

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS FROM AUTHOR TO LIBRARY FOR THESES

AUTHOR Elaine Zecher

TITLE Birthday Celebrations and Personal Spirituality
in the Rabbinic Tradition

TYPE OF THESIS: D.H.L. () Rabbinic (✓)

Master's ()

1. May circulate (✓)

2. Is restricted () for ____ years.

Note: The Library shall respect restrictions placed on
theses for a period of no more than ten years.

I understand that the Library may make a photocopy of
my thesis for security purposes.

3. The Library may sell photocopies of my thesis. ✓ no
yes

March 25, 1988
Date

Elaine Zecher
Signature of Author

Library
Record

Microfilmed _____
Date

Signature of Library Staff Member

THE KLAU LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
Jewish Institute of Religion
Brookdale Center
One West 10th Street
New York, NY 10012

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AND PERSONAL SPIRITUALITY
IN THE RABBINIC TRADITION

ELAINE ZECHER

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York

THE KLAU LIBRARY
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE
Jewish Institute of Religion
Brookdale Center
One West Fourth Street
New York, NY 10012

March 25, 1988

Referee: Professor Lawrence A. Hoffman

For my two Rabbinic role models:

Deborah Zecher, my sister, who has led the way

Lawrence A. Hoffman, my teacher and friend, who
has walked beside me along the way

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
1. Introduction: Can Jews Celebrate Birthdays?	1
2. The Celebration of Birthdays for Jews- Translation of the Hebrew	11
3. Translation of the Notes	45
4. Conclusion: The Spiritual Significance of Birthdays	82
<u>Appendix A</u> : Bibliographic References in the Article and Notes	94
<u>Appendix B</u> : List of Post-Talmudic Commentators Cited	103
<u>Appendix C</u> : Copy of the Article and Notes in Hebrew	111

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It all began with a suggestion from Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, my academic advisor, to look at an article from Or HaMizrach about the celebration of birthdays for Jews. He had seen the article and had written in the margin, "possible thesis?" I investigated, and for the past ten months, I have attempted to answer his question. Now, I can happily conclude that the article and its information definitely can be a thesis.

Dr. Hoffman's initial suggestion and his assistance throughout the process have provided me with the necessary tools and help that I needed to complete this project. I have learned to appreciate his unending concern and his willingness to share his wealth of knowledge with me. During my course of study at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Dr. Hoffman has played a key role in insuring that I have received a good education. For that and all the attention he has given me, I will always be grateful.

I would also like to thank Henry Resnick of the library staff for his constant concern and assistance in my research. His familiarity with the texts and his general knowledge helped me greatly.

Outside the research realm, but certainly in touch with this project and my four years of rabbinic training in New

York has been my apartment mate, Susan Bookchin. She has patiently awaited the completion of my work and has supported me in all my endeavors.

I would also like to acknowledge the help of my brother-in-law, Rabbi Dennis Ross, for his many suggestions and ideas concerning rabbinic school, thesis writing, and general survival. In addition, my sister, Rabbi Deborah Zecher, has offered her support and guidance throughout this process, the many years before it began, and I hope in the many years to come.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Susan and Steven, my sister-in-law and brother, for their interest and support, and to Joshua Zecher Ross and Chana Elster Zecher, my nephew and niece, whose births and lives have brought greater meaning to this thesis process.

And finally, I would like to thank my parents who made my own birthday possible, and who, with the help of God, have brought me to life, sustained me and assisted me in reaching this moment.

Introduction

CAN JEWS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS?

The article* before us seeks to answer the question of whether or not Jews may celebrate their birthdays. From the traditional perspective, no positive reply would result without finding a precedent in the holy texts. The article devotes its attention to establishing such a precedent through the actions of our rabbis and teachers from the Bible to modern Hasidism. Its focus lies in exploring the limits** of birthday celebrations. Questions such as "Who can celebrate," "What can we do specifically," "At what age is it permissible to celebrate a birthday," "May we say the shehecheyanu," and "Can we accept the birthday celebration in general" dominate the discussion in the article. By outlining the argument and the questions posed, it is

*The article appears in two parts in the periodical, Or HaMizrach, edited by Rabbi Israel Schepansky. The first is in Volume XXXI, Number 2, January, 1983; and the second is in Volume XXXI, Numbers 3-4, April-July, 1983.

I have translated this 23 page article and its 85 accompanying notes as a major part of the thesis. I have also annotated all the post-Talmudic sources cited and have given a brief biographical statement of the authors and names mentioned in the article or the notes. In addition, the thesis begins with this summary of the argument and concludes with a chapter on the potential spiritual meaning of a birthday.

**The idea of limit-type questions comes from an unpublished article by Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman who explores ways of looking at Judaism. One way is to see how the rabbis set limits of what we can and cannot do.

possible to see how the author comes to the understanding that the birthday celebration is a viable option in which any Jew may participate.

The first issue which the author addresses revolves around reasons to oppose the birthday celebration. The first is that far from mentioning Jews' celebrating birthdays, the sources connect birthdays with non-Jews. The immediate response to the question of Jews' celebrating birthdays is therefore negative. If the sources do not mention it, then surely such a celebration would be impossible. The author buttresses his view by looking at the texts and examining their attitude toward birthdays. The Bible mentions it only in relation to Pharaoh; the Talmud refers to it in connection with the idea of genusia.^{*} Both of these sources link birthday celebrations to non-Jews alone.

The connection to non-Jews supports the idea of opposing the birthday celebration. Any notation of birthdays would appear to be emulating the laws of the gentiles. The Greeks and Romans may have noted the birthdays of their leaders and even celebrated them, but such an action lends no support to Jews' celebrating it. A note in this section adds that one may not even have Jubilee celebrations like 25 years in the rabbinate. Such a statement demonstrates how adamant the opposition was toward

^{*}This term refers to a number of possibilities. Some of the sources associate it with the king's ascension to the throne while others view it as another name for a royal birthday. In this context, the meaning is linked to some kind of birthday celebration.

having an observance which might be seen as parallel to what the non-Jews do. In addition, the non-Jews recognize positive astrological influences of the day whereas Jews do not.

The other reason for opposing the birthday celebration emerges from a view of birthdays as negative experiences. Eruvim 13b describes a discussion between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel and concludes, that "it is better for one not to have been created than to have been created." The implication is that Jews have more negative commandments to observe. Non-Jews only have seven commandments, so, their lives are easier. Jews, however, stand precariously at the crossroads always with the potential to falter. Therefore, one would not want to celebrate the day on which one entered this closeness with failure. Another reason for the day's negative influence is that it is said that the Tzaddikim die on their birthday. If this is so, surely the birthday is a negative influence.

Having provided the reader with these three reasons for the opposition, the author takes each issue and turns it around to use it as supportive evidence for the birthday celebration. The first reason stated that the sources do not mention birthdays. After a careful survey of the texts, it is possible to find birthdays mentioned, noted, and kept: we thus find examples of famous Jews who did, in fact, celebrate their birthdays. The ones he mentions substantiate his argument because one would associate them with

stringency. The Hatam Sofer, for example, said that one does not have to keep a birthday, halakhicly speaking, but, according to his son's testimony, he did anyway. Shemot Rabbah, the book of Esther, and the Babli all provide illustrations of how certain days are marked and noted. Sources such as Metzudat David and Shemot Rabbah mention the celebration of birthdays of rulers and kings. Midrash Sekhel Tov states that the "birthday is a fulfillment of that which God has given so one should rejoice on it and have a feast." In addition to the specific mentioning of birthdays in the sources, we find that particular months and holidays also hold special significance, because important people were born during that time. Some of the examples include Isaac, Moses, David, and Simeon bar Yochai. The author also provides testimony of famous rabbis who celebrated their birthdays like Zadok haKohen, Samuel Salantar, Hefetz Hayyim, Ketav Sofer, Rav Kook and others. All of this evidence would lead us to believe that our sources and our teachers demonstrate that Jews do celebrate and recognize the birthday. The author does not address the discrepancy between those who say there are no sources and the many sources illustrated, but assumes that the normal view simply is not based on an exhaustive survey.

In response to the opposition of the birthday celebration based on the fear of observing gentile laws, he recognizes that one cannot "ignore the reality of birthdays and their significance for the non-Jews." Perhaps, Jews

should take a closer look at what this emphasis may mean. First, the day is said to have a beneficial astrological influence. Amalek, for example, deployed his troops on his birthday thinking that the stars would assist him in defeating the Israelites. P. T. Rosh Hashanah points out that Moses recognized this potential influence and "raised his hand toward heaven, " confounding the stars and, as a result, Amalek too. What Moses did illustrates the power of astrological influences. Does this recognition then mean that Jews accept astrological influences? Jews are influenced by astrology, but the article reasons that "the ability is placed in the Jew's hand to overcome their [the stars] power." At least this statement associates Jews with astrological forces. Note eleven, on the other hand, presents the opposite view by holding that absolutely no relationship exists between stars, birthdays, and Jews, "so there is no reason to celebrate [birthdays]." It further separates Israel from the other nations by saying that the birth date for non-Jews follows the "days and months of the sun on which the stars and planets depend. In contrast to this a Jew's birthday is established according to the unique lunar cycle which has no connection to stars or planets." Although the author does not prove that the astrological influence affects Jews in the same way that it does for the gentiles, he has recognized that the non-Jews do find meaning in this day and not necessarily as idolaters. In both cases, Jews and non-Jews, there is a greater matter at hand:

thanksgiving; for why "should a Jew's thanksgiving be less than any one else's?" Accepting the special recognition that non-Jews give the day suggests that Jews, too, can give it special acknowledgement, but not necessarily because of any astrological influences.

The other reason for opposing birthday celebration has to do with its negative connotation. The author asks about whom were Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel talking when they said that "it is better not to have been created?" He concludes that the statement does not, in fact, refer to how difficult it is to live "precariously at the crossroads"; rather, it refers to those who do not realize their own potential. In such a case, it would have been better not to have been created since that person has not taken full advantage of his or her life. A footnote points out that the birthday replicates creation, thus allowing humanity to fulfill its appointed task in life.

In response to the claim that Tzaddikim die on their birthday, so that birthdays must be seen as a negative event, the author contends that for Tzaddikim, dying on their birthday is actually positive. For them, death is a step up from mere earthly existence. This discussion involves the theory that the birth of the embryo is one step up; then, when they die, if they have really fulfilled life, they take another step up. The first step is precarious because they might not fulfill the mitzvot, similarly, their death would not be good if they have not

fulfilled the mitzvot, but the whole point is that Tzaddikim have fulfilled the mitzvot, so death is positive for them. And thus, the birthday is a positive event.

These negative claims and their counterarguments provide substantial evidence for the birthday celebration. With this understanding, it is possible to investigate who can celebrate a birthday. The first example comes from the sources which tell of celebrating the birthdays of the kings. Metzudat David to Hosea describes "the day of the King" when all the ministers would get sick from drinking too much. Note One relays that Rabbi Hayyim Eleazar Shapira comments how the people of the republic celebrated the birthday of its ruler. The Pesikta also mentions the celebration of birthdays for the rulers. Tzaddikim may celebrate their birthdays because, as note ten explains, "For them, retrospectively, it becomes clear how meritorious they were, and therefore it is fitting to single out their birthday with celebration. Despite the approval, if Tzaddikim do not celebrate it, it can only be because of modesty. The rest of the population, however, may as well mark birthdays which are the fulfillment of that which God has given; moreover, the soul is renewed each year on the day of its creation. One can conclude then, that anyone can celebrate a birthday and give thanks to God.

Birthdays, in general, may have significance, but, specific birthdays are seen as deserving special attention. The first birthday with particular meaning is the 60th one.

Rav Joseph's example of making a feast for the rabbis serves as the precedent. The author also notes that one's first notion of being saved takes place at the age of 60 for one has passed through the threat of karet.^{*} He asks the question, however, of why no big celebration exists for this particular birthday and cites sources which make no mention of the 60th birthday. One reason may be that one does not reveal one's age at this point for fear of the evil eye. In the end, however, he dismisses Rav Joseph's celebration as an exceptional occasion since Rav Joseph kept the day because he lived longer than he had anticipated. Note 61 even informs the reader that "the celebration for reaching the age of 60 does not apply to everyone."

The birthday which has the most meaning is the 70th. Moed Katan points out that when one has reached this age, this person has passed through the threat of karet and death by the "hand of heaven" and thus deserves to celebrate. It is customary to have a feast on the 70th birthday to celebrate the passing of the plague described in P.T. Yebamot 8:3. This comment refers to the view that a pestilence comes every 60 or 70 years and if someone has lived through that time, then one can rejoice. Divrei Yisrael and Otzar Derashot deny celebrating any birthday but the 70th. The author cites a number of the great rabbis who had the custom to celebrate their 70th birthday. These include Hatam Sofer, Rabbi Hayyim Palache, Rishon LeZion,

^{*}This term refers to divine punishment through premature or sudden death.

Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, and others.

The rationalization for celebrating the 80th birthday is based on the idea that if one marked the 70th birthday then one should continue the celebration at age 80. Even Abaye concurs that one can make a feast for the 80th birthday. The Hefetz Hayyim celebrated his 90th birthday by finishing his book, Beit Yisrael, arranging a meal and giving a speech.

The last part of the article discusses what one can do on a birthday. For the special birthdays, it is customary to have a feast. The question remains as to whether or not it would be considered a Seudat Mitzvah. The only way to make it one would be to sermonize because then it would be obligatory to attend. Hayyim David Hazan as well as the Hefetz Hayyim are used as examples of people who sermonized at their feast and thus turned it into a Seudat Mitzvah. The Hefetz Hayyim arranged a siyyum on this day as well.

Other activities include giving Tzedakah equal to the number of years reached, an aliyah to the Torah, an additional study session, cheshbon hanefesh, reciting Psalms, and saying the Shehecheyanu on one's 70th birthday. This last activity merits a great deal of discussion as to whether it is proper to say it on one's 70th. Some permit it, but the majority calls for reciting it without shem umalchut. In the end, the article states that if one wants to say the Shehecheyanu with shem umalchut, then one must

take something new and have the intention be for both the birthday and the new piece of fruit or cloths. The author ends the article with a suggestion of a greeting when one goes to someone's birthday party.

The article seeks to explore the issues surrounding whether or not one may celebrate a birthday. It focuses on setting the parameters for celebrating birthdays and gives a clear picture of whether one may celebrate it and what and who is involved in the celebration. It does not, however, deal with what a birthday can mean to the individual. Such an approach is most likely unfamiliar to the traditional perspective of limit setting. The emphasis here has been on what can and cannot be done. Another dimension still remains which needs exploration: what kind of meaning can a Jew gain from celebrating his or her birthday? The final chapter will deal with this issue. We turn now to the article itself.

Chapter Two

THE CELEBRATION OF BIRTHDAYS FOR JEWS* (especially the 70th birthday)

"The span of our life is seventy years." (Psalm 90:10)

"The existence of our soul numbers 70." (Zohar, Tetzeveh; 185b)

"At seventy [one is fit] for venerability." (Pirkei Avot 5:21)

"We find that the term, "venerability of old age" applies when most of the Tzaddikim reach a certain age--seventy years." (Rabbi Samuel Edels, Moed Katan 28b)

The controversy over celebrating birthdays is not new. It was stirred up initially at the beginning of the Enlightenment, with all the ferment characteristic of that period. As part of the struggle against the Haskalah, oral and written arguments were expressed against this phenomenon. It apparently seemed appropriate to reach a negative conclusion regarding the phenomenon of celebrations just as it was fitting to reject any of the innovative phenomena which were expressed by means of the Haskalah.

This point has another side. When we say that the controversy was opened up in this period, we mean specifically that the rejection occurred then, but it follows that the phenomenon of actually marking birthdays

*We do not know very much about the author of the article. The only information that the periodical provides is his name, Nuriyahu M. Gottel and his association with Mercaz HaRav, in Jerusalem, the yeshivah established by Abraham Isaac Kook in 1924. Gottel does inform the reader that he has reached his 70th birthday and has presented the article for the occasion.

must have occurred earlier. Thus it was only a part of the general resistance to these Enlightenment phenomena that people fought so hard against the birthday celebration. It is still worthwhile for us, however, to clarify how our ancestors, beginning from the period of the kings up until the end of the writing of the Talmud, and the Decisors after them, dealt with someone's birthday. If it then becomes clear that it is an old custom which is desirable and positive, then, God forbid we should reject it on the grounds that the reason for keeping birthdays was a temporary phenomena justified in its time but not thereafter.

This article is dedicated to just such a clarification and with particular focus upon the completion of one's 70th year.

Explication of the Reasons for Opposing Celebration of Birthdays for Jews

1] The negative attitude is based on two basic reasons which are intertwined and derive from a common origin. First and foremost, it was claimed that "...we have never heard from our teachers and our holy ancestors, may their merit defend us, that they used to make such a celebration for their birthdays." ¹ Since we have not heard about it, so that, presumably, they never did it, it must be because it was a negative thing which should not be instituted now. It was further claimed not only that we do not have record of it from our "teachers and holy ancestors" but also that our

[earliest and basic]* sources themselves do not mention that Jews kept birthdays. We all know that the Torah does not mention the subject of birthdays, except in reference to Pharaoh. The Yerushalmi and the Bavli refer only to "the day of genusia" and the birthday of non-Jews, which we consider under the legal category of "befitting their occasion,"² but not ours. It turns out that in terms of Jewish sources, we do not find birthday celebrations anywhere.³ If it is really not mentioned,⁴ then reason seems to be on the side of those who make this negative argument, so that we ought not to celebrate it. Moreover, while pointing out that no reference to birthdays exists except with regard to non-Jews, they add the fear also that were we to mark birthdays, we would be guilty of emulating the laws of the gentile.⁵ The story is told of Rabbi Israel of Reisin that because of this very fear, he rebuked his wife for making a special meal in honor of his birthday.⁶

2] But this approach which denies that a Jew should celebrate a birthday cannot ignore the reality of birthdays and the significance of their power with regard to non-Jews. [If non-Jews attribute such significance to celebrating it, then perhaps, goes the argument, we should celebrate it, too.] Birthdays are mentioned in connection with non-Jews

*In the course of translating, I found it necessary to include my own comments and explanations of the article for better clarity. The reader will find such statements in brackets ([]) or at the bottom of the page. Any comments within parentheses are by the author.

in so many of our sources; their birthdays have all sorts of influence and significance for them. Aside from what we have already mentioned above regarding the historical event of Pharaoh's, we also have a midrash Hamat HaChemdah⁷ which talks about the present: "Until now, it has been the custom among the Kings of Gog, under whose jurisdiction we are found, and the other nations who enjoy relations with them, and the heads of state too, that the Kings celebrate their birthdays with a great feast." It occurs here as a regular custom among the nations and their rulers! In addition to this example, the Greeks and the Romans also customarily celebrated the birthday of the king, during his lifetime and even after it.⁸ They certainly did not do this without support; there must have been a verifiable source. According to the system of thinking of those who take the negative position with regard to Jews' celebrating birthdays, it is necessary to explain why there is reason for non-Jews to celebrate it, but not for Jews.

From a citation in the Yerushalmi it is evident that the day of one's birth exercises a beneficial influence on what one does and the successes of that particular date from year to year. Have we not learned precisely this with regard to Amalek and his war against Israel in the desert:

"Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, Amalek was a sorcerer, so what did he do? He would deploy his troops on the day he had taken the monarchy saying, 'You don't fall so quickly on the day of your genusia.' What did Moses then do? He confounded the stars."

[The argument is that birthdays must be effective, or Moses would not have had to counter Amalek's strategy; Moses must have known that Amalek was right in recognizing the strength that accrues on one's birthday.]

Thus, it says in Habbakuk 3:10-11, "The mountains rock at the sight of You,/A torrent of rain comes down;/ Loud roars the deep,/ The sky returns the echo./ Sun and moon stand still on high/ As Your arrows fly in brightness,/ Your flashing spear in brilliance./"⁹ [Habbakuk illustrates the power of the astrological forces which Amalek used.] We find that Amalek already knew about the special influence of this day, and that it would bring success for those born on it. Even Moses could not have thought otherwise, so he persevered and overcame the challenge. We learn from this explanation that there definitely is [and was] meaning and power to this day, at least for non-Jews. If it is not so for Israel, however, then we need to figure out why. If, the particular essence of the day lies in the disposition of the planets and astronomical forces,¹⁰ and they are what influence the success of somebody on that particular birth date, then the answer to those who say Jews also should keep it is simple and clear. What we are talking about is relevant only to non-Jews because Israel does not have a "star". Israel's luck does not depend on the astrological forces on one's birthday and, therefore, we find no more significance on it than on any other day of the year."¹¹

The essence of the day is the fact that people have a unique

success-inducing connection with their birth star none of which has anything to do with Jews. There is thus a simple explanation why we find birthday celebrations associated uniquely with non-Jews.

Still, this explanation presents two difficulties. First [despite the claim that Jews have no star overseeing their destiny], even Jews are connected to the dominion of the planets which influence them. The only difference between us and them is that Jews are given the power to overcome the stars along with their power and their influence.¹² Therefore, if there exists naturally a special success-inducing connection between people and their star on the day of their birth, then under normal circumstances the essence of a birthday would apply to Jews too. How can we posit any essential differences between Israel and the other nations in this regard when the basis of the subject is equal for both parties? [If we do, in fact, inevitably use the stars, then we cannot deny their importance. If they affect everyone, they affect us too. Even though, as people without a particular star guiding our destiny--which is solely in God's hands--we can overcome stellar influence, still, the influence exists, and perhaps we should tap it positively by marking birthdays.] Secondly, we shall see further in this article that the essence of celebrating this day is not only on account of the planets and the successes connected with them, but also the greater matter of thanksgiving, that is, our means of expressing our

recognition of the good that comes to us. From this perspective, it would be astonishing if Israel's ability to offer thanks were to be curtailed beyond anyone else's!

Those who reject birthdays, therefore, require additional ideological reasons to those cited above. In that regard our rabbi and teacher, Hayyim Eleazar Shapira from Munkacz expressed his own reason for surprise about these celebrations. Didn't our sages say that "it is better for one not to have been created than to have been created." If so, what possible celebration can you have on a birthday which, after all, celebrates your own continued creation? We might respond to him with the words of Rabbi Samuel Edels who comments that the phrase "they voted" [literally: "they counted and completed" This verbal form of the tally is given by the Gemara in connection with the discussion between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai.]

"implies that they counted the positive and negative commandments and the negative commandments were more: 365 negative commandments and only 248 for the positive commandments. If this is the case then the reason it would have been better never to have been created is that [human nature is statistically more likely to failure than to success. Otherwise there would be no need for so many negative admonitions. Thus] a person is close to loss, but far away from reward, since there are so many negative commandments."

We can conclude, therefore, that birthdays are rejected on account of their joy which is unbecoming for one whose very existence poses potential loss. This is surely only with regard to Israel who agreed to take on all of the commandments as opposed to the non-Jews who have only seven

commandments to keep. It is thus not taught regarding non-Jews that they too counted the number of their commandments, [because they did not have to reckon with the responsibility inherent in having so many negative commandments, and therefore of being existentially close to failure.] For non-Jews, and especially for the righteous among them, birthdays represent a wonderful day of luck and joy. With regard to the nations of the world, then, it is correct to conclude that it is better that they should have been¹³ created." [It is difficult to be a Jew, so goes the argument, since we have so many negative commandments which bring us ever closer to the possibility of loss and not reward. Non-Jews have only seven, however, so they can celebrate existence and thus mark birthdays which, for them, really are wonderful.]

Birthdays are a formidable thing in the life of a person who stands precariously at the crossroads, ever about to fall; therefore, Jews do not rejoice or celebrate on them--not now nor in the future. From this reasoning, however, it would be possible to conclude that for truly righteous Jews--about whom retrospectively it becomes clear how meritorious they were--for them, on the contrary, it is fitting to single out their birthday with celebration. As for the fact that according to their own testimony, our teachers did not celebrate their birthdays, it must be¹⁴ because they were modest.

This is the essential difference between the two

explanations [presented thus far for opposing the celebration]: the first is that there is no value to a Jew's birthday [since Jews have no connection to the stars.] The second explanation [admits that Jews have a connection with the stars but prohibits celebration on the grounds of modesty, in that Jews are always close to failure before God. With respect to this argument] it will become clear later in this article the extent to which there is positive value in any given person's birthday, and whether therefore¹⁵ it should be kept or not.

¹⁶
 Rabbi Eliezar Deutsch argued as follows (as did Rabbi David Sperber): "Who could say while still alive, 'I have done righteously and have completed my life's work'? [As long as we are not dead, we will never be sure if we have passed through life completely righteous. It is thus] better not to have been created. Rabbi J. D. Eisenstein reasoned also that the day of birth is purely accidental, and as a result, there is no special quality or meaning for the day of the week or for the date on which one was born.¹⁷ "The important thing is what one does with one's life."

Sources that Clearly Provide Significance for Birthdays and Reasons to Keep them

4] All of the above reasons are given in order to deny the celebration of birthdays and to reason for a negative position. They are based on the fact that the marking of this day is not mentioned in the sources, nor known among

Jews. Deeper study, however, will reveal both early and late sources, in which our ancestors have accepted birthdays as an influential factor both in the year one is born and annually thereafter. Not only did our Jewish ancestors mark birthdays off for their importance, but they held celebrations and parties in their honor. We find this principally among kings, princes, and heads of state, as it is explained in Hosea 7:5 "The day they made our kings sick." Commenting on this verse, Metzudat David explains "the day of our king" means that it was a day of happiness for the ruler of Israel, just like a birthday, or the day of his coronation. So, the princes became sick from overconsumption. On such a day, they drank more, and as a result, they got sick. Such examples show that there was a widespread custom among Jews to celebrate a birthday of a king.¹⁸

It is also possible to derive the existence of celebrations based on a particular day from a midrash in Shemot Rabbah. In discussing the new calendar system adopted when Israel was released from Egyptian slavery and began its redemption, [it likens the event to a birthday]. "...There is a tale of a king who made his son's birthday a holiday. The son, however, was taken captive for a long period of time. When he was released, the king changed the holiday from his birthday to the day of his release. Before that the king celebrated the birthday of his son as the central and most significant day of his life; after the

son's redemption, that particular day became the most significant day of his life and was kept on a yearly basis." The fact that redemption is compared to birthdays makes it possible to conclude that they were accustomed even then to celebrating birthdays regularly. The Hatam Sofer wrote of Abraham's celebrating Isaac's circumcision each year--just as the kings did for their birthdays each year.¹⁹

These sources prove that Jews customarily celebrated birthdays in the earliest period, at least for the important people of the nation and their kings.²⁰

The Yerushalmi, however, demonstrates that the day of genusia determines a person's fate each year, whoever he is, and not just the important people of the nation. Amalek, therefore, reasoned that this fact would help his troops,²¹ Sekhel Tov further explains this matter: "A birthday has a purpose which God has given on the day of your birth...and most people embrace the day as the fulfillment of that which God has given. It parallels the day on which you were born so rejoice on it and have a feast."²² This midrash demonstrates that birthdays apply to "most people" and not only kings and princes.²³ There are those who go even farther and derive not only the issue of positive astrological forces on one's birthday but include other phenomena associated with this day as well.

The Ari's z"l interpretation to the verse [from Esther], "And these days were remembered and kept" demonstrates that for every day in the cycle of the year,

celestial matters return to the position they occupied were on the original day. Proof of this is known from the Mishnaic law in Gittin, end of Chapter Three, which shows the [cyclical view. Time is a series of astrological formations. When a birthday comes around, everything is the same as it was any other year at that moment. The source illustrates] that wine found "in barrels" changes at a certain moment in the year which they call the "birthday" of the grapes! That moment is a natural phenomenon which can influence everything that is found "under the moon." If it²⁴ can influence grapes, then why not people?

5] This is the reason that Jews still mark the days on which important people were born. These days are known, marked, and kept. Such a notation began with our ancestors whose particular month of birth merited certain names and²⁵ honorific titles. [We see that this also occurred elsewhere as with August in the case of Augustus Caesar.] Similarly, the birthday of Isaac has remained with us as a²⁶ day of celebration in subsequent generations. Also, the²⁷ merit of Moses' birthday has defended and saved us from the evil clutches of that wicked one, Haman, "who did not know that on the seventh of Adar he died, and on the seventh²⁸ of Adar he was born." The days around David's birthday are Shavuot [because we read from the Book of Ruth who was David's foremother]; and the messiah will be born on Tisha B'av. [Shabbatai Zevi claimed to be born on this day and he annulled the fast and had a big feast.] It also applies to

Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. These ancestors passed down a practical impression in the life of the people and its law forever after ²⁹ [by marking their birthdays.] The information and examples mentioned above clearly demonstrate that all Jewish sources too deal directly with the matter of one's birthday and the meaning of that particular date for subsequent generations.

Testimony of "Famous" Jews Who Used to Celebrate Their Birthdays

6] We find that many great Jewish leaders not only justified the birthday celebration, but also marked their own birthdays. (How they marked it off annually will be discussed later in paragraph ten.) Rabbi Zadok HaKohen from Lublin explained at some length in Divrei Halomot ³⁰ (chapter 20) at Motza'ei Shabbat of Vayishlach "that one's birthday has the power of fate and no reason exists to fear on that day because luck is associated with it." ³¹ This phenomenon recurs each year and we know of a source which proves it. In the Yerushalmi, Amalek deployed his troops on the day of his genusia. His particular age did not matter; rather it was the day he set each year. We find the topic of fate and luck discussed also in Metzudat David on Hosea 7:5 where a birthday, in general, is seen as a day of celebration. Similarly, we learn from Yalkut Shemoni, ³² Jeremiah, mentioned above, and from the Aharonim like Torat Moshe and ³³ others.

Therefore, the Hasidim of HaBaD had the custom to celebrate everyone's birthday and to distinguish it with special acts, as we will see in section 14. Our rabbi and teacher, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn said: "Our teachers and holy leaders had the custom [to celebrate their birthdays] albeit modesty."³⁵ Hasidism even glorifies the 18th of Elul with general joy and feasting.³⁶ [the birthday of the Ba'al Shem Tov]. The Ba'al Shem Tov himself during his lifetime was accustomed to arrange a special meal³⁷ each year at the same time and to speak words of Torah.

In addition, we find the combination of thanksgiving³⁸ and blessing mentioned in a letter from the Ketav Sofer to his son Yaakov Akiba Sofer:

"I have received a blessing on the day of my birth, the first of Rosh Hodesh Adar, in that I have arrived at 50 years of age and I give thanks to God publicly; for God has sustained me and brought me to this time, and blessed is God who gives strength to the weak, to learn and to teach. So may God help me for the sake of God's name and Torah. As I reach old age, may God not abandon me nor cast me aside, but may God be with me as the Holy One was with my holy forebears. May their memory be a blessing, to magnify Torah and to glorify it and to make a fence among those who are lenient with Torah and to squelch those who make free use of it...On this day, the day on which God has made me, I have made a conclusion feast for Masechet Pesachim."

