

The Concept of Birthday: A Theoretical, Historical, and Social Overview, in Judaism and Other Cultures

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Abstract : In the age of social distance, which has been added to an individual and competitive worldview, it has become important to find a way to promote closeness and personal touch. The sense of social belonging and the existence of positive interaction with others have recently become a considerable necessity. Therefore, this theoretical paper will review one of the familiar and common concepts among different cultures around the world – birthday. This paper has a theoretical contribution that deepens the understanding of the birthday concept. Birthday rituals are historical and universal events, which noted since the prehistoric eras. In ancient history, birthday rituals were solely reserved for kings and nobility members, but over the years, birthday celebrations have evolved into a worldwide tradition. Some of the familiar birthday customs and symbols are currently common among most cultures, while some cultures have adopted for themselves unique birthday customs, which characterized their values and traditions. The birthday concept has a unique significance in Judaism as well, historically, religiously, and socially: It is considered as a lucky day and a private holiday for the celebrant. Therefore, the present paper reviews diverse birthday customs around the world in different cultures, including Judaism, and marks important birthdays throughout history. The paper also describes how the concept of birthday appears over the years in songs, novels, and art, and presents quotes from distinguished sages. The theoretical review suggests that birthday has a special meaning as a time-mark in the cycle of life, and as a socialization means in human development. Moreover, the birthday serves as a symbol of belonging and group cohesiveness, a day in which the celebrant's sense of belonging and sense of importance are strengthened and nurtured. Thus, the reappearance of these elements in a family or group interaction during the birthday ceremony allows the celebrant to absorb positive impressions about himself. In view of the extensive theoretical review, it seems that the unique importance of birthdays can serve as the foundation for intervention programs that may affect the participants' sense of belonging and empowerment. In the group aspect, perhaps it can also yield therapeutic factors within a group. Concrete recommendations are presented at the end of the paper.

Keywords : birthday, universal events, positive interaction, group cohesiveness, rituals

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