

Unlocking the Code
The Letters of
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson

1934 Letter on Purim and Pesach

**TRANSLATION AND
EXPLANATION**

Shlomo M. Hamburger

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Preface

On the 18th of Nissan 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 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

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 April 17, 2024).

² The Rebbe was born the 11th of Nissan 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.

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 1934 Letter on Purim and Pesach

Unlike other letters from Rabbi Levi Yitzchak to the Rebbe, the 1934 letter does not include an introductory salutation or complimentary close. Also, unlike other letters, the 1934 letter does not appear to have a single unifying theme. Instead, the letter consists of two parts – the first explains topics related to Purim and the second explains topics related to *Pesach*.

Summary of Purim Section of 1934 Letter

For Purim, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explored the deeper meaning behind the famous Talmudic story of Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira. The story is offered as support for the adage that on Purim it is a mitzvah to become so intoxicated that one cannot tell the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai. As recorded in *Megillah* 7b, Rabbi Zeira celebrated the Purim meal together with Rabbah. During the meal they both drank wine and became intoxicated. Rabbah got up and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira.⁹ The next day, Rabbah begged for divine mercy and revived Rabbi Zeira. When Rabbah invited Rabbi Zeira to join him the next year, Rabbi Zeira declined explaining that one cannot rely on miracles every day. In a 1932 letter sent to the Rebbe and his youngest brother Yisroel Aryeh Leib, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak analyzed this same story to explain how Purim alludes to a level of equivalence between great (represented by Rabbah) and small (represented by Rabbi Zeira) where differences between them do not really exist.¹⁰ Rabbi Levi Yitzchak took a different approach in the 1934 letter.

By his telling, this was not just a story of two great Talmudic scholars having a Purim meal and fulfilling the mitzvah of Purim intoxication. Instead, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explained that Rabbah represents a state of expanded consciousness (*mochin d'gadlus*) and Rabbi Zeira represents a state of more constricted consciousness (*mochin d'katnus*).¹¹ Purim then represents

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 The text uses the word "*shechatei*" in explaining that Rabbah performed a type of ritual slaughtering, *shechita*, on Rabbi Zeira. The meaning of *shechita* in this context is explored more fully by the Rebbe in *Likutei Sichos*, Vol. 31, p. 177 where the Rebbe explains that *shechita* means to draw out and to bring the object of *shechita* to a higher level. Here, Rabbah elevated Rabbi Zeira to such a lofty spiritual state that Rabbi Zeira passed away from a state of expiration of the soul (*klos ha-nefesh*). In this letter, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak refers to a similar idea in explaining why Rabbah could slay Rabbi Zeira.

¹⁰ *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 267-268.

¹¹ In Hebrew, the word "rabbah" means abundant or numerous and "zeira" means small. In a literal sense, therefore, the names Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira refer to "greatness" and "smallness" respectively. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak goes further to associate Rabbah with "*mochin d'gadlus*" and Rabbi Zeira with "*mochin d'katnus*." As a general and simplified explanation, Kabbalah uses the terms *mochin d'gadlus* and *mochin d'katnus* to refer to various stages of development of the combinations of *sefirot* (i.e., Kabbalistic

the sweetening of *mochin d'katnus* through *mochin d'gadlus*. That is, at Purim our greater consciousness can bring our normally reserved or restricted consciousness to a higher, more expansive, spiritual existence.

As one reads Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's explanation about the Purim story, it is helpful to refer to the following chart:

Rabbah Represents	Performed Shechita on	Rabbi Zeira Represents
<i>Mochin d'gadlus</i> ; great; yet known as <i>Oker Harim</i>	Used tools of <i>shechita</i> to reach (and “sweeten”) R. Zeira	<i>Mochin d'katnus</i> ; small
<i>Chesed/Chasadim</i>		<i>Gevuros</i>
<i>Havayah</i>		<i>Elokim</i>
<i>Avraham</i> ; juxtaposed to Haman		<i>Yitzchak</i> ; juxtaposed to Haman’s sons
Chopped wood with R. Yosef for Shabbat; first line of <i>Ana Bekoach</i>		Kindled small sticks that Rabbah and R. Yosef cut; last line of <i>Ana Bekoach</i>
Which corresponds to Shabbat because before Shabbat we recite <i>Ana Bekoach</i> .		

emanations or attributes through which G-d manifests Himself) through *partzufim*. *Partzufim* are sefirotic "faces" referring to how divine revelation flows to each level of each world. Each *partzuf* is made up of ten *sefirot* which then develop through combinations of *sefirot*. *Mochin* is literally translated as "brains" or "intellect." The references to *gadlus* and *katnus* refer to the state of development of the intellectual spiritual faculties. *Gadlus*, or greatness, refers to well-developed or expanded intellect and *katnus*, or smallness, refers to less developed or constricted intellect. The initial part of that developmental process is referred to as *mochin d'katnus* as it is analogized to the early development of a child. The more mature and developed part of the process is referred to a *mochin d'gadlus*. To analogize this to levels of comprehension or consciousness, if one learns an idea without fully understanding it, that is a constricted level of understanding (like *mochin d'katnus*) and when one fully understands the concept, that is a state of expanded consciousness (like *mochin d'gadlus*). See Kaplan, Aryeh. *Meditation and Kabbalah*, Boston, MA: WeiserBooks, 1982, pp. 278-279. Importantly, this explanation of *mochin d'gadlus* and *mochin d'katnus* is only meant to provide the reader with a point of reference when the phrases are used in the text. A full explanation of these terms is beyond the scope of this translation.

Summary of Pesach Section of 1934 Letter

For Pesach, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak analyzed the symbols of matzah and wine. At a high level, he explained the meaning of the famous phrase from *Sefer Yetzirah*:¹² הָבֵן בַּחֲכָמָה וְהִחֵם בְּבִינָה “understand through wisdom and be wise through understanding” in the context of matzah and wine. Along the way, he explained the inter-connectedness of the Kabbalistic attributes of *chochmah* and *binah* as they are represented by matzah and wine respectively.