It is evident here that he displayed great thanks publicly on his birthday, despite the fact that the 50th³⁹ year is not even mentioned as a special age. Similarly the great Rav Kook blessed his son Rav Tzi-Yehuda Kook, may his memory be a blessing,⁴⁰ saying, "May my blessing ascend to heaven on the day of your birth, with God's help, at this

fated hour."⁴¹

7] These "famous" Jews marked off their birthdays each year because the essence of the day brings about special strength. Beyond this, however the day receives a secondary essence and additional meaning beginning at a special age. We know this from what Rabbi Hayyim Palache wrote in the treatise Kol HaHayyim, "This little booklet speaks to whomever has reached the age of 70 and beyond. Let this book be with him and let him read it on the day on which he was born from the 70th year onward annually." His custom combined the annual birthday celebration with the special essence marked at age 70.

Rabbi Hayyim David Hazzan, may he rest in peace, is reported as having the custom beginning in 1981, his 70th year, to make a special, annual meal on the first of Heshvan, his birthday.⁴² Similarly, we have other testimony⁴³ of the author of Sedei Hemed who wrote of how the Hatam Sofer celebrated his birthday when he turned 70. In the Responsa collection, Ginzei Yosef, he wrote, "...I know that there are good people who each year on their birthday are particularly scrupulous to say a Shehecheyanu on a particular fruit or new cloths."

Despite the marking of particular birthdays, however, there is no real difference between the year one reaches 70 and the other birthdays. It is always fitting to offer great thanks to God's great name, who is blessed."⁴⁴ Therefore, it is appropriate to have a celebration and to

mark one's birthday each and every year.

I move now to the custom cited in the halakhic work,
⁴⁵
Ben Ish Hai which states "There are those who each year customarily make their birthday a holiday. It is a good sign for them if they do it, and we, in fact, do it in our own home." All of this constitutes a clear and faithful source to root the custom of each and every Jew's celebrating a birthday annually; a celebration whose source is rooted in sanctity.

8] By the way, it is appropriate to mention a custom common in Israel not to celebrate the birth of a person, but the day of one's Bar Mitzvah, as was mentioned in note 35, and even the day of one's circumcision. That is the eighth day since one's birth, if, of course, the circumcision is
⁴⁶
 arranged at the proper time. The BaCH states:

"I have heard that there are places which have the annual custom to make a feast on the day on which one enters into the covenant with Abraham, our ancestor. It is a nice custom which pleases me a great deal, even though we do not do this in our house. I have been accustomed to say on the anniversary of my own circumcision the following request: Ruler of the Universe...May you...so may it be Your will."

So it turns out that a custom like this is in fact celebrated among Jews and the BaCH praises it even though he
⁴⁷ himself did not celebrate it. ⁴⁸ Widespread discussion occurred in the name of the Hatam Sofer over a Jew's celebrating the day of his circumcision but not his birthday. It seems that the Hatam Sofer did not consider it halachically binding. His gloss in Orah Hayyim shows the

letter of response to his son, the Ketav Sofer. The custom which he himself had according to his son's testimony proves that they used to mark off the birthday as celebrative.

[This testimony indicates that he said that one does not have to keep a birthday halachicly speaking, but that he did it anyway.] Those who supported celebrating the circumcision day relied upon what the Hatam Sofer had to say in Torat Moshe, under Vayera, beginning with the phrase, "Every year on the day of Isaac's circumsion" where he comments that "On the day of his circumcision, he made a feast. And similarly, every year, just like the kings do on the day of Pharoah's birthday, so did Abraham, our ancestor z"l do every year on the anniversary of Isaac's

⁴⁹circumcision." The Hatam Sofer only said this in the commentary to the Torah, [not in his halachic commentaries] and from there word got out about this practical custom. The Hatam Sofer himself, however, and all subsequent generations did not do it.

Reliance on celebrating the circumcision day helps us determine how to deal with days that are not appropriate for overabundant joy in a birthday celebration. On such days, one would postpone the celebration [from the day of birth] to the day of circumcision: people born between the days of the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'av [when joy is prohibited] ⁵⁰but whose circumcision falls afterward can have an annual celebration on the day of their circumcision.

A Closer Look at the Reasons Given in Opposition to the Celebration of Birthdays (From Sections One through Three Above)

9] Up to now we have explained that there is substantial support in the sources for the custom of Jews' annual birthday celebration. As a result, the central opposing claim to the effect that there are no sources for this custom evaporates of its own accord.⁵¹ One cannot, however, ignore the reasons claimed and the ideological thinking which were raised above at the beginning of this essay. On account of these issues, there is some cause to consider forbidding such a celebration.

First, there are those who negate the birthday celebration based on what both Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel voted on and declared at the end: that it would have been "better not have been born, than to have been born." If so, what place could there be for celebrating this negative event of a birth?⁵² Secondly, there are those who claim that the importance and the particularity of this day requires study and investigation for we find that there have been righteous people who died on the day of their birth. [The argument goes that if the birthday is lucky, then how could they have died? The assumption is made here that the date of death for some people is their birthday. Yet, why would anyone with merit die on his birthday?] The special nature of the Tzaddikim will demonstrate that [death is not seen as a negative event] even though death being decreed on this day throws the positive nature of the date of one's

birth into doubt.

It is possible, however, to look carefully and to find that the problem has the answer within itself. Our sages all looked carefully at the language that they themselves use in the sources when they wrote that it was specifically "Tzaddikim" who die on their birthday. Why the Tzaddikim [and not people in general]? We ask ourselves: why does everybody not die on their birthday? Why them in particular? Their deaths should not be seen--God forbid--as a descent into hell; rather, as meriting "going up" in the direction of their first "going up." That day of birth is the day on which the soul was revealed and sparked in the world. [This discussion involves the theory that the birth of the embryo is one step up, then, when they die, if they have really fulfilled life, they take another step up. The first step is precarious because they might not fulfill the mitzvot. Their death would not be good at all if they do not fulfill the mitzvot, but if they are Tzaddikim, and thus have fulfilled the mitzvot, death is positive for them, as it implies a second step up.] Such an understanding illustrates that the special nature of one's birthday is revealed by the special nature of these Tzaddikim. HaRav Zadok HaKohen of Lublin wrote at some length in his treatise, mentioned above, that for the Tzaddikim, death is the lifting up of their fate and their level of existence. They take off the materialistic dressing of sackcloth [our skin and bones] and they dress themselves in the spiritual

portion of the rabbis in order to enter the upper worlds far above to glory in the rays of the Shechinah. That is in keeping with the day of their birth, for it, too, is an additional level of going up in order to receive the gift of the ability and to serve [God] and perfect the world through Torah and mitzvot. Therefore, not only does no contradiction exist in the idea that Tzaddikim die on their birthday, in that negativity might then be imputed to birthdays, but this example also strengthens the support for the specialness and uniqueness of one's birthday throughout one's life.

In response to the first claim which expressed surprise at the outcome of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai's argument that "it is better that one should not have been born," could we not say that merit inheres in the day of one's birth, as long as such a person fulfills his [or her] obligation in the world? The two schools were only discussing the case of one who does not realize what one is obligated to do. [One should realize his or her potential. The phrase, "it is better not to have been created than to have been created" becomes an exception rather than a rule.] On our birthdays, we should give thanks to the Creator of the world who has kept us alive and sustained us for every moment, and who has made it possible for us to fulfill our task, thereby [earning the merit]. Anyone who does not give thanks to God on this account denies the goodness of God, for God has given merit to all creatures.

An additional conclusion follows from this with regard to the celebration of a birthday. Up until now we have been describing the specialness and the particularity of this day from the perspective of its own essence. [This describes the first perspective.] Now, it becomes clear that this celebration takes on significance in that we acknowledge the goodness of God who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this moment. [This is the second perspective.] There are two central differences between the two perspectives regarding birthdays. The first of these two perspectives is the influence which begins at the instigation of the forces above [heaven]; the second perspective is from below to up above. Moreover, the second perspective is in the form of something which continually grows and changes from year to year. Why? Because thanksgiving for only a few years cannot be compared to giving thanks for living a long life. We saw above that when God granted the author of Yishrei Lev the merit to reach a 70th birthday, he said, "I made a great feast, and it was no small matter." His example of offering thanks illustrates an additional reason for the celebration of completing a particular age because it would seem that additional thanksgiving is in order the more one ages.

CELEBRATION OF BIRTHDAYS FOR JEWS

[Continuation of the article]

"The celebrative marking of birthdays when one arrives at the particular ages of 60, 70, and 80 years old"

10] The first birthday which has particular meaning, beside the day of birth itself, and the day one enters into the covenant at the Bar Mitzvah age,⁵⁵ is the 60th birthday.⁵⁶

It is explained in the Gemara Moed Katan: "When Rav Joseph reached the age of 60, he made a holiday for the rabbis." since he passed safely through the danger of karet⁵⁷ which is the period of 50 to 60 years. Yerushalmi Yebamot adds to the significance of the 60th year when it notes a plague⁵⁸ that comes every 60 to 70 years. It follows that one's first realization of having been saved takes place at the age of 60 [since the plague would have struck him by that date].⁵⁹ These sources illustrate the reason for the celebration of one's sixtieth birthday.

On the other hand, despite the fact that testimony exists by Israel Isserlein, the author of Terumat HaDeshen who finished a tractate on the day he turned 60, thus marking off the event, we have almost no other mention of celebrating this day, even though it is [as we saw] mentioned explicitly in the Talmud [as a possibility]. Rabbi Margaliot in his book, Nefesh Hayyah expressed surprise at the fact that people refrain from celebrating it, but he did not answer his own objection. And in the

Responsa of Beit Yisrael, the author reasoned from the verse, "The days of our lives are 70 and by reason of strength, 80 years," that it does not mention anything about 60 years. There is also the fear of the evil eye "Lest it afflict them, God forbid, so it is better to conceal your age." To these tenuous reasons, one could add that there is doubt whether we ought to draw a practical conclusion from what Rav Joseph did. [Rav Joseph had a very special reason that does not apply to us. He lived long despite the fact that he had been told that he would not.] He had a special personal reason to give thanks and to bless his life, based on what the Chaldeans said in Berakhot, "He would rule for two years" and no more. Since he gave up the rule of the Yeshiva, God extended his years. It follows that one ought not to learn the responsibility of giving thanks from this instance of Rav Joseph's.⁶¹

11] The central age that the commentators and the Decisors discussed in the general context of celebrating one's birthday is at age 70. The primary source for this celebration is in Moed Katan. "According to the opinion of Raba" the 50th to the 60th year is the period in which one is in danger of death from karet; from the 60th to 70th year is the danger of death from the hand of heaven. Rav Joseph celebrated after passing successfully through the danger of karet, it follows that there is all the more reason to celebrate the day on which one passes through both of them [karet and "the hand of heaven"], and that is the 70th

birthday.

Rabbi Reuven Margulies in his gloss on Sefer Hasidim, Mekor Hesed further points out what Yerushalmi Yebamot means when it says that a plague comes into the world and kills the mamzerim. In order not to embarrass their families, the plague also takes people who are good. "This is the source for having a 70th year feast, which is a feast for thanksgiving since the pestilence must have completed its cycle within the period of time, and he has been saved."

Both of these Talmudic references, Yebamot and Moed Katan, provide the reasoning for the 70th-birthday celebration.⁶² Not only did they keep the celebration of this birthday--even in the works of the Posekim--they explained it in connection with a variety of celebrative customs. Even those who deny, more or less, the celebration of birthdays [in general], agree at least on the celebration of the 70th. Despite the fact that a Responsum of Divrei Yisrael, mentioned above, negates the custom of celebrating birthdays, it agrees to celebrating the 70th birthday and even cites supportive evidence.⁶³ Similarly, Otzar Derashot, mentioned above, has basic reservations with regard to these celebrations; nevertheless, it agrees to it for someone who reaches 70 years old.

From among all the illuminating discussions of the Decisors on this matter, we can cite first and foremost the responsum of Yair Hayyim Bacharach in his Responsa of Havat Yair. For the expansion of his opinion see the books, Yad

Ephraim and Pri Megadim. The Hatam Sofer in his glosses to the Shulchan Arukh, Yishrei Lev, also the Responsa Ginzei Yosef, Nefesh Hayyah and others discuss Havat Yair as well. (All that they said will be expanded upon below.)

There is further discussion by Rabbi Hayyim Palache who wrote a special tract, Kol HaHayyim which is for "somebody who has managed to reach 70 and beyond. Let the commentary be with him, and let him read it from the age of 70 and beyond year after year." In his introduction, he writes:

"Happy is the one who holds this book in his hand from 70 years and on...for I am certain that the good old age he will have will be without trouble or sorrow and without the abating of his natural strength. He will live to a ripe old age and live a life of goodness and strength without any pain all the days of his life, and peace be with him..."

12] In addition to all of these people who celebrated these particular birthdays, which we have already cited above in section seven, Hayyim David Hazan explains in his book, Yishrei Lev that he celebrated the day he reached his 70th year, and the author of Samach Nefesh also testifies that he did it. Similarly, we have already see how Hayyim Chavel celebrated his birthday with his students. And similarly, Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, Rabbi Israel Hildesheimer and Rabbi Samuel Salanter, and many more also had some kind of observance.

It follows from the example of these people that the celebration of the 70th year was already a generally

64

accepted tradition among Jews. Even if only a few people have celebrated reaching the age of 60, here at 70, when one has passed through the hand of heaven, there is certainly room to mark the day, to celebrate it, and to give thanks to the Creator of all souls who [daily] restores souls to our bodies. [The reference here is to a prayer in which we thank God daily for keeping us alive through the night.]

In addition to that, there are even people who discuss the celebration of the 80th birthday.⁶⁵ There is further discussion on the matter in Beit Yisrael mentioned above which further clarifies that those who have already celebrated a 70th birthday, would celebrate again when they reach 80. We draw the same implication from Kol HaHayyim, namely, that one who begins at the age of 70 should continue celebrating year after year.⁶⁶ Rabbi Samuel Salantar did the exact same thing at 80 as he did when he reached 70.⁶⁷

Things to Do on Your Birthday

13] Now that we have learned that many of the great thinkers in Israel celebrated their birthdays, both the general and the special ones, we need to clarify how and in what way they had the custom of celebrating and distinguishing these days; thereby, we will learn the proper way to keep the custom.

First and foremost, it is recommended that a feast be held which is considered a Seudat Mitzvah! If we are talking

about the special age of 60, then proof⁶⁸ of the Seudat Mitzvah comes from what Rav Joseph did in Moed Katan. This feast in essence is a Seudat Mitzvah because he arranged it for the rabbis.⁶⁹ (The rabbis would only eat at a meal that was a Seudat Mitzvah, as we read in Pesachim.) From this argument, there is proof for the celebration with a mitzvah feast for the 60th birthday. Logically speaking the 70th birthday [which is later and more significant] must also be a Seudat Mitzvah. We can infer from what is written in Prei Megadim⁷⁰ that this feast for the 70th birthday is considered a Seudat Mitzvah. And thus certainly Rabbi Hayyim Palache in his book, Kol HaHayyim recommends making a "Seudat Eliyahu, a holiday for the rabbis." Similarly Ben Ish Hai, mentioned above, stipulates the arranging of a birthday feast. The Hasidim testify that the Ba'al Shem Tov had the custom of arranging a meal on the 18th of Elul [his birthday].

Still, there are some people⁷¹ who doubt that this feast is a Seudat Mitzvah. Therefore they write that one should expound on Torah at such a feast and in that way, turn it into a Seudat Mitzvah. It does seem correct, however, to recommend exposition at least for regular birthdays. Despite the fact that the midrash, Hemat Hachemdah, pointed out above in Section Two, shows that they used to arrange a Seudah Gedolah, nevertheless, it is possible that only by means of Torah did they turn it into a Seudat Mitzvah. According to the logic mentioned above

regarding the idea of thanksgiving--particularly for the age of 70, as it appears in Mekor Hayyim--it seems fitting to sermonize on the subject of thanksgiving. However, despite the fact that the testimony of Rabbi Hayyim David Hazan in his book, Yishrei Lev, mentioned above, says that he arranged a meal on the day he reached 70, he did not have sermons of Torah. Nevertheless, the author of Samah Nefesh, mentioned above, testifies also regarding this particular event, and adds, "With regard to the Seudat Mitzvah mentioned above, they would fill out the day with Torah, holiness, and fear of heaven." This statement proves that they used to sermonize there just as they did for the 70th birthday. The Hefetz Hayyim arranged a feast for his ninetieth birthday as well, and gave a sermon on morality and fear of heaven. Therefore we find that the members of the Hatam Sofer's family⁷² made their celebration particularly elaborate by organizing a "siyyum" on that particular celebration and in that way they dovetailed the topic of the celebration with Torah and a "siyyum."

14] In addition to arranging a meal and sermonizing, we find three additional customs. First and foremost is the giving of Tzedakah--either in any amount whatever or in an amount corresponding to the number of years of that person's life. An aliyah to the Torah is also customary on this day.⁷³ According to our teacher and Rabbi Eliezer Deutsch:

"...one certainly should follow the custom of the great people in modern times with regard to birthdays: being called to the Torah on that very

day if it happens to be a day on which the Torah is read, or on the Shabbat before it if it is not a day on which Torah is read; giving of Tzedakah before Shacharit and Minchah, and if the birthday follows on a Shabbat Kodesh or on a holiday, then it should be given the day before; doing an additional study session in the Torah and the Kabbalah and adding a separate study portion for that day beyond what is normally done in the Torah and the Kabbalah. Beyond that, one says the normal lessons and the three sections that are applied to each soul..." [Everybody has three aspects of their soul and these three correspond to written law, oral law, and the Tanya.]

In addition to these customs, "one should be alone on one's birthday to self-reflect. If upon reflection Tikkun and Teshuvah are needed, one should repent and repair oneself" ⁷⁴ for this is the day of Heshbon HaNefesh! We derive this from the custom of the Ketav Sofer who on his 54th birthday while spending time in Budapest, instructed his servant not to allow anyone to visit him on that day, for he himself was in his room judging [The numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word for judging equals 54] himself, concerning "what he had done and what he had engaged in throughout the years--and when he thought about it he cried."

In sum, we find ourselves learning that in addition to arranging a meal, and sermonizing on the matter of the day [thanksgiving, birthday, etc...], they had the custom to give Tzedakah, to have an aliyah, to be self-reflective and to make Teshuvah. All of these are customary for every birthday. For particular birthdays, especially the 70th, an additional issue is raised concerning the Shehecheyanu.

15] In his Responsa, Bacharach sides with those who say one should say the blessing using shem umalchut when one reaches the age of 70. Pitchei Teshuvah also cites Bacharach's opinion which says: "That is what seems right to me." Similarly the questioner in the Responsa, Afrakasta De'inya thought this also. We also see similar thinking in Yad Ephraim and in the Responsa, Beit Yisrael, mentioned above.

The majority of the Decisors, however, did not agree that one should say this blessing, not, at least with shem umalchut, and they even doubted whether Havat Yair himself was really certain to say the Shehecheyanu with shem umalchut at the 70th birthday. Their uncertainty stems from the fact that section 237 of Havat Yair deals in some length with the limitations of this blessing and he presents the issue from a stringent perspective.⁷⁵ In the Responsa,⁷⁶ Teshuvah MeAhavah he wrote that because he doubted Bacharach's support for saying the blessing with shem umalchut, "I was not completely sure that I should instruct someone who is 70 years old to say the Shehecheyanu. Havat Yair's language implies that he did not write something from which we might learn practical halakhah; rather, he had the idea along with some doubts about it."⁷⁷

Therefore most of the Decisors declared that one who wants to say the blessing may do so, but without shem umalchut. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai in his Responsa Shiyyurei Berakhah wrote: "Everyone who wants to say the blessing without shem umalchut can do so, because the

Rishonim did not dictate otherwise." Even Rabbi Eliezer Deutsch, Av Bet Din of Benyhad wrote ⁷⁸ that one does not say the blessing with shem umalchut because the Decisors did not stipulate this blessing with it. Therefore he adds, "Whoever could say, 'I have fulfilled my obligation during my lifetime'...is really not able to know whether or not he has fulfilled his obligation during his lifetime, so, the blessing could not belong to this."

Also the Responsa of the Ketav Sofer mentioned above imply that when one reaches 50 years, which is not a special age, one can give public thanks to God, who is blessed, publicly for keeping us alive and sustaining us to this time.⁷⁹ It adds also thanksgiving for what has past and a request for the future. [The implication is that one is able to petition God for the future as of the 50th year.] It seems that he too gave thanks and made a blessing by expressing the essence of Shehecheyanu without shem umalchut.⁸⁰ In this way the Ketav Sofer followed in the footsteps of his father, who had already written in his glosses to the Orach Hayyim based on what the Havat Yair had pointed out in the matter under discussion, "It seems logical to say the blessing without shem umalchut" (even though the Hatam Sofer wrote this in regard to the age of 70, the Ketav Sofer did it at the age of 50!)

Nevertheless, if one wants to say the Shehecheyanu with shem umalchut, one may take something that is new and say the blessing on that without hesitation and intend it for

both of them. Rabbi Palache wrote in Kol Hahayyim, mentioned above: "Happy are you who choose, upon approaching the day of your 70th year, to wear new clothes and say the Shehecheyanu with the intention also that God has given you merit to complete 70 years." Similarly, Rabbi Eliezar Deutsch wrote "I know that there are meritorious people who each year when they reach their birthdays make it pleasant and say a Shehecheyanu on a new piece of fruit or new clothes, but who do not call for a specific blessing for the occasion of the birthday. Note that he stipulates this custom of "combining" the blessing of Shehecheyanu not only⁸¹ for the purpose of the 70th year but for every year. And in Ma'aseh Rav, Hayyim David Hazan also did this, according⁸² to his own testimony, "I wore a new piece of clothing and I said the blessing, thus fulfilling both of them..." [birthday and new item].

We have discussed our doubt regarding Shehecheyanu and we are still not sure either way on the matter. Therefore, when one rejoices on one's birthday and wants very much to say this blessing, that person will have to depend upon the additional Shehecheyanu [on a new piece of fruit or clothing].

16] In addition to the customs that are mentioned above, there are those who recite verses from Psalms and say different supplications on this celebrative and important day. In particular, one begins to say them starting at the 70th birthday. Rabbi Hayyim Palache dedicated most of his

book Kol Hahayyim to collecting and to gathering the Biblical verses, the sermons, and sayings of the Zohar in great numbers which are appropriate for this day. ⁸³ Rabbi Yitzchak Palache ⁸⁴ recommended saying them starting at the age of 70: "Every day you should say Psalm 103" and in section five of his book, Yefei Lelev he wrote,

"For this purpose, one should pray in the following fashion: May it be Your will, Eternal our God, God of our ancestors, that you renew our youth like an eagle to give strength, fortitude, vigor and health to all our limbs and veins. May our minds be coherent and eyes full of sight; let our legs remain sturdy to the fullness of our years, 80 years and more. May God add length of days and many years to us, a life of goodness and honor, a life without shame or disgrace, and unite our hearts to serve you with pure service and complete devotion, so may it be. Amen."

We conclude with the confidence that anybody who looks at our introductory remarks and the explanatory detail which follows will conclude that Jews may celebrate their birthdays.

* * * *

As a final touch, people who go to their birthday parties should be blessed, particularly those who have merited long life and length of days. From the years of old age and beyond, one should be blessed with the blessing which our rabbis said when they left one another from Pumbedita, "May God who makes life, grant you a long, sweet, and happy one." (Yoma 71a) And may God bring you to 120

years, the age which the great people of our nation reached,
like Moses, Hillel, Yochanan ben Zakkai, and Rabbi Akiva.

(see the end of Sifrei to Zot HaBerakhah)

Chapter Three

TRANSLATION TO THE NOTES

1] Rabbi Hayyim Eleazar Shapira, (our rabbi and teacher of Munkacs who wrote Minchat Eleazar and other works) commented in his book Divrei Torah, Part 5, Section 88 in a derashah that [members of his community celebrated the birthday of the head of the republic.] (He continues by explaining that this was to honor the 70th birthday for the same ruler!)

Furthermore, in Sections 2 and 3, discrepancy between non-Jews who are obligated to celebrate their birthdays, and Jews who have a negative view of birthday celebrations is clarified. Similarly, in the Responsa, Arugat ha-Bosem, Orach Hayyim, Part 2, Paragraph 416, Rabbi Moshe Greenwald wrote a strong Responsum against the celebration of special days, including birthdays, because they belong to the laws of other nations. He adds that for people who have a 70th-birthday celebration, "One checks up on them to see if they are unbelievers." At that age, he reasons, one approaches the day of reckoning so, "What kind of happy celebration could they possibly keep?"

Furthermore, in his Responsa, Kinyan Torah, Rule 8:3, top of Paragraph 21, he declares that this is the day not just for the older rabbis to celebrate--based on the what is written in Ahavat Yisrael and Pithei Zuta; on the contrary, this is a day of Teshuvah and contemplation [for everyone],

"Otherwise, you have no humility."

2] See A. Z. 1:3: "On the three days prior to the festivals of the idolatrous nations, it is forbidden to have business with them--to lend to them or to borrow from them... These are the festivals of the idolatrous nations...and the day of the ascension of the kings, the day of their birth and the day of their death..." Regarding this matter, Rabbi Meir and the sages disagreed. Cf Rashi to A. Z. 8a: "The birthday is a day on which the king makes an annual festival and offers sacrifices for all of his kingdom." In the Gemarah, a discussion ensues over the essence of genusia. Eventually, they determine that the day of genusia is the day of ascension to the throne, not a birthday, which is a separate thing. That is why the Yerushalmi, A. Z. 100:2 compares the day of genusia with a birthday: Pharoah's birthday was also his day of genusia. (The controversy is between the individual and the public, see Penei Moshe in that citation and Mareh HaPanim which compares the two Talmuds. The P.T. R.H. 100:8 proves that genusia is not both; and genusia, according to the Yerushalmi, is a birthday. See Korban HaEdah, and Penei Moshe. Also see Torah Shelemah, Vayeshev, Chapter 40, Section 49.

RaMBaM, in Mishneh Torah, "Laws of Idolatry", Chapter 9, Rule 2, clarifies the perspective which explains that the day of ascension into the kingship is their holiday--genusia--which occurs once, whereas a birthday may not even

be considered a "festival" for one does not celebrate a birthday even for a king! See RaBaD, Kesef Mishneh, and Lekhem Mishneh in contrast to Beit Ya'akov.

3] The language of Hayyim David Halevi, in his Responsa, Aseh Lecha Rav, Part 4, sides with the establishment of this celebration. However given the fact that there are sources for the celebration of birthdays for Jews--it is surprising that he does not protest the reasoning that there are not any sources.

4] Not only is the birthday celebration not mentioned, but an actual negating of it can be adduced from Kohelet who says, "A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death than the day of birth." [7:1] The preference is on a good name at death when one has already completed one's deeds. Until then, "One's life is not complete and one may sometime deviate [from the right path]" on a birthday. (Cf Otzar Derashot, and similarly, Divrei Torah and the end of note 57.)

5] Rabbi Moses Welcz adds to this matter in his published Responsa in Divrei Yisrael, Section 2 of "Repentance", Paragraph 18, pages 175-6 (by his father, Rabbi Izrael Welcz). It is forbidden to celebrate birthdays (as well as a Bat Mitzvah). However, the practice of not celebrating occurs during the time of the Rishonim and Aharonim, a time of fear of observing gentile laws. Cf the Responsa, Aseh

Lecha Rav, Section 4, Paragraph 26. The sources obviously explain the reasoning, but do not encourage celebration because of the fear of emulating gentile laws. See note 51 below.

6] See the end of the article by Tuvia Parschel entitled "Hokhmei Yisrael, veChagigot Yuvalim veYom Holedet" in the periodical, Shanah Beshanah. It points out that, in the periodical, HaZefirah, Volume 68, Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor, from Kovno strongly protested the suggestion to celebrate one's service in the rabbinate for 25 years with any special revelry. Rabbi Katriel Sandrovitz publicizes his opposition in HaZefirah, Volume 77 and adds, "Jubilee celebrations are not customary even for veteran rabbis, nor do any of the holy texts make mention of them." (See notes 14 and 33 below)

7] It is found in manuscript and quoted in Torah Shelemah, Vayeshev, Chapter 40, Section 49. (One should also check to see if it is said regarding Israel) [and not just non-Jews' celebration of birthdays].

8] This is what Rabbi Judah David Eisenstein wrote in his book, Otzar Derashot. He points out the source which describes when Herod, the King, adopted the customs of the non-Jews and made a party for his household and ministers for his birthday.

9] "Amalak would wage war against the people of Israel on

the same day as his birthday saying that they would not easily be harmed on this day since the dominating star would help him. But, Moses [lifted up his arm and] confounded the stars so the dominating birth star would not assist Amalek and his troops so they fell." (Joshua also acted in a similar way regarding Amalek--See the article by Emanuel Shochet who published it in Bitte'on HaBaD, 1972, Volumes 36-37, Note 4.)

10] Divrei Torah, mentioned in Note 1 calls the birthday the "day of one's fate". Rabbi Zadok HaKohen from Lublin expounds on the day's effect in Divrei Chalomot, below, in Section Six and in note 30. Rabbi Schneersohn wrote that "On one's birthday, the birth star rules and helps him." (See note 23) Cf Meiri in the part of A.Z. mentioned above, which says that the essence and success of the birthday hangs on the service of the star.

11] In an article written to deny the celebration of RaMBaM's birthday, the Responsa, Divrei Yisrael (mentioned above in note 5) concludes that for Jews, "The birthday really has no connection to luck, happiness or success, so there is no reason to celebrate it." (See note 55.)

Therefore, it is also possible to point out that the date of a non-Jew's birthday is established according to the days and months of the sun on which the stars and planets depend. In contrast to the solar influence, a Jew's birthday is established according to the unique lunar cycle

which has no connection to its star and planet. Based on this logic, then, the constellations are of no help to Israel.

