

Unlocking the Code

*The Letters of
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*

ו' כסלו תרפ"ט

Letter on Tenaim 1928

Lessons From The Engagement Ceremony

**TRANSLATION AND
EXPLANATION**

Shlomo M. Hamburger

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Preface

On the 18th of Nisan in 1878 (5638), the great-great-grandson of the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe) was born. His name was Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the future father of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the seventh and last Lubavitcher Rebbe.¹ When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was 24 (in 1902), his wife Rebbetzin Chana gave birth to the Rebbe.² For the next 25 years, the Rebbe lived, for the most part, in his parents' home.

In his earliest years, the Rebbe was recognized as a prodigy. He quickly outgrew formal *cheder* (formal Jewish elementary school) studies as well as private tutors such that by his teens, his father was his primary teacher.³ Rebbetzin Chana remarked in her memoirs that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak often treated his son more like a colleague than a son and had great respect for his scholarship and abilities.⁴ Indeed, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak would remark with pride that the Rebbe, even as a child, was able to find sources for Torah thoughts that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak did not think of.⁵

The Rebbe and his father last saw each other in the fall of 1927 (29 Tishrei 5688).⁶ They spent hours together learning before the Rebbe left home to join and help with the communal activities of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe.⁷ From the various descriptions of these final days

¹ This essay is intended as a short selective historical overview and summary to put Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's letters into context. It is not intended to be an extensive biography of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak or the Rebbe. For more on the historical background of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, the Rebbe, and their relationship, see the sources cited below in notes 3 and 4 as well as the various material available at https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/4095623/jewish/11-Facts-to-Know-About-Rabbi-Levi-Yitzchak-Schneerson.htm (last viewed Dec. 2, 2020).

² The Rebbe was born the 11th of Nisan which meant that his bris (ritual circumcision) was on his father's 24th birthday, symbolic of their life-long close connection.

³ Miller, Chaim. *Turning Judaism Outward, A Biography of the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson*. Brooklyn, New York: Kol Menachem, 2014, p. 12; Oberlander, Boruch and Shmotkin, Elkanah. *Early Years: The Formative Years of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, as Told by Documents and Archival Data*. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society, 2016, p. 61.

⁴ See *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader: The Life and Times of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*. Brooklyn, New York: Kehot Publication Society, 2008, p. 85.

⁵ Miller, *supra* p. 14-15; *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader, supra*, p. 86.

⁶ Miller, *supra*, p. 57.

⁷ *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader, supra*, p. 87; Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years, supra*, pp. 265, 269-270; Miller, *supra*, p. 65 and citations there in footnote 24 to Rabbi Shalom Ber Levin, *A History of Chabad in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, 1790-1946* (Heb.), (New York: Kehot 2011), p. 51.

together it seems that, at some level, they knew that they would not likely see each other again (physically anyway).

For the next several years, the Rebbe and his father communicated through letters, telegrams, and other written essays. Many of these documents have been published in Volume 3 of *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*. The Rebbe certainly cherished each letter he received from his father.⁸ In the preface to *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, the Rebbe indicated that he shared his father's letters for their Torah insights, both in revealed Torah and in "hidden" Torah.

The 1928 Letter on Tenaim – Lessons From The Engagement Ceremony

On 14 Kislev 5689 (1928), the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were married in a ceremony held in Warsaw, Poland. Eight days before the wedding, on the eve of 6 Kislev, the Rebbe was in Riga Latvia and, in a small ceremony, signed the *tenaim* agreement. On that same day, 6 Kislev, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak wrote a letter to the Rebbe explaining the meaning and spiritual significance of the *tenaim*.

To put this letter in context, a brief explanation is in order.

As a traditional part of a Jewish wedding, the bride and groom enter into *tenaim* before the actual wedding. *Tenaim* (or *shtar tenaim*) refers to the formalized contractual engagement commitment between bride and groom in advance of their marriage.⁹ The terms of the agreement formalize the parties' commitment to marry and articulate financial obligations associated with the wedding.

Historically, the *tenaim* were entered into well before the actual wedding. In fact, the *tenaim* of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin were signed eight days before their wedding. Because their *tenaim* were entered into before the actual wedding day, the text of their *tenaim* follows the text for *tenaim rishonim*.¹⁰

The historic practice of signing the *tenaim* in advance of the wedding day declined after World War II when it became more common to sign the *tenaim* immediately before the wedding itself.¹¹ The reason for the modified practice was due to the serious consequences involved in cases

⁸ In the forward to *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, p. 5, the Rebbe specifically stated that he included several letters that he "merited to receive from [his father] between the years 5688 and 5699 (1928-1933)." See also, Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years*, *supra*, p. 295.