Here is a short outline of the second part of the 1934 letter to help the reader work through Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s explanation:

1. Explanation of the order at the Seder – two cups of wine, followed by eating matzah, followed by two cups of wine
2. Explanation of how matzah represents *chochmah*
3. Explanation of how the four cups of wine represent *binah*
4. Explanation of how הָבֵן בַּחֲכָמָה וְהִחֵם בְּבִינָה corresponds to the order explained in step 1
5. Explanation of the inter-connectedness of *chochmah* and *binah*

In Appendix A, there is also a more detailed explanation of how these steps flow through Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s letter.

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 teacher, noted author, Chassidus teacher, and Chabad historian Rabbi Chaim Dalfin who provided insightful comments and edits and continues 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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¹² *Sefer Yetzirah* (the Book of Formation) is one of the earliest works of Kabbalah. Its authorship and origin are not entirely clear. However, the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 65b) records that Rav Chanina and Rav Oshaya would sit together every *erev Shabbat* and study deeply in *Sefer Yetzirah*.

צ"ד

נהניתי מביאורך שאמרת על המארז"ל ברבה ור"ז שאכלי סעודת פורים בהדדי וששחטי רבה לר"ז. בכלל הענין קרוב מאד לאמת. וזכורני שדברתי קרוב לזה עוד בהיותך אצלנו, וגם רשום אצלי מזה במד"ר במג"א, ואפשר שראית שמה. גם בהקונטרס דמורדיא דלברות ששלחתי לך קודם פורים נרמז מזה בקצרה מאד. ואולם להוי ידוע לך, כי יותר נכון הוא שרבה רומז על מוחין דגדלות כשמו, ור"ז רומז על מוחין דקטנות כשמו (ועולה בקנה א' שרבה הוא בחי' חסדים ור"ז בחי' גבורות) והיינו מה שר"ז מעולם לא שחק, כמבואר בדרז"ל בהעובדא דר' ירמי' שהי' עמו, ומבואר מזה ברשימה דאגרא חמוהי דר"א במס' מנחות כו' ת"ל) כי מוחין דגדלות הם בחי' חסדים, שמות הוי', ומוחין דקטנות הם בחי' גבורות שמות אלקים). ואז סרה קושייתך ממה שרבה הי' עוקר הרים, כי אדרבה בחי' זו הוא מצד מוחין דגדלות, ושחיטה הוא בסימנים קנה ושט וורידין שהם הג' מוחין דקטנות, כידוע בהג' שרי פרעה משקים אופים טבחים, וענין זה שייך ביחוד לפורים שהוא המתקת מוחין דקטנות ע"י מוחין דגדלות, שלכן מספרו הוא ג"פ הוי' אלקים של"ו הייתי, ועיין בל"ת להאריז"ל פ' וישב (והיינו בחי' נס המלוכש בטבע כמבואר ברשימה דמורדיא דלברות). גם מה ששחטי רבה לר"ז הוא ע"ד עקידת יצחק שאברהם בחי' חסדים רצה לשחוט את יצחק בחי' גבורות (אך שם הי' די בעקדה בלבד, כי נשחט תמורתו איל, ועיין בל"ת הנ"ל בדרוש העקדה. גם כדי שיהי' מפלת המן ובניו הי' צריך להיות שחיטה ממש, וד"ל) ושייך זה לפורים, כי המן ובניו הם הלעומת דאברהם ויצחק, שזהו המארז"ל שאימא דאברהם ואימי דהמן שמותיהן שוות, להורות שהמן הוא הלעומת דאברהם (אברהם נטע אמונה, ויטע אשל בבאר שבע כו' בשם ה' אל עולם, והמן רצה לעקור אמונה, ועשה עץ גבוה נ' אמה הלעומת דאשל דאברהם. אברהם מסתיים באותיות ה"ם והמן מתחיל באותיות ה"ם (אך המ' דאברהם הוא מ' סתומה, בסוד החותם שאין יניקה ללעו"ז, ובהמן הוא מ' פתוחה שאז יש יניקה ללעו"ז, והיינו מה שאח"כ הוא נ' העץ דנ' אמה, וד"ל) והע"ה אלף שהרגו בנס דפורים הוא בזכות הע"ה שנה דאברהם כשיצא מחרן, שחרן הוא מוחין דקטנות ג"פ אלקים, והע"ה שנה רומז על המתקת המוחין דקטנות במוחין דגדלות, שהוא מספר האותיות דג' שמות הוי' ואלקים במלואן ועוד ו' לנגד הוי' שמות דהוי' אלקים, עיין בל"ת פ' לך, גם אסתר היתה בת ע"ד שנה כמנין הדסה כשנלקחה אל בית המלכות, שהוא לנגד הע"ה שנה דאברהם כמ"ש במד"ר פ' לך ע"ש, והוא המתקת שם אלקים בהאותיות הקודמין לו שמספרם ע"ד (ולהעיר מהע' ד' רבתי דשמע כו' אחד) ועיין בפע"ח בכוונת פסח ובכוסות של פסח, וד"ל. והוא המתקת המוחין דקטנות ע"י המוחין דגדלות), והיו להמן ר"ח בנים כמספר ורב חסר ו' כמארז"ל הם הלעומת דיצחק שמספרו ר"ח, ארבי"ה את זרעו ואתן לו את יצחק כמ"ש בכתבי האריז"ל (אך בני המן הם ורב חסר ו' היפך מיצחק שקרא שמות מלא ו', עיין בתו"א פ' תולדות, שאות ו' הוא אות אמת, אות חיים, עיין בזהר ר"פ ויקרא ובפ' במדבר דק"כ כמדומה). לכן שייך לפורים שרבה ור"ז יעשו הסעודה בהדדי ושישחוט רבה את ר"ז ע"ד העקדה, ועי"ז הוא מפלת המן ובניו. והבן האחרון הקטן דהמן הוא ויזתא שבו הוא הגמר דמפלתם והוא

¹³ *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 302-304. Based on the opening lines of the second part of this letter, the letter appears to have been written after *Pesach* in 1934. See text after note 74 below ("Now because I haven't written to you before *Pesach*, as is my annual custom, I will repay a little of my debt to you with some ideas about matzah and the four cups of wine."). The reference to 1934 (צ"ד) was added to the original handwritten letter by the Rebbe and it appears in the upper left side of the letter. A copy of part of the original handwritten letter is at <https://collive.com/90-year-old-handwritten-letter-of-the-rebbes-father/> (last viewed April 17, 2024).