12] This is not the place to go into detail, however we can point out that according to RaMBaN's Responsum, "It is permissible to listen to the fortune tellers (who use stars) and to believe what they say...but there are times when the Holy One, who is blessed makes a miracle for those with reverence, thus confounding the stars. Those are among the hidden miracles...and if one should see in [the decree of the stars] something that one does not like, then one should pray more...I am of the opinion that it is forbidden to counteract the stars by depending on miracles." (Divrei RaMBaN, Part 1, page 379. For support of testimony on this line of thought, see Derekh Hashem by Luzzato, Section 2, Chapter 7. Also see Shaarei Zohar of Shabbat 156b, and Mekor Hesed to Sefer Hasidim, Paragraph 321 and elsewhere.

RaMBaM's opinion differs from that of RaMBaN's. The former thinks that depending on the stars is nonsense. Cf. the notes of Hayyim Chavel in the same place who discusses the opinion of RaMBaM and Rashi. See the RaMA also, Yoreh De'ah 17a, Paragraph 2.

For RaMBaM, the star does not influence Israel or the other nations. Therefore, there is no difference between us and them. Those who do make the distinction, however, do not use RaMBaM's reasoning. According to the opinion of RaMBaN, in contrast to RaMBaM, Israel does have some

connection to the stars and can worry about the fate of the day.)

13] These words are surprising. How could they say that with regard to Jews, "It is better for one not to have been created than to have been created"; but that in regard to non-Jews, "It is better to have been created!" (See the article in Bitte'on HaBaD as well as the end of note 26 and note 20.) Furthermore, are the children of Noah not obligated to perform the negative commandments and not the positive ones? (It is certainly the case, strictly speaking.) It seems that they are closer to suffering a loss than Israel. Israel has the positive commandments for which they can be rewarded. It is further surprising how the blessing Shehecheyanu and Hatov veHaMetiv will be explained with regard to the announcement of a birth. See note 54 (See the note in Kinyan Torah in the same section mentioned above for why it is written that even Rav Joseph, who was blind, was obligated to do only the negative commandments and not the positive ones. See, in the same citation that he rejoiced when he escaped from karet which proved to him that he did not transgress certain laws unlike the rest of the people who were obligated to do both the positive and the negative commandments. [In this case, we might ask] "What is the place for rejoicing?" Perhaps, "It is better for him--even for a blind person--to have been born." The author of Kevod Hakhamim already protested these words below in note 48 in section 11.)

14] This is the reasoning behind not celebrating on the basis of modesty. There is a controversy between the righteous and the wicked with regard to this matter which can be derived from the explanation of Rav Zadok HaKohen found in note 31. (Samuel Mohilever related in Shanah Beshanah, from note 6 above, how he opposed a party honoring his reaching old age, [demonstrating] that such an honor is not fitting. Similarly, Samuel Judah Leib Rapoport opposed his receiving an academic degree which members of the Prague community deemed appropriate to give him. He retorted ironically, that "In the year 1790, I was born--now what am I supposed to do?")

15] I will spend much time explaining the second reason, how it is retrospective with regard to the birthdays of the righteous--from Section 5. It is obvious according to that explanation, but difficult according to the first explanation. [The first explanation takes a retrospective interpretation and views no one as good; the second notes that only if you die on your birthday are you seen as good.]

16] By Eleazar Deutsch, Av Beit Din of Benyhad who wrote Tevuot HaSadeh and is cited in the Responsa, Ginzei Yosef.

17] In the published Responsa, Afrakasta D'inya, Section 1, Paragraph 123.

18] To be sure, see the Targum under the same citation. "On the day that they appointed kings, ministers, and rulers

over them, they drank wine..." RaBaD, Rashi, and ReDaK explain it in a similar way. Some say, however that the celebration of the "day of the king", when the king was appointed--occurred once and was not a yearly birthday celebration. See Da'at Soferim, ad loc.

19] From Torat Moshe, Genesis 4:5, beginning with the statement, "On the day of Isaac's weaning". (See Section 8 and note 49 the date of the celebration.)

20] The Pesikta also mentions that it was customary to celebrate birthdays for the heads of state, particularly for kings rather than for the workers.

Joseph said to his brothers: "Up until the time that you came down here, the Egyptians treated me like a servant, but now that you have come here, you have recognized my Genusia." (Pesikta deRav Kahana, Section One, pages 271-2, Mandelbaum edition, 1962.)

This article certainly implies that the technical term Genusia implies importance. See Arukh haShalem under the root g.n.s.

21] Genesis 40:20, the Solomon Buber edition, Section 1, page 247.

22] "It came to pass that the people of the holy city said that it was the day of the genusia of the kings when they brought the "Book of Lineage" and read it." See note 19 regarding this, and the end of note 20 above regarding the meaning of the technical term.

23] This refers to a published letter in a collection entitled, Yagdil Torah, a clarification of the Shulchan Arukh, Section 741, page 51, regarding Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, may he live a long life, our master and teacher of Lubavich (See Sefer HaArukhim, HaBaD, Volume 2, page 168, note 25--where they wrote that the soul of the first man is renewed each new year because it is the day of his creation. This idea is explained in Likkutei Torah LeShir HaShirim, page 3, Column 2, a source for the issue of birthdays.

24] See Yalkut Shemoni, to Jeremiah, Paragraph 301, which implies a birthday has meaning and influence because it can be cursed, whether for Job who said, "The day will be lost on which I was born..." or whether for Jeremiah who said, "Cursed is the day on which I was born..." cf Pesikta Rabbati Chapter 27, Section a and b.

25] See R.H. 11a where it says, "Our ancestors were born in Nisan" (according to the opinion of R. Yehoshua). "Our ancestors were born in Tishri" (according to the opinion of R. Eliezar). The reason that the month is called "Yareach haEitanim" is that it is the month in which the "Eitanim", the Patriarchs were born; or the reason that the month is called "Chodesh Ziv" is because it is the month in which the "Zivtanim", the luminaries of the world were born." Cf. Rashi and Tosafot ad. loc. And see Yad Ephraim by Rabbi Ephraim Fishel Weinberger z"l Paragraph 19, Section 1, and Yagdil Torah listed above in note 23.

26] From Yad Ephraim, mentioned above in note 2, and see Bereshit Rabbah 48:12, Shemot Rabbah 15:11, Tosafot to R.H. 11a, and Tanhuma Bo. Pesikta, Chapter 6 connects the erection of the tabernacle with Isaac's birthday. Bamidbar Rabbah, Pikkudei 52b mentions the month. Also see Tanhuma Pikkudei where the first of Nisan is explained. And see Torat Moshe, Vayar as well as Yefei Toar, Pikkudei, mentioned above.

The birthday of Isaac is an eternal festive day, and special arrangements are made for the great and righteous ones like him. Similarly, Yagdil Torah, mentioned above, comes to the same conclusion from this data. (And see the Responsa, Divrei Yisrael to clarify why the dedication of the Tabernacle on Isaac's birthday is not considered a case of mixing "simchas". [The problem is that the tabernacle was erected on Isaac's birthday and since both are happy times, it would be illegal to mix them.] Bereshit Rabbah 63a layed it down as a rule that there is rejoicing after rejoicing when a Tzaddik is born. (There are those who would deduce from the sources mentioned above that the general significance of the birthdays of the righteous make it a general birthday!) [Since Tzaddikim represent us in the world, their birthday could become a celebration for everyone, eg. Martin Luther King's birthday.] See Bitte'on HaBaD, Volume 36-37 in the article entitled, "Ateret Tiferet Seva".

27] On his birthday, note, and not on the day of his circumcision. Despite the fact that it says "birth" and not "covenant," one cannot oppose those who side with the celebration of one's circumcision. (See Section 8) Moses is different from the others because he was born, circumcised. [You might think that we should celebrate the birthday and not the circumcision day since for Moses, it says "birthday and not the circumcision day." It could be viewed, therefore, as a proof-text for a birthday celebration. Nevertheless, you cannot use this argument because it refers explicitly to Moses who was born circumcised. If it was talking about anyone else it would have included brit, too.] (This is the answer of Rabbi David Sperber, mentioned above.)

28] From Megillah 13b. Cf. Rashi ad. loc. for an explanation of how they established the day of his death and from there his birthday. See also Nazir 14a, Tosafot ad. loc., beginning, "when Moses said..." (where it illustrates that his birthday was a day of joy), and Yad Ephraim, mentioned above, in Section 3, and what is written in Samach Nefesh. (Cf Beit Yisrael mentioned above for clarification of this matter; and Otzar Derashot, mentioned above. It is surprising that it points out just this day but ignores the days that were dependant upon it.

29] One of the reasons for reading the scroll of Esther on Shavuot is based on David's being born on it. (See the

RaMA, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 490:9; and see Shaarei Teshuvah, Paragraph 107 under the name of Bakhor Shor.)

Certain customs connected with the fifth fast depend on the birthday of the Redeemer. (See Magen Avraham, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 552, Machazit Shekel and Beit Yosef under the same citation.)

Customs for Lag B'omer are known and widespread. For all of this see Yad Ephraim mentioned in Sections 4, 6, and 7.

30] "It is a list of things, which were revealed to me by God, in a dream at night, as far as I can remember."

31] The context revolves around the ways the Tzaddikim died on their birthdays since the deaths themselves were the elevation of their fate. At their ascension [death] they take off the materialistic dressing of sackcloth--skin and bones--and dress themselves in the spiritual portion of the rabbis in order to enter the upper worlds far above to glory in the rays of the Shechinah. On the day of their birth, the Tzaddikim ascended to this world. Then, on account of their work in this world in Torah, in Mitzvot and in good deeds, they arrive to a level higher still than that which they occupied previously. Similarly, on the day of their death, they arrive at an even higher level. The day of death is better than the day of their birth for when they die on the date of their birth, it is the day of the coming to fruition of their destiny. (See Orot Hekdesh, Section 2,

Paragraph 380, Second Edition: "What people call death is really just overcoming life in and of itself," See the continuation.) Those who are not Tzaddikim, however, do not necessarily ascend immediately on that day...so they have nothing to fear about death on their birthday." In the continuation of his remarks, he cites an additional interpretation of the death of the Tzaddikim on their birthdays: that their birthday brings them goodness in a higher realm. It follows that the very opposite is the case for the wicked. For them it would have been better if they had never been created. They have to fear lest they die on their birthday since there is no merit on their birthday! However with regard to those in between "it follows logically that the birthday in and of itself is a glorification and strength of fate and will not bring death." In light of what he says, we are able to establish an additional reason that there are people who do not celebrate birthdays on account of modesty! (See note 52 below.) For the connection of the day of birth and the day of death, specifically with regard to Tzaddikim, see Likkutei Sichot, Volume 5, 1972, page 86, in the second note in the margin. And here is the place to point out the connection to Rabbi Zadok himself--on the day of Rabbi Zadok's birthday, his rabbi passed away. When a complete year had passed, he was appointed as the rabbi [which demonstrates that birthdays can mark significant days.]

32] See above in note 24, and because of this source, even

the Responsa, Divrei Yisrael notes agreement that one should not disregard birthdays.

33] See the end of the commentary by Rabbi David Pardo i.e. the author of Chasdei David, to the Tosefta collection called Shoshanim LeDavid. He concluded it on his 34th birthday which was obviously an ordinary birthday and not a special one. See Shanah Beshanah 1976, in notes 8 and 9, regarding Samuel David Luzzatto. Note also that the chief rabbinate of England published a special book of prayer for the synagogues throughout the British empire to honor Sir Moses Montefiore on his hundredth birthday. Clearly, birthdays have meaning each year. See there ad loc regarding the 70th birthday of Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, Rabbi Samuel Rapoport, Rabbi Samuel Salantar, the Hefetz Hayyim, and Rabbi Samuel Mohilever. (Also see the beginning of Or Hame'ir which is dedicated to the 70th birthday of Rabbi Uziel z"l.)

35] [Schneersohn] also points out that the celebration of this day is not only a renewal of the actual birthday which brings the of one's birth into consciousness, but also reawakens awareness of the memory of a Bar Mitzvah or and requires rejoicing on a level similar to that of the wedding. This is explained in the Zohar, Bereshit 15:4 where the Ari makes the connection between the birthday and Bar Mitzvah, thus, giving reason to celebrate. See Magen Avraham, Orach Hayyim 25:104 and Mahazit Shekel ad loc.

36] The date has particular meaning in the history of Hasidism in that it is the birthday of the Ba'al Shem Tov in the year 1698; it is the day on which Elijah appeared to [the Ba'al Shem Tov] in the year 1714; it is the day on which Elijah's teacher appeared to him also--which is to say, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite in the year 1724; it is the day of the Ba'al Shem Tov's revelation to the world in the year 1734. (HaBaD adds that it is also the birthday of Shneur Zalmon of Lodi in the year 1745.)

37] See the periodical Shanah Beshanah, mentioned above at the end of the article. (And in Sefer HaMinhagim HaBaD, page 61, the author wrote that "On that very day, the 18th of Elul, our ancestors and holy teachers would say words of Torah but they did not overdo their celebration because of their modesty, except in their own households.)

38] See the Responsa of Ketav Sofer, Yoreh De'ah, Paragraph 148.

39] One needs to point out, however, that the Ketav Sofer himself had to offer special thanks because he stood on the brink of death at his birth. This story is explained in an article by Rabbi Shlomo Sofer, the youngest son of the Ketav Sofer--in the introduction called "Leah's Tent" in the book by Ketav Sofer: "In his youth he would finish a tractate on that particular day,"--i.e., the implication is that he would this annually. (The Ketav Sofer was born when his father, the Hatam Sofer was 52 years old. At the age of

six, he was exposed to great danger. They gave him another name and had already called for the Hevra Kaddisha. After the prayer and supplication of the Hatam Sofer, he recovered. Also see the story that Arikhot David retells of what happened in Budapest in 1829.)

40] His birthday began at the end of Sheloshim after his death: the 14th of Nisan.

41] In the margins of the letter printed in Iggeret Hare'ayah, Part 2, namely, the letter dated the 5th of Nisan, 1914 (at his 24th birthday).

42] It is a bracketed comment which is added to his book, Yishrei Lev, Section 2, page 2a: "For the sins God visited on him, the sins of us all this year, here in the year 1869, on the 5th day of the month of Shevat, my father died, and a Hasid was lost from the world." We learn that for nine consecutive years, he had the annual custom to arrange a celebratory meal on this birthday.

Concerning this annual meal, we have additional testimony of Gagin who writes in his book, Samah Nefesh, Ot Shin "I am young and alive, and I have merited the invitation to be included for some years into the Seudat Mitzvah filled with Torah, holiness, and fear of God until his final year, 1869, when the casket was taken because of our sins."

43] In the periodical HaMe'assef, Volume 10, 1905, Section

4, page 43, in a note. See the explanation of the editor there on page 46b. "On the seventh of Heshvan, our rabbi had a complete celebration for his 70th birthday. The flags did not wave. The telegraph machines were silent and the wires were quiet. It was a modest celebration of our rabbi's birthday. Only within the circle of his students did they drink wine for the life of our rabbi..."

44] [Surely, the 70th birthday must be unique] for if there is no difference between the 70th year and the rest of the birthdays [it would follow that no birthday is special, since] one can surely give thanks [equally well] on every day of the year. What difference can there be between one birthday and any other day of the year? Is it not true that every birthday allows you to give thanks and praise to God, who is blessed, for remaining alive that far? [But despite this logic, he says the 70th birthday is not so unique, so it follows that] there must be some special value and particular meaning to a birthday [beyond the general thanks that one may offer on any day. It can be differentiated, therefore, in the same way as] one separates between a minor thanks like Elohei Neshamah and a major thanks each year. (as was seen in note 10 and others)

45] Ben Ish Hai: the first year, see Section 17. (It presents the circumstances for the Bar Mitzvah meal.)

46] If the circumcision is not arranged at the proper time, but is pushed to a later date, one should investigate

whether the mitzvah obligation begins on the 8th day technically or on the actual day of circumcision. It may be necessary to differentiate between a postponement according to Jewish law and a postponement not according to Jewish law.

47] The BaCH explains that he was not accustomed to keeping the day of his circumcision, but he did keep his birthday. [There follows a discussion of the BaCH practice as understood by the Responsa, Aseh Lecha Rav.]

48] In the Responsa, Afrakasta De'inya, Section 1, Paragraph 123 relayed in the name of his brother-in-law the Gaon Rabbi Moshe Stern, z"l. This rumor surprised the author, who nevertheless, accepted it as obvious since it was said by his brother-in-law.

(Cf. Rabbi D. M Eisenstein's article, Simcha Vehoda'ah Litekufot Hayyei Ha'adam which was published in the volume, Kevod Chakhamim, to honor Rabbi Schneersohn on his reaching his 80th birthday, Section 6. The main point of the article explains the reason to celebrate reaching certain ages. Also see the magazine, HaPardes, which explains the special celebration, with reference to the Zohar and Hasidism. It especially emphasizes the birth of Isaac, of every righteous person, and of "anyone in general" as well as the events for the 70th birthday. Also see on what the editor, Slubivitz himself wrote on page five.)

49] Anyone who looks at this source will see, to the

contrary, the regular custom is to celebrate the birthday and not the circumcision day. Thus, Sarah, who would have needed to wean Isaac completely at 24 months, that is, the first day of Pesach, actually did so at the end of Pesach which was the day of his circumcision, so that he would not have to eat hametz on Pesach. The celebration was delayed to that time. [It is true, in other words, that Abraham celebrated Isaac's circumcision, but only because of accident. The fact that he did cannot be used to prove that we too should celebrate the day of circumcision. Actually, Isaac was born on the first of Pesach, and since it was Pesach, he waited until after it ended. By chance therefore, the celebration occurred 8 days later, which was the day of circumcision. But birthdays are still the preferred day of celebration, not the circumcision day.] We find that this is a chance event, whereas the normal thing would have been to celebrate the birthday! (Only with difficulty could one say that they learned an eternal halachah from this example. The matter needs more clarification.)

50] For example, one who is born on the third of Av would postpone the celebration of his birthday until the day of his circumcision--the 10th of Av. On this date, one is able to celebrate with ease. This is also the case for those born on a fast, etc.

51] The claim that birthday celebrations belong to the

gentiles also evaporates of its own accord. See note 5 above [which provides a source in our sacred text attributing the celebration to Jews as well.] (We can utilize what is said in the Responsa, Aseh Lecha Rav, mentioned above, to prove this point: "...Even though the sources for birthday celebrations are in the customs of the "idolators", it does not seem to me that there is any prohibition to celebrate in one's own family. The essence of the celebration is logical: whenever new years are added to you, it gives you joy. No idolatrous custom exists here..." As it says, it is not God forbid, a source in "those of the idolators" that is to say "the law of the gentile"; rather its source is in the holy customs of Israel). Once again I have found that Rabbi Eisenstein mentioned above, concurs.

52] One cannot go by the solution offered by the Tosafot, A.Z. 5a, namely: "Here we deal with ordinary people, but for a Tzaddik, happy is he and happy is his generation." According to this, the righteous would be the ones to celebrate their birthday, but in fact, this is not what we find, for the Tzaddikim do not celebrate, it because of modesty.

[The fact that the Tosafot sanctions the celebration for the Tzaddikim, but, the Tzaddikim do not celebrate it because of modesty forms the contradiction here.] The Tosafot states that people of stature would find meaning to this day and thus would mark it in celebration.

Nevertheless, it is they who avoid the particular day! Therefore, we require another explanation as will be provided below.

53] R. H. 11a uses a scriptural source: "I will fulfill the number of your days..." Also see Yeb. 47b.

54] See note 13 above. Also see the end of the article in Yad Ephraim, mentioned below in Section 12. He compares this [issue of birthdays] to the blessing Yotzer Ha'adam and the blessing Shebaranu Likhvodo and other blessings like that [both of which talk about how God created us in God's image so that we may do things for God.] The creation of humanity has intrinsic merit, that by fulfilling one's appointed task in life, "God is beloved on account of what one does."

It follows that the objection voiced in Yagdil Torah, mentioned above, (in notes 34 and 35) disappears entirely. The objection to the effect that the birthday celebration is meant only to commemorate Bar Mitzvah; actually we see here that it celebrates the creation of the human being.] There [the objection was that by celebrating a birthday] such a person merely celebrates anew his entrance into the yoke of the commandments [that is to say, the Bar Mitzvah]. Is it not obvious [goes the argument that is dispensed with here] that birthday celebrations have merit only when one enters the age of obligation to the commandments? [The negative focus disappears entirely if one sees that the birthdays

celebrate the creation of humanity, and has nothing to do with commandments per se.]

(From the general drift of his remarks, it becomes evident that he had only the recollection of a special day and event in mind, [namely, the Bar Mitzvah]. He does not consider the matter of thanksgiving [which could occur every day] On the other hand, the source that Reuven Margolies points to in Mekor Hesed, mentioned in note 11--connects [the notion of birthdays] only to thanksgiving because one's life has been saved thus far [and one is not looking ahead]. (Even though that source explicitly refers to the age of 70, it is possible to conclude from it that it refers to every year, although to a lesser extent. see note 59). See note 35 above.

55] See the Responsa Divrei Yisrael, mentioned above on what is written in B.K. 80a and Tos. ad. loc. Also see Kol Sofer, Niddah 6:3 and Hatam Sofer, Yoreh De'ah, 1:300. Also see note 35 above.

56] The saying in the end of Chapter 5 in Pirkei Avot is not the issue here. And there is not source for the age of 50 mentioned above in Section 6 in the Responsa of the Hatam Sofer. (In Dikdukei Soferim, M.K. 28a, no version exists that says "he died in his fiftieth year.") It appears that it is not special, but an ordinary birthday that is regular and set. Eisenstein, mentioned above in note 6, however, wanted to emphasize rejoicing for the 50th year. Looking

closely at the Yerushalmi, he was able to link it to sections from the Zohar which said, "50 years marks old age". See there, ad. loc.

57] The term, karet is explained by our teacher and rabbi, the Gaon S. Yashbuli (in his introduction to the collection, Hatorah Vehamedinah, Volumes 7 and 8, honoring the 60th birthday of Rabbi K. P. Tchorsch). "Since one does not labor for nothing nor is one born without purpose, therefore, he is able without concern to announce, "I have escaped from karet"! This occurs only once one has reached the total number of years referred to here, and he is content with himself and feels good within. He recognizes that his needs "have sunk root below and have rendered their fruit above..." That is, his deeds and activities have not been cut off without benefit.

(In the introduction to his remarks, he negates the custom of keeping a birthday. since it is not our way to look retrospectively and to put closure on the past. He notes merely that the 60th birthday is just an exception to the rule. With regard to Yashbuli's comment negating birthdays: first of all, the birthday is not simply and solely a summary of the past; and secondly, the birthday is certainly celebrated among Jews.)

58] See the controversy in this reference over death by karet and death by the hand of heaven; and the clarification of Rabbah. Also see Abaye's differentiation between a

premature death and a sudden death (However compare it to the version in Dikdukei Soferim which places death by the hand of heaven at 60 when everyone can be called to death.) And see Tosafot there. The source for the remark is Yerushalmi Bik. Chapter 2. It differentiates between death by love at 70 and death because of old age at 80. See the question of Abaye to Rav Joseph in M.K. previously cited...

59] In M.K. from note 11. This focuses on the age of 70 and it appears to connect it with the age of 60.

60] In the book, Leket Yosher and also see "the Notes to the Customs of Hatam Sofer" at the end of the book Divrei Yisrael, mentioned above, page 32.

61] This is similar to what we pointed out in note 30 above in connection to the Ketav Sofer. And see Likkutei Sihot, Vayeitzei, 1971 and similarly in Bitte'on HaBaD Issue 36, 37 in the article, "Ateret Tiferet Seva", notes 24-26 where it clarifies that the celebration for reaching the age of 60 does not apply to everyone. (See the connection to the special matter of the age of 70 in that article on page 25.)

62] These reasons are essentially different from those cited previously. In this discussion they were not pointing out the arrival at age 70, but completing the 60's peacefully. (See the book, Hesed LeAvraham, the second edition, by Rabbi Abraham Tzvi Brodna, 1931, in the introduction on page 6, Section 4 which justifies the custom

and even its name Chag Yovel. In a similar vein, Eisenstein, in his article, Section Ten, page 211, reasoned that the celebration at age 90 and 100 occurs when one begins counting the years at 20.

63] He wanted to reach the conclusion based on the interpretation in Niddah that this celebration does not apply to women for the following reason: "For it is known that all souls, male and female come into the world as a separate entity. But the male is the essence of creation and the female is contained within him. Therefore, when the soul enters the earthly sphere, God and the angels adjure it on its own, and in this same way his mate/wife-to-be is adjured simultaneously. She, however, is not adjured in her own right, and therefore, we do not keep a holiday on her actual birth, or her 12th birthday or her 70th birthday."

It is very difficult to reach a halachic decision that is supposed to be put into practice on the basis an aggadic derashah, a commentary which he reaches on his own accord. To be sure, the essence of what he says is based on what Jacob Amdan Ben Tzvi wrote at the beginning of Migdal Oz (before Nachal Rishon) in his explanation for the reason that we celebrate Shavuah HaBen, and also have a similar celebration for a daughter (see his second reason there). The things that he lists there, however, essentially revolves around the matter of Shavuah particularly. It is hard to say that she should not give thanks to God, who is blessed, for her long life and many years. Since she is not

exempt from all of the other commandments of thanks and praise, does she too not feel that her ages are different from each other? She can give thanks for the years that pass her by. So, it is obvious that the logic to the contrary does not belong here at all. The other possibility is that it depends upon what we pointed out above--that either birthdays depend on thanking God for luck and fate [then, male and female are equal] or they depend upon reaching a certain age [in which case reaching a certain age may be different for men than for women]. We have to think about this some more.

With regard to the logic mentioned above that by keeping a birthday, one is really keeping the Bar Mitzvah, it still makes sense that celebrating also applies to girls. She, too, returns annually to the day when she entered the age of responsibility for keeping the commandments, her Bat Mitzvah. (We cannot deny these three birthdays--day of birth, the 12th, and the 70th--with regard to women. We side in all cases with the women...

Therefore, none of the Poskim who deal with the matter correctly disassociate women it. All the logic, the reasons, and explications which are mentioned with regard to the praise of this celebration belong to both men and women. If we obligate one gender for this matter, then we should not deny it to the other gender.

64] The Responsa Beit Yisrael, mentioned above, implies that "not everyone had the custom of having a special meal for

the 60th, 70th and 80th birthday; only a small portion did." But, in my opinion, that was because of the fear that the evil eye would overcome them; so they concealed how old they were. One who would like to have a meal has supportive evidence from Moed Katan. It also turns out that the age of 70 falls into the category of customs which people did not keep [even though they could]. All that was mentioned above, however, shows that the decisions of the Poskim, their testimony, and their deeds imply that [they could celebrate that birthday.]

65] This is what he wrote in his book Yad Ephraim, Section 11. And see Sedei Hemed mentioned in Section 9, the controversy between Hacham Tzvi and J. D. Azulai over the matter under discussion in Eisenstein's article. (It says that with regard to the age of 80, even Abaye in Moed Katan concurs with Rav Joseph.) [Abaye did not think that one should make a feast for the rabbis, as Rav Joseph did, but even Abaye agrees that one may do so at least for the 80th year.]

66] He himself composed this booklet when God graced him with reaching the age of 80. He outlined a booklet dedicated to all who reach the age of 70 and onward. (He signed his composition: the young man, Hayyim Palache!) See the end of note 81.

67] He gave Tzedakah equal to the number of his years. When he was 90, the magnates of Jerusalem had already

established a charitable organization in his name. When the Hefetz Hayyim turned 90, he finished his booklet Beit Yisrael and arranged a meal for some of his relatives. He pointed out the great mercy of the Creator and he "awakened them with rhetoric on that day. (That is what he wrote in Shanah Beshanah, mentioned above.) Rabbi Benjamin Adler, in his book, Halakhot Vahalikhot Bar Mitzvah, Chapter 15, note 90, pointed out that the Gaon Joseph Kahaneman from Panevezys related that he was invited along with a friend to the feast of the Hefetz Hayyim, and the great teacher said to them that on that day 70 years had gone by for him. He said Shehecheyanu on a new piece of clothing. Also see the book, Hefetz Hayyim, Hayyav Upa'alo. And see note 62 above.

68] This evidence is cited in the Responsa Beit Yisrael. (He expands on the discussion of the parameters of a Seudat Mitzvah.) He also elaborates on the trepidation of Havat Yair on this issue in the Responsa Yad Ephraim, mentioned above in Sections 9 and 10. Also see Nefesh Hayyah, mentioned above, where even he concurs on the arranging of a meal; and see the Responsa Afrakasta D'inya, mentioned above, where he agrees to the meal for the 70th birthday. Also see, Ginzei Yosef, Paragraph 4, Section 2.

69] although one can point out that Rabbi Hananel, ad. loc. does not point out that he made a feast for the rabbis.

70] See the commentary, Prei Megadim, Orach Hayyim (which expounds in general on the Seudat Mitzvah--and concludes "one still needs to investigate all of this. Maybe I will be able to explain it someplace else in greater detail.")

71] In the Responsa Havat Yair, Paragraph 60, and in Pitchei Teshuvah, Yoreh De'ah, Paragraph 417, 100:16: "In any event, it is not obligatory that one have a Seudat Mitzvah by giving a derashah on a birthday."

72] They testified about the Hatam Sofer himself (in the book, Minhagei Hatam Sofer, Chapter 7, Section 14.) That concluded the Chumash with the students on the seventh of Tishrei--his birthday. The son of the Ketav Sofer pointed out in the introduction, Ohel Leah, mentioned above: "Ever since the days of his youth, he was accustomed to finish some tractate on that day," (Isserlein, the author of Leket Yosher, wrote that he completed a tractate on the day that he reached the age of 60.)

73] In the collection, Yagdil Torah, mentioned above. (Also see Likkutei Sichot, Volume 5, page 86, in the last note in the margins of the volume, and Sefer Minhagim--the customs of HaBaD, page 81). We find the giving of Tzedakah in a sum corresponding to the number of one's years, by Rabbi Samuel Salantar (see note 67). Bitte'on HaBaD, mentioned above in note 61, also cites the custom to say a "chapter of Psalms correlating to the number of years from the day of birth, etc..." Also see note 23.

74] Yagdil Torah, mentioned above, and see Likkutei Sihot, eleventh of Nisan, 1943 mentioned above, and also, Luach HaYom Yom Yom Shishi. (That is our rabbi and teacher Eleazer Deutsch's birthday).

Rabbi Mohilever made a similar comment: "This is the difference between Jews and other nations. Other nations take an accounting of others. "He restored the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing, but the chief baker he impaled." [Genesis 40:21] [Other nations think about what others do and either "restore them or impale them] but, for Jews, a birthday is meant for self reflection.

