

# Unlocking the Code

*The Letters of  
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*

**TRANSLATIONS WITH  
PRACTICAL LESSONS**

*(Letter from Erev Rosh Hashanah)*

**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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Shlomo M. Hamburger is a partner in a large international law firm. He is the author of numerous books and articles and a frequent speaker and teacher on employee benefit matters. Shlomo is on the International Advisory Board for Chabad on Campus International and an active member of the Chabad Shul of Potomac, Maryland.

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## EREV ROSH HASHANAH LETTER, 1928<sup>1</sup>

ב"ה, ער"ה, תרפ"ט.

דניפראפעטרווסק.

אוהבי חביבי בני שיחי'.

מפנימית לבי ונפשי הנני מברך אותך לשנה החדשה הבאה עלינו לטובה כי תכתב ותחתם בספרן של צדיקים לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום, (יש כאן ג' דברים, חיים, טוב ושלום, וממשיכים זה ע"י תק"ש, שהם ג' של ג', תקיעה, שברים, תרועה, שהם לנגד חג"ת. והיינו חיים גבורה, מעוז חיי, כי חיות נמשך ע"י הגבורה, טוב הוא חסד, כמ"ש אך טוב וחסד ירדפוני כו', שלום הוא מדת הת"ת העושה שלום בין חו"ג. ומקדימין חיים לטוב, כי בר"ה יצחק מדת הגבורה הוא העיקר, שלכן קורין פרשת לידת יצחק ועקידת יצחק. וכן בונתנה תוקף מקדימין לומר (אחר תוקף קדושת היום נורא ואיום, שקאי על כתר מל' שמת"ת ודעת דז"א, שזהו נורה ואיום, והיינו חיצוניות ופנימיות הת"ת, וכן בכתר מל' חיצוניותה ופנימיותה, אומרים אחר זה ובו תנשא כו' עד באמת שקאי על בנין חח"ן בג"ה דת"י דמל', מהג' קוין) ובו תנשא מלכותך, שקאי על קו השמאל, קודם לויכון בחסד כסאך שקאי על קו הימין. והיינו כי עיקרו של שופר הוא גבורות, כי שמו מורה עליו שכן הוא. אך הוא גבורות הממותקות ביותר כמו שהן בשרשן, שהם גבוהים הרבה מחסדים מהבחי' שלפני שבירה ותיקון. במקום שלא הי' שבירה כלל. (ולכן שופר צריך להיות שלם, כי אם נסדק או שדבק שברי שופרות פסול). וע"י אלו הג' דברים נעשה בנין המל', ואח"כ היחוד בשמע"צ שהוא ביום שחל להיות ר"ה) בגוף ובנשמה (ולמעלה הוא כלים ואורות) במלא מושג המלה. תהי' מאושר ומוצלח כל ימך. ובכן יהי רצון מלפני אדון כל שגם אצלך יהיו כל הג' דברים יחד, ובשנה הזאת במהרה בימינו בשעה טובה ומוצלחת יהי' הנשואין שלך, ותחיו יחד חיים טובים ונעימים בעושר ואושר וכל טוב סלה. ונזכה אנחנו לראות ממך ומאחיק שיחיו רוב נחת וענג בבשר וברוח, כי תלכו בדרך טובים כל ימי חייכם. והשי"ת יחדש עלינו בתכ"י שנה טובה ומתוקה שנת חיים ושלום וכל טוב סלה. ונתראה בחיים ושלום וכל הטוב הגלוי גם לנו כחפץ אביך אוהבך בלב ונפש מצפה ומייחל לישועת ה' לראות מכם אך טוב כל הימים.

לוי יצחק שניאורסאהן

1 See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 200-201.

## SYNOPSIS

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B”H

*Erev Rosh Hashanah*, 5689 (1928)

Dnepropetrovsk<sup>2</sup>

My dear beloved son,

From the inner depths of my heart and soul, I bless you for the New Year (which comes upon us for good) that you should be written and sealed in the books of Tzadikim immediately for life, for good, and for peace, ... in body and soul ... as these words are fully understood. You should be fortunate and successful all your days. May it be the will of the Master of All that you should have all three of these things {life, goodness, and peace} together, and in the coming year, speedily in our days, and at a good and auspicious time, you should be married and you and your wife should live together in a life of goodness and pleasantness with wealth and happiness and all good things forever. We should merit to see from you and your brothers that you should have great satisfaction (*nachas*) and celebration in body and spirit {materially and spiritually} and that you should walk in the right and good path all the days of your lives. May G-d renew it for us amongst all of Israel {that we have} a good and sweet year, a year of life and peace and all good forever. And may we {soon} see each other in life and peace and all revealed goodness as this is the desire of your father who loves you in heart and soul and awaits and longs for G-d's salvation to see all good things from you for all your days.

Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

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

## TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

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B”H

*Erev Rosh Hashanah*, 5689 (1928)

Dnepropetrovsk

My dear beloved son,

From the inner depths of my heart and soul, I bless you for the New Year (which comes upon us for good) that you should be written and sealed in the books of Tzadikim immediately<sup>3</sup> for life, for good, and for peace,

(There are three things referred to here – life, goodness, and peace. These {life, goodness, and peace} are drawn down from the sounding of the shofar which is three of three<sup>4</sup> – *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, and *Teruah*, which {three blasts} correspond to *Chesed*, *Gevura*, and *Tiferes*. Life (*chaim*) corresponds to *Gevura*, {as in the verse} “from the strength of my life,”<sup>5</sup>

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3 See Talmud Bavli, *Rosh Hashanah* 16b.

4 The reference to “three of three” is that each of the shofar blasts is done three different times. We sound the shofar blasts of *Tekiah*, *Shevarim-Teruah*, *Tekiah* three times and then *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, *Tekiah* three times and then *Tekiah*, *Teruah*, *Tekiah* three times. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak does not mention this, but there is a theme of “threes” throughout this letter (as illustrated in the diagram at Appendix A). These include “life, goodness, and peace,” “*Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, and *Teruah*,” “*Chesed*, *Gevura*, and *Tiferes*,” and “*Chochma*, *Bina*, and *Da’as*.” Three represents a special type of “unity.” “One” represents a type of unity that is more of a singularity. “Two” represents potentially opposing forces. However, “three” represents a type of unity that is complete or in balance as it balances the opposing forces, making peace.

5 Psalms 27:1.

because life is drawn down from *Gevura*.<sup>6</sup> Goodness is *Chesed*, as is written<sup>7</sup> “Surely goodness and kindness (*Chesed*) will follow me all the days of my life.” Peace is the attribute of *Tiferes* because it makes peace between *Chesed* and *Gevura*.<sup>8</sup> And life (*Gevura*) dominates goodness (*Chesed*) as we see with regard to Rosh Hashanah.<sup>9</sup> A principle theme of Rosh

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6 It is interesting that when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak writes of *chaim* and associates it with *Gevura*, he specifically cites a source and also provides an explanation for why *chaim*/life is associated with *Gevura*. This may be because the connection between *Gevura* and life is not clear on its own. Some might otherwise associate *Gevura* with goodness (see footnote 9). Here though, specifically, life is connected with *Gevura* in the same way that, for example, blood being our internal life force must adhere to certain restrictions or limitations (e.g., pH levels of blood must be within certain ranges) or else our life is at risk. In that sense, life is drawn down from or connected to *Gevura*. When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak writes of *Chesed* and associates it with goodness, he simply cites a source and does not need to explain why that association is correct; it makes sense on its own. When he associates *Tiferes* with peace, he does not cite a specific source at all but merely makes the statement. The association of *Tiferes* with peace is sufficiently well-known that neither a citation nor explanation is needed.

7 Psalms 23:6.

8 *Shalom*/peace comes from combining *Chesed*/mercy or kindness with *Gevura*/severity or judgment. *Tiferes* as the combining attribute creates peace. As explained in more detail in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s letter on *Erev Shavuot*, Kabbalah teaches that *Chesed* and *Gevura* are the two essential “heads.” *Tiferes*, being a mixture of *Chesed* and *Gevura* (the other two heads) means the other two become the “body” for *Tiferes*.

9 The word *מקדימין* is translated here as “dominates” instead of “precedes,” which is the translation of the same word below (at the text to footnote 11, “where we first say”). The reasons for this are: (a) Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is referring to *Gevura* being the principle

Hashanah is *Gevura*, represented by *Yitzchak*, as when we read in the Torah reading of Rosh Hashanah about the birth and “sacrifice” of *Yitzchak* (*Akeidat Yitzchak*).<sup>10</sup> We also see this in the *Unesane Tokef* prayer<sup>11</sup> where we first say ...