כמו קטניות שלכן צריך למימתח' לו' דויזתא ולו' דוקטניות, כמ"ש ברשימה דמורדיא דלברות, הוא הלעומת דר"ז דקדושה ששמו זעירא, קטן, ונק' קטינא, ובפ' כל כתבי שרבה מצלח ציבי הוא ע"ד ויבקע עצי עולה דאברהם (כדי שלא יהי' בהעץ תול"ע, אבגית"ץ משבירת חסד דתהו, עיין בשער שבה"כ פ"ב, ועיין בפע"ח בכוונת קטרת בענין תול"ע לעו"ת, ובלקו"ת בביאור דחקת דרוה"ר) וכן רב יוסף הי' מצלח ציבי בדאיתא שם, והיינו ששניהם יחד היו מצלחי ציבי, כי שניהם הם בחי' בקר, בקר דאברהם רבה, ובקר דיוסף רב יוסף, עיין בזהר בלק דר"ד ע"ש, והוא מ"ש ובער עלי' הכהן עצים בבקר בבקר תרין בקר דאברהם ויוסף, וכמ"ש במ"א ברשימה על המסרה דיג"פ בבקר ע"ש, וחסד שייך ליסוד כי חסד אתגלי בפומא (וכן בתהו אור החסד נפל ליסוד, כידוע) זהו ששניהם יחד היו מצלחי ציבי, ואז ר"ז שהוא זעירא, קטן, מצתת צתותי בהעצים שבקעו רבה ור"י, והוא השם האחרון דאנא בכח כו' שקוצי"ת כמספר צתות"י, ושייך זה למל' שהוא השם האחרון דאנא בכח כו', כי בה מתגלה האש היוצא מחשבון דזיווגא דאו"א עילאין כמ"ש להבה מקרית סיחון ועיין בל"ת פ' וירא בדרוש דבנות לוט ועמון ומואב ע"ש. ושייך כ"ז לשבת, כי קודם קבלת שבת אומרים אנא בכח כו', ועיין בפע"ח בכוונת שבת וד"ל. ויש עוד הרבה מה להאריך בזה ת"ל, ואכמ"ל.

ומפני שלא כתבתי לך קודם הפסח, כנהוג בכל שנה, מענין חהמ"צ, הנני לשלם לך בזה קצת את חובי באיזה הערה מענין מצה וכוסות, שסדרם הוא ב' כוסות שותין קודם אכילת מצה וב' כוסות אחר אכילת מצה, ובינתיים הוא האכילת מצה, שהעיקר הוא המצה האמצעית, שבתחלת הסעודה אוכלים המצה פרוסה שעלי' בעיקר הוא ברכת אכילת מצה ובגמר הסעודה אוכלים האפיקומן שהוא ג"כ ממצה האמצעית, הנה מצה הוא מוחין דאבא וכוסות הוא מוחין דאימא כמ"ש בפע"ח שער חהמ"צ רפ"ב ע"ש, מצות לאכילה הוא חכ' וכוסות לשתי' הוא בינה, עיין בתו"א פ' משפטים בדרוש דלבנת הספיר בענין ויאכלו וישתו, מצות הם מן התורה מוסר אביך חכ' וכוסות הם מדרבנן תורת אמך בינה (ולא יוקשה לך ממ"ש בלקו"ת בד"ה ושאתם מים בששון שלכאורה שם הוא בהיפך, שמן התורה הוא בבינה ומדרבנן הוא בחכ', כי שם הכוונה הוא שמן התורה הוא בז"א ומדרבנן הוא במל' ובשרשם בחו"ב נהפוך הוא שמל' שרשה בחכ' בחכ' יסד ארץ וז"א שרשו בבינה כונן שמים בתבונה, ובנדו"ד הכוונה הוא כמו שהם בחו"ב, ובשרשם יהי' ג"כ בהיפך כי שרש בינה גבוה מחכ' כמא' נבונים לא אשתכחו, ה' דאברהם שהוא למעלותא, ויש מעלה במזל ונקה לגבי מזל נצר חסד שבונקה הוא חסד מקיף ובנצר חסד הוא חסד פנימי דכתר כמ"ש בע"ח שער א"א, גם עיין בשער אנ"ך פ"ח תראה שבינה עילאה הוא חכ' ואבא עילאה הוא בינה, וא"כ א"ש וד"ל) והד' כוסות הם לנגד הד' לשונות של גאולה, ועיקר גאולת מצרים הוא מבינה, עלמא דחירו, פ' והי' כי יביאך שלנגד בינה, נ' פעמים נאמרה יצי"מ לנגד נ' שערי בינה. והנה צ"ל הבן בחכ' וחכם בבינה, הבן בחכ' הוא שבינה גבוה וקודם לחכ', וחכם בבינה הוא שחכ' גבוה וקודם לבינה, כמ"ש בשער אנ"ך פ"ח ועיין בפע"ח שער התפילין פט"ו וט"ז ע"ש. זהו הסדר מתחלה ב' כוסות ואח"כ אוכלים מצה הוא כמו הבן בחכ', ואחר האכילת מצות הוא עוד הפעם ב' כוסות א"כ אכילת מצה קודם להב' כוסות האחרונים הוא כמו וחכם בבינה. ויצי"מ נמשך מחו"ב כידוע בכוונת ויוציאנו הוי' אלקינו חו"ב משם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה, והב' אכילת מצה שבריש הסעודה ואפיקומן שבסוף הסעודה הם ממצה אחת לוי', כי ב' הבחי' שבחכ', אבא ויש"ס, הם מבחי' אחת בינה דמ"ה כמ"ש בשער אנ"ך שם, זהו מה שהם ממצה אחת, לוי' בינה. אך זהו בינה דמ"ה, כי מצה זו שאנו אוכלין ע"ש מ"ה דוקא, והיינו מה שתיבת לוי' הוא מ"ה ע"ה. משא"כ הב' כוסות הראשונים והב' כוסות האחרונים אינם בחי' א' ממש, כי בינה ותבונה הם ב' בחי' זה מחכ' דב"ן וזה מבינה דב"ן כמ"ש, ויש ב' בינות וב' תבונות, עיין בל"ת להאריז"ל פ' חיי שרה בענין מערת המכפלה, היינו הד' כוסות.