75] One who says the Shehecheyanu must consider these conditions: that the event for which one says it should not be a regular event (in its essence and not by happenstance; for example, if one did not put on Tefillin for a long time, the mitzvah itself is still regular in its essence); it ought to be something that never happened to him before; and thus something for which saying the Shehecheyanu is an obligation and not optional. [Havat Yair believes that Shehecheyanu is obligatory because it takes effect at specific events in one's life that are predictable, that happen regularly, not by happenstance. Birthdays, however, are not obligatory. Therefore the conclusion is that with cases of birthdays, one does not say Shehecheyanu.]

If the Havat Yair was so stringent with regard to this blessing, there is doubt over whether he would be lenient with regard to saying it at age 70. Moreover, the essence

of his discussion in Paragraph 60 does not discuss this at all. Rather, it talks about the circumstances for the Seudot Mitzvah and their definition. The matter of the blessing is not mentioned at all except incidentally. (The language he uses in our editions is stated as the following: "even one who turns 70 blesses God "who has kept me alive". Notice the use of "me" and not "us". Perhaps the intention was only for giving thanks and not for a blessing! On the other hand, Pitchei Teshuvah, mentioned above, has the version as "who has kept us alive"). All the reasons for not saying the blessing which he lists in Paragraph 437 as negative have no relationship to the matter of the 70th birthday. Therefore there really is reason to doubt his opinion with regard to halachah lema'aseh. [You should not form your practice on the basis that Havat Yair may have made a connection between the Shehecheyanu and the 70th birthday.]

76] The Responsa Teshuvah MeAhavah, Part Two, Paragraph 437, page 166 by Rabbi Eleazar Fleckels, deals with questions of saying the Shehecheyanu for lighting the Shabbat candles for the first time. He rejects the blessing based on the reason that the Shabbat candles are obligatory. [As we saw above, one does not say Shehecheyanu for what is obligatory.] Within this context, it discusses the parameters for women saying the Shehecheyanu and Kiddish; and it also expounds on the limits of this blessing. See Prei Megadim, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 444, Section 9, which

discusses the remarks of Havat Yair. (Also see the introduction by Rabbi Shalom Kotna in Mishat Aharon by his father Rabbi Aharon Kotna. On pages 8-9, he further discusses the remarks of the BaH and the author of Teshuvah MeAhavah, mentioned above. He wanted to explain Havat Yair on the basis of the BaH. It is a matter which is rejected in an appended note.

77] It seems obvious to point out that one cannot explain the perspective of Havat Yair and justify the saying of the blessing of Shehecheyanu by relying on the BaCH, Orach Hayyim, paragraph 29 who writes: "When it comes on a personal celebration, the blessing of the Shehecheyanu can be said even though it is not certain that one is obligated to say it. One is not guilty of transgressing by taking God's name in vain, if one rejoices and blesses God for giving one life and sustaining one up to this time..." (In this way this blessing differs from all the other ones See BaCH and Eliyahu Rabbah, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 432 which agree and proves it from Ber. 60a...Also see Hatam Sofer, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 25. and Tevu'ot HaSadeh 28:104, and the Responsa Kol Mevasser, Part 1, Paragraph 21, Section 6 (in connection to the saying of Shehecheyanu on Independence Day). Similarly, the RaMA, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 423: "...There are people who wrote that you should be lenient with regard to this blessing since it is not obligatory but optional, and hence it has become commonplace that many are lenient with regard to these blessings" (See Isserles,

paragraph 425, Paragraph 100, and Magen Avraham, under the same citation which says, "In this blessing--the blessing of Shehecheyanu (From this there are those who end up being lenient with regard to the rest of the blessings also, that is incorrect.) See the Tur under the same citation). The Responsa Teshuvah MeAhavah mentioned above, adds proof to the BaCH's system from Eruvim 40b. According to this point of view saying Shehecheyanu is more lenient than all the other ones since it can be said, as long as one is rejoicing even if there is doubt about whether it is required. One cannot explain, however, Havat Yair, since in Paragraph 437, he explicitly argues against a system just like this--even though he does not explicitly say it is the BaCH's--and he himself thinks that it would be a blessing in vain under those circumstances! Therefore the opinion of Havat Yair itself in this matter remains in doubt--that is, the blessing of Shehecheyanu for those who reach 70 years old. However, Eisenstein points out that the Gaon Yitzchak Isaac from Komarno wrote unequivocally that one can say the Shehecheyanu with shem umalkhut on the 70th birthday. See what is written there from the Responsa of Rabbi Abraham Broda and from the Responsa Divrei Rivot.

78] As is cited in the Responsa, Ginzei Yosef, Paragraph 4, Section 2 (the collected works of Deutch's father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph HaKohen Schwartz). Rabbi David Sperber in the Responsa, Afrakasta D'inya mentioned above rejects saying Shehecheyanu with shem and malchut for two reasons: First,

we do not find that our sages instituted it. And second, one does not generally rejoice when one nears one's eternal rest. Rabbi Uziel z"l of Or HaMeir, mentioned above, rejects the Shehecheyanu for any event that does not come all at once, but comes serially over the course of days and years. [like a birthday]

79] He combined the Shehecheyanu with finishing Masechet Pesachim, a tractate which concludes with a question regarding the saying of Shehecheyanu.

80] Also the Responsa, Afrakasta D'inya mentioned above, reached the conclusion that "He only gave thanks to God by means of the content of the blessing, [not the form, with shem umalchut]".

Even Ben Ish Hai, mentioned above, did not mention a Shehecheyanu at all, but he expressly notes that he had the custom to say some thanksgiving and requests on this day.

81] See the book, Yad Ephraim, mentioned above, in section 10 and 11. (This addition of Shehecheyanu obviously belongs in many ways, as, for instance, was cited in the Responsa, Beit Yisrael, mentioned above, whereby they used to add the Shehecheyanu for holidays). This combination of Shehecheyanu for a new piece of clothes or fruit is also supported by Kaf HaHayyim, Orach Hayyim, Paragraph 425, Section 28-29. Rabbi Eliezer Papo (the author of Feleh Yoetz) wrote in his book, Hesed LeElophim, (Novellae on the laws of Orach Hayyim, page 135b, Section 8) an enumeration of things where there is a

controversy over the saying of Shehecheyanu: such as finishing a book of novel interpretations of Torah, achieving a position of honor, or (for a woman) at the conclusion of shidukhin, and so on. Furthermore, it is fitting to say the blessing without mentioning shem umalchut or alternatively one should wear a new piece of clothes, then one is exempt from worrying that it is a blessing said in vain. [Papo adds,] "When one reaches the age of 60 or 70 years, it is fitting to give thanks to God and to say the Shehecheyanu without mentioning shem umalchut. And more important than that, I say it is fitting to bless God each day for God keeps us alive and brings us to a new day. It is good to give thanks to God for every single detail and everything that is good and to give thanks for the past and to pray for the future..."

Rabbi Hayyim Palache, mentioned above, testifies regarding himself in his book Ginzei Hayyim (Y.D. 15, s.v. Yoma Tava) that he had the custom of making a feast for the rabbis and their students every year on his birthday from his 70th year onward. "On the completion of my 70th birthday, I said the Shehecheyanu for my wearing of something new."

82] In his book, Yishrei Lev, mentioned above, it is prescribed for age 70; for the celebration of particular ages that require further elaboration, see there, and in Samach Nefesh, mentioned above. Also look at the Responsa, Ginzei Yosef, and the Responsa, Aseh Lecha Rav, mentioned

above.

83] See Kol HaHayyim: Sections 2, ("Form of Prayer"), 3 ("Reading the Bible"), and 4 "On the Need to Become Accustomed to Studying Ecclesiastes"; after that he cites many quotations from the Zohar.

84] In his book, Yefei Lelev, Section 8 to Orach Hayyim Paragraph 223, (See the Ketav Sofer's prayer and request in his Responsa, mentioned above.)

85] See Otzar Derashot, mentioned above.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BIRTHDAYS

"Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year."*

Throughout the previous discussion, the central issue has been whether or not a Jew could celebrate a birthday. It has emphasized the limits and parameters for such a celebration, but shown little concern for the possibility of turning it into a meaningful experience. Thus far, we have found no search for something spiritual in the birthday celebration. This chapter will devote itself to such a search.

In our quest for spiritual significance, we turn to the way Judaism already handles special moments. As the quotation by Abraham Joshua Heschel indicates, Judaism teaches us to view time as an entity that can be divided between the holy and the profane. In their ability to capture their own holy quality, certain moments of our week and year differ from others. Not only do we build "sanctuaries in time," as Heschel would say, but these moments commemorate sacred events. We gain a greater sense

*The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel. (New York, Farrar, Straus and Firoux, 1951) page 8.

of meaning by marking the creation of the world each week, the desert experience each fall, or even the Exodus from Egypt during the Spring. Every holy moment stands for another that happened earlier in time. As Jews, time does not simply pass unnoticed before our eyes. We celebrate it and are conscious of its holiness.

Birthdays are no different. They, too, occur in time and mark a specific event of an earlier moment. The celebrating of our own birthday, however, notes a personal spiritual moment as opposed to a group experience. Despite this difference, the model still works. Each individual can learn to bring into consciousness his or her own personalized spiritual moment, mark it, celebrate it, and find meaning in it. How such an expression can occur and how we can find the meaning of the moment can be derived from the discussion in the article.

The first act in celebrating a birthday is recognizing its existence. Shabbat serves as a paradigm for learning to bring a moment into consciousness. As Heschel has remarked: "God has sanctified the day, and one must again and again sanctify the day, illumine the day with the light of the soul. The Sabbath is holy by the Grace of God, and is still in need of all the holiness which one may lend to it."

[Heschel, page 54] In other words, Shabbat will occur each week whether or not we choose to recognize its presence. Similarly, the anniversary of each of our births comes around every year at the exact same moment. Each individual

determines if he or she will acknowledge that holiness. The holy quality already exists; we need to be conscious of it.

Heschel stresses this idea when he says,

"A special consciousness is required to recognize the ultimate significance of time. We all live it and are so close to being identical with it that we fail to notice it. The world of space surrounds our existence. It is but a part of living, the rest is time." [Heschel, page 96]

Our consciousness of our own birthday, therefore, allows us to recognize its potential for its spiritual significance.

One can make use of what the day offers, however, only when one recognizes that the day itself has an essence of its own that differs from any other day of the year. The power of human association makes it so. Individuals recognize that this day belongs to them and infuse it with significance. A note in the article demonstrates that the day itself holds its own quintessence by virtue of the fact that both Job and Jeremiah cursed their own birthday. The former said, "The day is lost on which I was born" and the latter cried, "Cursed is the day that I was born." Such statements acknowledge that the birthday holds a certain power. [Note 24, see page 54 above.] In fact, these biblical personalities were not the only ones who identified the significance of the day. Amalek deployed his troops on his birthday commenting that "One does not fall so quickly on this day." His age did not matter, but the date did. [See page 14 above.]

Certain dates in history also stand out as having greater consequence because they mark a particular birthday.

Note 36 in the article emphasizes the 18th of Elul because it marks the birthday of the Ba'al Shem Tov. Other major occurrences happened on this day and are attributed to the birth of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The article lists a number of our ancestors whose birth also elicits positive associations by virtue of their being born on that day.

"...The birthday of Isaac has remained with us as a day of celebration in subsequent generations. Also, the merit of Moses' birthday has defended and saved us from the evil clutches of that wicked one, Haman...The days around David's birthday are Shavuot; and the messiah will be born on Tisha B'av..." [See page 22 above.]

History's recognition of their birthdays has caused us to recognize these days as important and thus has infused with power and significance.

Once we have acknowledged that the birthday itself holds a particular essence by our recognition of its relevance, we need now to ask how it manifests itself. The article focuses on this issue in terms of how non-Jews view birthdays. It points out that we should not celebrate birthdays for fear that we might be viewed as "emulating the laws of the gentiles." Despite this trepidation, it does not hesitate to describe the potential beneficial influence that the day may hold. This attitude assists us in discovering more meaning in the birthday celebration. The article informs us that astrological forces come into play on a birthday, and they bring luck and special strength. Why did Amalek deploy his troops on his birthday? P.T. Rosh Hashanah explains that he knew that the astrological

forces would benefit him and would bring luck. He had the favor of the stars on this special day. Habakkuk demonstrates the power of astrological forces when he says:

"The mountains rock at the sight of You,
A torrent of rain comes down;
Loud roars the deep,
The sky returns the echo.
Sun and moon stand still on high
As Your arrows fly in brightness,
Your flashing spear in brilliance." [3:10-11]

In his own poetic way, Habbakuk has illustrated how forceful the stars can be. If the essence of the birthday elicits such a reaction, we can only imagine the potential for success. Amalek surely did.

Many of the post Talmudic sources have also acknowledged the special nature of the day. Divrei Chalomot notes that "One's birthday has the power of fate and no reason exists to fear on that day because luck is associated with it." [See page 49 above.] Divrei Torah calls the birthday the "day of one's fate." [Note 10, see page 49 above.] Menachem Mendel Schneersohn notes that "on a birthday, the birth star rules and helps him." [Note 10, see page 49 above.] Despite this acknowledgement of the positive connection, we cannot ignore that Jews did not, in fact, want to link themselves with "gentile customs". On the other hand, they could not disregard that Jews could benefit from the positive effect of the birthday. The article emphasizes that:

"If a special success-inducing connection naturally exists between people and their star on the day of their birth, then under normal circumstances the essence of a birthday would apply to Jews, too."

[See page 16 above.]

In the end, then, the article views stars as affecting Jews who perhaps should take advantage of this fact. A comment later in the article adds to this idea. It gives the example of "famous Jews" who used to celebrate their birthdays because the "essence of the day brings about special strength." [See page 26 above.] It would follow that if astrological forces had a beneficial influence, then surely the day would hold significant strength for the individual celebrating it.

We moderns and many of those cited in the sources, however, have a problem with attributing success on a birthday to the stars. We do not deny the fact that the essence of the day may bring about fate and luck; we differ just on the source. The article concludes that astrological forces have some success-inducing power. Our response to this attribution is that as much as the day may have significance on its own, instead of relying on the stars, why do we not rely on the individual to give the day power? Based on all of the comments above from the sources, we can take what they said and apply it to an individual's recognition of the significance of the day. It still can have the "power of fate", but now it emerges because of the individual and not from the stars. We grant power to the day because we recognize it as special.

We also give power to the day since it reminds us of a specific event. Just as Shabbat marks a moment in time when

God created the world and then rested from the labors of creation, the birthday notes the moment in time when an individual emerged into this world. Each year at that same moment, we can acknowledge that occurrence. Mircea Eliade* describes sacred time as a moment when matters return to the position they were on the original day. "What is involved is...a return to the original time, the therapeutic purpose of which is to begin life once again, a symbolic rebirth." [Eliade, page 82] The birthday allows us to reactualize our own moment of creation, to bring a past moment into the present.

That moment of acknowledging the past event of our birth enables us to have spiritual opportunities. The first is recognizing that we were born with the task to fulfill our potential in life and each year we can celebrate that fact on our birthday. The article uses the discussion between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel to illustrate this point. At first glance, their statement that "it is better for one not to have been created than to have been created" [Eruvim 13b] appears as a negative perspective on a birthday. The article tries to explain it in terms of the multitude of negative mitzvot and the fact that, "Birthdays are a formidable thing in the life of a person who stands precariously at the crossroads, ever about to fall; therefore, Jews do not rejoice or celebrate a birthday."

*The Sacred and the Profane by Mircea Eliade. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1959)

[See page 18 above.] Later in the article, however, the statement is clarified as referring to those who have not fulfilled their potential. It says,

"On our birthdays, we should give thanks to the Creator of the world who has kept us alive and sustained us for every moment, and who has made it possible for us to fulfill our task thereby [earning the merit]. Anyone who does not give thanks to God on this account denies the goodness of God, for God has given merit to all creatures." [See page 30 above.]

Menachem Mendel Schneersohn wrote that the soul of the first man is renewed at each new year because it is the day of his creation. [Note 23, see page 54.] That moment of creation holds the potential for the individual to fulfill his or her life. Moreover, not only does the birthday renew our actual birth and all the potential that goes with it, but it also brings special events such as the Bar Mitzvah and wedding into consciousness. [Note 35, see page 59.] Yad Ephraim goes so far as to compare the birthday to the blessings Yotzer Ha'adam and Shebaranu Likhevodo. [Note 54, see page 69.] Both portray humanity as being created in God's image to do things for God. Sekhel Tov summarizes this concept when it says,

"A birthday has a purpose which God has given on the day of your birth...and most people embrace the day as the fulfillment of that which God has given. It parallels the day on which you were born, so rejoice on it and have a feast."

Therefore, the creation of humanity has blessing and merit in it, when one fulfills one's appointed task in life. In addition to providing the opportunity to celebrate the potential of life, the birthday allows us to thank and bless

God for all the good that has come to us. One perspective connects thanksgiving with birthdays because one's life has been saved thus far. [Note 54, see page 69.] Another point of view permits us to increase our thanks as we gain in years. "The essence of the celebration is logical: every time you get new years added to you, it gives you joy." [Note 51, see page 67.] In either case, however, the opportunity to offer thanks is present. Rav Kook illustrates yet another way to give thanks. He offered a prayer on his son's birthday rather than his own: "May my blessing ascent to heaven on the day of your birth, with God's help, at this fated hour." [See page 24 above.]

The article and notes spend a great deal of time talking about whether one may say Shehecheyanu. We may cull from the discussion of limits an important point for giving meaning to the celebration. The conclusion seems to be that we can say it only if we do so along with something new, and intend the blessing for both the object and the birthday. Or we must avoid the exact wording of the benediction so as to prevent the possibility of a barakhah levatalah; in which case it is only the essence of the blessing that stands for our purpose. It would seem, therefore, that utilizing the general content of the blessing alone is sufficient to convey the message of the intended meaning for the moment. The meaning of what the Shehecheyanu says summarizes the focus thus far: birthdays celebrate our existence to that point and our opportunity to give thanks.

Along the same lines of giving thanks, specific birthdays, such as the 60th, 70th, and 80th are noted as having a particular significance. One reason stems from the fact that reaching these ages represents a milestone in one's life. Some of the discussion revolves around having survived threatening situations. If one has reached these ages, one can rejoice that one has been saved thus far. Another justification involves making note of major thanks versus minor thanks. Just as we have prayers that stand for major and minor thanks, so too can we have major and minor birthdays. Despite the emphasis on the particular birthdays, the article concludes

"Despite the marking of particular birthdays, there is no real difference between the year one reaches 70 and other birthdays. It is always fitting to offer great thanks to God's great name, who is blessed. Therefore, it is appropriate to have a celebration and to mark one's birthday each and every year." [See page 25 above.]

We can conclude, therefore, that celebrating a birthday and offering thanks takes precedent over waiting for particular birthdays to arrive.

Up to this point, we have discussed the fact that our recognition of our birthday gives it an essence that elicits a positive influence, that the day reactualizes the moment of birth, and that it allows us to celebrate our creation and give thanks. The final issue that is left to discuss is how to make the most of this spiritual experience. In other words, how can we celebrate it? Contrary to the normal modern mode of celebrating birthdays, the spiritual

significance of the birthday comes by way of modesty. The Tzaddikim serve as the model. They were permitted to celebrate their birthdays if they so desired, but they did not because of modesty. Note 14 describes how Samuel Mohilever opposed a party honoring his reaching old age and Solomon Judah Leib Rapoport did not want to receive an honorary academic degree on his birthday, because he deemed such an action inappropriate. Their example and the model of modesty may have influenced and should still influence the kind of activities that occur on a birthday.

Most of the activities do not entail the involvement of others. Having a Seudat Mitzvah with a derashah or a siyyum, however, is the exception. Other ways to celebrate include giving Tzedakah for any amount or for the number corresponding to the number of years; reciting verses from Psalms equal the one's age, and at 70, saying Psalm 103 every day; having an aliyah to the Torah; holding an additional study session in Torah and the Kabbalah; finishing a book or a tractate; taking time out for cheshbon hanefesh; and most of all, thanking God for giving us life, sustaining us, and bringing us to that moment.

Abraham Joshua Heschel said "We must not forget that it is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things." [Heschel, page 6] Our birthdays come but once a year. That moment belongs to us to recognize it as spiritually significant.

It allows us to turn inward, and to examine who we are and whether or not we have fulfilled our own potential. The day gives us the chance to thank and to bless God for our birth. All we need to do is to acknowledge its presence, view it as holy and celebrate that sacred moment in time.

Appendix A

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES IN THE ARTICLE AND NOTES

Afrakasta De'inya, Rabbi David Sperber: The book contains various Responsa by the author. Satu-mar, 1940.

Ahavat Yisrael, Menahem Mendal Schneerson, ed.: This is a small pamphlet, published by the Lubavich which deals with the love of fellow Jews and how to treat one another. Brooklyn, 1976.

Arugat Habosem, Moses Greenwald: This is a book of Responsa on Shulchan Aruch to Orach Hayyim and Yoreh De'ah. Budapest, 1938.

Arukh Hashalem, Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome, and edited by Dr. Alexander Kohut: This lexicon and dictionary of the words in the Talmudic literature appears more like an encyclopedia because it explains the passages. Compiled in eight volumes, arrangement follows the roots in alphabetical order. Lemberg, 1870.

Aseh Lecha Rav, Hayyim David Halevi: The book contains 540 Responsa focusing on national, community, personal, and family issues as well as dedications. It is written in seven volumes. Tel Aviv, 1976.

Bamidbar Rabbah: This aggadic Midrash to the book of Numbers contains homiletical material. Originally, it was divided into two individual sections, but by the 13th century, they had been copied together.

Bayit Hadash, Joel Sirkes: Known as the BaCH, this critical and comprehensive commentary to the Tur follows the law back to its Talmudic source and then progresses to the present where it explains the law's interpretation through the generations. Frankfurt, 1597.

Beit Ya'akov: There are many books with this title which makes it difficult to identify the one to which the author refers. It is possible to deduce from the references that the book comments on Shulchan Arukh.

Beit Yisrael, Rabbi Israel Meir Kahan: The book deals with the issue of ethics and morality. Petercoff, 1928.

Beit Yosef, Joseph Caro: As a commentary to the Turim, this book was the compilation of all the codes, arranged in a comprehensive order. Caro eventually made a more complete version when he compiled the Shulchan Arukh. He completed Beit Yosef in Safed, 1542.

Ben Ish Hai, HaRav Joseph Hayyim ben Elijah of Baghdad: The book contains laws, customs and practices which go hand in hand with the weekly Torah portions. It is published in two volumes: the first for the first year and the second for the next. Jerusalem, 1899.

Bereshit Rabbah: This midrash is seen as a watershed in Midrashic works because it is a classical Amoraic midrash with perfect developed literary constructions. The form demonstrates an exegetical style of the homiletical type. It is assumed that it reached its final form in the 6th century.

Bitte'on HaBaD: This Lubavich periodical focuses on the difficulties within the HaBaD community, 1954. Emanuel Shochet published the article called Ateret Tiferet Shevah in it.

Da'at Soferim: An eight volume work, this commentary to the Torah, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah and Chronicles includes the Targum, Rashi, Baal Ha-Turim, Ikar Siftai Hachakhamim as well as its own commentary from the B'nai Brak ultra-religious community. 1962.

Derekh Hashem, HaRav Moses Hayyim Luzzatto: This is a study of basic theological questions using philosophical language. Written from the Kabbalistic approach, it deals with the problems of creation, original sin, the ways of divine justice and discusses everyday problems of religious and ethical behavior. First published earlier, but reprinted in the edition cited here in 1977.

Divrei Chalomot, HaRav Zadok HaCohen of Lublin: This volume can best be described as a collection of the author's mind's wanderings. 1908.

Divrei Rivot, Yitzchak Bar Adrabi: The book contains 430 different Responsa. Salonika, 1582.

Divrei Torah, Hayyim Eleazar Shapira: This Hasidic anthology contains selections from Talmud, derashot, and stories as related by the Rishonim and Aharonim. Munkacs, 1929.

Divrei Yisrael, Israel Welcz: The work focuses on Responsa based on the Orach Hayyim of Shulchan Arukh. New York, 1931.

Dikdukei Soferim, Raphael Nathan Rabbinovicz: This two volume set contains variant readings of all tractates of Zeraim, Moed, and Nezikin, accompanied by explanatory notes in which readings found in other manuscripts or writings of early authorities and old printed editions are recorded. 1867.

Eliyahu Rabbah, Mordecai ben Abraham Jaffe: This extensive commentary on the Levush serves as a supplement to Orach Hayyim of the Shulchan Arukh. Both are published together. Sulzbach, 1757.

Ginzei Hayyim, Hayyim Palache: a dictionary of Jewish laws, 1871.

Ginzei Yosef, Joseph HaKohen Schwartz, ed.: The book contains discussions on the Talmud, concerns of the Posekim as well as a collection of many people's Responsa. Dova, 1930.

Chaf Hahayyim, Hayyim Palache: The book consists of ethical lessons and a collection of the rules of Orach Hayyim in the Shulchan Arukh. Salonika, 1859.

HaHefetz Hayyim Hayyav Upa'alo, Rabbi Moses Meir Yoshor: The three volumes tell the story of his life as told by the author who served as his personal secretary for ten years. Tel Aviv, 1959.

Halakhot Vahalikhot Bar Mitzvah, Rabbi Benjamin Adler: This collection contains laws concerning the Bar Mitzvah and all the issues which surround it. Jerusalem, 1974.

HaMe'assef: This weekly periodical is dedicated to the Torah and the wisdom of the great rabbis of our time in Israel. Jerusalem, 1897-1914.

HaPardes, edited by Samuel Aharon Pardes: Normally, this is a monthly rabbinical compilation, but this reference is to the jubilee volume. Chicago, 1927.

Hatam Sofer, Moses Sofer: This is a seven volume collection of his Responsa. 1855-1912.

Havat Yair, Jair Hayyim ben Moses Samson Bacharach: This monumental collection of 238 Responsa demonstrates the author's exhaustive knowledge of all branches of traditional Judaism as well as the extent of his knowledge of the general sciences. Frankfort, 1699.

HaTorah VehaMedinah: This collection serves as a platform for a clarification of the laws concerning the state of Israel. Tel Aviv, 1949.

Hazefirah: founded by Hayyim Selig Slonimski: This Hebrew paper appearing in Warwaw intermittently between 1862-1931 devoted itself to science and technology, but eventually broadened its scope to include other topics.

Hemdat Hachemdah: The article refers to this source as a midrash, but, I have been unable to determine the source to which he refers.

Hesed LeElofim, Eleazar Poupo: The book focuses on the Halakhic novellae Orach Hayyim in the Shulchan Arukh, Salonika, 1841.

Hesed LeAvraham, Rabbi A. Tzvi Brodna: This Responsa with novella contains the laws in the Bavli and the Jerushalmi as well as special siyyum drashot. Jerusalem, 1928.

Ibn Ezra, Abraham ben Meir: This commentary to the Torah focuses on the grammatical structure of the Hebrew. It is said to have been written in Lucca in 1145.

Iggeret HaRe'ayah, Abraham Isaac Kook: This three volume set contains his writings. 1962-65.

Kesef Mishneh, Joseph Caro: Written as a commentary to a part of the Mishneh Torah, and compliments the Maggid Mishnah, it gives the sources which Maimonides omitted and attempts to explain the sources. Venice, 1574-75.

Ketav Sofer, Abraham Samuel Benjamin Wolf Sofer: This is Responsa and expositions of the Torah by the Ketav Sofer, Abraham Samuel Benjamin Wolf Sofer. 1873-1938.

Kevod Hakhamim LeKhavod Rabbi Menachem Schneersohn: Novellae of the Torah and Halakhic matters were collected for this volume honoring Schneersohn's 80th birthday. Brooklyn, 1982.

Kinyan Torah, Horowitz, Abraham David: This is a book of Responsa. Straussberg, 1976.

Kitvei haRamban, edited by Charles B. Chavel: This two volume set contains the collection of the RaMBaN's work. New York, 1958

Kol HaHayyim, Hayyim Palache: This 35 page book deals with longevity and instructs the reader to carry the book with him (or her?) once the 70th year is reached. 1860.

Kol Mevasser: This first Yiddish weekly in Odessa addressed the people and their concerns in the 19th century.

Kol Sofer, Hayyim ben Mordecai Ephraim Fischel: This is a book of Responsa. 1881-82.

Korban HaEdah, David ben Rabi Naphtali Hirsch Fraenkel: This is a commentary to the Yerushalmi which follows Rashi's commentary to the Babylonian Talmud and is a running commentary aimed at elucidating the plain meaning of the text. Dessau, 1743.

Lechem Mishneh, Abraham ben Moses di Botton: This commentary to the Mishneh Torah refers to sources and reconciles decisions in various codes of earlier Rabbinic literature. Venice, 1609.

Leket Yosher, Joseph ben Moses: This book consists of Israel Isserlein's statements, customs and daily conduct as well as his Responsa and halakhic decisions as seen and experienced by his student, Joseph ben Moses. 1903.

Likkutei Torah, HaRav Schnuer Zalman: This book presents interpretation of the ways of the Hasidim. Zhitomir, 1848.

Likkutei Sichot, Menahem Mendel Schneersohn of Lubavich: A book which provides the Torah portions for holidays and special Lubavitsch celebrations. Tel Aviv, 1966.

Luach Hayom Yom: I could find no book with this title.

Ma'aseh Rav: Hayyim David Hazzan: also not clear

Magen Avraham, Abraham Abele ben Hayyim HaLevi Gombiner: The purpose of this commentary to Orach Hayyim of the Shulchan Arukh was to reach a compromise between the decisions of Caro and the glosses of Isserles. Dyhernfurth, 1692.

Machazit HaShekel, Samuel Ben Nathan HaLevi Kolin: A supercommentary to Magen Avraham, it gives actual wording of sources to which Gombiner alludes or which he abbreviates. Vienna, 1807-8.

Mekor Hesed, Reuven Margulies: This is a gloss to Sefer Hasidim which was first published in 1924.

Mekor Hayyim: Hayyim David Halevi: This book of Responsa deals with the subject of religion and state as well as topics relating to the post Six Day War era. Tel Aviv, 1967.

Mareh HaPanim, Moses ben Simeon Margoliot: This commentary in the Yerushalmi gives parallel passages in the Bavli and attempts to explain the differences. First published with Talmud text in Zhitomir, 1860-7.

Metzudat David, David Altschuler: This easy to read commentary on Prophets and the Hagiographa is based on earlier commentators. Published by his son, Jehiel Hillel

in Berlin, 1770.