⁹ For more background on the *tenaim*, see the discussion in Kaplan, Rabbi Aryeh, *Made in Heaven*. Brooklyn, New York: Moznaim Publishing Company, 1983, at pp. 22-30. A good overview of *tenaim* is also found at https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/476750/jewish/Tnaim-Engagement-Agreements.htm (last viewed Nov. 24, 2020).

¹⁰ Therefore, additional wording was included in the Rebbe's *tenaim* that is not typically used when *tenaim* are signed immediately before the wedding (as is current practice). The additional wording is noted *infra* at note 22. For an explanation of this custom and the underlying rationale for it see https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2840619/Jewish/Explanations-of-Wedding-Rituals-and-Customs-1.htm (last viewed Dec. 2, 2020).

¹¹ The following discussion is based on Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, *supra*, p. 28.

where the engagement was made pursuant to binding *tenaim* and then broken off before the wedding. Apparently, situations like this were common in the confusion after World War II. To mitigate the difficulties associated with broken *tenaim*, the custom developed to sign the *tenaim* just before the wedding. Some will still have a pre-wedding engagement celebration (called a “*vort*” in Yiddish) where a less formal arrangement is celebrated.

Now that the prevailing custom seems to be that the *tenaim* are entered into immediately before the wedding at a pre-*chupah* reception, it is fair to ask why there is a need to go through the trouble altogether. Why not go right from the pre-*chupah* reception to the *ketubah* signing and the *chupah* itself? One argument to support use of the *tenaim* is based on the importance of maintaining the time-honored Jewish tradition. Another argument in support of the practice could be made based on the sources cited for using the *tenaim*¹² which are still valid regardless of when the *tenaim* are signed.

Another way to understand the importance of the *tenaim* relates directly to what Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explained in his 1928 letter to the Rebbe.

As I read Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s letter, he explains the spiritual significance of the *tenaim* as a step in the process of becoming husband and wife. The *tenaim* represent that initial formal bonding between the parties to be married. But the document is not just a transactional document. By example, in a typical business merger transaction, the parties sign an initial contract whereby they agree to close the deal at a future closing date (“get married” if you will). That contract spells out the conditions that must be met before closing. If they are met, the businesses merge; if the conditions are not met, they call off the deal.

That is not how Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explains the purpose of the *tenaim*. He begins by explaining that, although the word *tenai* means condition, it refers to a type or level of doubt (*safek*). At one level, there is doubt associated with conditions yet to be fulfilled – will they happen or not (as in any transaction)? The type of doubt hinted at by the *tenaim* is not, as he explains, from the perspective of the typical transactional relationship. To continue with the business merger example, once the initial document is signed, there is doubt about whether the conditions will be met. However, there is no doubt about the outcome – either the deal will close, or it will not. The outcome is a known thing and the unknown thing is whether the conditions will be met.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak refers to a level of doubt (*safek*) that represents a level of complete unknowability. Marriage is about binding groom to bride in a way that they choose to connect to an existence where outcomes are completely unknowable. In concrete terms, two people decide to unite (or as we will see intertwine) and have no idea what that new relationship will mean. Will they be happy? Will they have children? Will they overcome material and spiritual challenges that inevitably stand in their way? The future is not just unknown, it is unknowable. Yet these two completely independent beings are going to face it together as an interconnected unity.

How can they do it? The *tenaim* provide an answer.

¹² *Ibid.*, at 26-28.

As Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explains, in *Kabbalah*, the source for this state of unknowability is the level of *Atik Yomin* – that level of G-dliness immediately preceding creation. That level is unknowable because it is a level above (or before) creation and still in the realm of G-dliness that we just cannot comprehend. The *tenaim* remind groom and bride that they are entering a place of unknowability and are agreeing to do this by binding themselves one to the other.

The success of this inter-connectedness is also dependent upon G-d's will (*ratzon*). That is why the *tenaim* include a phrase as part of a prayerful request that the match will flourish because one who finds a wife finds good and draws favor (*ratzon*) from G-d who is good. The *tenaim* are appealing to the source of G-d's *ratzon* which comes from the level of *Atik* to draw down that *ratzon* on the couple to enable them to withstand the challenges of the unknowability they will face together.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak then takes the concept of binding one to the other to another level. Once the binding is “good,” the *tenaim* continue with the phrase that you cannot hide one from the other, not him from her nor her from him. This phrase, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explains, refers to another type of binding that is best described as intertwining or blending as when the names of G-d known as *Havayah* and *Ad'nai* are intertwined (see the explanation of this at footnote 39 below). When these two names are intertwined it refers to the merger of upper and lower unities to form a new type of existence.