General translation and explanation of the letter from

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe)

*Dated 1934*¹⁴

[PART ONE OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHAK'S 1934 LETTER – ON PURIM]

I enjoyed your explanation of what our rabbis of blessed memory said about Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira who celebrated a Purim meal together where Rabbah slaughtered Rabbi Zeira.¹⁵ Your explanation is very close to the Truth.¹⁶ I remember that I said something similar to your explanation when we were last together.¹⁷ I also have it written up in the margin of the *Midrash Rabbah* on *Megillat Esther*,¹⁸ and maybe you saw it there. Also, the short pamphlet that I sent to

¹⁴ *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 302-303. Based on the opening lines of the second part of this letter which relates to Pesach, the letter appears to have been written after *Pesach* in 1934. Also, the reference to 1934 (ת"צ) was added to the original handwritten letter by the Rebbe and it appears in the upper left side of the letter. A copy of part of the original handwritten letter is at <https://collive.com/90-year-old-handwritten-letter-of-the-rebbes-father/> (last viewed April 17, 2024).

¹⁵ For an explanation of this story and the use of the term “slaughter,” see note 9.

¹⁶ The translation of אמת (*emes*), as Truth in this context requires some explanation. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is not implying that the Rebbe’s explanation of the story was false (in contrast to truth). That would be the basic English-language understanding of saying something was close to the truth. Here, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is likely intending to say that the Rebbe’s explanation was very close to a full kabbalistic explanation. Typically, אמת (*emes*) is an allusion to Torah (*Berachot* 5b, based on *Mishlei* 23:23). In the context of this letter, though, Truth is likely a reference to kabbalah (see https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380373/jewish/Mysteries-and-Truth.htm (last viewed April 17, 2024)). Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was referring to how the Rebbe’s analysis fits within a system of interpretation and understanding known as Truth; not to an epistemological understanding of the accuracy as to what the Rebbe said.

¹⁷ The Rebbe and his father were last physically together in the fall of 1927, approximately 6½ years earlier than the date this letter was written.

¹⁸ According to *Midrash Rabbah* on *Megillat Esther* 8:5, in the verse “and Mordechai told him [Hathach] all that happened to him” (*Esther* 4:7), Mordechai was referring to his dream (“חלם למרדכי חלם”) relating to the matter in the second year of the reign of Achashverosh. And in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s writings that he sent to the Rebbe on Purim 1934 (published in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak* vol. 3 pp. 178), he pointed out that “חלם” has the numerical value of 78 which is three times 26 (*Havayah*) and refers to the three *mochin d’gadlus*.

you before Purim¹⁹ which explains “the pole used by oarsmen on the river Libros”²⁰ briefly hints at this idea.²¹

[Rabbah is *Mochin D’Gadlus*; Rabbi Zeira is *Mochin D’Katnus*]

Nevertheless, you should know that it is more accurate to say that Rabbah represents *mochin d’gadlus* as befitting his name and Rabbi Zeira represents the *mochin d’katnus* as befitting his name.²²

(This is consistent with their natures²³ because Rabbah is associated with *chasadim* [kindness] and Rabbi Zeira is associated with *gevuros* [severity]²⁴ ...

(This also explains why Rabbi Zeira never laughed, as is understood based on the story with Rabbi Yirmiya who tried to get Rabbi Zeira to laugh.²⁵ Some of it is

¹⁹ Published in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 177-186.

²⁰ In *Megillah* 16b, Rabbi Yochanan said that the *vov* of ויזח (see the discussion in the text at note 55 below where Rabbi Levi Yitzchak brings back a discussion about ויזח) has to be stretched out like *mordiya d’Libros* (the pole used by oarsmen on the river of Libros). In *Bava Metziah* 87a, the specific reference to *mordiya d’Libros* relates to the question of what type of meal must be given to laborers. The Mishna on which the discussion is based explained that before the laborers begin, one needs to stipulate that they have the right to claim only a meal of bread and legumes (*pas v’kitnis*). Rav Acha, son of Rav Yosef then asked Rav Chisda to explain what the correct text of the Mishna should be – should it be referring to bread of legumes (*pas kitnis*, without a *vov*) or bread and legumes (*pas v’kitnis*). Rav Chisda answered: “By G-d! It [the phrase] requires a *vov* as large as the pole used by oarsmen on the river Libros” [and it reads: *pas v’kitnis* (“bread and legumes”)].

²¹ *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 178.

²² For an explanation of *mochin d’gadlus* and *mochin d’katnus* as used in this letter, see note 11.

²³ Literally, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak used the phrase “they arise from one stalk” (עולה בקנה א’). This phrase alludes to Pharaoh’s dream in *Bereishit* (41:5-7). In the dream, seven healthy ears of grain grew on a single stalk which were swallowed by seven sickly ears of grain from the same stalk. The phrase is used to express the idea that two things are in line with or compatible with each other (even if they seem different) because they come from the same “stalk” or source. *Chesed* and *gevurah* are seemingly different attributes (see note 24 below); but they arise from the same source in *Atik Yomin* (see *Tanya, Sha’ar HaYichud V’haEmunah*, chapters 4-6).