Migdal Oz, Moses Hayyim Luzzatto: Composed in the form of a contemporary Italian pastoral drama with strong Jewish overtones, the piece could be seen as a Kabbalistic allegory. 1827.

Minhagei Hatam Sofer, HaRav Yehuda Leib: The book is a discussion on some of the customs of the Hatam Sofer. Pressburg, 1930.

Mishat Aharon, Aharon Kotna: This is a commentary to Masechet Niddah. 1901

Nefesh Hayyah, Reuven Margulies: This is a commentary on Orach Hayyim, Shulchan Arukh, 1954.

Otzar Derashot, Judah David Eisenstein, ed.: This anthology contains 200 Hebrew sermons and lectures by medieval and modern authors on festivals and various occasions. New York, 1919.

Or HaMe'ir, Reuven Margulies: This is a study of Hasidic lore. 1926.

Orot Hekdesh, Abraham Isaac Kook: The author collected a selection of articles by Rabbi David HaKohen, Jerusalem, 1938.

Penei Moshe, Moses ben Simeon Margoliot: This is a commentary to Berakhot and Peah, as well as Nashim and Nizikin in the Jerushalmi. First published with the Talmud text in Zhitomir 1860-7.

Perush Hirsch, Samson Raphael Hirsch: Written in German and translated by Jacob Breur in 1948, this Torah commentary reflects the traditional Jewish perspective.

Pirkei deRav Kahana: This homiletical, Amoraic Midrash is based only on the biblical and prophetic readings of special Sabbaths and festivals. Written in the sixth century

Pesikta Rabbati: This composite of 50 holiday homilies was redacted in the sixth to seventh century right before the advent of Islam.

Pitcha Zuta, Pinkchas Horowitz: This collection appears to be explanations of the laws of concerning handwashing which were gathered from a variety of sources. Tel Aviv, 1968.

Pitchei Teshuvah, Zevi Hirsch Eisenstadt: As a supercommentary to Yoreh Deah, Hoshen Mishpat, and Even HaEzer, it is a collection of Halakhic material scattered throughout the Responsa literature which are related to

relevant laws in the Shulchan Arukh. It also gives the essence of the argument.

Prei Megadim, Joseph ben Meir Teomim: This is an explanation of various commentaries to Orach Hayyim of the Shulchan Arukh. 1785.

RaBaD, Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquieres: He represents the severest critic of the Mishneh Torah because he noted all places where he disagreed with the decisions based on the omission of references and of certain details.

ReDaK, David Kimchi: This Torah commentary stresses scientific analysis and the de-emphasis of homiletical digression and reflects the use of methodology of Ibn Ezra.

ReMA, Moses Isserles: This gloss of the Shulchan Arukh introduced explanations, supplements, additions, and customs of the Ashkenazi community which were ignored by Caro, thus, making the Shulchan Arukh accessible to both communities. It is also called Mappah or Haggahot. Written in the early eighteenth century.

RaSHI, Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak: The Torah commentary contains explanations derived from the Talmud and Midrash and has translations of difficult words into medieval French. The Talmud commentary serves as an indispensable guide for understanding the text since it lays out the discussion in a lucid manner. Written in the twelfth century.

Sekhel Tov, Rabbenu Menahum Bar Shlomo: This anthology of aggadic and halakhic midrashim is arranged according to the weekly parashah of Genesis and Exodus. Linguistic topics and Hebrew grammar constitute the underlying basis of the work. 1139.

Samach Nefesh, Shalom Moses ben Hayyim Abraham Gagin: This book deals with the laws of blessings, 1903.

Sefer HaArachim of HaBaD: This is from an anthology of the Hasidic collection which deals with values. Brooklyn, 1971.

Sefer HaMinhagim of HaBaD: The writings and oral teachings of HaBaD leaders are compiled in this book. Brooklyn, 1966.

Shaarei Teshuvah, Begun by Hayyim Mordecai Margolioth and completed by his brother Ephraim Zalman, the book is a collection of halakhic material relevant to the laws of Orach Hayyim in the Shulchan Arukh. Dubnow, 1820.

Shaarei Zohar, Reuven Margalies: This serves as an explanation of the perspective of the Zohar in the halachah and aggadah in comparison to the words of the sages from the

Talmud and the Midrash. Jerusalem, 1956.

Shanah Beshanah, Aaron Halevi Pichenik, ed.: This periodical published in Jerusalem, 1976, contains the article by Tuvia Parscel in it called "Sages of Israel, Their Celebrations and Birthdays".

Sedei Hemed, Rabbi Hayyim Hezekiah Medini: This halakhic encyclopedia contains rules of talmudic and halakhic methodology; an alphabetical list of various laws and responsa, as well as bibliographical research and articles on the lives of Jewish scholars. It also contains the author's ethical will. Warsaw, 1891-1912.

Shiyyurei Berakhah, haRav Hayyim Joseph David Azulai: The book serves to compliment Hayyim Benveniste's, Keneset ha-Gedolah with citations from later halakhic works and from numerous manuscripts. 1171-76.

Shemot Rabbah: This is an exegetical and homiletical Midrash from the 10th-11th century.

Shoshanim LeDavid, HaRav David Pardo: This commentary of the Mishnah employs sharp language and criticizes contemporary scholars. The second part, written a little later, uses softer language. Venice, 1752.

Sifrei: The halakhic midrash to Numbers and Deuteronomy is exegetical in style and contains some aggadah.

Tanhuma, attributed to Rabbi Tanhuma: This Yelammedanu type midrash of the middle period (775-900) is homiletical in style and is based on the triennial cycle.

Terumat HaDeshem, Israel ben Pethahiah Isserlein: In 354 sections, problems are presented in order to clarify and to give practical halakhic rulings. The decisions are based on Talmud and German scholars of the time. Venice 1519.

Teshuvah MeAhavah, Eleazar ben David Fleckeles: This collection of 450 responsa follows the order of the Shulchan Arukh. Fleckeles added his own comments and supplements. Prague, 1809-21.

Tevu'ot haSadeh, Rabbi Eliezar Deutsch: Divided into six parts, it is a series of novellae on Talmudic themes with Responsa appended to each part. Lemberg, 1892-1904.

Torat Moshe, Moshe Sofer: This book contains explanations and drashot on the Torah. Pressburg, 1879.

Torah Shelemah, Menahem Kasher: This encyclopedia of Talmud and midrash, published and in manuscript, is of Oral law which apply to a Scriptural verse. It also has notes,

expositions, and supplements. Twenty three volumes from "Bereshit" to "Ki Tissa" have been published from 1927-1967.

Tosofot: This is a critical analysis of Talmud text and RaSHI's commentary by descendants of France and Germany schools in the 12th-14th century.

Yad Ephraim, Ephraim Fishel Weinberger: This is commentary to Orach Hayyim of Shulchan Arukh.

Yagdil Torah: This periodical devoted to religious and halakhic subjects contains Responsa and explanations concerning the Shulchan Arukh. 1981.

Yalkut Shemoni, attributed to Simeon haDarshan: This comprehensive midrashic anthology follows the order of the Biblical verses and dates to the 13th century.

Yefei LeLev, Rachmim Yitzchak Palache: This book contains novellae to Orach Hayyim of the Shulchan Arukh. Azmir, 1872.

Yefei Toar, HaRav Shmuel Yefei haAshkenazi: This explanation of Midrash Rabbah on Genesis and Exodus was first published in Venice, 1577.

Yishrei Lev, HaRav Yaakov ben Rabbi Ephraim Avraham Hehasid: Issues concerning the matters of the soul to reward and punishment make up the content of this book. Vienna, 1805.

The bibliographic and biographical material has been taken from:

Encyclopaedia Judaica, Cecil Roth, ed. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971

Bet Eked Sefarim, Ch. B. Friedberg. Israel: Bet Eked, 1950

Appendix B

LIST OF POST TALMUDIC RABBINIC COMMENTARIES CITED

Abraham ben David of Posquieres: 1125-1198; Known as the RaBaD, Abraham served as the talmudic authority in Provence. Born in Narbonne, he became well known for his commentary on the Mishneh Torah. His writing reflects his concern for detail and the need to trace references back to their source. His scholarship was widely known in all circles of the Jewish community.

Abraham ben Meir: 1093-1167; Known Ibn Ezra, he was a commentator of Torah.

Abraham ben Moses di Botton: As rabbi of Salonika in the 16th century, Abraham served as one of the triumvirate elected for life on the supreme council governing the Jews of Salonika.

Altschuler, David: Known as Metzudat David, Altschuler lived during the 18th century in Jawrow, Galacia. As a leading Bible exegete, he wanted to promote Bible study and so he dedicated himself to this task. His son Jehiel Hillel continued his work.

Azulai, Hayyim Joseph David: Known as the HIDA, he lived from 1724 to 1806. As a halakhist, kabbalist, emissary, and bibliographer, he attained early reknown in Jewish studies and the Jews of the Ottoman Empire and Italy regarded him as a leading scholar of his generation. He became well-known through his travels as emissary of Hebron and gained many admirers for his scholarship, wealth of knowledge and his striking appearance.

Baal Shem Tov whose real name was Israel ben Eliezer lived around 1700 to 1760. His fame rests on the fact that he founded modern Hasidism. Through oral traditions handed down by his pupils the BeSHT became the first teacher and exemplary saint of the movement. Hasidic tradition has it that he revealed himself as a healer and leader on his 36th birthday and gained a great following.

Bacharach, Jair Hayyim ben Moses Samson: He lived from 1638 to 1702. As a German talmudic scholar with extensive knowledge of general sciences, Bacharach had a profound

knowledge of Talmud and commentaries. As a result of his teaching and lecturing, he moved around a great deal.

Deutsch, Eliezer Hayyim ben Abraham: He lived from 1850 to 1916. In 1897, he was appointed rabbi of Bonyhad where he founded and headed a large yeshivah. Throughout his lifetime and the work that he did, he was known as a leader of Hungarian Orthodoxy.

Edels, Samuel Eliezer Ben Juda Ha-Levi: 1555-1631. Known as MaHaRSHA, he was a foremost Talmudic scholar. Born in Cracow, he later served in a rabbinical position in a number of cities including Chelm and Lublin. His generation and thereafter show high esteem for him.

Eisenstadt, Abraham Zevi Hirsch Ben Jacob: 1813-1868; A halakhic authority who was born in Bialystok, he served as rabbi of Berestovitsa and Utina. There, he took upon himself the task of digesting all halakhic material found in the Responsa and putting it in Pitchei Teshuvah.

Eisenstein, Judah David: 1854-1956; Born in Poland, he emigrated to the United States and became a successful coat manufacturer and founded the first Hebrew society. In addition to his vocation, Eisenstein was also an encyclopedist, anthologist and author and is most famous for his anthologies on all sorts of rabbinic areas.

Fleckeles, Eleazar Ben David: 1754-1826; Born in Prague, he eventually served as rabbi on its Bet Din and headed a large yeshivah there. In his lifetime, he headed opposition to the Frankists and greatly opposed the Haskalah.

Gagin, Shalom Moses Ben Hayyim Abraham: died 1883; A talmudist and emissary of Erez Israel, Gagin was a member of Kabbalist circle of scholars at the Yeshivah, "Bet El" in Jerusalem. The identifying trait of his works is that he includes his name S.M.H. in the title.

Gombiner, Abraham Abele Ben Hayyim ha-Levi: 1637-1683; He was born in Gombin and was eventually appointed head of the yeshivah and dayyan of the bet din in Kalisz. His fame rests on his ability to write commentary, particularly, the Magen Avraham, but he published others which are well known also.

Halevi, Hayyim David: 1924-: Rabbi of Rishon le-Zion who wrote Aseh Lecha Rav among others.

Hazzan, Hayyim: died 1712; He was a rabbi of Smyrna who served as a rabbi in Egypt and later served as emissary from Jerusalem to different countries.

Hildesheimer, Azriel (Israel), the elder: 1820-1899; In

1851, he was appointed rabbi of the Austro-Hungarian community of Eisenstadt where he established a yeshivah which also included secular topics. He also founded a rabbinical seminary for the whole of Hungary. As a leader in the Orthodox community, he tried to recognize modernity in some way, but many opposed any compromise. He did oppose Reform Judaism as a force undermining Judaism, but did believe that all groups needed to cooperate in the battle against anti-semitism.

Hirsch, Samson Ben Raphael: 1808-1888; Hirsch was one of the foremost exponent of Orthodoxy in Germany, whose leadership and scholarship led the community into modernity. He argued against Reform, but did not want a schism. His focus layed on wanting to adopt a practical attitude to the problems which confronted German Jewry.

Isserlein, Israel: 1390-1460; Born in Regensburg, Isserlein is known as the foremost rabbi in 15th century Germany. In 1445, he went to Wiener-Neustadt and was appointed rabbi and Av Bet Din of the city and neighborhood, and as a result the city became known because of his scholarship. His works and life reflect the influence of Sefer Hasidim, for he lived a life of piety and ascetism. He emphasized restoring the study of Talmud because too many were relying on decision of Poskim.

Isserles, Moses: 1525-1572; He was a Polish rabbi, codifier, and great halakhic authority of Polish Jewry and writer of the Ashkenazi glosses to Caro's Shulchan Arukh.

Jacob Ben Asher: 1270-1340; Known as Ba'al haTurim, Jacob Ben Asher opened a new era in halakhic codification with his Arba'ah Turim. His authority spans time and place and he formed a structure for looking at halakhah which stands as eternal.

Joseph Ben Moses: 1423-1490, Born in Hoechstaedt, Bavaria, Joseph Ben Moses became a talmudist and author. His principle teacher and influence was Israel Isserlein under whom he studied for ten years. He wrote Leket Yosher based on his teacher's statements and laws.

Joseph Hayyim ben Eliyahu al-Hakam: 1834-1909; author of Ben Ish Hai, a book of customs arranged according to the weekly sedra.

Kahan, Israel Meir: 1838-1933; He wrote Beit Yisrael, a modern book of musar.

Kasher, Menahem: Born in Warsaw in 1895, he became rabbi and Halakhist and was distinguished for his research in talmudic and rabbinic literature. Abraham Bornstein influenced his method. In 1925, he went to Israel as emissary of Abraham

Mordecai Alter. On Alter's behalf, he founded the yeshivah, Sefat Emet in Jerusalem. Kasher, himself, never held an official appointment, but his reputation stemmed from his literary work.

Kimchi, David: 1160-1235; Known as the RaDaK, Kimchi was a grammarian and exegete of Narbonne, Provence. He wrote a commentary to Torah. As a strong defender of Maimonides, he travelled to different places to gain support during the Maimonidean controversy.

Kolin, Samuel Ben Nathan ha-Levi: 1720-1806; Rabbi and posek, and born in Kolin, Bohemia, he ran a yeshivah for 60 years.

Kook, Abraham Isaac: 1865-1935; Kook served as the first chief of Ashkenazi rabbi of Israel. In 1924, he founded Mercaz haRav, the yeshivah in Jerusalem.

Kook, Tzvi Yehuda Kook: Born in Zimel, Kovno region, he was the only son of Abraham Isaac Kook. After his father's death, he took over the Yeshivah and succeeded him as its head. He published many articles which dealt with halakhic matters. He also edited and published much of his father's writings.

Luria, Isaac Ben Solomon: 1535-1572; Referred to as Ha-Ari, Luria was a Kabbalist. In his work, he concentrated on the Zohar and the works of the earlier kabbalists. Although he grew up in Egypt he ended up in Safed where he gathered around him an academy whose members engaged in exoteric and esoteric studies. Of all the areas of Kabbalah, Luria pioneered its theoretical aspect.

Luzzatto, Moses Hayyim: 1707-1746; A kabbalist and writer of ethical works and Hebrew poetry, Luzzatto believed that he "heard" a maggid's voice instructing him which he tried to convey to others. He was eventually forced publically to give up such a notion. His general works reflect this experience and describe central Kabbalistic ideas while emphasizing the importance of kabbalah for attaining full religious life.

Margolies, Reuven: 1889-1971, Born in Lvov, this rabbinic scholar and author qualified as a rabbi, but, remained in business as a book seller. His works focus on Hasidism, Kabbalah, and Halakhah.

Margoliot, Simeon: died in 1781; Born in town near Kovno, Lithuania, he served as rabbi in several communities in the Samagita region of Lithuania. Margoliot's fame rests on his commentaries to the Jerusalem Talmud.

Margolioth, Hayyim Mordecai: Not much is known about him

except that we can date him to the same time as Eisenstadt which is to say, because Eisenstadt knew of his work on Orach Hayyim.

Medini, Hayyim Hezekiah ben Raphael Elijah: 1832-1904; Born in Jerusalem, Medini attracted many disciples because of his scholarship and saintliness. He served as rabbi to a community in the Crimean peninsula. In addition to his teaching, Medini is known for his ardent feelings toward Zionism.

Menahum Bar Shlomo: first half of the 12th century; His country of origin is unknown. He uses Italian in his writings, but it is not clear whether or not he came from there. His fame rests on his Sekhel Tov.

Mohilever, Samuel: 1824-1898; As a rabbi, a member of Hovevei Zion in Russia, and a founder of religious Zionism, Mohilever strongly supported the philanthropic efforts to build settlements in Erez Israel and devoted much of his life to this cause. He had many short works including responsa, talmudic and rabbinical novellae, homilies, and scholarly works.

Moses Ben Nahman: known as the RaMBaN, was a Spanish rabbi and scholar. Born in Gerona, Catalonia, he was one of the leading authors of Talmudic literature in the Middle Ages. Throughout the Maimonidean controversy, the RaMBaN attempted to find a compromise. His commentary was the first to contain references to the Kabbalah.

Nathan Ben Yehiel of Rome: 1020-1106; Not much is known about this man except that he was a linguist who wrote the encyclopedia of Talmudic terms called the Arukh.

Palache, Hayyim: 1788-1869; Born in Smyrna, Palache held many appointments such as the Av bet din, marbiz Torah and hakham bashi of Izmir. By the time he held the latter title, the community did not want him to run it which brought great controversy. His supporter prevailed, but his death prevented him from instituting the administrative procedures over the Izmir community. Many of his works were burned and a great number were not published.

Palache, Rachamin Yitzchak: died in 1907; author of Yefei Lelev, a book of novellae to Orach Hayyim.

Pardo, haRav David Samuel ben Jacob: 1718-1790, Born in Venice, Pardo was an author of rabbinical commentaries and Responsa and founded a rabbinic dynasty in Sarajero area. After serving as rabbi in a few cities, he finally settled in Jerusalem and served as head of a Yeshivah there.

Rabbinovicz, Raphael Nathan Nata: 1835-1888; Born in

Kovno, this talmudic scholar's fame rests on his publishing Dikdukei Soferim.

Rapoport, Solomon Judah Leib: 1790-1867; Born in Lemberg, Galicia, Rapoport became a rabbi and pioneer of Haskalah. He began his studies with a traditional education, but eventually mastered secular subjects as well. His great intellect allowed him to write on Jewish subjects on all kinds of issues. He strongly opposed the decisions of the Rabbinical Conferences of the German Reform rabbis because of their devisive character, but, insisted on including them in order to preserve the character of Judaism.

Schneersohn, Menahem Mendel: 1789-1866; A grandson of Shneur Zalman, he became leader of HaBaD after his father-in-law's death. His fine Torah scholarship brought him much fame and noteriety. His connection to the Hasidim led him to fight against the haskalah.

Schneersohn, Menahem Mendel: born in 1902; In 1950, he became the seventh successive leader of Lubavich Hasidim. Under his direction, the influence of Lubavich spread far and wide. He started the Lubavich Youth Organization and encouraged people to go out and bring Jews into Orthodoxy. He did not belong to any political or rabbinical organization, but he was often consulted for his opinion.

Schwartz, Joseph Ha-Kohen: 1877-1944, A Hungarian rabbi and author, he was born in Felsoviso, Hungary, and was a pupil of Jacob Tennenbaum. For 20 years, he edited the periodical, Va'Yelakket Yosef in Bonyhad. In 1924, he moved to Oradea and served as its rabbi.

Shapira, Elijah ben Benjamin Wolf: 1660-1712; Rabbi, preacher, and halakhist, he studied under his grandfather, Aaron Simeon Shapira, and Abraham Abele Gombiner. Shapira served as rabbi in Kolin, Bohemia, but, eventually ended up as head of the Yeshivah in Prague.

Shapira, Hayyim Eleazar: 1872-1937; The rabbi of Munkacs from 1913 on, Shapira was a Hasidic zaddik who combined talmudic dialectics with the ability to reach halakhic decisions. He opposed all innovation as well as Zionism. He is a descendant of Munkacs dynasty.

Shlomo ben Yitzchak: 1040-1105; Known as RaSHI, he lived and taught in Troyes, France where he wrote a commentary to the Torah as well as the Talmud. The Tosafists are descendents of his school of thought.

Simeon HaDarshan: lived in 13th century; Nothing is really known about him except from a reference which states "Rabbenu Simeon, chief of the preachers of Frankfurt".

Sirkes, Joel: 1561-1640; Born in Lublin, he is said to be one of the greatest talmudic scholars of Poland. He was a rabbi of a number of communities, and his chief work is Bayit Hadash.

Slonimski, Hayyim Selig: 1810-1904; Born in Bialystok, Slonimski was a Hebrew popular science writer and editor. He wrote many books on science, particularly topics associated with astronomical subjects and founded the paper HaZefirah.

Sofer, Abraham Samuel Benjamin Wolf: 1815-1871; Known as the Ketav Sofer, he was the oldest son of Moses Sofer and succeeded his father as rabbi and Rosh Yeshivah in Pressburg. He was an active organizer of Hungarian orthodoxy.

Sofer, Hayyim Ben Mordecai Ephraim Fischel: 1821-1886; Hungarian rabbi and outstanding pupil of Hatam Sofer in Pressburg where he served as rabbi in Hungary. He strongly supported extreme orthodoxy and was a central figure in it.

Sofer, Moses: 1762-1839; Known as the HaTam Sofer, he was a rabbi and halakhic authority. As a leader in the Orthodox community, he declared total war on modernity and encouraged complete submission to the rules of the Shulchan Arukh. He is famous for his saying, "Hadash Asur min haTorah" which illustrated his staunch opposition to the Haskalah.

Sofer, Solomon: 1853-1930, youngest son of the Katav Sofer, distinguished preacher and writer, served as rabbi of Bereszasz until his death.

Sperber, Rabbi David: Wrote Afrakasta De'inya which contains various Responsa by the author.

Teomim, Joseph ben Meir: 1727-1793; Wrote Prei Megadim, which explains various commentary to Orach Hayyim.

Weinberger, Ephraim Fishel: Weinberger was one of the first chief rabbis of Tel Aviv-Jaffo. Prior to his Aliyah, he served as Rabbi and Av Bet Din in Zotzburg, Poland.

Welcz, Izrael: wrote Divrei Yisrael, a book of Responsa.

Yosher, Moses M.: 1896-1978; Born in Komorow, Yosher was an enthusiastic student of the Hefetz Hayyim and wrote of his experiences with the master in his book. He eventually ended up in New York where he served a congregation for 37 years.

Zadok HaKohen of Lublin: 1823-1900; A hasidic zaddik who was born in Kreuzburg, Courland, he received halakhic education from Lithuanian rabbis but became a Tzaddik after

meeting with rabbis from Poland on some matter. He became a disciple of Mordecai Joseph Leines and had a special bent for historiosophy. His works reflected both his halakhic understanding and a kabbalistic and mystical dimension.

Zalman, Shneur: 1745-1813; Zalman is known as the founder of HaBaD Hasidism. He was born in Liozna, Belorussia and in 1764, decided he wanted to learn about Hasidism and became part of the inner circle of Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezhirech. A great Talmud scholar and kabbalist, he had a wide range of knowledge and was a mystic which is reflected in his work.

נריה מ. גוטל
מרכז הרב, ירושלים

חגיגת יום הולדת בישראל*

(ביחוד יום הולדת השבעים)

ימי שנותינו בהם שבעים שנה (תהלים צ' י').
קיומא דנפשאן ברזא דשבעין (זוהר תצוה, קפ"ה ב').
בן שבעים לשיבה (אבות סוף פ"ה).
מילת שיבה מצינו בקרא על הרוב בצדיקים שהגיעו לכלל
שנותיהם — שבעים שנה (מהרש"א מו"ק כ"ח ב').

פתח־דבר

הפולמוס סביב ציון וחגיגת "יום ההולדת" אינו חדש. תחילתו של
הפולמוס נעוץ בראשית ימי ההשכלה, לכל השלכותיה ותופעותיה, כאשר
כחלק מהמאבק נגדה נאמרו ונכתבו דברים גם נגד אירוע זה. לפיכך
נראה היה לכאורה להסיק שלילת תופעת חגיגה זו, כפי שודאי מן הראוי
לשלול מרבית התופעות ה"מחודשות" שנבעו מן ה"השכלה".

ברם, למטבע זו פן שני. הפולמוס אמנם נפתח בתקופה זו, אולם
דוקא הפולמוס, הוה אומר, תופעת השלילה אכן התחדשה באותה תקופה
— ברם תופעת החיוב קדומה היתה! ואף אם כחלק מהלחימה והמאבק הכללי
בתופעות ה"השכלה" לחמו וגינו חגיגה זו — ולחימה זו, לשעתה וזמנה,
אפשר שמוצדקת היתה — עדיין מן הראוי לברר מעיקרא דמילתא היכי
הוה; כיצד קדמונינו — החל מימות המלכים ועד חותמי התלמוד והפוסקים
שבתרייהו, כיצד הם התייחסו ליום לידת האדם. והיה אם יתברר שנוהג
קדום הוא זה, והוא נוהג רצוי וחיובי, חלילה אין לשוללו לאחר שגזירת
השעה בטלה.

לבירור זה — ובהתמקדות ייחודית בחגיגת מלאת שבעים שנה —
מוקדש מאמר זה.

בירור נימוקם וטעמם של המתנגדים לחגיגת ימי הולדת בישראל

א. הגישה השוללת מבוססת על שני טעמים מרכזיים, הקשורים למעשה

* מוגש לסבתי במלאת לה שבעים.

א. למשמעות המונח והמילה (המתייחסת לפעולה, לאם, ולא לנולד) דאה בפירושי
של רש"ר הירש עה"ת — וישב מ' כ' — שהוא לשון שבת, לבל נתייחס לעת היותו
תינוק — מתייחסים לאמו.

ב. ע"י זוהר ח"א מקץ, ר"ד א'!

אחד בשני, וביסודם — שורשם אחד. ראשית ותחילה טענו "... יום הולדת אצל בני לא שמענו מרבתינו ואבותינו הקדושים זי"ע לעשות כן יום שמחות ביום תולדותם", ומכיון שלא שמענו ולא נהגו — ודאי דברים בגו, וראיה מוכחת היא שהדבר שלילי ואין לחדשו. הוסיפו ואמרו — לא רק "מרבתינו ואבותינו הקדושים" לא שמענוהו, גם במקרא כידוע לא נזכר אלא "יום הולדת את פרעה" (וישב מ' כ'). ואף בש"ס הן ירושלמי והן בבלי לא נזכר אלא יום גנוסיא ויום הלידה של אוה"ע, החשובים לדינא כ"ימי אידם". נמצא ש"במקורות ישראל לא מצאנו בשום מקום חגיגת יום הולדת", ואם לא הוזכר ודאי

(1) כן כתב ר' חיים אלעזר שפירא (האדמו"ר ממונקאטש, בעמח"ס "מנחת אלעזר" ועוד) בספרו "דברי תורה" חלק ה' אות פ"ח, כחלק מדרוש שדרש בביהכ"נ "לרצון הממשלה יר"ה ליום הולדת שר הרעפובליק" הנודע למשגב בכל העולם במדת טובו וישרתו" (ובהמשך דבריו שם מבואר שהיה זה לכבוד חגיגות השבעים לאותו שליט). ולהלן אותיות ביג יבואר טעם החלוק בין אוה"ע — אצלם חיובי לחוג ימי הולדתם — לבין ישראל — אצלם החגיגה שלילית. וכן בשו"ת "ערוגת הבשם" (או"ח ח"ב סי' רט"ו) כתב ר' משה גרינוואלד תשובה חריפה ביותר לשלילת חגי יובל וימי הולדת הן משום שלא נשמע כזאת והן משום חוקות העמים ומשפט משכילי הזמן המכונים נעאלאגען, והוסיף שנ"ל שהעושה חג יובל שבעים שנה וכיו"ב "בודקין אחריו שמא מקטני אמנה הוא" דהלא בגיל זה קרב הוא ליום בוא עת פקודתו "ולשמחה מה זו עושה" ואינו אלא מן המתמיהים.

עוד החרה החזיק אחריו בשו"ת קנין תורה בהלכת ח"ג ריש סי' כ"א, כאשר אף הוא טוען שלא חוינן לרבנן קשישאי שעבדו הכי (ציין למעשי בעל אהבת ישראל ובעל פתחא זוטא — עיי"ש) ואדרבא זהו יום תשובה והתבודדות "ואין לך יפה מן הצניעות".

(2) ראה משנה פ"ק דע"ז "לפני אידיהן של עובדי כוכבים שלשה ימים אסור לשאת ולתת עמהם וכו'". ואלו אידיהן של עובדי כוכבים ... יום גנוסיא של מלכיהם ויום הלידה ויום המיתה — בו נחלקו ר"מ וחכמים, עיי"ש. ובדש"י ע"ז ח' א' "ויום הלידה — של מלך עושין כל בני מלכותו יום איד משנה לשנה ומקריבין זבחים". ובגמ' שם י' א' פלפלו במהות יום גנוסיא, ולבסוף קבעו שיום גנוסיא הוא יום עמידתו למלוכה, ו"יום הלידה" יום נפרד ושונה הוא. אמנם הירושלמי — שם פ"ק ה"ב — משוה ומזהה יום גנוסיא עם יום הלידה, והיום הולדת את פרעה" — יום גנוסיא הוא ! (והחילוק הוא בין צבור ליחיד — עיי"ש ובפנ"מ, אמנם ר' "מראה הפנים" שם הנוטה להשוות התלמודים. ברם מירושלמי ר"ה פ"ק ה"ח מוכח לא כוותיה, ויום הגנוסיא — לירושלמי — יום הלידה הוא. ועי' קה"ע שם, ודברי פנ"מ התם צ"ב). עו"ר תו"ש וישב פ"מ אות מ"ט.

לאור זאת צ"ע וביאור שיטת רמב"ם — הל' עכו"ם פ"ט ה"ב הסובר שיום הכינוס להעמיד מלך הוא יום חגם — גנוסיא — והוא חד פעמי, ואילו יום הולדת לא חשיב "יום איד" (אם כי אסור — יום אחד בלבד, עיי"ש) ולא ציין יום לידה אף למלך ! ועיי"ש תמיהת ראב"ד וכס"מ ולח"מ שם לעומת "בית יעקב" שם. ואכמ"ל.