Here is a very mundane practical application of this idea. Purple is an example of the intertwining of the right shades of red with blue. Whether you mix red into blue or blue into red, the result will be purple. At that point, the color is neither red nor blue but it is also both red and blue at the same time. The colors have inseparably merged to form something completely different from either one standing alone and that new thing is entirely dependent on both separate things working together.

When the *tenaim* hint at this intertwined unity between bride and groom, it is referring to an inner spiritual interconnectedness that allows them to see “face to face” (*panim b'panim*). To be clear, the notion of “face to face” in this context is not simply a transactional matter of finding mutual agreement (*i.e.*, if you are standing face to face, you can see “eye to eye”). Instead, it refers to a spiritual internal “gazing” that results in the fusion of completely different beings to create a new combined male/female energy.

The *tenaim* remind bride and groom that they were brought together to take on the challenges of unknowability not as two distinct people but as a new existence: as a fusion of differences and, perhaps, paradoxes. Each party is not trying to “get” something out of the other. Instead, each one “gazes” at the other to connect to who they are. That is how the process of interconnectedness alluded to in the *tenaim* works.

Whether *tenaim* are done right before the wedding or weeks before the wedding, the significant lessons of the *tenaim*, as explained in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's 1928 letter on the *tenaim*, are real and relevant for every bride and groom.

I am grateful for the invaluable assistance from noted Torah scholar Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Keller who reviewed and edited this translation and explanation. I am also grateful for the ongoing

contributions from my teachers, noted author, Chassidus teacher, and Chabad historian Rabbi Chaim Dalfin and Rabbi Mendel Bluming of Chabad Shul of Potomac each of whom provided insightful comments and edits and continue to encourage and inspire me every day.

As the Rebbe wrote in a letter from *Motzoei Tisha B'Av* 5744: “It is my obligation and great *zechus* to suggest, request, etc., that everyone study from {my father’s} teachings...” It is my hope that this translation and explanation will help advance that goal.

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14 Kislev 5781

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ב"ה, ו' כסלו התרפ"ט.

דניפראפעטראווסק.

בני אהובי חביבי ידידי ויקירי החתן מר מנחם מענדל שיחי.

מז"ט מז"ט ומז"ט, לכם, בני החתן עם ב"ג הכלה המהוללה מרת חי' מושקא תחי', בעד הקשורי תנאים שלכם למז"ט. יתן ויעזור השי"ת, ויהי בשעה טובה ומוצלחה, בהצלחה ואושר בנפש ובבשר, והקשור הזה של התנאים (שהוא ראשית ההתקשרות בין החתן והכלה, ורומז למעלה על ראשית ההתקשרות דדו"נ בשרשם הראשון, שהוא מ"ה וב"ן דעת"י. וזהו שנקרא תנאים, שתנאי הו"ע ספק, ובעת"י הו"ע הספקות, לא מפני הצד השלישי ח"ו, רק מפני עומק הענין א"א להשיגו ולתופסו בודאי. וזהו לאלה דברי הברית והתנאים, ברית המ"ה, ותנאים הב"ן. וברית ל' יחיד המ"ה, ותנאים לשון רבים הב"ן, כי הספקות הם עד אין קץ, וכמ"ש והשביע בצחצחות נפשך, ועיין בע"ח סוף שער עתיק, ודו"ק. וזהו מצא אשה מצא טוב, מצא בשני קמצי"ן, שקמץ רומז על כתר, א"כ שני קמצין הוא גם בחי' העליונה דכתר, עתיק, מצא טוב, כי בעתיק כולו טוב, כמא' לית שמאלא בהאי עתיקא כולא ימינא. ובמלת מצא נרמזו התקשרות דו"נ, המ' הוא המ' יום קודם יצירת הולד שמכריזין בת פלוני לפלוני, והאותיות צ"א רומז על הדו"נ גימט' הוי' אד'. גם המ' הוא כחב"ד וצ"א הוא הוי' אד' ז"א ומל' שהם בחי' זו"ן. אח"כ ויפק רצון מה' הוא א"א, רצון. ובפרט התגלות מצח הרצון, רעווא דכל רעווין, שעיי"ז מתבטלים כל הדינים, כידוע במנחת שבת עת רצון, ונעשה הכל טוב, גם בגלוי), יהי קשר בל ימוט לעולם, יואל ה' ויאמר לדבק טוב הוא, ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום, בל תבריחו ובל תעלימו לא זה מזו ולא זו מזה, (שרומז על ב' היחודים ושלובים דהוי' אד', אם שלוב אד' בהוי' ושלוב הוי' באד') אלא תהיו פנים בפנים בכל עת, באהבה ורצון זה מזה. ויהי רצון מלפני אבינו שבשמים, בזכות כ"ק אבותינו רבותינו הקדושים צוקללה"ה זיע"א, שבמהרה בימינו¹⁴ (גימט' ש"ע רומז על המשכת הש"ע נהורין מא"א לז"א, מהרה מא"א (שמשם נמשך השפע במהרה, עיין בלקו"ת בד"ה פרח מטה אהרן) בימינו ז"א, הבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו) יהיו הנשואין שלכם (היינו יחוד זו"נ, הבאת שלום בין איש לאשתו התלוי בהבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו, כידוע, ועיין בלקו"ת בהביאור דוהניף) בשעה טובה ומוצלחת למז"ט. בבנין עדי עד, קול ששון, וקול שמחה, קול חתן וקול כלה. ועיני אבותיכם תחזינה ותראינה מכם רוב נחת וענג וכל טוב סלה, דור ישרים יבורך במלא מושג המלה.

