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Considering Candles and Cake

Daniel Jeremy Silver

I have always taken birthdays for granted. Blowing out birthday candles and licking the icing off a chocolate cake was an annual, much-anticipated event during my childhood. I turned fifty the other day and for the first time I gave some serious thought to this familiar and innocent celebration. To my surprise I found that I had engaged in a significant celebration of the democratic ideal.

The birthday story is worth retelling. Once upon a time there were no birthday celebrations and still, today, the annual birthday party is a rare event in peasant societies. Many cultures pay little or no attention to the birthday anniversary; though in almost all, the actual day of a child's birth is the occasion of special rites and taboos. In most societies the omens of the actual birthday are held to determine the newborn's fate; so much so that among certain African tribes infants born on unlucky days were put to death for their own good.

The annual birthday celebration entered Jewish life quite recently. The Bible contains no record of the birthday of any Hebrew, Israelite or Judean nor, for that matter, does the Talmud mention the birthday of any Tanna or Amora. The Encyclopedia Judaica has a one-inch entry under the rubric, "Birthday", which begins with this dismissal: "The celebration of birthdays is unknown in traditional Jewish ritual." The midrash equips most Biblical notables with a birthday. It turns out that Moses was born on the seventh day of Adar, but this is obviously medieval invention. People of consequence knew their birthdays. People of no consequence did not. Moses was a man of consequence so his birthday must be known and noted. In this midrashic convention we begin to touch my thesis that the universality of the modern celebration represents a significant change in popular attitudes towards the significance of ordinary people's lives.

The Bible contains a single specific reference to an annual birthday celebration. When Joseph spurned the advances of Potiphar's wife, he was jailed on charges brought by that frustrated woman. In jail Joseph made the acquaintance of two fellow prisoners who, before their incarceration, had been senior officials in Pharaoh's court. One night those gentlemen experienced highly symbolic dreams. They reported these to Joseph who had gained some notoriety as an interpreter of visions. Joseph explained to the chief cupbearer that he was being told that he would be returned to royal favor in three days' time. The chief baker's dream was less fortunate. He would be beheaded on the day his fellow inmate was pardoned. The storyteller insists that Joseph's talent was divinely inspired, "interpretation belongs to God" (Gen. 40:8); but his audience might well have come to a more realistic explanation. It must have been common knowledge that three days hence Pharaoh would celebrate Yom Holad et Pharaoh, his birthday, and it was customary during that annual celebration for pardons to be pronounced and executions ordered.

How did the king celebrate his birthday? He organized and paid for elaborate sacrifices at the royal shrine. He invited the court to a sumptuous repast at which his wealth was conspicuously displayed. He laid on special entertainment for the citizens of the capital. He dispensed summary judgment. His birthday was a day of pardons and executions. Prisoners had good reason to anticipate this fateful day.

Incidentally, it appears that royal birthdays were not always celebrated on an annual basis. In some Near Eastern communities the New Year's day was arbitrarily designated as the king's birthday. The First Book of Maccabees describes a royal birthday celebrated monthly. It seems that among the tyrannies which Antiochus' government imposed on Judea before the revolt was a law requiring participation in the monthly sacrifice celebrating the emperor's birth (6:7). We sometimes forget

that a fixed annual calendar became universal only in comparatively modern times.

We do not know whether the Bible's silence about birthday celebrations by and for Israel's kings can be accepted as proof that these minor potentates, in fact, never organized such occasions. The lack of any such citation may simply be evidence of the piety of editors who recognized that these celebrations were organized for magical and idolatrous purposes. In ancient times the royal birthday celebration was a power-filled magical rite. In those days a country's prosperity and security depended upon the leader's energy, vitality and effective power. An aging king lacked the concentration to think through hard issues of policy or carry out long-range and difficult policies. A burned-out king could not be a decisive field marshal. David's kingdom suffered repeated defeats and civil strife during his dotage. Palace plots often were initiated by those who sensed that the prince's will had weakened and who rationalized their disloyalty and ambitions as being in the best interests of the nation.