²⁴ *Chesed* is an attribute associated with unbounded kindness. *Gevurah* is associated with contracting or limiting. Thus, *mochin d’gadlus* (expanded consciousness) is appropriately associated with *chesed* as being unbounded and *mochin d’katnus* (constricted consciousness) is appropriately associated with *gevurah*. See Schochet, Jacob Immanuel. *Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*, Brooklyn, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 1979, pp. 80-86 and sources cited there for more background.

²⁵ *Niddah* 23a.

explained in my notes on the story of Agra, the father-in-law of Rabbi Abbah in tractate *Chullin*²⁶, thank G-d.)

... because *mochin d'gadlus* is associated with *chesed*, represented by *Havayah*, and *mochin d'katnus* is associated with *gevuros*, represented by *Elokim*).

This resolves the question you had based on the fact that Rabbah was known as an *oker harim* [uprooter of mountains].²⁷ To the contrary, his actions²⁸ were due to his association with *mochin d'gadlus*.

Shechita is done through three key elements: the windpipe/trachea, the esophagus, and the *veridin*²⁹ which are three features associated with *mochin d'katnus*, as is known regarding the three officers of Pharaoh: the butler, baker, and butcher.³⁰

[Connecting the *Mochin* to Purim]

This entire idea has a special connection to Purim which consists of the sweetening of *mochin d'katnus* [which represents the severity of *gevuros*] through the application of *mochin d'gadlus* [which represents kindness/*chesed*]. It is represented by the name Purim specifically

²⁶ *Chullin* 104b (explaining that chicken and cheese can be eaten one after the other). Kabbalah teaches that meat and milk should not be mixed because they represent conflicting energies – milk represents *chesed* and meat represents *gevurah*. See *Likutei Torah, Toras Shmuel*, 5634, p. 31. For a further discussion of this topic, see https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2836689/jewish/Meat-and-Milk-Angels-and-Torah.htm (last visited April 17, 2024). Perhaps Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is referring to the question of which quality predominates over the other (*i.e.*, milk vs. meat; *chesed* vs. *gevurah*) as it relates to the energies represented by Rabbah (*mochin d'gadlus*) and Rabbi Zeira (*mochin d'katnus*).

²⁷ *Berachot* 64a; *Horayot* 14a. Rabbah was known for his ability to argue texts and resolve difficulties in the texts which gave him the nickname *oker harim*. Here, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was responding to a question previously raised by the Rebbe. The question itself was not stated. Yet the context suggests that the question arose because, at first glance, an *oker harim* ought to be associated with *gevuros* (severity) represented by *Elokim* (*mochin d'katnus*) and not *mochin d'gadlus*. In other words, if Rabbah was really associated with *mochin d'gadlus*, it seems inconsistent to refer to him as an *oker harim* which reflects *mochin d'katnus*. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak seems to be answering this question by explaining that Rabbah acted with Rabbi Zeira at a more elevated level even though he was known as an *oker harim* so that his actions were indeed consistent with his representation as *mochin d'gadlus*.

²⁸ That is, his actions in the Purim story about Rabba and Rabbi Zeira.

²⁹ The *veridin* are often identified as the jugular veins. However, Rambam's commentary to *Chullin* 2:1 identifies the *veridin* as "two pulsating blood vessels that are stretched from both sides of the trachea," which correspond to the carotid arteries. Possibly, both the jugular veins and the carotid arteries are included in the term *veridin*. See *Simla Chadasha (Tevuos Shor)* 22:2.

³⁰ The windpipe (corresponding to the butler) is associated with *chochmah* of *mochin d'katnus*; the esophagus (corresponding to the baker) is associated with *binah* of *mochin d'katnus*; and the *veridin* (corresponding to the butcher) is associated with the brain of *da'as*. See *Likutei Torah* of the Arizal on *Parshat Vayeishev* 40:1. For an explanation, see https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/379830/jewish/The-Butcher-in-the-Throat-Part-2.htm (last viewed April 17, 2024).

because the gematria of Purim [336] is three times the combination or unity of *Havayah Elokim*³¹ as it says³² וְיָפַרְפְּרָנִי /שָׁלוֹ הָיִיתִי “I was quiet and he broke me into pieces.”

See *Likutei Torah* of the Arizal on *Parshat Vayeshev*.³³ (This is also the level of a miracle that is vested in nature, as explained in my notes regarding the pole used by oarsmen on the river Libros.³⁴)

Also, the *shechita* of Rabbi Zeira by Rabbah is like the binding of *Yitzchak* by *Avraham* in that *Avraham* represents *chasadim* (*chesed*)³⁵ that wanted to sacrifice (through *shechita*) *Yitzchak* who represents *gevuros*.

(But regarding *Yitzchak*, it was enough that he was bound; the ram served as a sacrifice that could be offered in his place. See the *Likutei Torah* [by the Arizal] referred to above in its discussion of the *Akeida*.³⁶ Whereas, to bring about the downfall of Haman and his sons, there had to be an actual *shechita*.³⁷)

[Comparison of *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* to Haman and His Sons]

This is connected to Purim because Haman and his sons are juxtaposed to *Avraham* and *Yitzchak*. [Here are some reasons why. First,] our rabbis of blessed memory explained that the names of the mothers of Haman and *Avraham* were the same.³⁸ This is to teach us that Haman corresponds to *Avraham*.

([Another example of their juxtaposition is that] *Avraham* planted faith (אמונה); he planted an *eshel* tree in *Be'er Sheva* in the name of G-d, the L-rd of the world.³⁹ By contrast, Haman wanted to uproot faith and he made a tall “tree” 50 cubits high.⁴⁰ [Haman’s tree]

³¹ The gematria of *Havayah* (י-ה-ו-ה) is 26 and *Elokim* (א-ל-ה-י-ם) is 86. The sum equals 112. Three times 112 is 336.