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theme of Rosh Hashanah; and (b) the idea of *Gevura* dominating *Chesed* is similar to the same idea expressed in the letter from *Erev Shavuot* (where it is explained that, generally, severity or judgment as reflected in *Gevura* dominates *Chesed* because ultimately (at its source) the exercise of severity or judgment (*Gevura*) is for the good).

10 *Bereishit* 21:1-34 (first day of Rosh Hashanah); 22:1-24 (second day of Rosh Hashanah).

11 The *Unesane Tokef* prayer is part of the musaf (additional) service on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and is one of the most solemn prayers for those days. Its origin is shrouded in some degree of mystery and has been associated with an 11<sup>th</sup> century Kabbalistic scholar, Rabbi Klonimos ben Meshullam of Mainz. See *Sefer Or Zarua*, by Rabbi Yitzchak ben Moshe of Vienna, Book 2, perek 276 (*Hilchos Rosh Hashanah*). According to the story, in brief, the bishop of Mainz insisted that his advisor, Rabbi Amnon, convert to Christianity. Rabbi Amnon tried to stall by asking for three days to consider the issue. Immediately upon returning home, Rabbi Amnon was distraught that he would even have considered such a thought. When the bishop demanded his answer, Rabbi Amnon refused. As punishment, the bishop cut off his limbs one-by-one and joint-by-joint. Rabbi Amnon did not yield. When Rosh Hashanah came a few days later, Rabbi Amnon was carried to the Ark and before *Kedusha* was recited, he cried out the *Unesane Tokef* prayer and then died. Three days later, Rabbi Amnon appeared in a dream to Rabbi Klonimos wherein Rabbi Amnon taught the prayer to Rabbi Klonimos and asked him to send it out to be included in all Rosh Hashanah prayer services. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak ties the first sentence of the *Unesane Tokef* prayer to the various attributes described in this letter and breaks that sentence into phrases corresponding to the various ideas (see Appendix A).

(after the phrase *Kedushas Ha'Yom Nora v' Ayom*,<sup>12</sup> which refers to the *Kesser* (crown) of *Malchus* (kingship) that is from *Tiferes* and *Da'as* of *Za* (the six emotional attributes), which is *Nora* and *Ayom* (great and awesome), which

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See also *Likutei Sichos* Volume 19, p. 296, where the Rebbe explains that people are more aroused to do *teshuvah* (repentance) when reciting *Unesane Tokef* (which includes questions of who shall live and who shall die) than when they recite the prayer related to G-d reigning over the entire world (“*m'loch al ha'olam kulo bichvodo*”). The basic reason for this is that the idea of life and death in the physical sense touches us more deeply (i.e., we can relate to a message that speaks to physicality). The Rebbe goes on to explain that the internal reason for this difference is that the source of the physical (as expressed in *Unesane Tokef*) is actually rooted in G-d's Essence (*Atzmus*). Kingship reflects G-d's spiritual manifestation but the physical (*gashmiyus*) reflects what G-d wants (as He desires a dwelling place in this world). Thus, *Unesane Tokef* reaches from G-d's Essence (*Atzmus*) to our essence and that is the inner cause of the arousal to do *teshuvah* (repentance).

- 12 Rabbi Levi Yitzchak writes of *Nora v' Ayom* as referring to the *Kesser* of *Malchus*. When one considers the *Kesser Malchus* of the supernal realms, there is an inner (*Pnimius*) aspect and an external (*Chitzonius*) aspect. The inner (*Pnimius*) intellectual (*Mochin*) aspect is *Da'as* of *Malchus*. This is “inner” in the same way that our intellect is to ourselves. The external (*Chitzonius*) aspect refers to the emotions (*middos*) which are an external expression of the way one is “outside” of oneself; it is how we express ourselves to another. This external aspect is *Tiferes* of *Malchus*. Rosh Hashanah is the time of *Binyan Ha'malchus*, building kingship, which requires both the inner and the outer aspects (the *Mochin* and the *middos*) which are alluded to in the words *Norah* and *Ayom*; *Nora* being the external fear of G-d, and *Ayom* being the inner awe for the Almighty. (Although in the Talmud, regarding criteria for witnesses, we find the plural of *Ayom*, used as an external way of scaring the witnesses to testify to the truth. *Sanhedrin* 29a (ומאיימין עליהן).)

represent the externality {presumably referring to *Nora*} and inner part {presumably referring to *Ayom*} of *Tiferes*. *Kesser* of *Malchus* refers to her external and inner elements and we say after this “*Uvo tinase*”, etc., until “*b’emes*” which corresponds to establishing, [*Chochma*, *Chesed*, and *Netzach*], [*Bina*, *Gevura*, and *Hod*], and [*Da’as*, *Tiferes*, and *Yesod*] all of *Malchus* which extends from the three *kavim*<sup>13</sup>)