How could a king delay or prevent that loss of strength which comes with age? Only by magic. The royal birthday was a ritualized attempt to replicate the original birthday and so to place the king again at the moment of his birth when the full possibility of his life lay before him. It was also a ritualized attempt to place the king again under the propitious omens which had governed at his birth and which had, till that moment, successfully guided his life. Cultural anthropologists list these royal birthday celebrations as an inversion of a classic form of sympathetic magic. Normally, sympathetic magic attempted to influence future events by organizing what was, in effect, a dress rehearsal, complete with happy ending. Here the attempt is made to repeat what has been in order to regain an original advantage. Our familiar greeting, y'yasher koha-ha, suggests the purpose of the ancient magic; so does the rather lugubrious prayer, 'For Notable Birthday Anniversary', included in The Rabbi's

Manual, which ends with the Psalm text: "He asked life of Thee, Thou gavest it to him, even length of days forevermore" (21:4).

I have not made an exhaustive search of references to birthdays celebrated in post-Biblical texts, but a quick review comes up with only two. Interestingly, both relate to princes of that most unJewish of all Jewish royal lines, the house of Herod. One story appears in Josephus and describes the birthday feast at which Agrippa rescinded the exile of General Silas (Ant. 19:7:1); the other involves Antipas and is well known from the New Testament. The editor of the gospel of Matthew tells that Herod's grandson, Antipas, celebrated a birthday in high style. At this time Antipas was married to Herodias who had a beautiful daughter by an earlier marriage. At his feast Antipas asked Herodias to have her daughter dance for him. So enticing was the dance that Herodias was carried away to the point where he told the girl: 'Ask what you will and I will give it to you.' The daughter, ever dutiful, turned to her mother who was at that moment in a royal fit because she had been put down by John the Baptist. 'Demand the head of John.' It was given to her on a platter. What better display of a king's power?

Some have argued that when Jeremiah (20:14) and Job (3:1) cursed the day on which each was born, the language suggests some form of birthday observance. Not so. No more is suggested than the common belief that a person's fate is determined by the omens or astrological facts present on the actual day on which they are born. What did Job actually say when he "cursed his day?" "Let the day perish wherein I was born" (3:2). He damns the fact that the bad omens present at his birth could not be avoided and have now caught up with him. The medieval piety that the righteous die on the anniversary of their birth presents us a later variation on this theme. The original signs had been propitious, as their lives proved; so the recurrence of these signs was a guarantee of a good death, and of a propitious new life in the World to Come since omens of proven benefit would control the fate of the righteous in his new existence.

In Christian martyrologies, the day of death was the day of a saint's true birth and the anniversary of his death was celebrated with a birthday feast. After all, his death was his birth. In the midrash the seventh of Adar is Moses' day of death as well as his birthday.

We return to the question why the Bible fails to report that David or any royal successor celebrated his birthday. Why the absence in the Jewish tradition of a common practice among all neighboring peoples? There may be no reason at all. The chroniclers may simply have had no occasion to report such an event. Arguments from silence must remain suspect, but our tradition's long-lived disinterest in such celebrations provides probable cause to assume that even if some king had held a birthday court, he was aping another culture rather than responding to domestic interests.

Those who have speculated on this question generally claim that we have here another bit of evidence of the power of the rule requiring Jewish separation from idolatry. The familiar royal birthday featured lavish sacrifices to the gods. The games sponsored by the king on his day were not innocent public entertainment, but events formally dedicated to the dynasty's gods. Obviously, a royal birthday was familiar as a cultic event. So the argument runs, for David or any of the rest to have organized such celebrations would have raised the suspicion that they engaged in idolatrous practices. A mishnah (A. Z. 1:3) is often cited by way of confirmation. This text declares the birthdays of gentile kings to be pagan holidays during which Jews must observe certain restrictions as regards their dealings with non-Jews. It is a pious argument, but one of doubtful merit. The Amoraic discussion of the mishnah makes it clear that the sages had not the faintest idea what a birthday celebration involved. Birthday celebrations simply did not impinge in any major way on Jewish life. Moreover, Israel's kings simply were not scrupulous in such matters. Some set up idols. Some worshipped before terebinths. Many allowed their wives to in-

introduce pagan altars and even pagan priests in the royal shrine.

I would suggest that Israelite indifference of the royal birthday is a consequence of our people's somewhat unique perception of royal power. In the settled communities of Egypt and West Asia, the king was known as the agent of the gods to his people; and all the ceremonial and religious activities of the community underscored the claim that the king was ^RMaduk's or Ra's designed representative to Babylon or Egypt, ^{who} ~~and he~~ had been granted essentially unrestricted authority to carry out his task. Royal power was sometimes burdensome, but the legitimacy of the king's authority was not questioned. The king acted for the High God.