כחפץ אביך החפץ בטובכם בגו"ר תכה"י.

לוי יצחק ש"ס

¹³ See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 202-203.

¹⁴ See *infra* note 42.

*Free translation and explanation of the letter from
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe)
On the occasion of entering into the Tenaim, 5689 (1928)¹⁵*

B”H, 6 Kislev 5689 (1928)

Dnepropetrovsk

My dear beloved son, the groom, Menachem Mendel.

Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov, Mazel Tov to you my son, the groom, together with your contemporary,¹⁶ the laudable bride, Miss Chaya Mushka, may she live and be well, on account of your entering into your engagement contract (*tenaim*).¹⁷ With G-d’s help, may it be in a good and auspicious time, with success and with pleasure in body and soul. The entering into the *tenaim* ...¹⁸

(which is the initial bonding between the groom and the bride, and which hints at the initial supernal bonding of *duchrah* and *nukvah* in their initial source, which is *mah* and *ban* of *Atik Yomin*.¹⁹ This is why it is called “*tenaim*.” [That is, we call the contract *tenaim*]

¹⁵ At this point in 1928, the Rebbe was in Riga, Latvia and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. See Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years*, *supra*, p. 307-308.

¹⁶ Literally, *ב"ג* or *ב"ג* refers to a “contemporary.” In the context of this letter, this could be translated as “your intended.” See Oberlander and Shmotkin, *Early Years*, *supra*, p. 309. In today’s vernacular, perhaps it could be translated as “your soulmate.”

¹⁷ See the text at note 9 for a discussion of the *tenaim*.

¹⁸ To help the reader follow the flow of this letter as it weaves in and out of parenthetical observations, ellipses were inserted before and after each of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s parentheticals. These ellipses do not appear in the Hebrew version of the letter.

¹⁹ *Duchrah* (or *mayim duchrin*; masculine waters) is a term that refers to a “male” quality or radiance that flows down from Heaven. *Nukvah* (or *mayim nukvin*; female waters) is a term that refers to a “female” desire for G-d that ascends. See *Zohar* on *Bereishit*, 1:60b. (“The passion of the female toward the male is only aroused when he puts the spirit into her. And the flow of *mayim nukvin* (female waters) ascends to meet *mayim duchrin* (male waters) above. The righteous cause the upward flow to the male waters and then there is one passion, one union, and one tie (קשורא חדא) and this appeases everyone. And it is then that the Holy One, blessed be He, walks among the righteous.”) Similarly, in *Berachot* 59b, as is taught in a *baraisa*: When does one recite the blessing over rain? After the groom has gone out to meet the bride (*i.e.*, drops on the ground extend toward drops of rain that continue to fall).

Mah and *Ban* are derived from the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, the name *Havayah* (*yud*, and *hei*, and *vov*, and *hei*; ה-ו-ה-י). These letters may be spelled out in an expanded format in several different ways. For example, the letter “ה” could be spelled out as “ה”ה” or as “ה”ה.” Each expanded spelling of each letter then yields a different overall numerical value. When the letters of the Tetragrammaton are spelled

because the word *tenai* (condition) implies doubt (*safek*) and the state of *Atik Yomin* [the source alluded to by *tenaim*] is all about doubt. Here I am not referring to doubt in the sense of the “third side,” G-d forbid;²⁰ rather, it is just that at the depth of the level of *Atik Yomin*,²¹ it is impossible to understand or grasp these ideas with any degree of certainty. This is alluded to by the phrase used in the *tenaim*: לאלה דברי הברית והתנאים “these are the words of the covenant (*brit*) and conditions (*tenaim*).”²² “Brit” (covenant) refers to *mah*, and the *tenaim* (conditions) refer to *ban*. And *brit* (covenant) is in the singular as is *mah*, and the word *tenaim* (conditions) is plural which refers to *ban*,²³ because the “doubts” that

