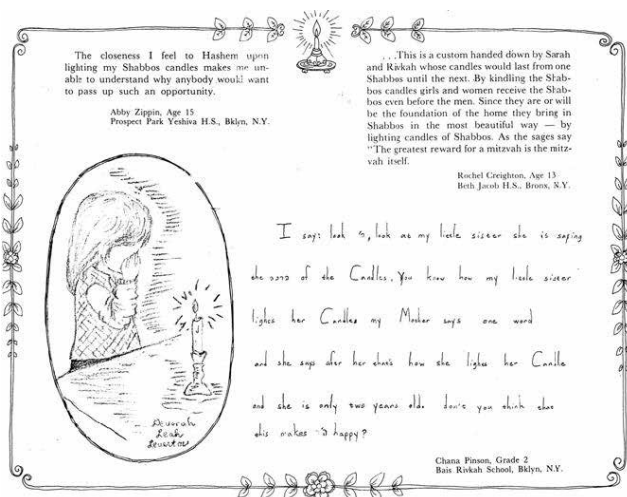
Approximately two years later, in summer 5739, Mrs. Sternberg unexpectedly received a surprising note from the Rebbe:

איה חוברת השניה דמאמרי הבנות שתחיו, עכ"פ הפצתו לא יאוחר מערב ר"ה הבעל"ט

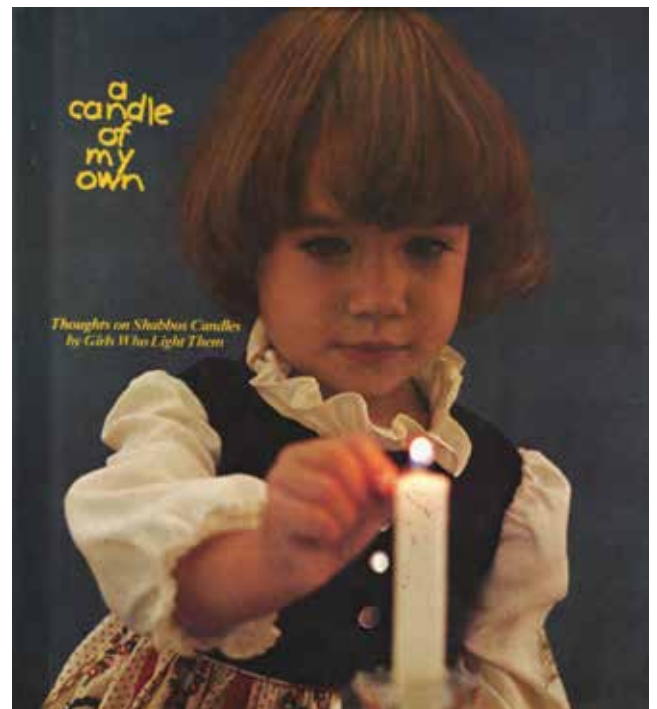
Where is the second booklet of the essays of the girls shetichyu? Its distribution should be no later than Rosh Hashana?

Mrs. Sternberg understood that this time it would have to be even better, more beautiful, and further reaching.

"Regarding certain questions we had, the Rebbe instructed us to consult with professionals in the publishing field," Mrs.



A PAGE FROM THE FIRST BOOK "A CANDLE OF MY OWN". THE BOOK INCLUDED THE ORIGINAL HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM THE GIRLS, AS WELL AS ARTWORK.



THE SECOND VOLUME OF "A CANDLE OF MY OWN". AS PER THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTION, THE COVER PORTRAYS A GIRL LIGHTING THE SHABBOS CANDLES.



ARTWORK BY YOUNG GIRLS SENT AS PART OF THE COMPETITION FOR THE BOOK.

Sternberg relates. In fact, the album was even more beautiful and stellar, with thousands of girls joining the contest.

“One of our art consultants suggested that the cover depict a girl gazing at the lit Shabbos candle in wonder, as if asking ‘what are these candles?’ and the book will offer the answer. When this idea was suggested to the Rebbe, the Rebbe answered, emphatically, that our mission is *action*, not to *wonder*. We thus went with a picture of a girl lighting the candles. From then on, we were careful in all our publications to have a picture of women and girls lighting the candles, rather than looking at lit candles.”