Pre-exilic Israel had a less exalted view of royal authority. Kol Yisrael, the tribal council, never acknowledged that God had placed the king over them as His fully empowered representative. In one well-known tradition God accedes, with manifest sadness, to the demands of a frightened people that a king be appointed. In other nations the king regularly promulgated fundamental law albeit in the name of his God. In Israel the terms of the covenant had been proclaimed, once and for all, through Moses and there is no surviving account of a king publishing constitutional law. A Torah law required that the king write out by hand a copy of the covenant and keep it by him (Deut. 17:14ff). This ritual of obedience may never have been actually complied with, but its inclusion as revelation and the importance of the legends in which Nathan and Elijah confront kings who had broken specific Torah laws indicate how little Israel accepted a prince's divine right to rule as he willed.

Moreover, the faith took a strong stand against the idea current in most other communities that national security depended largely on the well-being of the king. The official faith made it official that prosperity, victory, rain, depend not on mighty men or strong kings but on hesed, obedience to the covenant. The prophetic

tradition reenforced covenant theology, "Not by power nor by might, but by my spirit, sayeth the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). In such a cultural setting it is doubtful that pressure would build up for the celebration of a rite designed to renew the king's strength.

To the classical world one other group of men seems to have celebrated birthdays. Incidentally, I know of no classic reference to a woman's birthday. Diogenes Laertes reports that the disciples of Epicurus, the fourth century Greek philosopher, celebrated his birthday at an annual feast and that this master enjoined the continuation of this custom after his death. In our day, philosophers clearly have lost a good bit of status. The label, philosopher-king, with all its implications, has long since been replaced by the stereotype of the slightly absent-minded professor. In the Greek mindset the renewal of strength was as vital to a philosopher's effectiveness as to a king's for the philosopher lived not in a classroom but as an active citizen and the perfection of his virtues inevitably and properly led him to high office. A philosopher-king whose strength weakened lost part of his knowledge, hence, part of his virtue and of his ability to legislate, which is why Greek panegyric naturally insists that the likes of Socrates, Epicurus and Zeno died as had Moses, "his eyes undimmed, his vigor unabated" (Deut. 34:7).

Our sages had their own set of pretensions. The student was not only to learn from the sage, but to pattern himself after his speech and bearing for the master had internalized the Torah and his actions presented the student with concrete illustrations of the right way. The operative image, however, is not one of an enthroned king but of a nearly divine holy man/sage, and there was no tradition of birthdays among the shamans and Magi. Moreover, the fate of the community did not rest on one man. There were many who were ordained masters and the rabbis accepted with some grace the inevitability of the time when the cistern would no longer be watertight, when memory would fail. There were ~~always~~ ^{other} colleagues to intercede for Israel and to carry on the sacred teaching.

The practice of holding birthday celebrations in non-royal circles began to spread in late Roman times and became a familiar practice among the advantaged in both the Christian and Muslim worlds. It seems not to have become a common practice among Jews. Why were our people the last to accept candles and cake? Some have explained the absence of birthday celebrations as evidence of the rabbis' determination to affirm Judaism's message that no man is divine against current Christian and Muslim practice. Moses' birthday was never celebrated like that of the Jesus, Mohammed and Ali. This apologetic argument neatly overlooks the popularity of the cult of saints among Jews and the supernatural powers routinely ascribed to the patriarchs and Moses in the midrash. After being with God Moses never removed the veil from his face because his whole being was supernaturally radiant. Moses sits at the right hand of God, acting as Israel's intercessor in Heaven, ~~as he had once been the people's intercessor on earth.~~ Moreover, the Jewish pattern was established before Christmas became a familiar celebration. Origen (3rd cent.), in one of his homilies (#8 on Lev.), ~~still~~ protests celebrating the birthday of Christ "as if he were a Pharaoh." Christmas developed in the western rather than the eastern church and it is doubtful that it became a popular holiday until the close of the Talmudic period.

In Roman times, under Islam and throughout the Middle Ages, birthday feasts were relatively common in that world's urban and literate circles. There is no record of birthdays being celebrated by Jews until modern times. Neither Maimonides nor the Baal Shem received birthday cards and presents. The first indication of a birthday celebration among Jews emerged some four centuries ago when central European families began to include a feast with a son's bar mitzvah. The bar mitzvah, which till then had been little more than a fact of calendar and an aliyah, now became an occasion for family to celebrate together. It was a once in a lifetime occurrence. There

would be no fourteenth birthday feast.