out as ו"ד ה"א ו"א ה"א the numeric value of the characters adds up to 45 which corresponds to מה (*mah*). *Mah* represents the male dimension, which is also represented by the *vov* of *Havayah* and corresponds to six *middos*/emotional attributes. When the letters of the Tetragrammaton are spelled out in expanded form as ו"ד ה"א ו"א ה"א the numeric value of the characters adds up to 52 which corresponds to בן (*ban*). *Ban* represents the female dimension, which is also represented by the lower or last *hei* of *Havayah* and *malchut*.

Atik Yomin is the inner dimension of *keser* and the last (lowest) level of G-dliness before *Arich Anpin* which is the beginning of creation.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is explaining that just as the *tenaim* represent the initial bond between bride and groom, the *tenaim* also allude to the kabbalistic initial bond between female and male attributes sourced at the most elevated deep levels of existence.

²⁰ It would appear to the translator that, for Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, doubt implicated by the “third side” alludes to the following. Assume two parties to a contract must fulfill certain conditions. If they do, an outcome contemplated by the agreement will occur. If they do not, the outcome will not occur and there will be other consequences. The “outcome” is the “third side” relative to the two parties and their respective conditions. The potential outcomes are known in the sense that we know which outcome follows from the preceding actions. Based on the context that follows in the letter, doubt that is not of the “third side” appears to refer to a level of unknowability wherein the outcome is not and *cannot be* known. The future outcome of a marriage is such a level of “doubt” or unknowability.

²¹ As indicated *supra* at note 19, *Atik Yomin* refers to the level of G-dliness immediately preceding creation. That level is unknowable because it is a level above creation and still in a realm of G-dliness that we cannot comprehend.

²² *Tenaim* are written in various forms and the wording can vary depending on custom and tradition. The current custom is to sign the *tenaim* immediately before the wedding. Where the *tenaim* are written long in advance of the wedding, they are called *tenaim rishonim* and an additional opening phrase is used. The phrases used in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s letter are consistent with the actual *tenaim* text of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin, as re-printed in *A Chassidisher Derher Magazine*, published in 2018 (5779) on the 90th anniversary of the wedding of the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin, page 21. The full phrase in the *tenaim* of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin is: המגיד מראשית אחרית הוא יתן שם טוב ושארית לאלה דברי הברית והתנאים “May the one who knows the end from the beginning provide a good name and future to these words of covenant (*brit*) and conditions (*tenaim*).” In other words, it forms an opening prayer of sorts that G-d (the one who knows the end from knowing the beginning, *Isaiah* 46:10) should bless the agreement so that it should be fulfilled at the wedding. Some versions of this phrase in *tenaim rishonim* refer to “*Ha’tenaim*” before “*Ha’Brit*” as in לאלה דברי התנאים והברית, the *tenaim* used by the Rebbe and Rebbetzin and the version referred to by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak follow the order as indicated above.

²³ *Ban* (בן) is also plural in that its numerological corollary is 52. The gematria for *Havayah* (ה-ו-ה) is 26 and twice 26 (the plural of 26) is 52. Inherently, therefore, *ban* has a plural connotation which is not true for *mah*, which corresponds to 45, a number that is not evenly divisible.

exist at this level²⁴ are without any end; as it is written²⁵ “G-d will satisfy your soul’s thirst in dry places (*b’tzachtachot*)”, see *Etz Chaim* at the end of the *Sha’ar* entitled *Atik* and look there.²⁶ This is also what is alluded to (in the *tenaim*) where it is written that “one who finds [*matza*] a wife finds good.”²⁷ The word “*matza*” in Hebrew (מצה) is spelled with two *kamatzin*. One *kamatz* hints at *keser*;²⁸ therefore, two *kamatzin* refer to an even higher level of *keser*, *Atik*. Moreover, the verse refers to *matza tov* (i.e., one who finds a wife finds good) because *Atik* [the level hinted at with the two *kamatzin*] is a level where it is all good. As it is said,²⁹ there is no “left” (or *gevurah*) in *Atik*; it is all “right” (corresponding to *chesed*).

The word *matza* also hints at the combination of *duchrah* and *nukvah*. The *mem* (מ) represents the forty days of the formation of the fetus at which time it is decreed who that person will marry,³⁰ and the letters *tzadi* and *aleph* (צ+א) allude to *duchrah* and *nukvah* and

²⁴ That is, the level of *mah* and *ban* of *Atik* where it is all doubt/unknowability. The doubt at this level is without end, as explained earlier. Here, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak connects this level of *mah* and *ban* of *Atik* to the phrase in the *tenaim* לאלה דברי הברית והתנאים.

