



# Unlocking the Code

*The Letters of  
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*

**TRANSLATIONS WITH  
PRACTICAL LESSONS**  
(Letter from *Erev Sukkot*)

**Shlomo Mordechai Hamburger**

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson was the father and teacher of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the "Rebbe"). Rabbi Levi Yitzchak passed away on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Av in 1944 (5704). This publication is in commemoration of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's 75<sup>th</sup> *yahrzeit*.

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## EREV SUKKOT LETTER, 1928<sup>1</sup>

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ב"ה, ערחה"ס תרפ"ט.  
דניפראפעטרווסק.

אוהבי מחמדי שיחי'.

באשר במהרה יגיע הש"ק והחג מוכרחני לקצר, והנני מברך בברכת חג שמח במלא מושג המלה. ה' הטוב יפרש עליך ועלינו סוכת שלומו, (סוכה גימט' הוי' אד', הרומז על יחוד זו"נ, ע"י המשכת המקיף מבינה, שזהו סכך הסוכה, (שהסכך דסוכה נמשך מהתקיעות דר"ה שהם במספר סכך, ס' תקיעות, כ' שברים, כ' תרועות. והמצוה דתק"ש הוא השמיעה, כנוסח הברכה לשמוע קול שופר, שמיעה הוא בינה, וכן סוכה מלשון הסכת, שפירושו שמיעה כידוע). והוא כמו ענין החופה להחתן והכלה ביחד. ובכן גם עליך ביחוד יהי' סוכת שלומו ית'. שבשנה זאת, ובמהרה (הרומז על המשכה מא"א לז"א, שזהו במהרה בימינו האומרים בוכן תן כבוד בר"ה ויהכ"פ, הרומז על החתן דיעקב ודו"ק, וההמשכה הוא ע"י בינה, שהיא הכסא לרחמים דא"א (הנמשך ע"י תק"ש, שהקב"ה יושב על כסא רחמים) וכשנמשך מא"א לז"א אז יש יחוד זו"נ שנמשך מז"א למל'. וכמו הבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו, ומזה נעשה שלום בין איש לאשתו). יהי' החופה והנשואין שלך עם ב"ג שתחי', ושלום ושלחה יהי' ביניכם כל הימים בגו"ר, ויומשך לכם חיים טובים, כפולים, חיי עולם, וחיי שעה, החיים שמבינה לז"א ע"י ההדסים, והחיים שמז"א למל' ע"י הלולב, עיין בפע"ח בכוונת לולב ומיניו, חיים ארוכים ע"י המשכה מא"א לכל הבחי' הנ"ל). שלום ושלחה יהי' בארמנותינו, תגיל ותשמח בהחג השמת, והשי"ת יקים לנו במהרה את סוכת דוד הנופלת, תקומה עולמית לנצח נצחים, ע"י ז' דברים שבלולב ומיניו, כמ"ש שובע שמחות כו' בימינך נצח, ועיין במד"ר אמור. ויסיר מאתנו כל הטללים רעים ורוחות רעות, ויהי' אך טוב וחסד כה"י. כחפץ אביך אוהבך בלו"נ מברכך בחג שמח.

לוי"ש

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1 See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 201-202.

## SYNOPSIS

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B”H

*Erev Chag HaSukkot*, 5689 (1928)

Dnepropetrovsk<sup>2</sup>

My beloved son,

As it is close to the start of Shabbat and the Holiday {of Sukkot}, I must be brief, and I hereby bless you with a happy holiday with the full understanding of the word. May the good L-rd spread over you and over us the shelter (Sukkah) of his peace ... Peace and tranquility should be in our gates (palace). We should rejoice and be happy in this holiday of happiness. And Almighty G-d, may He be blessed, should establish for us speedily the fallen Sukkah of King David and it should be reestablished as an eternal rebuilding, in accordance with the seven items that are associated with the lulav and the species, as is written, “You will reveal to me the path to life, the fullness of joys in Your presence. There is delight at Your right hand for eternity” and see the *Midrash Rabbah* for *Parshat Emor*. And may He eliminate from us all “harmful dews” and “harmful winds.” And there should just be goodness and kindness all your days. This is your father’s wish; your father who loves you with his heart and soul and blesses you with a joyous holiday.

Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

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2 At the time this letter was written, the Rebbe was in Riga, Latvia. He was with his future father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn for Sukkot. See Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years*, *supra*, pp. 293-298.

## TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

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B”H

*Erev Chag HaSukkot*, 5689 (1928)

Dnepropetrovsk

My beloved son,

As it is close to the start of Shabbat and the Holiday {of Sukkot}, I must be brief, and I hereby bless you with a happy holiday with the full understanding of the word. May the good L-rd<sup>3</sup> spread over you and over us the shelter (Sukkah) of his peace<sup>4</sup> ...

### {Connecting Sukkah and *Schach* to *Chuppah*}

(The word Sukkah (סוכה) in Hebrew ט (60), ו (6), כ (20), ה (5)) has the same gematria as Y-H-V-H, *A-dnay* {which is 91 (26+65)}, which hints at the unity of *Za* and *Nukvah*,<sup>5</sup> as the qualities that are drawn down from *Bina*, which is {i.e., *Bina*

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3 The phrase “May the good L-rd” followed by an action that the “good L-rd” (ה' הטוב) should take (in this case, spread over us the shelter of his peace) does not appear to be a typical phrase. However, it has precedent in *Divrei Ha'Yamim II*, 30:18 (ה' הטוב יכפר בעד) “May the good L-rd atone for...”).

4 In the traditional liturgy, the phrase is *U'fros Aleinu Sukkat Shelomecha*.

5 *Za* is *Zeir Anpin*, the six emotional attributes (*sefiros*). Y-H-V-H corresponds to *Zeir Anpin*. *A-dnay* refers to G-d as King and corresponds to *Malchus*, which refers to the *Shechinah*, also called *Nukvah*. Also, although Rabbi Levi Yitzchak does not mention this, note that Sukkot is a seven-day holiday corresponding to the unity of *Za* (the six *sefiros*) plus the *Malchus/Shechinah* of *Nukvah*. See *Sefer HaLikutim*, *Parshat Emor*. Also, there is a good translation and explanation at [https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article\\_cdo/aid/653493/jewish/Origins-of-4-Species.htm](https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/653493/jewish/Origins-of-4-Species.htm).

and the drawing down from *Bina* refers to} the *schach* {covering} of the Sukkah.

{(To explain:} The *schach* of the Sukkah emanates from the sounds (*tekiyos*) of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah which correspond to the {numeric equivalents of the Hebrew letters in the word} *Schach* (שכח), {which add up to 100, ש (60), כ (20), and ח (20). One hundred also corresponds to the number of shofar sounds:} 60 *Tekiyos*, 20 *Shevarim*, and 20 *Teruos*.<sup>6</sup> And the *mitzvah* related to blowing the shofar is to *hear* the sounds of the shofar, as is reflected in: {a} the blessing over the blowing of the shofar; {b)} hearing corresponds to understanding/*Bina*<sup>7</sup> and {(c)} Sukkah is

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- 6 The blasts of the shofar are of three different types. A *tekiyah* is a single long blast, *shevarim* are three short blasts, and a *teruah* consists of (at least) nine short staccato blasts. Traditionally, 100 blasts in total are sounded, divided as described above.
  - 7 The word in Hebrew (*Sh'mia*) is what is associated with *Bina*. *Bina*, literally translated, is “understanding.” Understanding in turn refers to our ability to examine and analyze a concept and make a judgment based on that understanding. See also Job, 12:11 and 34:3 referring to “the ear examines words” (*Ozen Milin Tivchan*). The first letters of each of those words (*aleph*, *mem*, *taf*) spell *emes* or truth. So the ear (hearing) examines the meaning of words and searches for understanding. Also, the Shema prayer – “Hear, O Israel...” (*Devarim* 6:4) begins with the word “*Shema*” meaning not just to hear in an auditory sense but to understand or comprehend. By making the point that hearing is associated with *Bina* (understanding), Rabbi Levi Yitzchak therefore connects *Bina* to the shofar (associated with hearing and with 100 blasts) and to the Sukkah (which has *schach* (gematria is 100) and is derived from the Hebrew word for listening).

from the word *hasket* (to hear or to heed),<sup>8</sup> which derives its meaning from hearing, as is known.<sup>9</sup>)

This {concept of the Sukkah; that it alludes to the unity of *Za* and *Nukvah* which is drawn down from *Bina*} is like the idea of the chuppah of the groom and bride together. {That is, just as the unity of *Za* and *Nukvah* is drawn down from *Bina* and then brought down and enveloped by the Sukkah/*schach*, so too, the unity of groom and bride which is drawn down from G-d's having brought them together is in turn brought down and enveloped under the chuppah.} And this is how it should be with you in unison with G-d's shelter of peace. That this year, and quickly<sup>10</sup> ...