Today in America almost all our children get presents and have a party. In many religious schools birthdays are noted during services. The current popularity of birthdays among Jews measures our assimilation to modern mores. Children's birthday parties first became popular during the nineteenth century among the urban Jews of western Europe. There was now a secular culture. Such parties were common in non-Jewish homes and the argument seems to have been: 'Why not?' My neighbor's birthday party for his child was harmless. Why can't my boy have one?

Birthdays were rarely celebrated in the eastern shtetls. When I began my rabbinate many older congregants, immigrants from eastern Europe, knew only that they had been born on hol ha-moed Sukkot, in the year of the Czar's abdication. Some claimed that they could remember chicken on the table at a birthday dinner, but when I pressed them to describe what happened to the birthday feast of somebody born during Adar Sheni, it becomes clear that birthdays were not a regular or regulated fact of life. I am sure that we are the first generation of rabbis who have patiently written out birthday greetings to our congregants and deemed it a mitzvah.

If we look at the historical process through which birthdays slowly emerged from a royal monopoly into common practice, two events become decisive: the regularization of the annual calendar and the spread of the democratic ideal. My awareness of being born on the 26th of March is far different from my grandfather's awareness that he had been born three days after Shabbat Ha Gadol in the year the family moved to Neunstadt. The 26th of March is a precise date which reappears every year on the calendar. The move to Neunstadt was a non-recurring event. As we look back over history, it becomes inescapable that there is a direct correlation between the spread of such anniversaries and the spread of the idea of individual worth. At first only the kings celebrated birthdays; then philosophers who thought themselves as better than kings; then the nobles and rich merchants who shared

power with the king; then all who deemed themselves personages. Boys celebrated their birthdays in Europe long before girls did. In modern peasant societies the birthday celebration is still unknown. The current popularity of birthdays can be taken as evidence of the triumph of the democratic spirit.

How shall we explain the tardy arrival of birthdays into the Jewish pattern of life? Our tradition, so we have been taught, insists on the dignity of the individual human being, B'selem demut tavnito and all that. How is it that a tradition which insists that man is created in the spiritual image of God came so tardily to this public affirmation of individual worth?

Perhaps at first it was simply the absence of imperial models. When leaders do not celebrate birthdays, ordinary folk have little desire to. But what about later? Shall we use the exclusionary rule of Hukkot ha-goyim to explain it all? Certainly, by Geonic times birthdays had become domestic rather than national and cultic events so that there would seem to have been little reason to be scrupulous in this regard. Could it have been because in our tight little world the affirmation of individual worth had to be kept separate from the affirmation of individuality? I think so. Jews knew that Kol Yisrael b'nai melachim, but, also, that our young could not be encouraged to do their thing. In the first instance, our faith rested on the imperative: 'do God's thing'. Moreover, realistically, our young could not go out and do their thing. Many professions and occupations were closed to them. There were places they could not live. There were travel papers they could not acquire. Often they could not even get permission to be married. The modern sense of untrammelled freedom is just that, modern, and the Jew is among the last arrivals to modernity. Over the ages our profound respect for persons developed within, not apart, from community discipline.

Our sages did not encourage that uniquely modern gestalt which encourages each "I" to dream the impossible dream and to place an extra candle on the cake to "make a wish", any wish. In the shtetl children had their ears boxed for asking, 'why can't I?' A Jew was encouraged to spend a good bit of time understanding the richness and subtleties of the tradition, appreciating his worth as a member of am segulah; but not to set out to find himself so that he could make his own life style decisions - pardon the jargon. In our world there were few objective reasons to encourage the celebration of personal anniversaries. What were celebrated instead were the communal anniversaries, those moments which bound close the ties of community and family.

Given this history, I find it interesting that the tradition has not attempted to proscribe birthday celebrations. No rabbi had put the birthday under the ban. Quite the contrary, a number of traditional scholars have felt deeply honored when a Festschrift was published in honor of their 70th or 75th birthday. Rabbinic tolerance of candles and cake suggests that individualism has made deeper inroads in orthodox circles than they may be aware of and that the sense of self has changed markedly in transitional as well as liberal quarters with consequences for the tradition which cannot yet be calculated.