³² *Iyov* 16:12. The gematria for שָׁלוֹ is 336. Thus, the verse means “when I was on the level of 336 (שָׁלוֹ הָיִיתִי) [where (336 = 258+78)], the *mochin d'katnus* [258 = 3x86 (*Elokim*)] is sweetened by the *mochin d'gadlus* [78 = 3x26 (*Havayah*)] and then I attained the level of Purim.” This latter point is alluded to by the sound of the word וְיָפַרְפְּרָנִי which hints at the “Pur” in Purim. See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, p. 177.

³³ On the verse (*Bereishit* 40:1), "וַיְהִי אַחֵר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה".

³⁴ Explained in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 177-178.

³⁵ Micah 7:20 (referring to *chesed l'Avraham*).

³⁶ In the first print of *Likutei Torah* by the Arizal (Zohlkva, 1775), pp. 35b-37a.

³⁷ That is, it would not have been acceptable to offer some type of substitute sacrifice in place of Haman and his sons; when it comes to that type of evil, actual slaying was needed.

³⁸ *Bava Basra* 91a. Haman’s mother’s name was אַמְתַּלַּי בַּת עֹרֵבְתִי (*Amatlai bas Orevati*) and *Avraham*’s mother’s name was אַמְתַּלַּי בַּת כַּרְנֵבֻו (*Amatlai bas Karnevo*).

³⁹ *Bereishit* 21:33.

⁴⁰ *Megillat Esther* 5:14.

corresponds to *Avraham's eishel* tree. Also, *Avraham's* name ends with the letters ה"ם [*hey* and *mem*]. By contrast, *Haman's* name begins with the letters מ"ה [*hey* and *mem*].

(However, *Avraham's* name ends with a closed *mem*. Because it is entirely closed, it does not leave an opening for the development of *kelipos* [negative forces]; they are under containment. By contrast, the *mem* in *Haman's* name has an opening at the bottom left corner which allows for the growth and development of *kelipos*. This leads to the next letter of *Haman's* name, a *nun*, which has the gematria of 50 corresponding to the “tree” that *Haman* planted which was 50 cubits high.)

Next, the 75,000 who were killed in the miracle of Purim⁴¹ was in the merit of the 75 years representing *Avraham's* age when he left *Charan*.⁴² *Charan* corresponds to *mochin d'katnus* – three times *Elokim*.⁴³ The 75 years also hints at the sweetening of *mochin d'katnus* by *mochin d'gadlus*. The reason for this is that 75 is the number of the letters of the 3 names of *Havayah* and the 3 names of *Elokim* spelled out in full, which equals 69, plus another 6 to correspond to the 6 names of *Havayah Elokim* used in the calculation⁴⁴ (see *Likutei Torah* [of the Arizal] in *parshat Lech Lecha*).⁴⁵

Also, *Esther* was 74 years old, corresponding to the numerical value of her Hebrew name הדסה [*Hadassah*], when she was taken into the palace of King *Achashverosh*. This corresponds to the 75 years of *Avraham* [when he left *Charan*] as is written in *Midrash Rabbah, Parshat Lech Lecha* (39:13), see there.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Id.* 9:16.

⁴² *Bereishit* 12:4.

⁴³ As explained above, *Elokim* is associated with *mochin d'katnus*. The gematria of *Elokim* (א-להים) is 86 and the gematria of *Charan* (חרן) is 258. Three times *Elokim* (86) is *Charan* (258).

⁴⁴ The gematria here is based on the number associated with 3 times “*Havayah Elokim*” when spelled out in full. There are 10 letters in the name *Havayah* when the letters are spelled out in full as יו"ד ה"א וא"ו א"ה (which adds up to 30 letters when *Havayah* is spelled out three times in full). Then, there are 13 letters in the name *Elokim* when it is spelled out in full as אל"ף ל"מ ד"ה א"י מ"מ (which adds up to 39 letters when *Elokim* is spelled out three times in full). Thus, the total amount of letters in the 3 names of *Havayah* and in the 3 names of *Elokim* when spelled out in full adds up to 69. Adding another six corresponding to the number of times *Havayah* and *Elokim* are used in this calculation, as Rabbi Levi Yitzchak points out, brings the total to 75.

⁴⁵ On the verse ויאמר ה' אל וואברם בן שבעים וחמש שנה בצאתו מחרן (*Bereishit* 12:4), and on the verse ויאמר ה' אל וואברם בן שבעים וחמש שנה בצאתו מחרן (*ibid* 12:1).

⁴⁶ “Our Rabbis say she [*Esther*] was 75 years old [when she was taken to *Achashverosh's* palace]. Rabbi Brechya said in the name of [the Rabbis of Babylonia]: G-d said to *Avraham*: You left your father's house at age 75; likewise, the redeemer that I will establish from you will be 75 years old [when she marries *Achashverosh*] like the [corresponding numerical value] of הדסה”. (The numerical value of הדסה is 74. At that age, she was taken to the harem where Hagai guarded the women who were designated as potential wives for *Achashverosh*. One year later, when *Esther* turned 75, she was taken to *Achashverosh's* palace. Commentary of *Maharzu* (מהרז"ו) on the Midrash.)

This represents a sweetening of the name *Elokim* by looking at the letters that precede each letter in the name *Elokim* which add up to 74.⁴⁷ (The number 74 also corresponds to the elevated letters *ayin* (ע) and *daled* (ד) in the verse *shema*, etc., *echad*.⁴⁸ See *Pri Etz Chaim Sha'ar HaPesach* where the discussion concerns the four cups of wine on *Pesach*. This illustrates further the principle of sweetening the *mochin d'katnus* through *mochin d'gadlus*.)