("Quickly" hints at the flow from *Arich Anpin* to *Za* (*Zeir Anpin*),<sup>11</sup> which should be speedily in our days as we say

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- 8 The word *hasket* means "listen up" or "pay attention" and, interestingly, in modern Hebrew is used as the word for "podcast."
- 9 See *Devarim* 27:9. הִסְכַּח וְשָׁמַע וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הִסְכַּח וְשָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ("Moses and the Levite priests spoke to all Israel, saying 'Hasket/Pay attention and listen, O Israel.'")
- 10 As of the date of this letter, the Rebbe's specific wedding date was not known. However, it appears to have been known that the wedding would be delayed until later in the year due to financial difficulties and the possibility of allowing time for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana to attend. Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years, supra*, pp. 286 (in a letter from the Previous Rebbe to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, he wrote "I believe that by Elul you should have enough time to obtain passports."), 291-292 (explaining financial difficulties), and 296 (letter from Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka indicating the marriage would be in the winter). By 30 *Tishrei* 5689, the Previous Rebbe established that the wedding would occur in the month of Kislev. *Ibid*, p. 299.
- 11 To explain: *Arich Anpin* is removed from *Za* as it is in *Kesser*. The reason this "movement" from *Arich Anpin* to *Zeir Anpin* is "quick" is that it would normally have to go through *Bina* to get to *Za*. If it goes

during the prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that “He should bestow His honor on us,” which in turn hints at the groom associated with *Yaakov*.<sup>12</sup>

The drawing down of this is on account of *Bina* that is the throne of mercy of *Arich Anpin* (which is drawn down by the blowing of the shofar when the Holy One, blessed be He is sitting on His throne of mercy<sup>13</sup>) and when it draws down from *Arich Anpin* to *Zeir Anpin*, then there is a unity of *Za* and *Nukvah* that flows from *Zeir Anpin* to *Malchus*. And similarly as it brings peace between a man and his fellow, and from this we can make peace between a husband and wife).

... your chuppah and wedding should be without limitations/boundaries and the two of you should live in peace and contentment all your days body and spirit {materially and spiritually} and it should be drawn down to you to have a good life in double measure, meaning eternal life and current life,

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straight to *Za* from *Kesser/Arich Anpin* the process is happening “quickly.”

- 12 See *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Tzav*, p. 16. The name *Yaakov* (יעקב) is spelled with the same letters as *Yibaka* (יבקע) which refers to bursting through (as in Isaiah 58:8 אז יבקע כשחר אורח (“Then shall your light burst through like the dawn”)) or splitting (as in Psalms 78:15 צרים במדבר יבקע (“He split the rocks in the wilderness”)). Also, the word *chason*/חתן (groom) is spelled similarly to the word *n'chos*/נחות which refers to descending. Therefore, the idea of the groom (*chason*) associated with *Yaakov* is intended to refer to the process of a quick descent from *Arich Anpin* to *Za*. At the same time, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak added the acronym ודו"ק to indicate that his interpretation is a difficult one.
- 13 See *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:6 where it is explained that, through the shofar, G-d leaves His throne of judgment and moves to His throne of mercy.

the life that is from *Bina* to *Zeir Anpin* according to the *Hadassim* {the three *Hadassim* which are part of the lulav}; the life from *Zeir Anpin* to *Malchus* according to the lulav, see the *Pri Eitz HaChaim* in connection with the intent of the lulav and the related species, and a long life according to the drawing down from *Arich Anpin* to all of the attributes explained above {in connection with the meaning of “quickly”}).

Peace and tranquility should be in our gates (palace). We should rejoice and be happy in this holiday of happiness. And Almighty G-d, may He be blessed, should establish for us speedily the fallen Sukkah of King David<sup>14</sup> and it should be reestablished as an eternal rebuilding, in accordance with the seven items that are associated with the lulav and the species, as is written,<sup>15</sup> “You will

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<sup>14</sup> *Amos* 9:11.