GREAT Z'CHUS

Within no time, remarkable results were attained. The Rebbe recounted some of these results at farbrengens, explaining how, from one small flame of a young girl, the entire family was transformed into one which respected the holiness of Shabbos by not listening to the radio or TV while the flames were lit, and eventually came to observe the entire Shabbos. And once G-d was being recognized one day of the week,

THE REBBE ANSWERED THAT OUR MISSION IS ACTION, NOT TO WONDER.

how could one ignore Him the other six? Hence, an entire family became Shomer Torah and Mitzvos thanks to the flame of a young girl. (See sidebar for the Sicha of 6 Tishrei 5736, where the Rebbe speaks in great length of the positive results of Mivtza Neshek.)

As the activities of Mivtza Neshek grew by leaps and bounds, the Rebbe consistently expressed his satisfaction and appreciation of those that partake in this extraordinary campaign. Mrs. Sternberg would regularly receive responses to her reports, expressing the Rebbe's great satisfaction with the headway made in the campaign.

On one occasion, after speaking of the torpid development with the Mikva under construction, the Rebbe instructed to announce the time and location of that night's Melave Malka for Mivtza Neshek, which in contrast to the Mikva campaign, was being performed with great energy. The Rebbe added however, that considering the great importance of Neshe"k, even more should be accomplished.¹⁰

During the distribution of dollars to ‘Tankisten’ at the end of farbrengens (a practice started just days before the launch of Mivtza Neshek), the Rebbe would also include women, encouraging them to join forces in the Mivtzoim, specifically Mivtza Neshek. Interestingly, the first time the Rebbe announced that he would also pass along dollars to women, on Zos Chanukah 5735, it was Mrs. Sternberg's nine year old daughter who was brought in to bring the dollars to the women.



The farbrengen of Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 5735 was on a Thursday night. Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe announced that three dollars will be handed out to all women present; one for themselves, one for Tzedaka, and a third to be passed on to a woman who would accept to light Shabbos candles the next day.

The Rebbe stressed however, that the Shlichus of the third dollar applied only until the following evening, the onset of Shabbos, and any dollar not distributed by then must be returned to Mazkirus.

The next morning, Rabbi Hodakov telephoned Mrs. Sternberg asking if there were any dollars remaining from the packets passed along for the women. Upon answering in the affirmative, Rabbi Hodakov instructed her in the Rebbe's name that six dollars should be brought to Mazkirus, and the remainder to the students of Bais Rivkah who were not present at last night's Farbrengen. Those students should go on Mivtzoim today and any additional dollars should be passed out to the students of Machon Chana with the same conditions. Any dollars which still remained should be given to others involved with the Mivtza.

Rabbi Hodakov concluded by reiterating the Rebbe's stipulation: Any dollar not given to a woman or girl accepting upon herself the Mitzvah, must be immediately returned to Mazkirus.

Not surprisingly, that Friday saw a great boost in women and girls hitting the streets of New York, influencing scores of

women and girls to accept upon themselves the Mitzvah, and presenting them each with a dollar from the Rebbe.

GREAT ZCHUS

In a report dated 27 Iyar 5735, three girls notified the Rebbe that they went on *mivtzoim* in Far Rockaway, and distributed some 180 Neshek kits. The Rebbe double underlined the number "180" and wrote (see Ksav Yad Kodesh):

הרב
כ"ט אייר ה'תשנ"ה
לכבוד אדמו"ר שליט"א
דענא דעם עשר זיבן אדמו"ר שליט"א שפירט ה' זכרון בערב
העכצן נעסוק הימקדש, ויחוד קדוה געק' קבר באקט'
העקטו כחאה ושמעיה נא.
זאגט זיך זעלן
השקטנות
העכצן נאך דעם
שיינא קייטא פון דעכדא קינעס
קיינאן פון זיכר שו"ט זיך
ואשרי חלקן וזכותן

Fortunate is their portion and their merit

PROJECT 470

In 5748 the annual Mivtza Neshek Melave Malka was scheduled towards the end of Shevat. Following the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka on 22 Shevat 5748, the



coordinators were hesitant to hold the event during such a painful period for Chassidim and the Rebbe in particular. Nevertheless, it was ultimately decided that the Melave Malka will go on as planned with even more publicity, as well as the establishment of a new fund in honor of the Rebbetzin.