(3) לשון הרח"ד הלוי בשו"ת עשה לך רב ח"ד סי' כ"ו [אמנם דעתו הוא — לצדד בקיום חגיגה זו, עיי"ש. ברם למתבאר להלן שיש מקורות לחגיגת יום ההולדת גם אצל ישראל, תמוה שלא דחה טענה זו מכל וכל].

(4) לא רק שלא הוזכר, דרשנים תלו שלילת חגיגה זו במאמרו של קהלת

טעמו בצידו ונימוקם עמם, ואין לנהגו. יתירה מזו, מכיון וסברו שלא נמצא זכרו אלא כלפי אוה"ע, ובישראל לא שמענותו, הסיפו וחשו מ"חוקת הגוי". ואכן משום כך יסופר על ר' ישראל מרוזין שגער בא"תו על שערכה סעודה לכבוד יום הולדתו.

ב. ברם גישה זו השוללת ימי הולדת בישראל אף היא אינה יכולה להתעלם ממצאות ימי הולדת ומשמעות תוקפם אצל אוה"ע. שהרי בכ"כ מקומות ממקורותינו נזכרים ימי הולדת בהקשר לאוה"ע, ובכ"כ השפעות ומשמעויות. לבד מהנזכר לעיל כמאורע הסטורי אצל פרעה — הנה במדרש "חמאת החמדה" נאמר על התוה "... ועד עתה זה המנהג אצל מלכי גוג שאנחנו בעברותם, גם שאר האומות הנלוים עליהם גם השרים הגדולים, עושים יום הולדם סעודה גדולה; מפורש כאן כנוהג רגיל באומות ובמלכיהם! ולבד מהנזכר לעיל (הערה 2) מירושלמי ובבלי — נהגו היונים והרומיים לחוג יום הולדת המלך הן בעודו בחיים והן אחר מותו. ודאי לא בכדי נהגו כן ושורש אמיתי לכך; הלכך צריך להבין ולבאר מדוע באוה"ע יש משמעות ליום זה ויש סיבה נכונה ומובנה לחוגו — ולא כן בישראל. לשיטתם.

יתירה מזו, ממאמר מפורש בירושלמי — ר"ה פ"ג ה"ח — מוכח שיש תועלת והשפעה ליום הולדת האדם על תיפקודו מעשיו והצלחותיו באותו תאריך מידי שנה בשנה. הלוא כך שנינו בענינו של עמלק ומלחמתו במדבר עם ישראל: "ריב"ל אמר עמלק כושפן היה, מה היה עושה, היה מעמיד בני

"טוב שם משמן טוב ויום המות מיום הולדו" — העדפת השם טוב ביום המות בו כבר השלים מעשהו, מיום הלידה "שלא נשלם עדיין ולפעמים יתקלקל" (ראה "אוצר דרשות" וכן ב"דברי תורה" דלעיל. ע"ר להלן הערה 57 בסופה).

(5) חש לענין זה הרב משה חעלץ בתשובתו הנדפסת בשו"ת "דברי ישראל" (של אביו — הרב ישראל חעלץ) ח"ב — לקוטי תשובות סי' י"ח (עמ' קעה"ו), ואכן אסר לחוג ימי הולדת (וכן חגיגות בת"מ צוה, עיי"ש). אמנם חשש זה תליא בפלוגתת ראשונים ואחרונים בהגדרת "חוקת הגוי" — ואכמ"ל, ועי' בשו"ת "עשה לך רב" ח"ד סי' כ"ו. ברם פשיטא שלמתבאר להלן בדבר מקורות החגיגה החשש סר ובטל מעיקרו. ועי' להלן הערה 51

(6) ראה "שנה בשנה" — תשל"ו, בסוף מאמרו של טוביה פרשל "חכמי ישראל וחגיגות יובלות ויום הולדת"; וכן ציין שם שר' יצחק אלחנן ספקטור ז"ל מקובנא דחה בתוקף נמרץ הצעה שהועלתה ב"הצפירה" גליון 68) לחוג יובל כהונתו כ"ה שנות רבנות ברוב פאר והדר. מוזכרו — ר' כתריאל סנדורביץ — הודיע (ב"הצפירה" גליון 77) ההתנגדות, והוסיף "חגי יובלות לא נהגו מעולם בין רבנן קשישאי עד היום, ולא נמצא זכרם בכל ספרי ישראל הקדושים ...". ע"ר להלן הע' 14, 33.

(7) מצוי בכת"י, ומצוטט בתו"ש וישב פ"מ אות מ"ט. (צ"ב אם נאמר גם כלפי ישראל).

(8) כ"כ הרי"ד אייזענשטיין בספרו "אוצר דרשות" — דרשה קפ"ט, עמ' 385-6. עוד ציין שם למקור שהורדוס המלך התחקה אחר מנהגי אוה"ע, ועשה משתה לכל ביתו ולשריו ביום הולדתו. ע"ר מ"ש שם בקישור יום הולדת ל"גיתל".

אדם ביום גינוסיא שלו לומר לא במהרה אדם נופל ביום גינוסיא שלו. מה עשה משה, עירבב את המזלות. הה"ד שמש ירח עמד זבולה וגו' (חבקוק ג') וכתוב נתן תהום קולו רום ידיהו נשא (שם) וכו' ". נמצאנו למדים שכבר עמלק מודע היה לסגולתו והשפעתו של יום זה על הצלחת הנולדים בו, ואף משה לא כבר אחרת אלא רק "התגבר" ופתר הבעיה. משמע בבירור שיש ויש משמעות ותוקף ליום זה, לכהפ"ח לאוה"ע: ואם בישראל אין הדבר כן — צריך ביאור וטעם!

אלא שאם תלו עניינו הייחודי של יום זה במערכות מזלות וכוכבים", שהם הם המשפיעים הצלחה בתאריך הולדתו, לפי"ז הישוב פשוט וברור — דבמה דברים אמורים גבי עכו"ם, אבל בישראל דאין מזל להם א"כ אינו תולה הצלחתו במערכת כוכבי יום הלידה שלו, ואינו מוצא חשיבות בו יותר מבשאר ימות השנה". הנה אומר, עניינו של יום שאינו אלא קישור ייחודי ומוצלח במחלו של אדם, כל זה אינו שייך בישראל, וממילא — ביאורו — פשיטא מדוע מצינו חגיגות ימי הולדת דוקא באוה"ע.

ג. דא"עקא שני חסרונות בולטים בביאור זה: אל"ף — אף ישראל קשורים וחיים תחת ממשלת המזלות ומושפעים מהם, ורק יכולת נתונה בירם להתגבר עליהם ועל כוחם והשפעתם". לכן אם קיים באופן טבעי

(9) ובקה"ע שם — "היה מעמיד למלחמה עם ישראל בני אדם שהיה אותו היום יום לידתו לומר לא במהרה אדם ניווק ביום מולדתו, שאז המזל השולט הוא עוזר לו", ומשה "עירבב את המזלות — שלא ישלוט ביום ההוא המזל שנולד בו, ויפלו" [גם יהושע עצמו נהג בדומה לעמלק — ראה במאמר הרב יעקב עמנואל שוחט הנדפס ב"בסאון חב"ד" תשל"ב, גליון 36-37, הערה 4].

(10) כך בדברי תורה הנ"ל — הע' 1 — הזכיר "יומא דמולא", הרחיק על כך ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין בקונט' "דברי חלומות" — להלן אות ו' והע' 30 — וכ"כ הרמ"מ שניאורסאהן — ר' להלן הע' 23 — "ביום הולדתו של אדם מזלו שולט ועוזר לו". עו"ר במאירי לסוגיא דע"ז הנ"ל שתלה עיקר החגיגה בעבודת כוכבו!

(11) שו"ת "דברי ישראל" הנ"ל — הע' 5 — במאמר שנכתב לשלילת חגיגות "יום הולדת הרמב"ם", וסיכם שבישראל "יום הלידה באמת אין בו שום מעלה יתירה למו, לענין הצלחה ואושר או סימן טוב", ואין כל סיבה לחוגו (עו"ר הע' 55).

לכך ניתן להוסיף ולהעיר, דתאריך יום הולדת הגוי קביעא וקיימא עפ"י ימי וחודשי חמה, אשר כוכבים ומזלות תלויים במסילותיה וסדריה. לעומת זאת יום הולדת ישראל קביעא וקיימא ונחוג למנייננו המונים ללבנה, לסדר לוחנו המיוחד, וממילא כבר אינו קשור וקבוע ביחסו לכוכבו ומזלו! לפי"ז מסתבר בפשיטות שאין בו סיוע המזל לישראל.

(12) אין כאן המקום להאריך ולפרט סוגיא זו, ואך נעיר ונציין דברי הרמב"ן בתשובתו: "... מותר לשמוע להם — למנחשים בכוכבים — ולהאמין דבריהם... אלא שפעמים הקב"ה עושה נס ליראיו לבטל מהם גזירת הכוכבים, והם מן הנסים הנסתרים... ואם ראה בהן דבר שלא כרצונו עושה מצות ומרבה בתפילה... וכסבור אני שאסור לבא כנגד המזלות על הנס" [כתבי הרמב"ן] ח"א עמ' שע"ס. ולחזוק וסיוע שיטה זו, ראה "דרך ה'" לרמח"ל חלק שני פרק ו', עו"ר שערי זוהר לשבת קנ"ו א' וכן מקו"ח "ספר חסידים" סי' שכ"א, ועוד. אמנם לא כן היא דעת רמב"ם הסובר שדברי הבל

קישור מיוחד ומוצלח של האדם במזלו בתאריך יום הולדתו, הרי בדר"כ ובמצב רגיל גם בישראל שיך עניינו של יום הלידה! ומה הועילו בחילוקם בין ישראל ואוה"ע — כאשר בסיס הנושא שוה. ובי"ת — כפי שיתאר להלן אין עניינה של חגיגת יום זה אך ורק משום המזל וההצלחה הקשורים בו, כי אם ענין גדול בה כתודאה וכהבעת הכרת הטוב — ובנוגע לכך תמוה במה גרע כוחם של ישראל!

ואכן נזקקו השוללים לטעמים רעיוניים נוספים. תמה האדמו"ר ממונקאטש על חגיגות אלה: הלוא אמרו חז"ל בעירובין י"ג ב' "טוב לו — לאדם — שלא נברא משנברא, ואם כן לשמחה מה זו עושה?" אולם הטעם שם כ' במהרש"א מ"שנמנו וגמרו, היינו שנמנו וישבו וספרו את המ"ע ול"ת שהל"ת הם מרובים — שס"ה — והמ"ע — רק רמ"ח — ע"כ אמרו שטוב שלא נברא כיון שהוא קרוב להפסד ורחוק משכר כיון שהל"ת מרובים כנודע". מעתה אמור, אם זהו ביאור טעם מניעת השמחה בלידת האדם ובעקבות זאת גם ביום ההולדת, מצד הקירבה להפסד, הרי "זהו — דוקא — בישראל שקיבלו עליהם לשמור ולעשות התרי"ג מצות, משא"כ באו"ה שאין להם רק חוב ז' מצות ל"ש הך שנמנו וגמרו ממספר תרי"ג, וע"כ אצלם ובפרט מחסידי או"ה . . . יום תולדותם יומא דמזלא ושמחה"; זאת משום שכלפי אוה"ע נכון יהיה לומר "טוב לו שנברא".

הוא אומר יום הלידה עצמו יום מכריע הוא בחיי האדם הניצב על עברי פי פחת ועלול למעוד ולהיכשל, ולכן אין לשמוח בו ולחוגג, לא בשעתו ולא לדורות. לפי סברא זו ניתן יהיה להסיק שכלפי צדיקים גמורים, שמתברר למפרע זכות לידתם, אצלם אדרבה ראוי לחוג ולציין יום הלידה, ומה שבכ"ז לא חגגו רבותיהם — כעדותם — "נראה מרוב ענותנותם".

ושטות הם, ועי"ש בהערות הרח"ד שעוועל שם הדן בדעות רמב"ם ורש"י, וע"ע רמ"א יו"ד קע"ט ס"ב. ברם לרמב"ם אין המזל משפיע לא רק על ישראל כ"א במידה שוה אינו משפיע גם על אוה"ע, וממילא שוב אין לחלק ביניהם! ומוכח שהמחלקים לא ס"ל בנדון דא כשיטת רמב"ם בעקרון נושא השפעת המזלות, ולדעת הרמב"ן אף ישראל אית ליה למיחש.

(13) והדברים כמובן תמוהים, כיצד יעלה על הדעת לומר על ישראל "נוח לו שלא נברא משנברא" ועל אוה"ע "טוב לו שנברא"! (עו"ר במאמר בבטאון חב"ד — ר' סוף הע' 26 — הערה 20) ועוד, הלא אצל ב"נ אין אלא ל"ת ואינם מצווים במ"ע (ודאי לא מעיקר הדיון) וממילא הם קרובים להפסד מישראל שיש להם גם מ"ע ע"מ לתקן! ועוד תמיהא כיצד יבאר ברכת "שהחיינו" והטוב והמטיב" בבשורת הלידה! עו"ר להלן הערה 54. [מכך גם הערה למ"ש בשו"ת קנין תורה בהלכה הנ"ל שם ר"ל שדוקא רב יוסף שהיה סגי נהור וחייב רק בל"ת — ולו במ"ע, עי"ש הרח"ד — הוא שמח כד נפיק מכרת והוכח לו שלא עבר עליהם, מאש"כ שאר כל אדם המחוייב בתרווייהו "מה מקום לשמחה". ואולם תמיהא רבה לומר מעליותא ו"נוח לו" דוקא לסומא! וכבר דחה דבריו בקובץ "כבוד חכמים" — להלן הע' 48 — שם אות י"א, עי"ש.]

(14) סברא זו של אי-חגיגה משום ענוה, דהיינו חילוק בין צדיקים ורשעים בענין זה של זכות יום הלידה, ניתנת להיאמר גם בביאורו של ר' צדוק הכהן דלקמן הערה 31.

ומכאן שזהו חילוק מהותי ועקרוני בין ב' הביאורים: בעוד שלראשון (אות ב') אין כל ערך ליום הולדת ישראל, הרי לביאור זה מתברר לבסוף אצל כל אחד ואחד אם ליום לידתו היה ערך חיובי, ומי הראוי לצינו "אם לאו.

סברא זו "שמי יאמר זכיתי לבי שהשלים עצמו בימי חייו, וא"כ נוח לו שלא נברא . . .". כתבה גם הרב אליעזר דייטש", וכן זכרה הרב דוד שפרבר". הוסיף לכך והטעים הרי"ד אייזענשטיין שיום הולדת האדם אינו אלא מקרה ואין חילוק ומשמעות ליום ולתאריך בו נולד "העיקר הוא מה שפעל ועשה האיש בימי חייו לתכליתו . . .".

מקורות ברורים ומפורשים לייחודם המשמעותי — וכן לציונם — של ימי ההולדת בישראל

ד. מכלול טעמים אלה שניתנו ע"מ לשלול חגיגה זו והיוו נימוקי הגישה השוללת, כל אלה התבססו — כאמור — בעיקר על כך שאין ציון יום זה נזכר במקורות, ולא נודע הוא בישראל. ואולם עיון מעמיק ומדויק יגלה ויחשוף מקורות — מוקדמים ומאוחרים כאחד — בהם התייחסו לתאריך יום לידתו של אדם כגורם מכריע ומשפיע הן באופן חד-פעמי בעת לידתו, והן מידי שנה בשנה לאחר מכן. ולא זו בלבד שציינוהו והחשיבוהו — אף חגיגות ומסיבות ערכו לכבוד יום ואירוע זה, אמנם זאת מוצאים אנו בעיקר במלכים בשרים וגדולי האומה. כמפורש בהושע ז' ה' "יום מלכנו החלו שרים חמת יין . . .". ו"מצודת דוד" שם פירש מונח זה "יום מלכנו — ר"ל ביום שמחת מלך ישראל כיום הלידה או יום המלכתו אז נעשו השרים חולים בעבור נאדות מהיין כי הרבו למלאותם לשתייה ונעשו חולים מרובי השכרות". מכאן שהיה זה מנהג נפוץ בישראל לחוג יום לידתו של המלך".

כך גם ניתן להסיק ממדרש שמו"ר (פט"ו — י') הממשיל המנין המיוחד

(ועל ר' שמואל מוהליבר מסופר — "שנה בשנה" הנ"ל הע' 6 — שהתנגד למסיבה לכבוד הגיעו לשיבה, באומרו שאינו ראוי לכבוד זה. וכן שי"ר התנגד לקבל אותות הכבוד שחפצו בני קהילת פראג להעניק לו, ואמר בהלצה "בשנת תק"ן נולדתי — ומה תקנתי?").

15) ארווח לן מילתא היישוב השני, לבאר מה שנשאר רושם ימי לידת צדיקים — להלן אות ה' — דבר ברור לפי ביאורו, וקשה לביאור הראשון!

16) אב"ד באניהאד, בעמח"ס תבואת השדה — מובא בשו"ת "גנוז יוסף" סימן ד' אות ב'.

17) בתשובתו הנדפסת בשו"ת "אפרקטא דעניא" ח"א סימן קכ"ג.

18) אמנם ע"י תרגום שם — "יומא דמניאי עליהון מלכהון שריאו רברביא למטתיה עמיה חמר . . .", ודומה לכך ביאורו ראב"ע רש"י ורד"ק שם, המסיבים "יום מלך" זה לאירוע מינוי המלך שהוא אירוע חד-פעמי, ולא דוקא אירוע שנתי של חגיגות יום לידתו. עו"ר "דעת סופרים" שם.

לחדשי השנה, אותו החלו ישראל למנות מקץ שעבוד מצרים וראשית גאולתם —
 "... משל למלך שנולד לו בן ועשה יום טוב, ונשבה אותו הבן ועשה שם זמן
 מרובה, אחר זמן נפדה אותו הבן ועשה לו המלך יום גנוסיא, כך וכו'".
 הוה אומר, בעוד שקודם לכן חגג המלך יום הולדתו של הבן, באשר זה היה
 היום המרכזי והחשוב בחייו, הרי לאחר שבייתו של הבן הפך יום פדיתו
 ליום החשוב והמרכזי, ויום זה היה נחוג מידי שנה. מההקבלה בין ב' החגיגות
 ניתן להסיק שאף את יום הלידה רגילים היו לחוג מידי שנה בשנה! ואכן
 החת"ס" כתב שאברהם חג יום מילתו של יצחק כל שנה ושנה "כדרך שמלכים
 עושים ביום הולדת בכל שנה".

אלה הן ראיות לכך שנהוג היה בישראל כבר בימים קדומים ביותר
 לחוג ימי הולדת, לכהפ"ח לחשובי העם ומלכיו". ואולם מהירושלמי ר"ה
 דלעיל (אות ב') מוכח שיום גינוסיא מועיל להצלחת מזלו של כל אחד
 ואחד ובכל שנה ושנה — יהיה מי שיהיה, לאו דוקא חשובי עם — ולכן
 סבר עמלק שתעזור עובדה זו לחילותיו. עוד יותר מפורש הדבר במדרש
 שכל טוב "יום הולדת" ... יום זה תכלית שנתן ביום שנולד ... ורוב
 בני אדם מתבכים יום שהוא תשלום שנתן. שהוא כנגד אותו היום שנולד
 ושמחים בו ועושין בו משתה". כאן כבר מפורש ציין זאת המדרש כלפי
 "רוב בני אדם" ולא דוקא מלכים ושרים. ויש "שעוד הגדיל לומר והסיק
 ענין מזל תאריך יום הלידה לא רק כלפי בני אדם — בכלל — כי אם
 גם לכלל תופעות החומר. בהסתמכו על "פירוש הארידל עה"כ והימים האלה
 נזכרים ונעשים, שבכל יום לתקופת השנה חוזרים הענינים לקדמותם, וידועה
 הראיה על זה מדין המשנה (גיטין סוף פרק ג') דהיין הנמצא בחביות
 נשתנה לתקופת השנה מיום "הולדת" הענבים! הוה אומר שסגולת היום

(19) "תורת משה" עה"ת — פרשת וירא ד"ה "ביום הגמל את יצחק". [עו"ר להלן
 אות ח' והע' 49 בענין תאריך החגיגה].

(20) גם מהפסיקתא משמע שרגילים היו לחוג דוקא לחשובי העם — אם כי לאו
 דוקא מלכים — ולא לעבדים; שהרי כך אמר להם יוסף לאחיו: "עד שלא ירדתם
 לכאן היו המצריים נודגין בי עבה, משירדתם לכאן הודעתם גניסיי שלי". (פסיקתא דרב
 כהנא — "נחמו", מהדו' ד. מנדלבוים, תשכ"ב, ח"א עמ' 271). הוה אומר: גניסיא —
 דוקא לחשובים! [אמנם ממאמר זה משמע שעיקר המונח "גנוסיא" משמע ייחוס, וראה
 "ערוך השלם" ערך גנס].

(21) פרשת וישב — מ' כ — מהדו' הר"ש באבער ח"א עמ' 247.

(22) "אפס כי אנשי עיר הקודש אמרו כי הוא יום גנוסיא של מלכים, שמביאין
 ספר יחוסי המלכים וקוראין ...". וראה שם הערה י"ט, ולעיל סוף הע' 20, למשמעות
 המונח.

(23) רמ"מ שניאורסאהן שליט"א — אדמו"ר ליובאוויטש באיגרת הנדפסת בקובץ
 "גדיל תורה" — תשובות וביאורים בשו"ע, תשמ"א, עמ' 51 [וראה ספר הערכים — חב"ד
 כרך ב' עמ' קס"ח (ערך אדה"ר) הערה 25, שם כתבו שחידוש נשמתו של אדה"ר בכל
 ר"ה, שהוא יום בריאתו (כמבואר בליקוטי תורה לשיר השירים דף ג' סור ב') מהוה
 מקור לענין יום הולדת!].

הינה תופעה טבעית המשפיע על כלל הנמצא "תחת הירח", ואם על ענבים משפיע — על בנ"א לא כ"ש!"

ה. זו הסיבה — ומכאן יובן הטעם — שעד היום הזה נשאר בעם ישראל רושם ימי לידתם של גדולי וחשובי האומה, וימים אלה נודעים נזכרים ונעשים. החל באבות אשר לא רק ידוע תודש לידתם, אף זכה חודש זה בשמות ותארי כבוד מחמת כך"; כך גם "יום שמחה לדורות נשאר לנו יום לידתו של יצחק אבינו" וזכות יום לידתו "של משה הגינה והצילה עם ישראל ממזימתו של אותו רשע אשר לא היה יודע שבשבעה באדר מת ובשבעה באדר נולד". גם ימי לידתם של דוד — בשבועות; של משיח — תשעה באב, וכן של רשב"י, השאירו חותמם המעשי בחיי האומה והלכותיה לדורות עולם".

(24) עו"ר "ילקוט שמעוני" ירמיה רמז ש"א, אף שם משמע שיש משמעות והשפעה ליום הלידה ולכן קללוהו הן איוב (שאמר "יאבד יום אולד בו") הן ירמיה (שאמר "ארוך היום אשר יולדתי בו") — עיי"ש ובפס"ר פכ"ז א"ב.

(25) ע"ר ר"ה י"א א' "בניסן נולדו אבות" (לדעת ר' יהושע) "בתשרי נולדו אבות" (לדעת ר"א), וכונה החודש "ירח האיתנים — ירח שנולדו בו איתני עולם" או "חודש זיו — ירח שנולדו בו זיוותי עולם", עיי"ש (וברש"י ותוס' וראה בספר "יד אפרים" להרב אפרים פישל וינברגר וצ"ל — סימן י"ט אות א' וב"תשובות וביאורים" דלעיל).

(26) "יד אפרים" הנ"ל אות ב' — וראה ב"ר פמ"ח י"ב, שמו"ר ס"ו י"א, תוס' ר"ה י"א ותנחומא בא ס'. ובפסיקתא פ"ו קישרו וייחסו הקמת המשכן ליום לידתו, וכן במ"ר פקודי נ"ב ב' — שם נזכר החודש — וע"ר תנחומא פקודי י"א שם מפורש אחד בניסן, ואילו במקורות הנ"ל — ס"ו ניסן. וע"ר "תורת משה" וירא הנ"ל ור' "יפה תואר" פקודי הנ"ל — לעולם יום לידתו של יצחק הוא יום שמחה לעולם. "מכאן הערך הנעלה ליום לידתו של גדול וצדיק", וכן הסיק מכאן "תשובות וביאורים" הנ"ל. (וראה שו"ת "דברי ישראל" הנ"ל לבאר מדוע חנוכה המשכן ביום לידת יצחק לא חשיבא עירוב שמחה בשמחה). ובב"ר ס"ג א' כתבו ככלל "גילה אחר גילה בזמן שהצדיק נולד! ניש שהסיקו מכל הנ"ל לחשיבות הכללית של יום הולדתם של צדיקים — "יום הולדת כללי" ראה "בסאון חב"ד" גליון 37:36 במאמר "עטרת תפארת שיבה".

(27) יום לידתו דייקא — ולא יום בריתו, ולמרות זאת אין מכאן פירכא למצודים לחוג יום הברית (להלן אות ח'), דשאני משה דנולד מהול! (תירוצו של ר' דוד שפרבר הנ"ל).

(28) מגילה י"ג ב' וראה ברש"י שם ביאור חשבון ודרך מציאת וקביעת יום זה למותו, ומתוך כך ללידתו. וע"ר נזיר י"ד א' תוד"ה "אמר כמשה וכו'", משם מוכח שיום לידתו יום חדוה הוה. עו"ר ב"יד אפרים" הנ"ל אות ג' מ"ש "נפש חיה" מ"מדרש הזהיר". (וע"ר "בית ישראל" הנ"ל כצד ביאור ענין זה: ועל "אוצר דרשות" הנ"ל תמיה שצ"ן רק יום זה והתעלם מכלל המנויים כאן!).

(29) קריאת מגילת רות בשבועות — שורש אחד מטעמיה נעוץ וחקוק בכך [ראה רמ"א או"ח סי' ת"צ ס"ט ושעת"ש תצ"ד סק"ו בשם "בכור שור"]. כך גם מנהגים שונים הקשורים לצום החמישי נתלים בלידתו של גואל [ראה מג"א או"ח סי' תקנ"ב ס"ק י"א ומחצה"ש וכן בב"י שם], וידועים ונסוצים מנהגי ל"ג בעומר. ועל כל זה ראה ב"יד אפרים" הנ"ל אותיות ד' ו' ז'.

מכל הג'ל משמע ומוכח בבירור ובודאות שבמקורותינו ייחסו ייחוד וענין ליום הולדתו של אדם, ותאריך זה בעל משמעות הוא — לדורות!

ערויות על גדולי ישראל שנהגו לחוג ימי הולדתם

ו. הלכך מצינו לכמה וכמה מגדולי ישראל, רועיו ומנהיגיו, אשר לא רק הצדיקו אלא אף נהגו הם עצמם לציין ולחוק ימי לידתם — בראש וראשונה ימי הולדת ייחודיים, וע"כ להלן אות י' ואילך, אולם גם מידי שנה בשנה! כפי שהאריך לבאר ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין ב"קונטרס דברי חלומות" אות כ' — ליל מוצש"ק וישלח — "כי היום שהאדם נולד בו אז הוא בתוקף מזלו ואין לו לירא באותו יום בכל שנה משום דבר שיורע מזלו אז", ותופעה זו מתחדשת מידי שנה בשנה, כמובן מקור וראיה לכך, כמתבאר לעיל, מהירושלמי ר"ה לענין מלחמתו של עמלק אשר העמיד חיילים שהיה זה "יום גנוסיא" דידהו, לאו דוקא בגיל מסוים אלא עצם היום קבע. כך משמע גם מ"מצודת דוד" להושע הג'ל שיום הלידה בכללו יום שמחה היה, וכן משמע מילקו"ש ירמיה הג'ל ומאחרונים כ"תורת משה" ועוד".

(30) הוא "רשימת דברים שנתגלו לי בעוה"י בחלום הלילה ממה שעלה בזכרוני".
(31) מתוך כך בא לדון במה שצדיקים מתים ביום שנולדו — "היינו לפי שאצלם המיתה היא התרוממות מזלם, ומעלתו שפושט לבוש שק הגופני ולובש חלוקא דרבנן הרוחני ליכנס לעולמות העליונים למעלה עליונה ליהנות מזיו השכינה, וכמו שביום לידתו ירד לעוה"ז לתוספות מעלה שע"י עבודתו בעוה"ז בתורה ומצות ומעש"ס הוא מגיע למעלה עליונה יותר ממה שהיה קודם, כן ביום המיתה מגיע למעלה עליונה עוד יותר, וטוב יום המות מיום הולדו וע"כ הם מתים ביום לידתם דהוא יום התרוממות מזלם [ראה "אורות הקדש" ח"ב עמ' ש"ס — מהדורה שניה — : "מה שבני אדם קוראים מות הרי הוא רק תגבורת החיים מעצומתם", ועוד ע"ש בהמשך]. אבל מי שאינם צדיקים, שאין המיתה מיד ביומו התרוממות מעלה . . . אין להם לירא ביום לידתם מן המיתה". בהמשך דבריו הביא ביאור נוסף למות צדיקים ביום לידתם — והוא שלידתם גרמה להם טובה גדולה והתרוממות מעלה — וממילא היפוכו ברשעים שנוח להם שלא נבראו, להם יש לירא ממיתה גם ביום לידתם, דאין כל זכות בלידתם! אולם בינונים "שפיר הוי אצלו יום הלידה התרוממות ותוקף מזלו ולא ימות אז". (נמצא שרשעים הוו נפ"מ בין הסעמים. ולאור טעמיו נוכל לתלות טעם נוסף לכך שיש שלא חגו — משום ענוה! ור' להלן הע' 52). ולקישור יום הלידה ליום ההסתלקות, בפרט לצדיקים, ראה עוד "לקוטי שיחות" כרך ה' תשל"ב, עמ' 86 בהערה שניה בשולי הגליון. וכאן מקום להעיר בנוגע לר' צדוק גופיה — ביום הולדתו של ר' צדוק נפטר רבו, וכעבור שנה תמימה מונה הוא לאדמו"ר!
(32) לעיל הערה 24, ומחמת מקור זה הסכים אף בשו"ת "דברי ישראל" הג"ל שלכהפ"ח אין לזלזל בימי הולדת האדם.