<sup>15</sup> *Psalms* 16:11. The play on words involved is that the wording in *Psalm* 16 is “*Sovah semachot*” or the fullness of joys. Rashi explains that this refers to a joy that has no limit and the joy of the future. See also *Berachot* 17a where the Talmud relates how the righteous will sit with crowns on their heads and enjoy the happiness and contentment of being in the Holy Presence. Certainly, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak had this type of joy in mind. At the same time, by referring to the *Midrash Vayikra Rabbah* (for *Parshat Emor*), there is another reading. As noted there, a number of commentators have said not to read the word “*Sovah*” as such and instead read it as “*Sheva*” or seven. Seven references the full spectrum of achievement and, with regard to Sukkot, refers to the seven *mitzvot* associated with Sukkot – *esrog*, *lulav*, *hadass*, *aravah*, *sukkah*, the *chagigah* offering, and the *shalmei-simchah* offering. (This is based on the reference to the *Midrash Rabbah* 30:2 for *Parshat Emor*.) It is also possible that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was alluding literally to the seven parts of the *lulav* and *esrog* – three *hadass* branches (corresponding to *Chesed*, *Gevura*, and *Tiferes*) plus the two *Aravah* branches (corresponding to *Netzach* and *Hod*) plus the *lulav* (corresponding to *Yesod*) plus

reveal to me the path to life, the fullness of joys in Your presence. There is delight at Your right hand for eternity” and see the *Midrash Rabbah* for *Parshat Emor*. And may He eliminate from us all “harmful dews” and “harmful winds.”<sup>16</sup> And there should just be goodness and kindness all your days. This is your father’s wish; your father who loves you with his heart and soul and blesses you with a joyous holiday.

Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

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the *esrog* (corresponding to *Malchus*). Then, when we hold the *lulav* and the *esrog* together, we are creating a physical representation of the unity of *Za* and *Nukvah*. See *Sefer HaLikutim*, *Parshat Emor* and translation and explanation at [https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article\\_cdo/aid/653493/jewish/Origins-of-4-Species.htm](https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/653493/jewish/Origins-of-4-Species.htm).

- <sup>16</sup> The “harmful dews” and “harmful winds” refer to *Sukkah* 37b-38a where Rabbi Chama bar Ukva quoting Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Chanina, explained that the movement of the *lulav* and *esrog* in the four directions (north, south, east, west) is to dispel harmful winds and storms that come from all directions and that the movement up and down are to stop harmful dews and rains that come from above. The Gemara goes on to point out that the “non-essential aspects of a *mitzvah* {such as the waving which is not essential to fulfilling one’s obligation} avert calamity.” Rabbi Levi Yitzchak does not mention this; however, extending this rationale to the historical context, the “harmful winds” could be referring to the potential for harmful actions of Stalin and the Communist Party in Russia which had (1) adopted a “Five-Year Plan” to accelerate industrialization; and (2) launched an offensive against the peasantry in 1928. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was aware of the launching of the “Five-Year Plan” as he spoke publicly during *Lag B’Omer* about this and how the sacred elements behind the numbers four (it being the fourth week of the *Omer*) and five (being the fifth day of the fourth week) would outweigh anything negative planned for the next four or five years. See *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader*, *supra*, p. 77. Thus, it is not unreasonable to see a connection between “harmful winds” and current events.



# UNLOCKING THE CODE

## *The Letters of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*

*Translations with Practical Lessons*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson was the father and teacher of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. For about 25 years, the Rebbe lived, for the most part, in his parents' home where the Rebbe and his father developed a close personal bond. The Rebbe and his father last saw each other in the fall of 1927 (29 Tishrei 5688) and would never see each other again in the physical world. During 1928, and pending the Rebbe's wedding date, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak wrote a series of letters to his son all related to the Rebbe's upcoming wedding. Four of the letters were written on the eve of Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, and Sukkot. In each letter, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak tied the holiday to his son's upcoming wedding through explaining the Kabbalistic significance of each holiday and how it relates to different aspects of marriage. These letters show not just Torah insights but also very personal insights into the close connection between Rabbi Levi Yitzchak (the then 50-year old father) and the Rebbe (his then 26-year old son).

"It is my obligation and great *zechus* to suggest, request, etc., that everyone study from {my father's} teachings..." From a letter of the Rebbe, *Motzei Tisha B'Av 5744* (1984).

In this publication, Shlomo M. Hamburger translates and analyzes these four letters. In addition, Mr. Hamburger includes personal essays explaining some practical lessons to learn from these letters.



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