The day the Rebbe got up from *shiva*, Rosh Chodesh Adar, Mrs. Sternberg along with her father, Rabbi Schneur Zalman Gurary, were called to the Rebbe's house to meet with the Rebbe in the study after Shacharis. Mrs. Sternberg recalls:

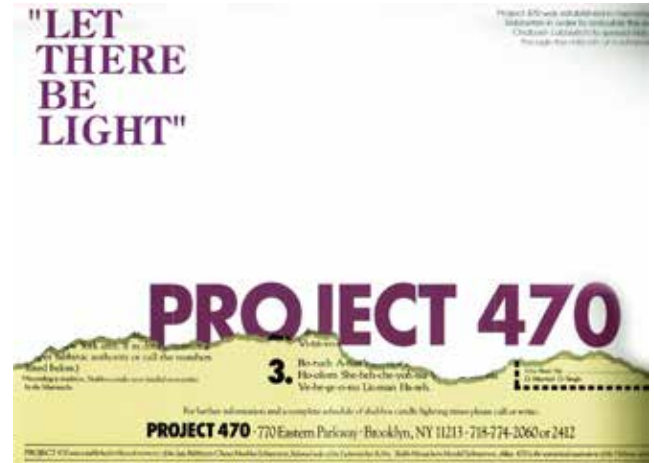
"Although my father had been by the Rebbe on countless occasions, this time he was shaking. He assumed the Rebbe would ask him about what had occurred during those last moments before the histalkus, and he knew he would be unable to face the Rebbe and talk of such a painful matter.

"I carefully assisted my father into the Rebbe's study where the Rebbe sat holding the invitation to the Melave Malka, which he then motioned for me to take. He then said that as we had established this new fund in honor of the "נפטרת" (the Rebbe used the word "נפטרת" without saying the Rebbetzin's name), and as he was unable to send his blessings, he wants to give us 470 dollars, the numerical value of the Rebbetzin's name, as his personal contribution to the fund, and an additional dollar as a bonus contribution for added success.

"The Rebbe then went on to bless us, showering us with a torrent of blessings, so many that neither I nor my father remembered everything the Rebbe said, as we were so

startled. But I do remember the Rebbe said: יאיר מזלן, their Mazal should shine, of all those that help you in this campaign, ויאיר מזלן of those active in the campaign (i.e. those that go out on the streets influencing others to light the candles), ויאיר מזלן and of those that start to light as a result of this campaign.





“The Rebbe said so many more Brochos, but we were completely numb and it was well beyond something we were able to walk away from remembering in full detail. Yet we were extremely excited about this special Yechidus, and so we decided to add an additional push to the campaign.

“And with that ‘Project 470’ began, established in memory of the Rebbetzin. Many more women and girls started lighting as a direct result of this expanded campaign.”

IN CONCLUSION

Due to the efforts of Mivtza Neshek, hundreds of thousands, if not millions of women and girls began lighting the Shabbos candles. As a result of Mivtza Neshek, millions of tiny flames were kindled, dispelling the world of its darkness while further filling it with light. It is thanks to Mivtza Neshek that the world continues to be brightened every week, as additional mothers and daughters take to their weekly G-d-given mission to illuminate His world.

Forty years later, Mivtza Neshek continues to grow, with millions of candlesticks and brochures having been distributed throughout the years. However, as the Rebbe said¹¹, considering the immense value of the Mitzvah, whatever was done was not enough, and more must be done.

On the fortieth anniversary of this principal Mivtza, let us all intensify our efforts in introducing the beauty of the Shabbos candles to more and more homes, until we will be zoche, in the words of the Rebbe:

“*Yehi Ratzon* that all the small flames (ליכטעלאך) should join to form a large torch, and from a torch a large fire, which will burn down the remainder of Golus, [and as the Possuk says] “and Hashem will be for you an everlasting light””¹² **D**

1. See Dermer Magazine, Nissan 5774
2. Referred to in the earlier years as the Sichra to Ladies Auxiliary of Tomchei Tmimim and Beis Rivkah.
3. Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 2 p. 437.
4. The Rebbe recognized the term *Neshe*”k in a Sichra Shabbos Mevarchim Shevat, Parshas Vaera, saying that this was the name accepted in Eretz Yisroel for the Mivtza (Sichos Kodesh 5735 vol. 1 p. 320).
5. Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 2 p. 448.
6. Ibid p. 469.
7. While the Rebbe distributed *lekach* for men Erev Yom Kippur and to women on Hoshana Rabbah, Mrs. Sternberg was from the only ones that also received on Erev Yom Kippur.
8. Sichos Kodesh 5735 vol. 1 p. 125.
9. During the campaign of Erev Pesach, 5735.
10. Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev, Mevorchim Hachodesh Teves, 5743 (Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 2 p. 702).
11. Ibid.
12. Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 2 p. 448.