²⁵ *Isaiah* 58:11.

²⁶ The only time the word *b’tzachtzachot* is used in Tanach is in *Isaiah* 58:11 and, in context, it refers to dry or parched places. (See also *Isaiah* 5:13, והמונו צחה צמא “and its masses parched with thirst.”) The phrase from *Isaiah* mentioning *b’tzachtzachot* means according to the *Zohar* in portion *Vaychi* (1:224b): צחות תרין (one *tzach* or two *tzachot*). And according to the *Etz Chaim Sha’ar* 12 (*Sha’ar Atik*), *Perek* 5, it refers to *nukvah* of *Atik*. *Etz Chaim* explains that *Isaiah* the prophet was uncertain because, on the one hand, *b’tzachtzachot* could contain merely the *keser* of *mah* that is attached to the *keser* of *ban* which would be one level (i.e., צח in the singular form). This would represent *mah* and *ban* at the level (*keser*) where *mah* and *ban* are inseparable [the gematria of *mah* (מה/45) and *ban* (בן/52) corresponds to *tzach* (צח/98), *im ha’kollel* (i.e., using the gematria principle of adding 1 for the words themselves which make up the gematria)]. On the other hand, it could also contain the *chocmah* and *bina* of *ban* (which are now united with *chocmah* and *bina* of *mah*) which would be considered two distinct levels (צחות in the plural form). Thus, *Isaiah* referred to *Atik* as *tzachtzachot*, because it might contain both *tzach* (the *keser* of *mah* and the *keser* of *ban*) and *tzachot* (the *chocmah* and *bina* of *ban* and the *chocmah* and *bina* of *mah*). *Etz Chaim* points out the additional doubts that we have regarding *nukvah* of *Atik*, which is why *nukvah* of *Atik* is described in *Zohar* as *reisha d’lo ityada* (“the head that cannot be known”). In *Kabbalah*, this refers to the deepest aspect of G-d’s Essence which is entirely unknowable; unknowable because it is a level of “Essence” that transcends intellect or knowledge entirely.

²⁷ *Mishlei* (Proverbs) 18:22. The phrase is included in the opening line of the *tenaim*.

²⁸ See *Tikunei Zohar* 129b. For a discussion of the association of the *kamatz* with *keser* (crown) representing the highest of the *sefiros*, see *Ma’amorei Admur Hazaken* 5562 II p. 341-346; https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/137292/jewish/Kamatz-Concealment.htm (last viewed Dec. 2, 2020).

²⁹ *Zohar* III:129a.

³⁰ *Sotah* 2a אמר רב יהודה אמר רב ארבעים יום קודם יצירת הולד בת קול יוצאת ואומרת בת פלוני לפלוני; Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav that during the 40 days of the formation of the fetus, a heavenly voice declares that the daughter of so-and-so is destined for so-and-so).

have the gematria of *Havayah Ad'nai*.³¹ Also the *mem* represents the four *sefiros* of *keser*, *chochmah*, *bina*, and *da'as* (כהב"ד)³² and the *tzadi* and *aleph* (צ"א) are [the numerical value of] *Havayah Ad'nai* which are *za* (six *sefiros*) and *malchut* which are in the nature of the combination of *zun* {*za* and *nukvah*}.

After that [*i.e.*, in the text of the *tenaim* after the phrase “one who finds a wife finds good” is the phrase] “and it draws favor/goodwill (*ratzon*) from G-d”³³ which is *Arich Anpin*, representing *ratzon* or G-d’s will. In particular, it reveals the frontal part (literally forehead) of *ratzon* (will), the will of all wills.³⁴ On account of this all judgments are cancelled, as is known about *mincha* on Shabbat which is an auspicious time,³⁵ and makes everything good, even in a revealed way.)

... should be an everlasting commitment, with G-d’s will, as is written³⁶ “he says the riveting is good” and “you who cleave to G-d, your G-d, you are all alive today.”³⁷

[The *tenaim* continue with the phrase] “You cannot flee and you cannot hide one from the other,”³⁸ not him from her nor her from him ...

(which hints at the two intertwined unities of *Havayah Ad'nai* which are intertwined whether it is *Ad'nai* in *Havayah* or *Havayah* in *Ad'nai*³⁹)

³¹ The letters צ (corresponding to 90) + א (corresponding to 1) have the gematria value of 91. *Havayah* (ה-י-ה-ו-ה) has the gematria of 26 and *Ad'nai* (אדני) has the gematria of 65; together they add up to 91. The connection to *nukvah* and *duchrah* is that *Ad'nai* refers to the *Shechinah* or a feminine attribute (*nukvah*) and *Havayah* refers to a male attribute (*duchrah*).