(33) ראה בסוף פירושו למשניות של רבי דוד פדרו — בעמח"ס "חסדי דוד" על התוספתא — "שושנים לדוד" אותו סיים ביום הולדתו השלושים וארבעה — שהוא כמובן יום הולדת רגיל לא ייחודי. עו"ר ב"שנה בשנה" תשל"ו במאמר הג"ל — שם הערות 8, 9 מש"כ אודות שד"ל, וכן אודות סיר משה מונטיפיורי ויום הולדת המאה שאז הוצא ע"י הרבנות הראשית באנגליה ספר תפילה מיוחד (!) לבתי הכנסת בכל מלכות

לכן נהגו חסידי חב"ד לחוג ימי הלידה של כל אחד ואחד ולציין במעשים שונים — להלן אות י"ד — והעיד האדמו"ר שליט"א "ונהגו בזה רבותינו נשיאינו הק', אף כי בצנעה". החסידות בכללה עוד הגדילה וקבעה ימי שמחה והילולא קבועים לדורות את יום י"ח אלול", וכבר הבעש"ט רגיל היה לערוך סעודה בכל שנה באותו יום, ולומר "תורה".

לכך מצטרפת הודאתו וברכתו של הכת"ס הנזכרת במכתבו לבנו הרב יעקב עקיבא סופר — "הנה ברך לקחתי ליום מולדתי א' דר"ח אדר שהגעתי לשנת תמשים, והודיתי להשי"ת ברבים על שהחנינו וקימנו לזמן הזה, וברוך ית"ש הנותן ליעף כח ללמוד וללמד, כן יעזרני למען שמו ותורתו, עד זקנה ושיבה אל יעזבני ואל יטשני, ויהיה עמי כאשר היה עם אבותינו הקדושים זצ"ל להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה ולגדור פרצי התורה אשר רבו בעז"ה... ועשיתי ביום התוא זה היום עשה ה' לי סיום למס' פסחים". מפורש כאן שביום הולדתו ערך הודאה רבתי בצבור, זאת למרות שגיל החמישים לא נזכר כגיל ייחודי! וכך גם בירך הראי"ה קוק זצ"ל את בנו מו"ר הרב צבי יהודה זצ"ל "ברכתי תעלה ליום הולדתך בעה"י בשעה מוצלחת...".

בריסניה על אלה ועוד מפורש שייחסו משמעות לכל שנה ושנה. עו"ר שם אודות מלאת שבעים להרב עזריאל הילרסהיימר, שי"ר, ר' שמואל סאלאנט, הח"ח ועוד, ואף ר' שמואל מוהליבר — לאחר הפצרות רבות. [ע"ע בריש ספר "אור המאיר" המוקדש ליובלו השבעים של הרב עזריאל זצ"ל].

(35) הוסיף והטעים ציון וחגיגת יום זה לא רק בהיותו חידוש יום הלידה והתעוררות, כ"א גם בהתעוררות וחידוש יום בר מצוה — בו צ"ל שמחה כביום החופה, כמבואר בזהר חדש בראשית ט"ו ד' — ועפ"י כתבי הארי"ה ז"ל חונות ומתעוררת המשכה זו מידי שנה. נמצא שיש ענין בכל שנה ושנה לשוב ולחוג התעוררות יום הבר מצוה! (ועי' מג"א או"ח סי' רכ"ה סק"ד ומחצה"ש שם).

(36) תאריך בעל משמעות ייחודית בתולדות החסידות — והוא יום לידת הבעש"ט בשנת תנ"ח, הוא יום התגלות אליהו אליו בשנת תע"ד, הוא היום בו נתגלה לו רבו, הוא הנביא אחיה השילוני, בשנת תפ"ד, והוא יום גילויי הוא לעולם בשנת תצ"ד. (חב"ד הוסיפו שהוא גם יום לידת הרש"ו מלאדי בשנת תק"ה).

(37) ראה "שנה בשנה" הנ"ל בסוף המאמר (ובספר המנהגים חב"ד הנ"ל עמ' 61 כתב ש"בו ביום — ח"י אלול — היו אומרים — אבותינו ורבותינו הקדושים — דא"ח בהצנע, רק לפני בניהם ביחידות עיי"ש).

(38) ראה שו"ת "כתב סופר" חלק יו"ד סי' קמ"ח.

(39) אמנם צריך להעיר שהכת"ס עצמו חייב היה בהודאה מיוחדת, ומסוכן מאוד היה בילדותו ועמד על סף מיתה, כמבואר באורך עיי' הרב שלמה סופר — בנו הצעיר של הכת"ס — בהקדמתו "אהל לאה" לספר כת"ס עה"ת, עיי"ש עמ' 29. (הכת"ס נולד לאביו החת"ס בהיותו בן נ"ב שנים, ובן שית היה מסוכן מאוד — והוסיפו לו שם — וכבר הועיקו הח"ק! ולאחר תפילת ותחינת החת"ס נרפא, ועיי"ש אריכו"ד בנדון דא וכן הסיפור אודות המאורע בבוראפשט בשנת תרכ"ט). "והיה רגיל בימי נעוריו לסיים על יום זה איזה מסכת" — משמע בכל שנה ושנה.

(40) יום הולדתו חל ביום מלאת ה"שלושים" לפטירתו — י"ד ניסן.

(41) בשולי איגרת הנדפסת ב"אגרת הראי"ה" ח"ב — אג' תרע"ח — עמ' רפ"ו,

זתאריך ה' ניסן תרע"ד (למלאת לו כ"ד שנים).

ז. הוה אומר: משום שעניינו של יום גורם תוקף מיוחד ליום זה לכן ציינתו בכל שנה ושנה. עם זאת מקבל היום מישנה ענין ותוספת משמעות החל מגילאים ייחודיים. כפי שכתב בשער "קול החיים" "זה הקונטרס מדבר בו למי שהגיע להשלים ע' שנה ואילך, והיתה עמו וקרא בו ביום שגולד מע' שנה ואילך מידי שנה בשנה ..". — צירף החגיגה מידי שנה עם הענין המיוחד שבגיל השבעים; וראה להלן אות י"א.

ואכן העידו על הראשון לציון הרב חיים דוד חזן ש"היה נהג רבינו הגדול ז"ל משנת תרנ"א — שנה בה מלאו לו שבעים — ואילך לעשות סעודה בכל שנה בר"ח חשון שהוא יום הלידה", וכן עדות לנו "אודות התח"מ בעל שד"ח שאף הוא חגג יום המלאות לו שבעים שנה. ובשו"ת "גנוי יוסף" (ראה הע' 78) כתב "... יודע אני שיש איזה אנשי מעשה שבכל שנה כשמגיע יום הולדת אותם שמהדרין לברך שהחיינו על איזה פרי או בגד חדש ... ובאמת אין חילוק בזה בין השנה שהגיע לשבעים שנה או שאר השנים ביום לידתם ודאי מהראוי ליתן שבח והודאה לשמו הגדול ית"ש ...". לכן מידי שנה בשנה מהראוי לחוג ולציון יום הולדתו.

ומכאן להוראת מנהג שהובאה בספר הלכתי-פסקני, ה"בן איש חי", הכותב "ויש נוהגין לעשות בכל שנה את יום הלידה ליו"ט, וסימן יפה הוא וכן נוהגין בביתנו". כל אלה מהווים מקור נאמן וברור להשרשת מנהג חגיגת ימי הולדת בישראל לכל אדם ואדם ובכל שנה ושנה, חגיגה שמקורה בקודש.

(42) לשון הגה"ה בסוגריים שנוספה לספרו "ישרי לב" — אות ב' (דף ב' ע"א): וחתמו ההגה"ה "והן בעון ה' הפקיע בו את עון כלנו השתא הכא שנת ה'תרכ"ט ביום ה' לחדש שבט בו מת אבי התעודה ואבד חסיד מן הארץ וצוק"ל וזיע"א". ומיניה לפינן שמשך ט' שנים נהג מידי שנה בשנה לערוך סעודה ביום הולדתו.

על סעודה זו שהיתה נהוגה מידי שנה בשנה נותרה לנו גם עדותו של הרב שמ"ח גאגין הכותב בספרו "שמח נפש" אות ש'; "ואנכי הצעיר החי זכיתי להיות אחד מהמומנים כמה שנים בסעודה של מצוה הנזל המלאה לה תורה וקדושה ויראת ה' עד שנה אחרונה שנת ה'תרכ"ט שנלקח ארון אלקים בעוה"ר וצוק"ל".

(43) בקובץ "המאסף" כרך עשרי, תרס"ה, חוב' ד' — טבת — עמ' מ"ג, בהערה. וראה תיאורו המלבב של העורך שם בעמ' מ"ו ע"ב: "ביום ו' חשון ש"ו חגג רבינו חג גמר השבעים ליום הולדתו. הדגלים לא נפנפו, הטלגרם שקט במכונו וחוטיו היו שליים בהכוסות הלבנות אשר על העמודים, כי אם חג צנוע היה חג המולד של רבינו, ורק בחוג תלמידיו שתי כוסות יין לחיי רבינו ...".

(41) אמנם יש לתמוה דאם לא שנא גיל השבעים משאר ימי ההולדת ובכולם יש להודות, מה לי יום ההולדת לעומת שאר ימות השנה, והלא בכל אחד ואחד מהם יודה וישבח השי"ת על שזיכהו והביאו עד הלום! ובהכרח צ"ל שיש ערך ומשמעות ייחודית ליום זה דוקא, וכן שיש הפרש בין "הודאה ועירא" (כ"אלוהי נשמה" וכדו') מידי יום, ו"הודאה רבא" — מידי שנה. מקביל לכך הוא היחס בין יום הולדת רגיל לימי הולדת הייחודיים, דלהלן אות י' ואילך.

(45) בן איש חי, שנה ראשונה, ראה אות י"ז (בכללו דן אודות סעודת בר מצוה — עיי"ש).

ח. אגב גררא יש להעיר למנהג שנהג בישראל לחוג לא את יום לידת האדם — והוא הוא יום הבר מצוה, כדלעיל הע' 35 — כי אם דוקא את יום מילתו, היינו תאריך יום השמיני ללידתו (אם נערכה מילתו בזמנה). כך הבא"ח הג"ל מוסיף וכותב „ושמעתי שיש מקומות נוהגים לעשות בכל שנה סעודה ביום שנכנס בו האדם בבריתו של אברהם אבינו, ומנהג יפה הוא וערב לי מאוד אך לא נהגנו בזה בביתנו [ורק אנא עבדא נהגתי לומר בכל שנה וביום שנכנסתי בבריתו של אברהם אבינו בקשה זו: רבש"ע . . . אנא ה' . . . אכיר]“. נמצא שמנהג כזה נהג בישראל, ובא"ח קילסו, אף כי הוא עצמו לא נהגו. גם בשם החת"ס נפצה שמועה „שאמר „דאין לישראל לחוג יום לידתו כ"א את היום שנכנס בבריתו של אאע"ה. אמנם נראה שלא סבר כן חת"ס להלכה, דמהגהתו לאו"ח, ממכתב תשובת בנו — הכת"ס, ומתנהגתו הוא עצמו — כעדות בנו — מוכח שנהגו לחוג ולציין יום הלידה דוקא. אלא צ"ל שהסתמכו על מה שכתב החת"ס ב„תורת משה“ — וירא ד"ה „ביום הגמל את יצחק . . . ביום מילתו עשה סעודה, וכן בכל שנה כדרך שמלכים עושים ביום הולדת את פרעה כן עשה אאע"ה בכל שנה ביום מילתו של יצחק . . .“. לא אמר כן החת"ס אלא כפרשנות למקרה זה, ומכאן התגלגלה השמועה לנהיגה מעשית כן, אף שהחת"ס עצמו וכן צאצאיו לא נהגו כן.

ושמא על סמך מנהג זה אפשר יהיה להורות לנולדים בימים שאין ראוי להפריז בהם בשמחה, שידחו חגיגתם זו לתאריך יום מילתם. כגון הנולד בימי בין המצרים, ובאופן שיום מילתו חל אחריהם, יחוג הוא מידי שנה יום המילה!

(46) אם לא נערכה מילתו בעיתה אלא נדחתה לתאריך מאוחר, צ"ע אם יחוג היום השמיני בו חל חיוב המצוה, או יום המילה בפועל. ואפשר דצריך לחלק בין דחייה כדין לדחייה שלא כדין, וצ"ב.

(47) מהמפורש בבא"ח שהוא לא נהג לחוג יום המילה כי אם דוקא יום לידתו — תמיהה רבתי על שו"ת „עשה לך רב“ (הג"ל הע' 3) שציין דברי הבא"ח רק לגבי יום המילה, בעוד שבא"ח מפורש כותב שהו"ע לא נהג כן אלא רק באמירת תחינה — עיי"ש. (48) כ"כ בשו"ת „אפרקסא דעניא“ ח"א סי' קכ"ג בשם חמיו הג"ר משה שטרן ז"ל, ואף הוא שם תמה על שמועה זו — אמנם קיבלה כפשוטה מדנאמרה ע"י חמיו. [עו"ד במאמר הרד"מ אייזנשטיין „שמחה והודאה לתקופות חיי האדם“ הנדפס זה עתה בקובץ „כבוד חכמים“ לכבוד הרמ"מ שניאורסאהן אדמו"ר ליובאוויטש בהגיעו לגבורות שמונים — שם אות ו' ודו"ק. (עיקר מאמרו בא להטעים סיבת ומהות השמחה לגילאים השונים. וראה עוד בחוברת „הפרדס“ שנה מ"ו גליון ח' סימן נ"ט שם הטעים עפ"י זוהר וחסידות, והדגיש המיוחד בלידת יצחק וכן כל צדיק ו„אדם כללי“; כמו"כ אודות המיוחד ב„שבועים“, ושם עמ' 5 ראה מ"ש העורך שליוברין עצמה „מקור" הוא ין.]

(49) אמנם המעיין שם יווכח שאדרבא הרגילות היא לחוג יום הלידה ולא יום המילה, ולכן צריכה היתה שדה לגמול את יצחק בתום כ"ד חודש — היינו א' דפסח, והיא גמלתו רק בתום הפסח — שהוא יום מילתו — לבל יצטרך לאכול חמץ בפסח, ונדחית החגיגה למועד זה. נמצא שמקרה זה הוא החרגי, ואילו הרגילות היא דוקא לחוג יום הלידה! (ובדוחק י"ל שהם סברו למילף מכאן הלכה לדורות, וצ"ב).

יישוב ההשגות הרעיוניות שהעלו שוללי חגיגה זו (לעיל אותיות איג)

ט. עד הלום התבאר כדבעי שלמנהג חגיגת ימי הולדת האדם הישראלי מידי שנה בשנה יש סימוכין ומקורות נאמנים ויציבים העומדים איתן על אדני מסורת ישראל. בכך כמובן סרה מאליה הטענה המרכזית של השוללים אשר חשו מחסרון מקורות למנהג זה — ולא היא. אולם אין להתעלם מהטענות הסיבתיות והנימוקים הרעיוניים שהועלו לעיל בריש המאמר, ומחמתן יש ששללו חגיגה זו.

ראשית — טענו — הלוא אחר מחלוקת של שתי שנים ומחצה, נמנו גמרו והסיקו לבסוף ב"ש וב"ה כאחד ש"נח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא וכו' " (עירובין י"ג ב') וא"כ מה מקום יש לחוג מאורע קדום "שלילי" זה של לידתו! שנית — הוסיפו לטעון — ייחוד וחיבות יום זה מצריכים עיון ובדיקה, דמצינו צדיקים שמתו באותו יום, ואדרבא סגולת צדיקים היא עובדה זו שהרי אמרו בגמ' ר"ה "הקב"ה יושב וממלא שנותיהם של צדיקים מיום ליום וכו' " ואם מיתה גזורה על יום זה — מפוקפק עניינו החיובי של יום הלידה!

ברם האמת ניתנת להיאמר שאדרבא לכשנדייק נמצא שהקושיא גופה — שורש התירוץ היא. אכן דייקו חכמינו ז"ל בלשונם וכתבו "צדיקים", דוקא הם, הם שדאי מתעלים בבוא יום עת פקודתם וחלילה אין מיתתם ירידה, הם הזוכים לעלייה זו במכוון ליום העלייה הראשונה — הוא יום התגלות ונצנוץ נשמתם בעולם, יום הלידה. נמצא שאכן שיאה של סגולת

(50) לדוגמא: הנולד בג' לחדש אב — ידחה חגיגת יום הולדתו לתאריך יום מילתו הוא י' אב, ותאריך זה יוכל לחוג בשופי. כך גם כל הנולדים בימי תענית וכו'.

(51) כך כמובן סרה מאליה גם טענת "חוקת הגור" שהועלתה — ר' לעיל הע' 5 — דהלא מקורו בקדש! (ומכאן שוב תמיהה לנאמר בשו"ת "עשה לך רב" הג"ל "... ואעפ"י שמקורם במנהגי עובדי עבודה זרה קדמונים. אין נראה לי שום איסור לחוג כיום ימי הולדת בחוג המשפחה. שכן עצם החגיגה היא דבר מובן והגיוני, שכל שנת חיים נוספת שזוכה בה אדם מעניקה לו ולמקורביו שמחת הלב. ... אין כאן שום סרך עבודה זרה. ...". לאמור כאן חלילה אין מקורו ב"עובדי עבודה זרה קדמונים — הגוי וחוקותיו, כ"א מקורו בקדשי ישראל ומנהגיהם). שוב מצאתי שגם הרד"מ אינו שטיין הג"ל צידד כך (שם אות י"א).

(52) ואין ליישב אליבא דתירוצ' התוס' התם — ור' תוס' ע"ז ה' א' — "הכא איירי בסתם בני אדם, אבל צדיק אשריו ואשרי דורו", דלפי"ן אך צדיקים יחוגו ימי הולדתם וזאת לא מצינו (אם כי כך הוא לדורות!) ועוד דלפי"ן גם הצדיק לא יחוג, מטעם עונה.

ולמעשה קושיא זו ותירוץ תוס' זה סותרים הקושיא הסמוכה, לדבריהם אכן לאנשי מעלה יש משמעות וענין ביום זה, ויש לציינו ולחוגו, ואעפ"כ דוקא הם המסתלקים ביום זה! ומוכח ההסבר דלהלן.

(53) ר"ה י"א א' — ומקורו מקרא "את מספר ימך אמלא", עיי"ש. ור' יבמות מ"ט ב'.

יום הלידה מתגלה בסגולת צדיקים זו; וכפי שהאריך ד' צדוק הכהן מלובלין בקונטרסו הנ"ל (הערות 30—31) לבאר "שאצלם — אצל הצדיקים — המיתה היא התרוממות מזלם ומעלתו שפושט לבוש שק הגופני ולבוש חלוקא דרבנן הרוחני ליכנס לעולמות העליונים למעלה עליונה לידנות מזוי השכינה", וזאת בהקבלה ליום לידתו שאף הוא היה תוספת מעלה — הענקת יכולת ואפשרות העבודה והתיקון בעוה"ז בתורה ומצוות. לכן לא רק סתירה אין כאן, חזק וסיוע יש מכאן ליסוד סגולת וייחוד תאריך יום הלידה לכל ימי חייו (כך לכל אדם, ולצדיק אף ליום הסתלקותו).

באשר לתמיתה הראשונה מהסכמת ב"ש וב"ה ש"נח לו שלא נברא" — הלוא פשיטא שישנו חיוב זכות בלידת כאו"א ובלבד שיקיים חובתו בעולמו, ולא באו שם לדון אלא כשאינו מממש מה שיכול וחייב היה לעשות, ובאמת על עצם לידת האדם ודאי צריך לתודות לבורא עולם על שהחיינו ומקיימנו בכל רגע ורגע ומאפשר לנו למלא תפקידנו ולפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות. וכל מי שאינו מודה על כך אינו אלא כופר בטובה, בהענקת הזכות והיכולת שנתן לו בורא כל נשמות."

ומכאן הסקת ענין נוסף שיש בחגיגת יום ההולדת. אם עד עתה דנו בעיקר אודות סגולתו וייחודו של יום זה מבחינת מהותו העצמית, הרי עתה מתברר שיש לחגיגה זו גם משמעות של הבעת והכרת תודה וטובה להשם יתברך על אשר החייו וקיימו והביאו עד הלום, ושני הבדלים עקרוניים בין שתי בחינות אלה של החגיגה: בעוד שהבחינה הראשונה עיקרה הוא השפעה החלה באתערותא דלעילא, הרי הבחינה השניה יסודה הוא מתתא לעילא. זאת ועוד, הבחינה השניה היא בגדר מוסיף והולך ומשתנה משנה לשנה, דאינה דומה ההודאה על שנים מעטות — למודה על אריכות ימיו, כלשון "ישרי לב" הנ"ל כשזיכרו ה' להגיע לשבעים "עשיתי סעודה גדולה, כי לאו מילתא זוטרתא היא!" וזו הוספת טעם ומשמעות לחגיגת גילאים מסויימים, והודאה יתירה ככל שהולך ובוגר.

(54) עיין לעיל הערה 13. עו"ר בספר "יד אפרים" הנ"ל בסוף מאמרו (אות י"ב) מה שהקיש זאת לברכת "יוצר האדם" וברכת "שבראנו לכבודו" וכדו', דפשיטא שישנה ברכה וזכות בכריאת האדם כשימלא ייעודו בחיים ו"יהא שם שמים מתאהב על ידו". כמו"כ סרה התמיהה כליל לביאור "תשובות וביאורים" הנ"ל בהערות 34-5 ששב וחווג היכנסו לעול מצוות והלוא פשיטא שיש בכך חיוב וזכות, וכי יעלה על הדעת שהגעתו לגיל חיוב במצוות וגיל עונשין — שלילי הוא? ! הלוא זו חובה שכל כולה זכות! [מכלל דבריו שם מוכח שנקט רק ענין זה של חזרת סגולת היום והמאורע מידי שנה בשנה, וכלל לא הזכיר ענין ההודאה. מאידך גיסא המקור שציין הר"ר מרגליות במקו"ח מירושלמי יבמות — להלן אות י"א — מתייחס אך ורק להודאה על הצלת חייו עד השתא (ואף שמקור זה מפורש הוא על גיל שבעים, ניתן להסיק ממנו לכל שנה, אם כי במידה פחותה. ור' הע' 59). עו"ר לעיל הע' 35.]

חגיגת יום הולדת בישראל *

ציון וחגיגת ימי הולדת בהגיע אדם לגילאים ייחודיים —
ששים שבעים ושמונים

י. "יום ההולדת" הראשון בעל משמעות ייחודית [לבד מיום הלידה עצמו, ויום קבלת עומ"ש בגיל מצוות"] הרי הוא גיל הששים". כמפורש בגמ' מו"ק כ"ח א' "רב יוסף כי הוה בר שיתין עבד להו יומא טבא לרבנן" מאחר ונפק מסכנת כרת" שהיא "מחמישים ועד ששים שנה" — עיי"ש". לכך יש להוסיף הירושלמי יבמות פ"ח ה"ג בנוגע לדבר הבא אחת לששים או שבעים שנה, וממילא בגיל ששים התחילה הצלתו להיות מוכחת בחוש". מאלה מקור וטעם מפורש לציון וחגיגת יום הגיעו לגיל הששים.

ואולם למרות שקיימת עדות" על בעל תרומת הדשן שסיים מסכתא

(*) המשך מ"אור המזרח", חוברת שבט תשמ"ג, עמ' 172-185.

(55) ע"י בשו"ת דברי ישראל הנ"ל מ"ש מב"ק פ' א' ותוס' שם. ועי' "קול סופר" נדה פ"ו מ"ג וחת"ס יו"ד סי' א' וסי' ש, עיי"ש. עו"ר לעיל הע' 35.
(56) הנאמר בשלהי פ"ה דאבות — אינו ענין לכאן. באשר לגיל החמישים, הוער לעיל — אות ו' — לתשובת הכת"ס, אולם אין לכך כל מקור מפורש (ובדק"ס למו"ק כ"ח א' ליתא כלל גירסת "מת בחמישים שנה") ונראה שאינו ייחודי אלא כיום הולדת רגיל וקבוע. אמנם רד"מ אייזנשטיין הנ"ל — שם אות ו' — רצה להטעים שמחת גיל החמישים עפ"י דיוק מהירושלמי וסמך לזה מתקו"ו (בן חמשים לוקנה!) עיי"ש.
(57) לשון "כרת" נדרשה ע"י מו"ר הגר"ש ישובלי שליט"א (בפתיחתו לקובץ "התורה והמדינה" כרך ז', לחבורת יום הולדתו הששים של הרב כ. פ. טכורש) שנאחר ו"לא יגע לריק ולא יילד לבהלה, ללא פקפוק יכול הוא להכריז: נפקי לי מכרת!" זאת משהגיע לכלל שנים אלו ולבו שלם עמו, ומכיר הוא "שמעשו שלחו שורש למטה ועשו פרי למעלה...". הוה אומר מעשיו ופעולותיו הן הן שלא נכרתו!
[אמנם שם בפתח דבריו שלל דר"כ מנהג ימי הולדת, דאין דרכנו להסתכל אחורה ולסכם העבר, ור"ל שגיל הששים יוצא מן הכלל הוא. לאמור כאן, ראשית יום הולדת אינו אך ורק סכום העבר, ושנית — בהחלט נהג בישראל].

(58) עיי"ש בחילוק מיתת כרת ומיתה ביד"ש וביאור רבה, וכן הבדל אביי בין כרת דשני וכרת דיומי. (אמנם השוה לגיר' דקד"ס אשר במקום ששים מיתה ביד"ש גורס שהיא מיתת כל אדם). וראה בתוס' שם מקור הדבר בירושלמי בכורים פ"ב, ובירושלמי התם ה"א הבדל מיתה של חיבה (שבעים) ומיתה של זקנה (שמונים). עו"ר הרח"ד בנוגע למשמעות נפק מכרת ומיתה ביד"ש, ושאלת אביי לרב יוסף במו"ק שם — האם חלוקים הם, וכמי הלכה — במאמרו הנ"ל של רד"מ אייזנשטיין (שם אות א"ב ד"ה סי') והוסיף שבאמת רבים נהגו כן, וצויין על רב יוסף לחדש דאע"ג שהיה סומא אעפ"כ שמח וחגג.

(59) במקו"ח — להלן אות י"א — ציין מקור זה בנוגע לגיל השבעים, ונראה לצרפו גם לגיל ששים.

(60) בספר "לקט יושר", וראה "הערות על מנהגי חת"ס" בסו"ס "דברי ישראל" הנ"ל עמ' ל"ב.

ביום שהגיע לגיל ששים, ובכך ציין המאורע, למרות זאת כמעט ולא נזכר ולא צויין גיל זה, על אף שכאמור דוקא הוא זה שמקורו מפורש בש"ס! ואכן הר"ר מרגליו (בספרו "נפש חיה" סי' תמ"ד) תמה על מניעת החגיגה — ולא יישב; ובשו"ת "בית ישראל" (ח"א או"ח סי' ל"ב) סבר לתלות זאת בפסוק המדגיש "ימי שנותינו שבעים שנה ואם בגבורות שמונים שנה", ולא נזכר גיל הששים, ועוד מחשש עין הרע "שלא ישלוט ח"ו בהם ע"כ מסתירין שנותיהם". לסברות דחוקות אלה נראה להוסיף שספק אם ניתן ללמוד הוראה והדרכה לכל אדם מדברי רב יוסף שם, זאת משום שלו עצמו היה טעם אישי מיוחד להתברך ולהודות על שנותיו; שהרי עליו אמרו כלדאי (ברכות ס"ד א') "מלכת תרתין שנין" ותו לא, ואך בזכות ויתורו על ראשות הישיבה האריך ימיו ושנותיו עיי"ש. ממילא אפשר שאין ללמוד חובת הודאה לכל אדם מהודאתו זו של רב יוסף".

יא. הגיל המרכזי עליו דנו מפרשים ופוסקים בהקשר כללי זה של חגיגת יום לידתו הוא בהגיע האדם ליום מלאת לו שבעים שנה. המקור העקרי והיסודי לחגיגה זו הוא מתוך הגמ' מו"ק הנ"ל, ממנה מוכח — אליבא דרבה — שמחמישים עד ששים זו סכנת מיתת כרת, ומששים ועד שבעים זו סכנת מיתה בידי שמים. ממילא כפי שרב יוסף חגג יום צאתו מסכנת הכרת כך יש לחוג ביתר שאת ותוקף את היום בו נפיק מתרווייהו — הן כרת הן מיתה ביד"ש — וזהו יום הולדת השבעים.

הרב ראובן מרגליות זצ"ל בהגהותיו — "מקור חסד" — לספר חסידים סי' רי"ג אות א' הוסיף לציין לירושלמי יבמות פ"ח ה"ג, שם נאמר שאחת לששים או שבעים שנה דבר בא לכלות ואז נטלים ומתים ממזרים, ובכדי שלא לבייש משפחותיהם נספים ומתים עמם גם כשרים. "וזהו מקור מנהג סעודת שבעים, דהוי כסעודת הודאה לפי שודאי היה דבר בשבכותיה בימיו וניצל". הרי לנו ב' מקורות מש"ס לחגיגה זו, ולטעמה".

מתוך כך לא רק שנהגו לחוג יום הולדת זה, אף בספרי הפוסקים הוער עליו בהקשר לכו"כ מהנהגות חגיגה (ע"כ להלן אות י"ג ואילך)

(61) בדומה למה שהערנו לעיל הע' 30 בנוגע לכת"ס. ועי' "לקוטי שיחות" לס' ויצא תשל"א וכן "בטאון חב"ד" גליון 36-37 במאמר "עטרת תפארת שיבת הערות 24-6, שם ביארו שחגיגת גיל הששים אינה שייכת לכאו"א. (עו"ר שם עמ' 25 בנוגע לענין המיוחד שבגיל השבעים).

(62) מהותית שונים הם טעמים אלה מהקודמים — הכלליים, בכך שלמעשה הם אינם מציינים יום ההנעה לשבעים אלא את הסיום בשלום גיל הששים. [עו"ר בספר "חסד לאברהם" — השני — מהרב אברהם צבי ברודנא, תרצ"א, בפתיחה עמ' ו' אות ד' שהצדיק המנהג ואף את שמו כ"חג יובל" — יובל מעת היכנסו לגיל עונשין ביד"ש — עיי"ש. בדרך דומה נקט הרד"מ אייונשטיין במאמרו הנ"ל — שם אות י' ובעמ' רי"א — להטעים השמחה בגיל התשעים והמאה, כשמנין השנים הוא החל מגיל כ'.