QUELLING THE

As noted, there were those that questioned to the Mivtza at first. After all, lighting Shabbos candles at such a young age, especially with a *brocha*, was largely unheard of. How could the Rebbe so candidly declare, they asked, that this was a custom befitting for all Jewish girls? The Rebbe addressed these objections, referring to them as ‘predictable concerns’ (“חששות הידועות”),¹ clarifying why there was no problem with this practice. Furthermore, he explained the importance and special meaning of young girls lighting candles. Presented here is a synopsis of the key explanations the Rebbe gave regarding this initiative, and how he answered the questions that people had.

The main issue the Rebbe addressed was: how could we change the *minhag* that only married women light Shabbos candles when it is a *minhag* that has been accepted by virtually everyone? Isn’t there a famous rule in Torah that one shouldn’t change the *minhag* of his ancestors (“אל” (תשנו מנהג אבותיכם)?

This seemed to be one of the biggest *ta’anos* on the Mivtza, especially since the Mivtza was directed not only as an

aspect of *kiruv*, but to *frumme* families as well. On several occasions the Rebbe addressed this issue.²

One of the main examples the Rebbe used was the fact that until a few decades ago *frumme* girls didn’t go to school. At that time there was no concept as a religious girl’s education in the classroom. It was only when a righteous woman (אשה צדקנית) in Poland³ initiated this with the explanation that in this day and age girls too need a proper school education. She said that we can’t rely solely on the premise that their mothers and grandmothers will teach them. Though many Gedolei Yisroel objected to this at the time for a number of valid reasons⁴, nevertheless today we see the positive results of this initiative. In fact, it is in the merit of this endeavor that tens of thousands of *frumme* families exist today. Now everyone agrees that this change was proper and necessary. From this the Rebbe derived that when a new darkness surfaces we must add a new light, at times in a form never explored before.

Regarding Mivtza Neshek, the Rebbe explained⁵: in past generations when the

world was purer and Jewish homes were not exposed to undesirable influences (“פרעמדע געדאנקן”), one or two candles were enough. Today however, the world is darker and madder, and unfortunately Jewish homes are exposed to this, therefore, there is a need for additional light.

NO NEWS

In one of Mrs. Sternberg’s earlier Duchos about Mivtza Neshek, she mentioned that she heard from her mother Mrs. Chava Gurary (a daughter of the Kapischenitzer Rebbe) that in her father’s home the custom was for all girls to light Shabbos candles, even from the youngest of ages.

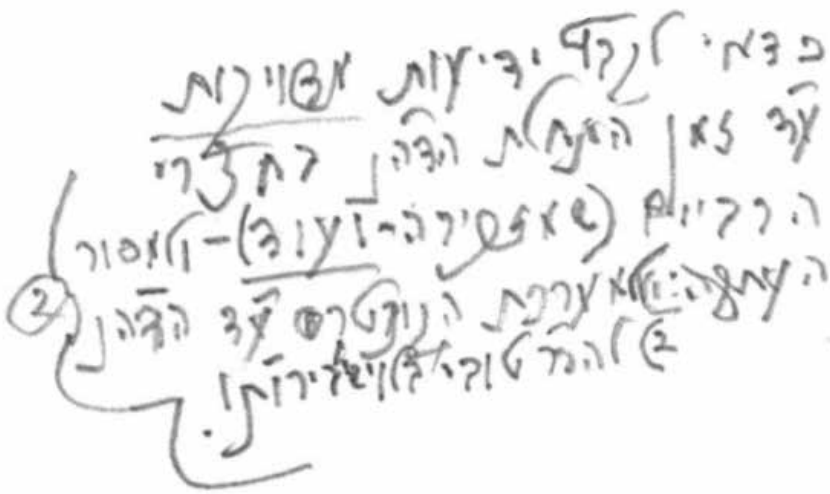
The Rebbe answered her (see Ksav Yad):

כדאי לקבץ ידיעות מדויקות ע”ד זמן התחלת
הדה”נ בחצרי הרביים (שמזכירה - ועוד) - ולמסור
העתקה: 1) למערכת הקונטרס ע”ד הדה”נ, 2)
להר”ר טובי’ בלוי שי’ בירות”ו.