³² Each of the four *sefiros* has within it 10 *sefiros*. Thus, the four *sefiros* correspond to 40 or *mem* (מ).

³³ Phrase from *tenaim* which reads ויפק רצון מה' הטוב.

³⁴ See *Zohar* III:129a and 288b. This phrase refers to the highest transcendent level of *Arich Anpin* and the source of all *ratzon* (will) from which follows all other sources of *ratzon* and is referred to as the *metzach ha'ratzon* (the forehead of wills). This is based on a verse in *Shemot* 28:38 (“It [the forehead plate worn by the high priest] should be upon his forehead at all times (during the Temple service) to make them favorable (לרצון) before G-d.”).

³⁵ In *Zohar* 129a, it is explained that עת רצון (an “auspicious time”) comes from *Atik Yomin* and is specifically at the time of *mincha* on Shabbat afternoon.

³⁶ *Isaiah* 41:7. The full phrase refers to the worker who encourages the blacksmith; “he who flattens with the hammer ... says of the riveting ‘it is good’ and he fixes it with nails.”

³⁷ *Devarim* 4:4. Before the parenthetical which explained the deeper nature of the bonding between groom and bride represented by the *tenaim*, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak introduced the basic concept that the *tenaim* represent a binding connection. That part of his thought is continued in the text after the parenthetical which illustrates a strong bond represented by a riveting or by one who cleaves to G-d for life.

³⁸ Quoting from *tenaim* text.

³⁹ This idea is another type of “binding” between groom and bride – one where the connection is a unification by blending or being intertwined. See *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VehoEmunah*, Chapter 7. The blending of the names *Ad'nai* and *Havayah* reflect different expressions of unification. When one blends *Ad'nai* in *Havayah*, that means transcendence comes first and it reflects upper unity. When one blends

... and you should be “face to face” for all time (בכל עת),⁴⁰ with love and favor (*ratzon*)⁴¹ each from the other. It should be the will of our father in Heaven, in the merit of our holy fathers and rabbis (may the memory of the righteous ones be a blessing for the life of the World to Come, may their memories protect us, Amen”) that speedily in our days ...

(the gematria of which is 370⁴² and hints at the flow of the 370 lights from *Arich Anpin* to *Zeir Anpin* (*za*),⁴³ which happens “speedily” from *Arich Anpin* (from which the flow continues speedily, see *Likutei Torah* in the passage of the flowering of Aaron’s staff⁴⁴)

Havayah in *Ad’nai*, that means the letters of *Ad’nai* come first. This reflects a lower level of unity where *Ad’nai* is revealed and *Havayah* is submerged/hidden and this allows for the creation of time and space where creation can feel a separate existence. The intertwining nature of the words appears to work as follows: *Havayah* has the letters ה-ו-ה-י and *Ad’nai* has the letters א-ד-נ-י. There are two ways to combine the words. One would alternate letters beginning with *Havayah* (יאהדוניה) representing upper unity and one would begin with *Ad’nai* (אידהנויה) representing the lower unity.

⁴⁰ Here, the phrase in the letter is “פנים בפנים בכל עת”. At one level, the phrase is a wish that the Rebbe and Rebbetzin should be in sympathetic agreement one with the other (like always seeing “eye to eye”). More likely, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was alluding to an everlasting internalized (פנימיות) “face to face” spiritual experience as occurred between Moses and G-d (*Devarim* 5:4). Interestingly *Sefer Ikkarim* (III:8) describes the unique prophetic experience of Moses as having changed בכל עת forever after a face-to-face experience. Moreover, *Sefer Ikkarim* continues, this experience was of so high a character that it forever avoided any possible suspicion or doubt (ספק). (See also *Tanya, Kuntres Acharon, Essay Two* discussing the turning of face to face (and the unity of *za* and *nukvah*) in the context of action-oriented *mitzvot*.) Perhaps Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is alluding to a time when the Rebbe and Rebbetzin will be bound together, one to the other, and united/intertwined so that their existence will eliminate the existence of any doubt/uncertainty. This idea is also connected to the discussion in note 46.

⁴¹ Here, *ratzon* is used in a slightly different context than earlier in the letter, see text at note 34.