ואף מבין השוללים דר"כ חגיגת ימי הולדת יש שהסכימו לחגיגת ייחודית זו. בשו"ת "דברי ישראל" הנ"ל, למרות ששלל מנהג החגיגות — הסכים לציון וחגיגת יום הלידה השבעים, ואף הביא סמך לחגיגת זו⁶³. וכן גם "אוצר דרשות" הנ"ל עם הסתייגותו העקרונית מחגיגות אלה, אעפ"כ הסכים לכך במלאת לאדם שבעים.

מהפוסקים שדנו והעירו על כך נציין בראש וראשונה את תשובתו של החו"י בשו"ת דידה סי' ע' והרחבת דבריו ראה בספר "יד אפרים" הנ"ל סימן י"ט אות י', וכן דן בנושא הפמ"ג, והחת"ס בהגהותיו לשו"ע, ישרי לב, שו"ת גנוי יוסף, נפש חיה ועוד — ומכלול דבריהם יורחב להלן —; הנה אומר שכל אלה שתו לבם וכתיבתם לאירוע ייחודי זה שהיו מודעים לו!

הגדיל לעשות הרב חיים פאלאג'י אשר חיבר קונטרס מיוחד בשם "קול החיים" אשר עניינו מוסב "למי שהגיע להשלים ע' שנה ואילך והיתה עמו וקרא בו ביום שנולד מע' שנה ואילך מידי שנה בשנה . . .". וכן כתב בהקדמתו "ואשרי שיאחו בסה"ת הזאת מע' ואילך . . . ומובטחני דיהיו לו ימי שיבה טובה בלתי צער ובלתי יסורין ואפיסת הכחות אלא יהיה בשיבה ונחת חיים של טובה וכוחו אז בלתי שום מכאוב כל ימי חייו ושלום בעצמיו . . .".

יב. מאלה שידוע לנו שנהגו לציון יום לידתם זה כבר ציינו לעיל את ז' את הראשל"צ הרח"ד חזן אשר מעיר בספרו "ישרי לב" שחגג יום

(63) אמנם ע"ס דרושו זה ממסכת נדה (עיי"ש) רצה להסיק שחגיגה זו אינה נהגת בנשים. כי ידוע שכל הנשמות זכר ונקבה באות, כי כל אחד הוא פלג בלבד, והזכר הוא עיקר היצירה והנקבה נכללת בו, ולכן כשיצא לאור העולם משביעין אותו לבדו ובוה מושבעת ג"כ בת זוגו בבת אחת אבל לא נשבעת בפני עצמה . . . וע"כ לא עושים חגיגת יום הלידה, וחגיגת בת שנים עשרה שנה, וחגיגת בת שבעים לנשים.
ע"כ י"ל בראש וראשונה שתמוה להסיק מסקנא הלכית-מעשית ע"ס דרוש אגדי שדרש מעצמו. אמנם עיקר דבריו הם ע"ס מ"ש יעב"ץ בריש "מגדל עוז" (קודם לנחל הראשון) עיי"ש בביאור טעם חגיגת "שבוע הבן" דוקא — ולא בבת (סברתו השניה שם). ברם הדברים שם עיקרם מוסבים על ענין השבועה דוקא, ותמיהה לומר שמשום כך לא תודה להשי"ת על אורך חייה וימי שנותיה, כפי שאינה פטורה מחמת כך משאר מצות הודאות ושבתות! והלאו בחוש מוכח שגילאיהם שונים זמ"ז, וממילא לענין הודאות השנים פשיטא שאין סברה זו שייכת כלל וכלל. (ואפשר שתליא במה שהערנו לעיל אי תליא במזל — וכו' שמא שוים הם — או תליא בגיל, וצ"ב).

ואף לסברא הנ"ל ששב וחוגג יום "הבר מצוה" (תשובות וביאורים) הנ"ל ע"ס זו"ח) מסתבר כך גם לבת, השבה וחוגגת יום היכנסה לעול חובת קיום מצות, יום בת המצוה. [ואכן מה ששם שלל כל ג' החגיגות — אנו מצדדים בכולן, ואכמ"ל, ואין כל הכרח סתירה בינן ובין "כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה"].

משום כך לא מצינו אף לא לאחד מן הפוסקים וכלל הדנים בנושא שמצא לנכון להסתייג מחגיגה זו לנשים, וכל הסברות הסיבות והטעמים הנאמרים בשבח חגיגה זו שייכים לתרומיה, הן גברים הן נשים, והמחייב זאת לאלה — לא ימנע זאת מאלה.

הגיעו לגיל שבעים, והעיד ע"כ גם הרב "שמח נפש". כן ציינו שם שידוע על השד"ח שאף הוא חגג יום זה בקרב תלמידיו, וכן ר' שמואל מוהליבר, הרב עזריאל הילדסהיימר, הרב שמואל סאלאנט ועוד ועוד.

נמצא שחגיגת גיל השבעים היא כבר היתה נתלת הכלל ובהחלט נפוצה בישראל⁶⁴, ואם בגיל ששים פחות נהגו, הרי כאן שנפק גם ממיתה ביד"ש בהחלט היה מקום לציין היום, לחוג ולהודות לבורא כל נשמות המחזירן ומקיימו.

אגב כך יש שהוסיפו לדון גם אודות חגיגת גיל השמונים, בהטעימים שבו אפשר ושוב לא שייך גם "כרת דיומי"⁶⁵. האריך לדון בכך בשו"ת "בית ישראל" הנ"ל המוסיף להעיר שגם מי שכבר חגג יום הולדת השבעים ישוב ויחוג בהגיעו לגיל השמונים. כן משמע גם מ"קול החיים" שהחל מגיל שבעים ישוב ויחוג בכל שנה ושנה⁶⁶. ואכן הרב שמואל סאלאנט נהג בהגיעו לגיל שמונים — מה שנהג בהגיעו לשבעים⁶⁷.

מעשים והנהגות כימי הולדת

יג. לאחר שנמצאנו למדים שימי הולדת — בכלל וימי הולדת ייחודיים בפרט — בהחלט נהגו רבים משלמי אמוני ישראל לצינם ולחוגם, צריכים אנו עתה לדון ולברר כיצד ובאיזה אופן נהגו לחוג ולציין ימים אלה — הן הרגילים והן הייחודיים — ומתוך כך תודע דרך ההנהגה הנכונה בכך.

בראש וראשונה המליצו ונהגו לערוך סעודה, וסעודה זו חשובה תהיה

64) אם כי בשו"ת "בית ישראל" הנ"ל כתב "ומה שאין העולם עושין סעודת בר ששים או בר שבעים או בר שמונים רק מקצת מועיר אנשים, הוא לדעתי משום שחוששין מחשש עין הרע שלא ישלוט ח"ו בהם ע"כ מסתירין שנותיהם. אבל מי שרוצה לעשות יש לו סמך מן הגמרא הנ"ל דמו"ק" — נמצא שהכליל גיל השבעים בכלל אלה שהעם לא נהג לעשותם. ברם מכל הנ"ל — דיוני הפוסקים, עדויותיהם ומעשיהם — משמע לא כך.

65) כ"כ בספר "יד אפרים" אות י"א. וראה "שדי חמד" מערכת כף כלל קמ"ח. עו"ר במאמר רד"מ אייזנשטיין הנ"ל (שם אות ט') למחלוקת החכ"צ והחיד"א בנדון (ור"ל שבגיל שמונים גם אביי דמו"ק יודה לרב יוסף — עיי"ש).

66) הו"ע חיבר קונטרס זה כאשר זיכהו ה' וחנונו להגיע לגיל שמונים, אזי סידר הקונט' המיועד לכל המגיע לגיל שבעים ואילך (וחתם חיבורו — הצעיר חיים פאלאגי ס"ט!). וראה סוף הערה 81.

67) נתינת צדקה בסך מקביל למספר שנותיו; ובהגיעו לגיל התשעים כבר ייסדו עסקני ירושלים מפעל חסד על שמו. בהגיע הח"ח לגיל זה — תשעים — סיים קונטרסו "בית ישראל", ערך סעודה לכמה ממקורביו ושם ציין את החסד הגדול שבזכות ספרי "חפץ חיים" האריך הבורא ימיו, ועורר אותם בשמירת הלשון (כ"כ ב"שנה בשנה" הנ"ל). ובספר "הלכות והליכות בר מצוה" להרב בנימין ארלר בפרק ט"ו הערה 90 ציין שהגר"ש כהנמן מפונבויז סיפר שנקרא עם חברו להח"ח ואמר להם שהיום מלאו לו שבעים, ובירך בפניהם שהחיינו על בגד שהכין. עו"ר בספר "החפץ חיים, חייו ופעלו" להרב ישר, ח"א עמ' כ"ה ושי"ב. וראה לעיל סוף הערה 62.

כסעודת מצוה! אם המדובר בגיל ייחודי כששים, מוכח" ממעשהו של רב יוסף בגמ' מו"ק הנ"ל שסעודה זו בעצמותה הינה סעודת מצוה, דהלוא ערך סעודה זו לרבנן", רבנן שאינם אוכלים בסעודה שאינה של מצוה — כמבואר בפסחים מ"ט א' —! מכאן ראייה שסעודת חגיגת גיל הששים, ומסתבר כן גם בחגיגת גיל השבעים, "סעודת מצוה" היא בעצמותה, וכן משמע גם ממ"ש הפמ"ג" שסעודה זו של גיל השבעים חשיבא סעודת מצוה, ואכן הרב חיים פאלאג'י בספרו "קול החיים" הנ"ל המליץ אף הוא "לעשות גם כן סעודת אליהו יומא טבא לרבנן . . ." וכן "בן איש חי" הנ"ל ציין עריכת סעודה ביום ההולדת, ובחסידות העידו על הבעש"ט שנהג לערוך סעודה בכל שנה בי"ח אלול.

ברם יש" שהסתפקו אם סעודה זו כשלעצמה לבדה חשיבא סעודת מצוה, ולכן כתבו לדרוש שם בד"ת ועל ידי כך להפכה לסעודת מצוה. ואכן כך נראה להמליץ לכהפ"ח לימי הולדת הרגילים — ולא הייחודים כששים ושבעים —, דעל אף שבמדרש "חמאת החמדה" שצויין לעיל — אות ב' — נאמר שנהגו לערוך "סעודה גדולה", מ"מ יתכן שרק ע"י ד"ת הפכה לסעודת מצוה. וגם לסברה הנ"ל שזו סעודת הודאה (ובייחוד גיל שבעים — כמקו"ח הנ"ל) גם כן מן הראוי לדרוש אודות הודאה זו. ואמנם על אף שבעדותו של הרח"ד חזן בספר "ישרי לב" הנ"ל נאמר שערך סעודה ביום שהגיע לגיל שבעים — וכן נהג מידי שנה מאז ואילך — ושם לא ציין דרשות ד"ת, אולם הרב "שמח נפש" הנ"ל המעיד אף הוא על אירוע זה הוסיף ע"כ . . . בסעודה של מצוה הנו' המלאה לה תורה וקדושה ויראת ה'". הרי לנו שנהגו לדרוש התם, גם כשהמדובר בחגיגת גיל השבעים. וגם הח"ח שערך סעודה ליום הולדתו התשעים דרש במוסר ויראת שמים. לפיכך מצאנו שבני משפחת החת"ס" הידרו לערוך "סיום" ביום חגיגת זה, ובכך שילבו עניינה של החגיגה בסעודה, בדברי תורה עם ה"סיום".

68) ראייה זו שהובאה בשו"ת "בית ישראל" הנ"ל (ועיי"ש שהוסיף להאריך לדון בגדרי סעודת מצוה) פושטת ספקו של החו"י בנדון — בשו"ת סי' ע'. ועי' בספר "יד אפרים" הנ"ל אות ט', י'. עו"ר "נפש חיה" הנ"ל שאף הוא צידד בעריכת סעודה; ור' בשו"ת "אפרקסתא דעניא" הנ"ל שהסכים אף הוא לסעודה — לגיל שבעים —, וע"ע שו"ת "גנוי יוסף" סי' ד' אות ב'.

69) אם כי יש להעיר שרבינו חננאל התם אינו מציין שעשה סעודה לרבנן! 70) פמ"ג או"ח סי' תמ"ד מ"ש"ו סק"ט [שם האריך לדון בכלל סעודת מצוה — וסיים "ועדיין צ"ע בכל זה, אולי אוכה לפרשם במקום אחר יותר באורך"]. 71) שו"ת חו"י סי' ע', וכן בפת"ש יו"ד סי' רי"ז סק"ט"ו . . . מ"מ לא יחוייב שיהא סעודת מצוה, לכן ראוי לדרוש בהם".

72) על החת"ס עצמו העידו (בספר מנהגי חת"ס פרק ז' אות י"ד) שסיים החומש עם התלמידים בני תשרי — הוא יום לידתו, ועל הכת"ס העיד בנו בהקדמתו "אהל לאה" הנ"ל: והיה רגיל מימי נעוריו לסיים על יום זה איזה מסכתא, וכדמשמע גם מתשובתו הנזכרת לעיל. (גם על חרוה"ך כתב ב"לקט יושר" שסיים מסכתא ביום שהגיע לששים).

יד. לבד מעריכת סעודה ובה דרשה מעין המאורע לכבוד יום זה, מצינו ג' סהנהגות נוספות לימי ההולדת, בראש וראשונה — נתינת צדקה, בין אם סכום כל שהוא ובין אם סכום המקביל למספר שנות חייו, וכן גם עליה לתורה נהוגה בחב"ד ביום זה. כדברי האדמו"ר שליט"א " . . . בטח ינהג כמנהג אנ"ש — בזמן האחרון — ביום ההולדת, בעליה לתורה ביום זה עצמו אם הוא יום הקריאה או בשבת שלפניו באם אינו יום הקריאה, נתינה לצדקה קודם תפילת שחרית ומנחה ואם חל בש"ק או ביום טוב אז ביום שלפניו, ולימוד שיעור נוסף בתורת הנגלה ובתורת החסידות נוסף על שיעוריו הקבועים ועל שלשת השעורים השונים לכל נפש . . . בחת"ת (חומש תורה תניא) הידועים, ללמד ביום זה".

נוסף לכך כתב כי "ביום ההולדת על האדם להתבודד ולהעלות זכרונותיו ולהתבונן בהם, והצריכים תיקון ותשובה ישוב ויתקנם" — הוה אומר זהו יום של חשבון הנפש! וכפי שנהג כת"ס ביום הולדתו הנ"ד בשהותו בבודפשט כאשר הורה לשמשו לבל יתן לאנשים לבקרו ביום זה, והוא עצמו בחדרו ד"ן את עצמו "מה עשה ובמה עסק כל שנותיו — ועל דא קא בכינא".

לסיכום נמצאנו למדים שלבד מעריכת סעודה ודרשה מעניינו של יום, נהגו ליתן צדקה, לעלות לתורה, ולהתבונן ולשוב בתשובה, כל אלה הם עניינים הנהוגים בכל ימי ההולדת, אולם הייחודיים שבהם, ובעיקר גיל השבעים, העלת דיון בענין נוסף — ברכת שהחיינו!

טו. בשו"ת "חות יאיר" סי' ע' צידד הרב יאיר בכרך לברך ברכת שהחיינו בשם ומלכות בהגיע האדם לגיל שבעים שנה, דעתו זו של החו"י הובאה גם בפת"ש יו"ד סי' רי"ז ס"ק ט"ז, הכותב על כך "כך נראה לי". וכן סבר השואל בשו"ת "אפרקסתא דעניא" הנ"ל — וע"ע בספר "יד אפרים" הנ"ל אות י' ובשו"ת "בית ישראל" הנ"ל.

אולם מרבית הפוסקים לא הסכימו לברך ברכה זו, בכל אופן לא בשם ומלכות, ואף הסתפקו האמנם דעתו של החו"י עצמו היתה ודאית לברך בגיל שבעים שהחיינו. זאת משום שבסי' רל"ז דן החו"י באריכות

(73) בקובץ "תשובות וביאורים" הנ"ל — סי' נ' (עו"ר "לקוטי שיחות" כרך ה' עמ' 86 בהערה אחרונה בשולי הגליון, וכן ב"ספר המנהגים" — מנהגי חב"ד — עמ' 81). נתינת צדקה בסך המקביל לשנותיו מצאנוה אצל ר' שמואל סאלאנט (לעיל הע' 67). ב"בטאון חב"ד" הנ"ל הע' 61 הוסיף להביא מנהג לומר "קאפיטל תהלים המתאים למספר שנותיו החל מיום ההולדת וכו'", ועיי"ש הערה 23.

(74) "תשובות וביאורים" הנ"ל, ור' "לקוטי שיחות" הנ"ל וכן "לוח היום יום" (יום ששי) י"א ניסן (ה'תש"ג) [הוא יום הולדתו של האדמו"ר שליט"א]. דומה לכך אמר ר' שמואל מוהליבר שוהו הבדל ישראל מאוה"ע, הללו בימי הולדתם עושים חשבון אחרים — משיב שר המשקים למקומו ואת שר האופים תולה — ואילו ישראל ביום הולדתו עושה חשבון נפשו הוא!

בגדרי ברכה זו, ואדרבה מחמיר הוא בכו"כ אופנים". ואכן בשו"ת "תשובה מאהבה" כתב מחמת ספק זה "לא מלאני לבי להורות שבן שבעים שנה יברך שהחיינו, כי גם מפשט לשון בעל חות יאיר לא נראה כ"כ הלכה למעשה כ"א עלה ומסתפק. . .".

לכן הכריעו מרבית הפוסקים שהרוצה לברך — יברך בלא שם ומלכות. כפי שכתב החיד"א ב"שירי ברכה" או"ח סי' רכ"ג אות ב' "וכל שיברך

(75) ע"מ לברך שהחיינו הצריך כו"כ תנאים: שיהיה לא שכיחא נבעצם ולא במקרה, דהיינו אף אם הו"ע לא הניח תפילין זמן מסוים — המצוה עצמה תדירה היא, שיהיה זה דבר שמעולם לא קרה לו, וכן שאינה חובה. ושם כותב הוא במפורש דלא כב"ח — להלן הע' 77 — וסובר שברכת שהחיינו חובה היא ולא רשות. ואם מחמיר הוא החו"י כ"כ בברכה זו — ספק אם היה מיקל לגבי גיל שבעים; מה עוד שעיקר דיונו בסי' ע' כלל אינו מוסב על כך כ"א אודות סעודות מצוה והגדרתן, וענין הברכה לא הוזכר אלא אגב גרדא. (ועוד, בלשונו בדפוסים דידן נרשם "אפילו זה הבן שבעים מברך שהחיינו כי כך נ"ל", שהחיינו דייקא ולא שהחיינו — אפשר שאינו אלא לשון הודאה ולא ברכה! אמנם בפת"ש הגו' גרס "שהחיינו"). אם כי כל הטעמים לשלילה שמנה בסי' רל"ז אינם שייכים לענין גיל השבעים, ולכן עדיין איכא לאיסתפוקי בדעתו הלכה למעשה.

(76) שו"ת "תשובה מאהבה" לר' אלעזר פלעקלש — חלק שני סי' רל"ט (דף ט"ז ע"ב); שם דן בדבר ברכת שהחיינו למדליקה נרות — לראשונה — בער"ש, ושלל הברכה מטעם דנרות ער"ש חובה ניהו, ומ"ש הט"ז בסי' כ"ב היינו דוקא במצוה. מתוך כך דן בגדרי נשים בברכת שהחיינו ובקידוש, ועוד הרחיב בגדרי ברכה זו — עיי"ש. והפמ"ג (או"ח סי' תמ"ד — מש"ז אות ט' כתב על דברי החו"י "וצ"ע"!) (עו"ר בהקדמת ר' שלום קוטנא לספר "משחת אהרן" על מס' נדה מאביו הר"א קוטנא — שם בדף ח"ט האריך לדון בדברי הב"ח והתשובה מאהבה הנ"ל; ורצה לבאר החו"י עפ"י הב"ח, דבר הנדחה בהערה הסמוכה).

(77) נראה להעיר שאין לבאר שיטת החו"י ולהצדיק ברכת שהחיינו בהסתמכות על שיטת הב"ח (או"ח סי' כ"ט) הכותב " . . . ברכת שהחיינו, שבאה על שמחת לבו של אדם יכול לברך אף על פי שאינו ודאי דחייב לברך, דאינו עובר על לא תשא אם הוא שמח ומברך לו יתעלה על שהחיינו וקיימו עד הזמן הזה . . . " (ובכך שונה ברכה זו מכלל שאר הברכות — עיי"ש) ור' הב"ח באו"ח סי' תל"ב, ואליה רבה או"ח סי' כ"ב המסכים לכך והוכיח כן מברכות ס', וכן כתב הצ"ח ברכות שם. עו"ר בחת"ס או"ח סי' ג"ה וכן תבוא"ש סי' כ"ח סק"ד, ובשו"ת קול מבשר ח"א סי' כ"א אות ו' [שם בנוגע לברכת שהחיינו ליום העצמאות — עיי"ש]. דומה לכך ראה ברמ"א או"ח סי' רכ"ג ס"א — " . . . יש שכתבו להקל בברכה זו שאינה חובה אלא רשות, ומה נתפשט שרבים מקילים באלו הברכות" (ור' רמ"א סי' רכ"ה ס"ק) ובמג"א שם סק"ג "בברכה זו — ברכת שהחיינו" (ומתוך כך באו להקל גם בשאר ברכות, וזה אינו נכון, ועי' בה"ט שם סק"ד). ובשו"ת "תשובה מאהבה" הנ"ל הוסיף ראייה לשיטת הב"ח מעירובין מ' ע"ב — עיי"ש. לשיטה זו כמוכן ברכת שהחיינו קילא משאר ברכות וניתן לברכה גם מספק, ובלבד ששמח הוא. אמנם את החו"י הנ"ל אין זה יכול לבאר, באשר בסי' רל"ז במפורש חולק הוא על שיטה מעין זו — אם כי לא ציין הב"ח — והו"ע סובר דהוה ברכה לבטלה! ולכן תבנא לספיקא בדעת החו"י גופיה בנדון דא — ברכת שהחיינו למגיע לגיל שבעים, למעשה. אמנם רד"מ אייזנשטיין הנ"ל ציין שהגרי"א מקומרנא כתב בפשיטות לברך שהחיינו בשו"מ בגיל השבעים. ועו"ר כ"ש שם משו"ת הד"ר סי' י"ח ומשו"ת מהרא"ב ח"ב סי' ס"א.

בלא שם ומלכות מאחר שלא כתבוהו הראשונים". אף הרב אליעזר דייטש (אב"ד באניהאד בעמח"ס תבואות השדה) כתב "לא לברך בשו"מ משום שלא צויינה ברכה זו בפוסקים, ולכך מוסיף "שמי יאמר זכיתי לבי שהשלים עצמו בימי חייו... וכיון שאינו יודע אם השלים חובתו בימי חייו לא שייך ברכה על זה".

גם מתשובתו הנ"ל של הכת"ס משמע שכאשר הגיע לגיל חמישים — שאינו גיל ייחודי — הודה להשי"ת ברבים על שהחיינו וקיימו לזמן הזה", והוסיף והסמיק לכך הודאה על שעבר ובקשה על העתיד — עיי"ש. נראה שאף הוא הודה וברך מעין ברכת שהחיינו בלא שם ומלכות". בכך דרך הכת"ס בדרכי אביו אשר כתב בהגהותיו לאו"ח סי' רכ"ה — אחר שציין תשובת חו"י בגדון — "ונראה לברך בלא שם ומלכות". [אם כי חת"ס כ"כ בנוגע לגיל שבעים, והכת"ס נהג כך בצינו גיל החמישים!].

אמנם הרוצה בכל זאת לברך "שהחיינו" ברכה כצורתה עם שם ומלכות, יוכל ליקח דבר-מה חדש וכדו' וע"כ יברך שהחיינו בלא פקפוק — ויכוון אתרווייהו, כפי שכתב הר"ח פאלאג'י ב"קול החיים" הנ"ל: "ואשרי תבחר ותקרב מי שהשלים ע' שנה ללבוש בגד חדש ולומר שהחיינו ולכוין נמי על שזכה ה' להשלים ע' שנה", וכן כתב הר"א דייטש הנ"ל "יודע אני שיש איזה אנשי מעשה שבכל שנה כשמגיע יום הולדת אותם שמהדרין לברך שהחיינו על איזה פרי או בגד חדש, אבל ברכה מיוחדת לא תקנו". הרי שציין מנהג זה של "צירוף" ברכת שהחיינו לא רק לגיל שבעים כי אם בכל שנה ושנה". "ומעשה רב" — הראשל"צ הרח"ד חזן נהג כן, כדבריו "לבשתי בגד חדש וברכתי, כדי לצאת ידי שניהם...".

(78) כמובא בשו"ת "גנוי יוסף" (ספרי המאסף של חתנו הרב יוסף הכהן שווארץ) סימן ד' אות ב'. אף הרב דוד שפרבר בשו"ת "אפרקסתא דעניא" הנ"ל שלל ברכה בשו"מ בהסתמכו על ב' הסברות: א. לא מצאנו שתיקנוהו חז"ל. וב. אין כלל לשמוח שקרב לבית עולמו [למרות שמוכח שיש לשמוח בסעודה — בכ"ו לברך אין ראיה, עיי"ש]. והרב עוזיאל ז"ל — "אור המאיר" הנ"ל עמ' סו — שלל ברכת שהחיינו על דבר שאינו בא בבת אחת כ"א בזה אחר זה משך ימים ושנים, עיי"ש.

(79) ואף שילב ענין זה בסיימו דוקא מסכת פסחים — הדנה בסופה בגדון ברכת שהחיינו.

(80) גם בשו"ת "אפרקסתא דעניא" הנ"ל — בהערה שם — הסיק שרק "הודה להשי"ת על תוכן הברכה".

אף "בן איש חי" הנזכר לעיל לא הזכיר כלל ברכת שהחיינו, ואך ציין הודאה ובקשה שנהג לומר ביום זה, עיי"ש.

(81) עור' בספר "יד אפרים" הנ"ל אותיות י"א. [הסמכה וצירוף זה של ברכת שהחיינו שייך כמובן כו"כ אופנים, כמקרה המובא בשו"ת "בית ישראל" הנ"ל שהסמיכו לשהחיינו דיו"ט]. לצירוף זה של ברכת שהחיינו על בגד או פרי"ח צידד גם כף החיים (או"ח סי' רכ"ג אות כ"ח-כ"ט) וכ"כ הר"א פאפו (בעמח"ס פלא יועץ) בספרו "חסד לאלפים" (חרושי דינים על או"ח — דף קל"ה ב' אות ח', שם מונה כו"כ דברים שיש מחלוקת אם לברך עליהם שהחיינו — כגמירת ספר חידו"ת, או העולה לגדולה, וכן

הוא אומר — לספק ברכת שהחיינו נכנסנו, ומידי ספק לא יצאנו, ולכן השמח ביום הולדתו וחפץ בכל מאודו לברך ברכה זו, יראה להסמיכה ל"שהחיינו" נוסף.

טו. נוסף למנהגים שהוזכרו לעיל, יש שהוסיפו ורשמו מזמורים פסוקים ותחינות שונות לאומרם ביום חגיגי וחשוב זה, בייחוד ע"מ לאומרם החל מגיל שבעים. הר"ח פאלאג'י הקדיש רוב ספרו "קול החיים" הנ"ל ללקט לקבץ ולאסוף פסוקים מקראות דרשות ומאמרי זוהר לרוב אשר מן הראוי לאומרם ביום זה". הרב יצחק פאלאג'י המליץ לומר החל מגיל ע' ומעלה, "בכל יום מזמור ק"ג, ובח"ה מספרו "יפה ללב" כתב "על זאת יתפלל בנוסח זה: יהי רצון מלפניך ה' או"א שתחדש כנשר נעורינו לתת חוזק ואומץ וכח ובריאות בכל אברינו וגידנו ונהיה מיושבים בדעתנו ועינינו מאירות, ואל יתן למוט רגלינו עד מלאת ימי שנותינו בגבורות שמונים שנה והותר, אך ימים שנות חיים יוסיפו לנו, חיים של טובה וכבוד, חיים שאין בהם בושה וכלימה, ויחד לבכנו לעבדך עבודה תמה עבודה שלימה כיר"א".

אמור מעתה, כל המעין בפתח דברינו ובכללות הביאור יסיק מעצמו היחס הנכון לאירוע זה.

* * *

לסיום וחיתום יתברכו המגיעים לחוג ימי הולדתם, ובעיקר אלה שזכו והאריכו ימים משנות השיבה ואילך בברכה שאמרו רבנן כי מפטרי מהדדי בפומבדיתא — "מחיה חיים יתן לך חיים ארוכים טובים ומתוקנים" (יומא עא א) ויגיעו לשנות מאה ועשרים הגיל שהגיעו אליו גדולי האומה: משה רבינו, הלל הזקן ריב"ז ור"ע (ראה סוף ספרי ברכה פי' שנו) *.

על האשה כשנגמרו השידוכין, ועוד — וראוי לברך בלא הזכרת שו"מ או שילבש בגד חדש ויפטור) "וכן כשהגיע לששים שנה ולשבעים שנה ראוי להודות לה' ולברך שהחיינו בלי הזכרת שם ומלכות; וגדולה מזאת אני אומר שראוי לברך לה' מידי יום על שהחיהו והגיעו ליום חדש וטוב להודות לה' על כל פרט ופרט על כל הטובה ויתן הודאה לשעבר ויתפלל על העתיד...".

והר"ח פאלאג'י הנ"ל העיד על עצמו בספרו "גנוזי חיים" (מערכת יו"ד אות ט"ז — יומא סבא), שנהג לעשות סעודה לרבנן ותלמידיהוהן משנת ע' ואילך בכל שנה ושנה ביום שנולד "ובתשלום ע' ברכת שהחיינו על מלבוש חדש".
(82) בספרו "ישרי לב" הנ"ל — שם מפורש בנוגע לגיל השבעים; לגבי חגיגת הגילאים שאח"כ צ"ב שם וב"שמח נפש" הנ"ל. עו"ר שו"ת "גנוזי יוסף" ושו"ת "עשה לך רב" הנ"ל.

(83) עיין שם אות ב' — נוסח התפילה. אות ג' — "קרא מקרא". אות ד' — להרגיל ללמוד ספר קהלת; אח"כ הביא וציטט הרבה מאמרי זוהר.

(84) בספרו "יפה ללב" חלק שמיני או"ח סי' דכ"ג. (עו"ר תפילתו ובקשתו של כת"ס בתשובתו הנ"ל).

(85) ראה "אוצר דרשות" הנ"ל.