It would be commendable to compile precise information on the age [when girls] began lighting Shabbos candles in the Chassidic courts (that you mentioned, and additional ones), and provide it to:



QUARRIES



1) the editorial board of the treatise on *Hadlokas Neiros*. 2) To Rabbi Tuvya Blau of Yerushalayim.

Mrs. Sternberg began researching the various customs kept in the homes of different Rabbonim and Chasidic courts. She discovered that many of them, including the Belzer, Bobover⁶, and others, practiced this Minhag of young girls lighting candles.

With this research in hand, the Rebbe explained that this is not a new *minhag* as many *kehillos* had this practice in the past.

At the Farbrengen of Zos Chanukah 5735, the Rebbe mentioned the fact that research has concluded that many *kehillos* of all types (Chasidic, non-Chasidic and Litvish) would practice this *minhag* in previous generations. One example of the Poilisher communities is the house of the Sefas Emes (whose *seforim* are accepted among all different Yeshivos, both Chasidic and non-Chasidic), where girls would light Shabbos candles before Bas Mitzvah. In a number of Galician communities, including Belz, Bobov and so on, young girls would light candles. Also in Lithuanian communities, the

Oruch Hashulchan says that this was the custom in Brisk (where everything was done in precise conformity with concrete sources in *Nigleh*); the offspring of both the Volosziner and Reb Chaim Brisker lit candles with a *brocha* before Bas Mitzvah (and continue this practice to this day in Eretz Yisroel and abroad). The same thing applied in quite a few German *kehillos* too.

The Rebbe suggested that the reason why this *minhag* was interrupted may be due to the different periods of war when candles were very scarce and costly, and it was rather difficult to obtain paraffin (as it was commonly used for weapons). Another reason was that perhaps there was danger for Yidden to keep this Mitzvah openly, as lighting more than one candle may reveal that they were for Judaic purposes. Even if the candles would not be discovered, they may have been scared that their young girls wouldn't hold themselves from telling other people, thereby letting the word out. Once things were back to normal, there wasn't a strong enough התעוררות to resume this *minhag* because of the rampant disorder (בלבול העולם).



The Rebbe said further, that were people to investigate, they may very likely find that their grandmothers and great-grandmothers also lit candles before they were Bas Mitzvah.

In the beginning of Kislev 5735, the Rebbe instructed Mazkirus that they should recruit the *yungeleit* learning in the Kotel to study the laws of Shabbos Candles and print a booklet detailing the various laws and customs regarding young girls lighting candles. The booklet, קונטרס נרות שבת קודש, published at the beginning of Shvat 5735, included a list of the various Jewish circles where it was accepted that girls light candles before their marriage. The Rebbe gave a number of Horaos regarding the booklet, instructing that it be sent to Rabbonim and girls' schools. A number of copies were given to Mazkirus, and the Rebbe sent them out personally to a number of Rabbonim who wrote to him regarding the new Mivtza.

NON-EXCLUSIVE

Another question that the Rebbe addressed was the fact that the Alter

On 22 Cheshvan 5735, Harav Krieger (a Rov from the Poilisher community) had *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Among the things spoken about was Mivtza Neshek, and the fact that various Chasidic courts kept the *minhag* of young girls lighting candles. The Rebbe told him an amazing lesson from that week's *parsha*:⁹ Rivkah lit Shabbos candles at the young age of three as we find in the *parsha* that when Yitzchok brought Rivkah back to his mother's tent, Rashi explains that he observed she was like his mother, Sarah. One of her similarities was that her candles held a special power, remaining alight for a full week (מערב שבת לערב שבת). This took place even before she married. Despite the fact that Avrohom lit his own Shabbos candles after Sara's passing (because he lived alone), still, it was the candles of this three year-old girl that had this long lasting attribute to them! Avrohom was a Tzadik of 140 years old and yet it was only Rivkah who merited this special *zechus*. The Rebbe explained, that even a young girl *today* has this *Koach*, in a spiritual sense.