⁴² במהרה בימינו (speedily in our days) adds up to 370. In the printed text of *Likutei Levi Yitzchak* (Vol. 3, p. 202) the words were printed as: במהרה בימנו (missing the second *yud*). This seems to be a printer error as the last word on the same page is spelled בימינו (with the second *yud*). Interestingly, even if the spelling is not a printer error, the gematria could add up to 370 as follows: the words במהרה בימנו add up to 360. By then adding the 10 letters in the words במהרה בימנו, the total is 370.

⁴³ The concept of the 370 lights (ש"ע נהורין) is found in *Sefer Etz Chaim* (13:14) and the *Zohar* (1:4b). The number 370 is explained in various ways. One understanding is based on a process of “inter-inclusion” of the intellectual *sefirot* of *chochmah*, *bina*, and *daat* of *Arich Anpin* which include a ten-fold iteration twice. Each *sefira* therefore corresponds to 100 (10 x 10), for 300 in total. The seven emotional *sefirot* only undergo one tenfold iteration adding up to 70 (7 x 10). The total comes to 370. These 370 lights shine from *Arich Anpin* to *Zeir Anpin* representing goodwill. When they shine through *Zeir Anpin*, these lights achieve the attribute of peace. This is explained in detail at https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/379552/jewish/The-Secret-of-Levis-Genes.htm (last viewed Dec. 2, 2020). Interestingly, the themes of goodwill (*ratzon*) and peace are key themes in this letter.

⁴⁴ See *Likutei Torah* for *Parshas Korach*. There, the point is made that Aaron’s staff sprouted blossoms and brought forth almonds. *Bamidbar* 17:23. Almonds sprout faster than other fruits and blossoms. This speedy sprouting forth hints at the priesthood which is endowed with the ability to quickly bring the flow of “light” from the highest levels above to below. Aaron the Kohen draws this from *Rav Chesed* of *Arich Anpin*, which is speedy because there is no *din* (judgment/restriction) to stop it (unlike regular *chesed* which comes down much slower because it is constantly challenged by *din*).

“in our days” which corresponds to *za*, which brings peace between man and his fellow)
... you should have your wedding ...

(which is the unity of *zun* (*za* and *nukvah*), which brings peace between husband and wife which, in turn, is dependent upon bringing peace between man and his fellow, as is known,⁴⁵ and see in *Likutei Torah* in the elaboration to *V’Heinif*⁴⁶)

... at a good and successful time for *Mazal Tov*. You should build an everlasting edifice, with voices of rejoicing and happiness and voices of groom and bride. May our fathers look down on you and experience tremendous joy (*nachas*) and all good forever and you should have an upright blessed generation in the full understanding of those words.

This is your father’s desire; a desire for all good for you in body and soul for all your days.

Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

⁴⁵ This refers to the morning blessings where the siddur includes a portion from *Peah* 1:1 which includes a discussion of several precepts the fruits of which are enjoyed in this world while the principle rewards are in the world to come. Among those precepts is bringing peace between a man and his fellow and between husband and wife (והבאת שלום שבין אדם לחברו, ובין איש לאשתו). Interestingly, the phrase concerning peace between husband and wife is not included in Ashkenaz prayer rites. The interjected phrase is attributable to the Shelah (see *Sha’ar Ha-Kolel Perek* 1:19 and *Sefer Likutei Mahariach*, Part 1, at *Seder Birkot Ha’sachar*). For purposes of this letter, it is sufficient to note that it appears this way in the Siddur *Nusach Ha’Ari*. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak then makes the point that peace between husband and wife is *dependent upon* (התלוי) peace between man and his fellow. Perhaps the reason that peace between husband and wife is dependent upon peace between man and his fellow is that if one’s nature is not able to bring peace between man and his fellow, it will not be a good harbinger for the person’s ability to bring peace in a marriage.

⁴⁶ See *Likutei Torah Parshat Emor* 38a-b, where the Tzemach Tzedek quotes (and explains) the interpretation of the Arizal that הבאת שלום שבין אדם לחברו refers to the interaction of *Arich Anpin* with *Zeir Anpin*. The discussion refers to the flow from *Arich Anpin* to *Zeir Anpin* through a spiritual internalized “gazing” (אסתכלות אגפין באגפין בין האדם לחבירו שהוא האריך בזעיר) (אגפין באגפין) “face-to-face” flow leads to an inner complete unity (מתחברים בהתכללות גמור ואמיתי). In *Kuntres HaTefilah*, Chapter 1, Rabbi Shalom DovBer of Lubavitch writes of a type of “gazing at the king’s glory” (הסתכלות ביקרא דמלכא) that refers to the merging of divergent elements that are then joined and become a single unit. This is similar to what Rabbi Levi Yitzchak seems to refer to in describing his wish that the Rebbe and Rebbetzin be “face-to-face” for all time. See above at note 40.