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Daniel Jeremy Silver

I HAVE ALWAYS taken birthdays for granted. Blowing out birthday candles and licking the icing off a chocolate cake was an annual, much-anticipated event during my childhood. I turned fifty recently, and for the first time I gave some serious thought to this familiar and innocent celebration. To my surprise, I found that I had engaged in a significant celebration of the democratic ideal.

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Incidentally, it appears that royal birthdays were not always celebrated on an annual basis. In some Near Eastern communities the New Year's day was arbitrarily designated as the king's birthday. The *First Book of Maccabees* describes a royal birthday celebrated monthly. It seems that among the tyrannies which Antiochus' government imposed on Judea before the revolt was a law requiring participation in the monthly sacrifice celebrating the emperor's birth (6:7). We sometimes forget that a fixed annual calendar became universal only in comparatively modern times.

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lowed their wives to introduce pagan altars and even pagan priests in the royal shrine.

I would suggest that Israelite indifference toward the royal birthday is a consequence of our people's somewhat unique perception of royal power. In the settled communities of Egypt and West Asia, the king was known as the agent of the gods to his people; and all the ceremonial and religious activities of the community underscored the claim that the king was Marduk's or Ra's designated representative to Babylon or Egypt who had been granted essentially unrestricted authority to carry out his task. Royal power was sometimes burdensome, but the legitimacy of the king's authority was not questioned. The king acted for the high god.

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Moreover, the faith took a strong stand against the idea current in most other communities that national security depended largely on the well-being of the king. The official faith made it official that prosperity, victory, rain depend not on mighty men or strong kings but on *hesed*, obedience to the covenant. The prophetic tradition reenforced covenant theology, "Not by power nor by might, but by my spirit, sayeth the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). In such a cultural setting it is doubtful that pressure would build up for the celebration of a rite designed to renew the king's strength.

In the classical world one other group of men seems to have celebrated birthdays. (Incidentally, I know of no classic reference to a woman's birthday.) Diogenes Laertes reports that the disciples of Epicurus, the fourth-century Greek philosopher, celebrated his birthday at an annual feast and that the master enjoined the continuation of

this custom after his death. In our day philosophers clearly have lost a good bit of status. The label philosopher-king, with all its implications, has long since been replaced by the stereotype of the slightly absent-minded professor. In the Greek mindset the renewal of strength was as vital to a philosopher's effectiveness as to a king's, for the philosopher lived not in a classroom but as an active citizen and the perfection of his virtues often led him to high office. A philosopher-king whose strength diminished lost part of his knowledge, hence, part of his virtue and of his ability to legislate. That is why Greek panegyric naturally insists that the likes of Socrates, Epicurus and Zeno died as had Moses, "his eyes undimmed, his vigor unabated" (Deut. 34:7).

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The practice of holding birthday celebrations in non-royal circles began to spread in late Roman times and became a familiar practice among the advantaged in both the Christian and Muslim worlds. It seems not to have become a common practice among Jews. Why were our people the last to accept candles and cake? Some have explained the absence of birthday celebrations as evidence of the rabbis' determination to affirm Judaism's message that no man is divine against current Christian and Muslim practice. Moses' birthday was never celebrated like that of Jesus, Mohammed, and Ali. This apologetic argument neatly overlooks the popularity of the cult of saints among Jews and the supernatural powers routinely ascribed to the patriarchs and Moses in the Midrash. After being with God Moses never removed the veil from his face because his whole being was supernaturally radiant. Moses sits at the right hand of God, acting as Israel's intercessor in Heaven. Moreover, the Jewish pattern was established before Christmas became a familiar celebration. Origen (3rd cent.), in one of his homilies (#8 on Lev.), protests celebrating the birthday of Christ "as if he were a Pharaoh." Christmas devel-

oped in the western rather than the eastern church, and it is doubtful that it became a popular holiday until the close of the Talmudic period.

In Roman times, under Islam and throughout the Middle Ages, birthday feasts were relatively common in that world's urban and literate circles. There is no record of birthdays being celebrated by Jews until modern times. Neither Maimonides nor the Baal Shem Tov received birthday cards and presents. The first indication of a birthday celebration among Jews emerged some four centuries ago when central European families began to include a feast with a son's *bar mitzvah*. The *bar mitzvah*, which till then had been little more than a fact of calendar and an *aliyah*, now became an occasion for family to celebrate together. It was a once in a lifetime occurrence. There would be no fourteenth birthday feast.