Rebbe himself writes about the idea of multiple candles being lit several household members, but seems to dismiss it. This is derived from the words of the Mishna "הדליקו את הנר – the candle should be lit" in a singular form. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe learns, that only one candle per house should be lit. The Rebbe explained why this wasn't a problem, and addressed it very clearly⁷:

"No matter how many questions one may ask a Chabad'nik, none would be greater than to question what the Alter Rebbe writes, not as an analysis, but as a Psak Din!

"But, there is no greater proof [to uphold this *minhag*] than the fact that

the actual practice in the homes of our Rebbeim was that young girls lit Shabbos Candles, with the intention that this be widely known and accepted, thereby illuminating all places."

Some people were not satisfied by this, and asked further: perhaps this was a special custom exclusively for *Beis Harav*? How do we know that this is applicable to the public?

In a *Yechidus* with Rabbi Moshe Halbershtam (a Rov in the Eidah Hacharedis) on 6 Adar 5735, the Rebbe explained that in the Friediker Rebbe's house there was a young girl who would often visit and spend time there. The Friediker Rebbe once asked if a candle stick was prepared for her. From here it is



IT IS IN THE MERIT OF THIS ENDEAVOR THAT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FRUMME FAMILIES EXIST TODAY.

understood that the custom is applicable to all.⁸

A BROCHA OF HER OWN

Another issue addressed by the farbrengen of Yud tes Kislev 5735: was that many people felt that for young girls making a *brocha* is an unnecessary *brocha* (ברכה שאינה צריכה). Even if one feels that their daughter is obligated to recite a *brocha*, let the mother make her *brocha* first, and the daughter will be included in her *brocha*. Why is the daughter required to recite her own *brocha*?

The Rebbe gave a number of answers to this. First, a practical one: once a mother lights her candles, she would not be able to assist her daughter in lighting hers. Rather, a mother should first assist the child, and only afterwards light her own candles. Hence, the daughter must make her own *brocha*, as she won't be hearing it from her mother.

Secondly, a halachic answer: including someone in a *brocha* is only affective if both the one making the *brocha*, and the one being included, whole heartedly

want to include and be included. If however, one of them isn't happy about this inclusion, the listener won't be included. Take for example a situation where the mother feels that the daughter should be making her own *brocha*, but because the husband is of the opinion that the daughter shouldn't, the mother includes her. In this case we don't have the mother's full consent, and therefore the daughter isn't properly included. Similarly, if the daughter wants to make her own *brocha*, and the mother doesn't allow it, then we don't have the daughter's full consent, and she is not included. Therefore, the best solution would be that they both make their own *brochos*.

Then the Rebbe added an additional argument:

"There were hundreds of homes where the mothers didn't light Shabbos candles רחמנא ליצולן, and since their young daughters have begun lighting, the mothers followed suit.

"We told the daughter to begin lighting, and to try to influence her mother that she should light too. Now that she indeed did influence her mother – should

we take the opportunity to recite the *brocha* away from her? That would be catastrophic (א דבר מבהיל)!" **D**

1. Farbrengen of 19 Kislev 5735.
2. See Farbrengen of Rosh Hashana, Vov Tishrei and Yud Tes Kislev 5735.
3. Sarah Schenirer, originally from Krakow, established the Beis Yaakov school network in 5678; quite a revolutionary, and even controversial concept at the time. Although the Chofetz Chaim and the Gerer Rebbe agreed with the initiative, many other Gedolei Yisroel, especially from Hungary and Galicia had strong objections.
4. One being "כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה"; it's not fitting for a Jewish girl to wander and travel, rather she should occupy herself at home. Going to school and mingling with others may seem contradictory to this.
5. Farbrengen of Motzei Shabbos Breishis 5735.
6. Where until just a few decades before, they would light with girls of even 1 day old.
7. Farbrengen Zos Chanukah 5735.
8. Mikdash melech, vol 4, page 399.
9. Parshas Chayei Sarah. The Rebbe spoke about this two days earlier, at the Chof Cheshvan farbrengen. The Rebbe said that this was one of the reasons why he's farbrenging specifically today and not waiting until Shabbos, in order to give over this amazing lesson in good time, so that already by this Shabbos more people will take on this "*minhag tov*". This was the first time the Rebbe farbrenged on Chof Cheshvan when it fell out during the week.