Haman [juxtaposed to *Avraham*] had 208 sons which is the numerical value of ורב (*v'rov*) without the ו (*vov*) as noted by our sages.⁴⁹ The 208 sons of Haman are juxtaposed to *Yitzchak* (יצחק) whose name has the gematria of 208. As is written: ארב"ה את זרעו ואתן לו את יצחק ("I increased his seed and gave him *Yitzchak*."⁵⁰) and as is written in the writings of the *Arizal*. (However, the sons of Haman were 208, corresponding to *v'rov* without the *vov*, which is juxtaposed with *Yitzchak* who gave names (שקרא שמות) to the wells⁵¹ with a *vov*, see *Torah Or*,

⁴⁷ This refers to the name of *Elokim* (א-להים) spelled as אכדטט. The process used replaces each letter in *Elokim* (א-להים) with the preceding letter. Because no letter precedes *aleph* (א), that letter is retained. Then, the last four letters (להים) are replaced with the letters that precede them (כדטט). That leaves the name spelled as אכדטט, the numerical value of which is 74. The "sweetening" of *Elokim* refers to the sweetening of *mochin d'katnus* by *mochin d'gadlus*. To do this, start with *Elokim* which is associated with *mochin d'katnus* as explained earlier in the letter. Then, use the gematria rules of looking at the preceding letters to see that *Elokim* corresponds to 74. *Hadassah* is also 74 by the gematria of her Hebrew name. However, she was 75 when she went to the king which corresponds to *Avraham*'s age when he left *Charan*. *Avraham* is *mochin d'gadlus*. Therefore, *Elokim* (*mochin d'katnus*) is "sweetened" by connecting its internal gematria to *Avraham* (*mochin d'gadlus*).

⁴⁸ That is, the last letter of *shema* (שמע) is *ayin* and the last letter of *echad* (אחד) is *daled*.

⁴⁹ *Megillah* 15b. The Talmud debates the number of Haman's sons. Rami bar Abba took the position that there were 208 sons based on the verse in *Megillat Esther* (5:11) where Haman recounted to his friends the glory of his wealth and of his many sons (ורב בניו). The *Gemara* questions this because the value of ורב is 214. The reason for this argument is that when the word is written without vowels, the extra *vov* is needed to indicate proper pronunciation. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak responded, explaining that the actual text of the *Megillah* does not use the extra *vov*. Thus, when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak indicates that the number of Haman's sons is 208 to correspond to *v'rov* without the extra *vov*, he is referring to this explanation in the *Gemara*.

⁵⁰ *Yehoshua* 24:3, quoted in the Haggadah section that begins "In the beginning, our ancestors served idols"/מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה. In the verse itself, the word *v'arbeh* is spelled without a *hey* at the end even though we read it as if it had a *hey* at the end (i.e., it is written וארב but pronounced וארבה (*v'arbeh*)). See *Radak* commentary on Haggadah; Jerusalem Talmud, *Pesachim* 10:5. In the letter, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak spelled ארב"ה with a quotation mark between the *bet* and the *hey* which calls out the gematria of the word as pronounced, which is 208 and the same as יצחק.

⁵¹ *Bereshit* 26:18, where *Yitzchak* dug anew the wells that *Avraham* previously dug, and *Yitzchak* gave names to those wells. As explained in footnote 52, the emphasis here is on the *vov* in the word שמות.

Parshat Toldot.⁵² The letter *vov* is the letter of truth, the letter of life, see the *Zohar* at the beginning of *Parshat Vayikra*⁵³ and in *Parshat Bamidbar* it seems on page 120.)⁵⁴

Therefore, one can see the connection with Purim – that Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira made the meal together and that Rabbah “slaughtered” Rabbi Zeira – which is similar to the *Akeidah*, and that through this was the downfall of Haman and his sons.

And the last and youngest son of Haman was *Vaizatha* (ויזתה) through whom the end of their downfall was accomplished. He is like *kitnyos* (legumes) in that we need to extend the *vov* of *Vaizatha* just as the *vov* is extended in *v'kitnyos* as I have written in the explanation of *mordeya d'Libros*.⁵⁵ This is juxtaposed to Rabbi Zeira (the holy one) whose name was Zeira (זעירא), or small (קטן), and he was called short (קטינא).⁵⁶

[Connecting the theme to Shabbat]

Separately, in the chapter *כל כתבי* (*Kol Kisvei*)⁵⁷ it says that Rabbah would chop wood (for Shabbat), which is like *Avraham's* cutting the wood for the offering of *Yitzchak*⁵⁸ (so there should not be a worm (תולע) in the wood. *Tola*/תולע (506) is the numerical value of אבגית"ץ (506),⁵⁹

⁵² *Torah Or, Parshat Toldot* 17c (on the verse צחק תולדות): “since through the digging of *Yitzchak*, their [the wells] flow did not stop; and the six emotional attributes, which are the level of *vov*, are drawn down and flowing, therefore it is שמות with a *vov*.”

⁵³ *Zohar, Parshat Vayikra*, 2a (where it explains why *vov* is the letter of truth).

⁵⁴ *Zohar, Parshat Bamidbar*, 120b-121a (where it explains why *vov* is the letter of life).

⁵⁵ Published in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 177-186 (the specific discussion begins at p. 182). See *supra* at note 20 for an explanation of the *vov* in *v'kitnyos*. Also, in Megillah scrolls, scribes write the *vov* in *Vaizatha* (*Megillat Esther* 9:9) in a larger extended size compared to the other letters. Also, *Vaizatha* was the youngest son – הקטן – which corresponds to Rabbi Zeira who was known as קטן (small).

⁵⁶ In the *Gemara, Bava Metzia* 85a and *Sanhedrin* 37a, it is explained that Rabbi Zeira was known as “the short one with singed legs.” Rabbi Zeira ascended from Babylonia to Eretz Yisrael and, at the time, he would fast one hundred fasts so he would forget the Babylonian method of studying *Gemara* so as not to impede his ability to adapt to the style of learning in *Eretz Yisrael*. He also fasted one hundred fasts to make sure that Rabbi Elazar would not die during Rabbi Zeira's lifetime and another one hundred fasts so that the fire of *Gehenna* would not affect him. Every thirty days, he would examine himself to make sure he was still at this exalted level. He tested himself by igniting an oven, climbing in, and sitting inside it. The fire did not affect him. One day, the sages gave him “the evil eye” (they were jealous) and his legs became singed in the fire. From then on, he was referred to as the short one with singed legs. This part of the 1934 letter appears to be another juxtaposed comparison between Haman's son *Vaizatha* (as associated with *kitnyos*) and Rabbi Zeira (known as the short one, *k'tina*, and associated with *mochin d'katnus* above) and connects the discussion to the beginning of this letter where Rabbi Levi Yitzchak refers to his explanation of *mordiya d'Libros*.