Today in America almost all our children get presents and have a party. In many religious schools birthdays are noted during services. The current popularity of birthdays among Jews measures our assimilation to modern mores. Children's birthday parties first became popular during the nineteenth century among the urban Jews of western Europe. There was now a secular culture. Such parties were common in non-Jewish homes and the argument seems to have been: "Why not? My neighbor's birthday party for his child was harmless. Why can't my boy have one?"

Birthdays were rarely celebrated in the *shtetl*. When I began my rabbinate many older congregants, immigrants from eastern Europe, knew only that they had been born on *hol ha-môed Sukkot*, in the year of the czar's abdication. Some claimed that they could remember chicken on the table at a birthday dinner, but when I pressed them to describe what happened to the birthday feast of somebody born during Adar Sheni, it becomes clear that birthdays were not a regular or regulated fact of life. I am sure that we are the first generation of rabbis who have patiently written out birthday greetings to our congregants and deemed it a *mitzvah*.

If we look at the historical process through which birthdays slowly emerged from a royal monopoly into common practice, two events become decisive: the regularization of the annual calendar and the spread of the democratic ideal. My awareness of being born on the 26th of March is far different from my grandfather's awareness that he had been born three days after *Shabbat Ha-Gadol* in the year the family moved to Neunstadt. The 26th of March is a precise date which reappears every year on the calendar. The move to Neunstadt was a non-recurring event. As we look back over history, it becomes

inescapable that there is a direct correlation between the spread of such anniversaries and the spread of the idea of individual worth. At first only kings celebrated birthdays; then philosophers who thought themselves better than kings; then nobles and rich merchants who shared power with the king; then all who deemed themselves personages. Boys celebrated their birthdays in Europe long before girls did. In modern peasant societies the birthday celebration is still unknown. The current popularity of birthdays can be taken as evidence of the triumph of the democratic spirit.

How shall we explain the tardy arrival of birthdays into the Jewish pattern of life? Our tradition, so we have been taught, insists on the dignity of the individual human being—*b'tselem demut tav-nito* and all that. How is it that a tradition which insists that man is created in the spiritual image of God came so tardily to this public affirmation of individual worth?

Perhaps at first it was simply the absence of imperial models. When leaders do not celebrate birthdays, ordinary folk have little desire to. But what about later? Shall we use the exclusionary rule of *hukkot ha-goyim* to explain it all? Certainly by Geonic times birthdays had become domestic rather than national and cultic events, so that there would seem to have been little reason to be scrupulous in this regard. Could it have been because in our tight little world the affirmation of individual worth had to be kept separate from the affirmation of individuality? I think so. Jews knew that *Kol Yisrael b'nai melachim* but, also, that our young could not be encouraged to do their thing. In the first instance, our faith rested on the imperative: "Do God's thing." Moreover, realistically, our young *could* not go out and do their thing. Many professions and occupations were closed to them. There were places they could not live. There were travel papers they could not acquire. Often they could not even get permission to be married. The modern sense of untrammelled freedom is just that—modern. And the Jew is among the last arrivals at modernity. Over the ages our profound respect for persons developed within, not apart, from community discipline. Our sages did not encourage that uniquely modern *Gestalt* which encourages each "I" to dream the impossible dream and to place an extra candle on the cake to "make a wish," any wish. In the *shtetl* children had their ears boxed for asking, "Why can't I?" A Jew was encouraged to spend a good bit of time understanding the richness and subtleties of the tradition, appreciating his worth as a member of *am segullah*, but not to set out to find himself, so that he could make his own life-style decisions—pardon the jargon. In our world there were few objective reasons to

encourage the celebration of personal anniversaries. What were celebrated instead were the communal anniversaries, those moments which bound close the ties of community and family.

Given this history, I find it interesting that the tradition has not attempted to proscribe birthday celebrations. No rabbi ever put the birthday under the ban. Quite the contrary, a number of traditional scholars have felt deeply honored when a *Festschrift* was published in honor of their 70th or 75th birthday. Rabbinic tolerance of candles and cake suggests that individualism has made deeper inroads in orthodox circles than they may be aware of and that the sense of self has changed markedly in traditional as well as liberal quarters, with consequences for the tradition which cannot yet be calculated.