... *Uvo Tinase Malchusechal* “on it your kingship will be exalted,” which corresponds to the left *kav*, before we say *v’Yikon b’Chesed Kisechal* “Your {G-d’s} throne will be established with *Chesed*/kindness” which corresponds to the right *kav*. And the principle point of the shofar is *Gevuros*, for the name of the shofar itself denotes that this is what it is about. Because greater sweetened *Gevuros* as they are in their source are much higher than *Chassadim*, from the attributes that exist before the breaking of the vessels and their repair (*shevirah v’tikun*),<sup>14</sup> in a place where there is no brokenness at

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- 13 A “*kav*” refers to a ray of “light” from Ein Sof (G-d’s Essence) which contains the ingredients for worlds below. As a *kav* descends, light is more concealed and continues to fill the worlds below. See the diagram in Appendix A which shows how Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is breaking out the *sefiros* and associating them with: (a) the *tekiyas*; (b) life, goodness, and peace; and (c) the phrases in *Unesane Tokef* from *Uvo tinase* through *b’emes*.
- 14 According to the Zohar (on *Parshas Emor* 99a), when the blasts of the lower shofar here below rise up, they arouse an even higher shofar in *Bina* which then arouses mercy which overtakes judgment. After *Shevirat Ha’Keilim* (the “breaking of the vessels”), *Chesed* is kindness and good as compared to *Gevura*. But the point here is that the source of *Gevura*, which is from before *Shevirat Ha’Keilim*, is “better” and is higher than *Chesed*. At that level, *Gevuros* can sweeten severity and is for good. See also *Vayikra Rabbah* 29:6

all. (That is why a shofar has to be whole. If there is any crack in the shofar or broken pieces of a shofar are fused (or glued) together, it is *passul* (invalid).<sup>15</sup>) On account of these three things {life, goodness, and peace} we can build *Malchus*.<sup>16</sup> After that, there is a unity with Shemini Atzeret which falls on the same day as the first day of Rosh Hashanah).<sup>17</sup>

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where it is explained that, through the shofar, G-d leaves His throne of judgment and moves to His throne of mercy.

15 *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Rosh Hashanah* 586:10.

16 The goal of Rosh Hashanah is to have a coronation of the King or *מלכות בנין מלכות/Binyan Malchus*. Generally, the ten *sefiros* exist both as individual attributes and as “*partzufim*” (profiles) that include all ten *sefiros*. However, *Malchus* initially is a single point (*Kesser Malchus*) and only receives the other *sefiros* after further development when it becomes a *partzuf*. “This development of *malchus* into a complete *partzuf* is called *binyan hamalchus*, and it is dependent upon the arousal from below (*itaruta d’letatah*) initiated by the Jewish people in this world.” See Schneersohn, Rabbi Shalom DovBer. *Forces in Creation, Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah* 5659, *Discourse Two*. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society, 2003, p. 38, footnote 61.

17 More generally, there is a process that takes place from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur to Sukkot and then ends on Shemini Atzeret (which falls on the same day as the first day of Rosh Hashanah). On Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, the “left arm” of *Gevura* is manifest. Then on Sukkot, G-d’s Essence is manifest as He embraces us with His “right arm.” The latter manifestation on Sukkot is something of a transcendent manifestation and on Shemini Atzeret, this Essence becomes one with our being internally. See Schneersohn, Rabbi Shalom DovBer. *Forces in Creation, Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah* 5659, *Discourse Two*. Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2003, p. 68ff. and footnote 176 there; and Schneersohn, Rabbi Shalom DovBer. *The Power of Return, Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah* 5659, *Discourse Three*.

... in body and soul (and in the higher world where they are light {corresponding to body} and vessels {corresponding to soul}) as these words are fully understood. You should be fortunate and successful all your days. May it be the will of the Master of All that you should have all three of these things {life, goodness, and peace} together, and in the coming year, speedily in our days, and at a good and auspicious time, you should be married and you and your wife should live together in a life of goodness and pleasantness with wealth and happiness and all good things forever. We should merit to see from you and your brothers that you should have great satisfaction (*nachas*) and celebration in body and spirit {materially and spiritually} and that you should walk in the right and good path all the days of your lives. May G-d renew it for us amongst all of Israel {that we have} a good and sweet year, a year of life and peace and all good forever. And may we {soon} see each other in life and peace and all revealed goodness as this is the desire of your father who loves you in heart and soul and awaits and longs for G-d's salvation to see all good things from you for all your days.

Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

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Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 2005, p. 88ff. and footnote 234 there.

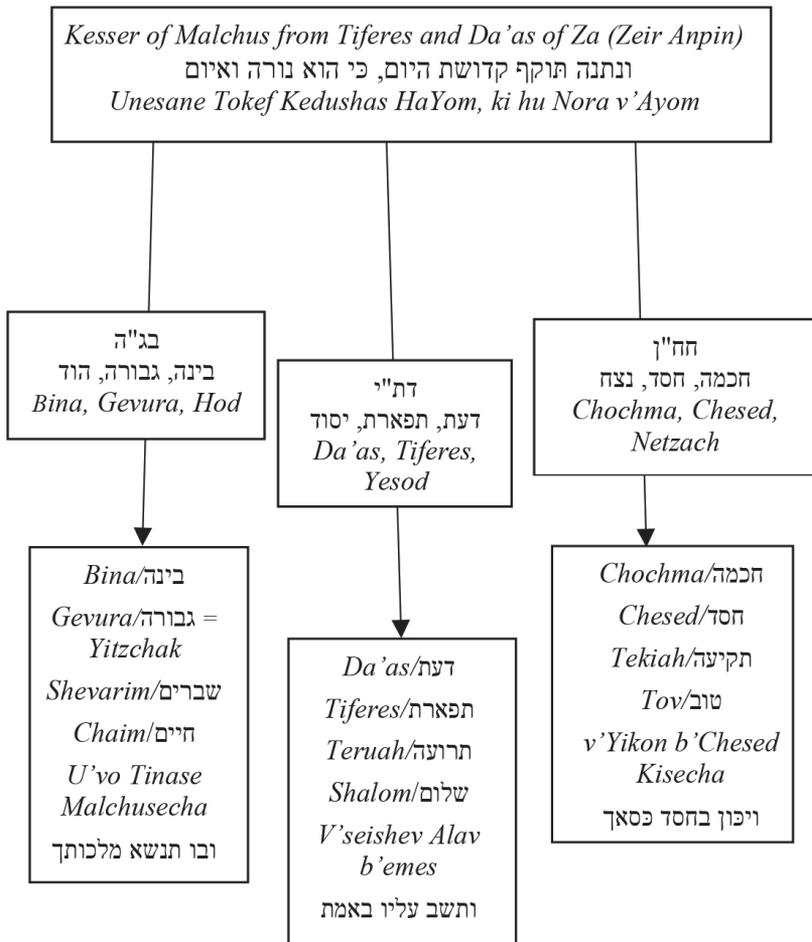
# APPENDIX A

## APPLICATION OF *KAVIM*

### TO IDEAS AND THEMES IN LETTER

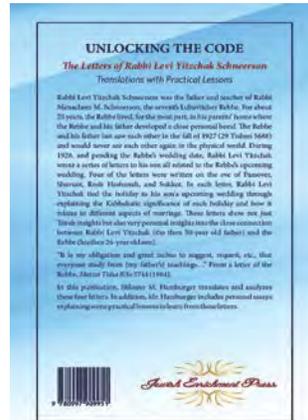
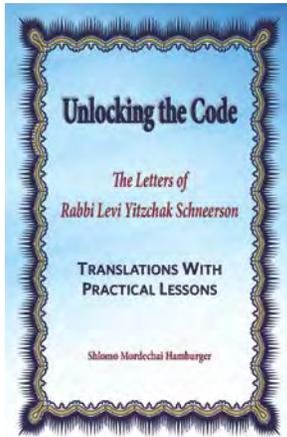
#### FROM *EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5689*

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# Unlocking the Code

## The Letters of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson



### Contents:

- 112 Pages
- 4 Holiday Lessons
- 150 Footnotes
- Original Hebrew Letters
- 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. 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, Motzoei Tisha B'Av 5744 (1984).

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Includes many examples of how we can apply Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's teachings to our own relationships

### About the author:

Shlomo M. Hamburger ([smhpubs@gmail.com](mailto:smhpubs@gmail.com)) is a practicing lawyer, frequent speaker, and the author of *The Anochi Project: Seeking G-d's Identity* and *Unlocking the Code: The Letters of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*. He is on the International Advisory Board for Chabad on Campus International.

# 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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