⁵⁷ *Shabbat* 119a.

⁵⁸ *Bereishit* 22:3.

⁵⁹ These letters are also the first letters of each word in the first line of *Ana B'koach*, the 42-word prayer that spells a sacred name of G-d, and which will be referred to below.

which results from the breaking of *chesed* of *Tohu*, see in *Eitz Chayim Sha'ar Sh'virat Ha'Keilim*, chapter 2, and in *Likutei Torah*, the explanation for the first discourse on *Chukat*).⁶⁰

Likewise, Rav Yosef would chop wood [for Shabbat] as it says there.⁶¹ The reason that the two of them [Rabbah and Rav Yosef] would chop the wood [for Shabbat] together, is because they are both on the level of morning (בקר): the morning (בקר) of *Avraham* is represented by Rabbah and the morning (בקר) of *Yosef* is represented by Rav Yosef, see the *Zohar* on *Balak* (vol. 3) page 204.⁶²

This is why, in the verse ובער עליה הכהן עצים בבקר בבקר (“each morning the priest shall kindle wood on the altar”),⁶³ בקר (morning) is mentioned twice, once for *Avraham*⁶⁴ and once for *Yosef*.⁶⁵ You can also look at what I have written elsewhere in an explanation on the thirteen times that בבקר is written in Tanach.

Chesed is connected to *yesod* because *chesed* is revealed in the mouth of *yesod*⁶⁶ (and so, too, in *Tohu* the light of *chesed* fell to *yesod* as is known). This is how the two of them together [Rabbah and Rav Yosef] were choppers of wood; and then Rabbi Zeira who was זעירא – small, מצתת צתותי – would kindle the fire for Shabbat with the small wooden sticks⁶⁷ that Rabbah and Rav Yosef cut.

This is also the final name in the *Ana B'koach*, שקוצי"ת, which has the same numerical value as צתותי (906).⁶⁸ And this is connected to *malchut* which is the last of the seven names in *Ana B'koach*, because in it is revealed the fire that comes out of *cheshbon*⁶⁹ of the pairing of the supernal *abbah* and *imma*,⁷⁰ as is written:⁷¹ a flame from *Sichon's* capital, (see *Likutei Torah*, *Parshat Vayera* in the discussion of the daughters of Lot and Amon and Moav, see there⁷²).

⁶⁰ *Likutei Torah*, *Chukat*, 58d-59b.

⁶¹ See *Shabbat* 119a where this is explained. There it mentions that Rabbi Zeira would kindle the fire by lighting the small pieces of kindling used to start the wood fire for Shabbat.

⁶² The *Zohar* discusses at length the morning of *Avraham* and the morning of *Yosef*.

⁶³ *Vayikra* 6:5.

⁶⁴ *Bereishit* 22:3 (וישכם אברהם בבקר, “*Avraham* got up in the morning”).

⁶⁵ *Bereishit* 44:3 (הבקר אור, “The morning became light”).

⁶⁶ *Zohar* 3:142a.

⁶⁷ *Shabbat* 119a.

⁶⁸ צתותי refers to the small sticks that Rabbi Zeira would kindle, as explained above.

⁶⁹ *Bamidbar* 21:28 (“Fire was brought out of *Cheshbon*”).

⁷⁰ See *Zohar* Vol. 256a: מאי ארנון? זווגא עילאה דחביבותא דלא מתפרשאן לעלמין

⁷¹ *Bamidbar* 21:28.

⁷² In the first print of *Likutei Torah* by the Arizal (*Zohlkva*, 1775), pp. 34b-35a.

And all of this is also connected to Shabbat because before Kabbalat Shabbat, we say *Ana Bekoach*, etc. and see the *Pri Etz Chaim*, on the section on Shabbat.⁷³

There is much more that could be said about this, thank G-d; and here is not the place to elaborate on it.

[PART TWO OF RABBI LEVI YITZCHAK'S 1934 LETTER – ON *PESACH*⁷⁴]

Separately, because I didn't write to you before Pesach, as is my annual custom, I will repay some of what I owe you with some ideas about matzah and the four cups of wine.

[Explanation of the order at the seder – two cups of wine, eating matzah, and another two cups of wine.]

At the seder, we drink two cups of wine before eating matzah and then two cups of wine after eating matzah. Between the two sets of two cups, we eat matzah; specifically the middle matzah. At the beginning of the meal, we eat from the broken matzah over which we recite the blessing אכילת מצה [on the eating of the matzah]; and at the end of the meal, we eat the afikoman which is also from the middle matzah.⁷⁵

⁷³ As explained in *Pri Etz Chaim*, Section 8, *Ana Bekoach* is recited at a time corresponding to elevation. See also *Yalkut Levi Yitzchak al Ha-Torah*, vol. 3, p. 261, note 26 (Kehot Publication Society 2016). For example, it is recited before the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah which is a time of elevation of *malchut*. Similarly, the recital of *Ana Bekoach* before Kabbalat Shabbat is also a time of the elevation of *malchut*. Thus, this closing by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak brings the analysis of Purim full circle: Rabbah, representing *mochin d'gadlus* sweetened (or elevated) Rabbi Zeira, representing *mochin d'katnus*; this discussion continued with the connections between *Avraham* and *Haman* as opposed to *Yitzchak* and *Haman's* sons; which led to the idea of Rabbah and Rav Yosef chopping wood corresponding to the first line of *Ana Bekoach* and to Rabbi Zeira kindling sticks to light the wood on Shabbat representing the last line of *Ana Bekoach*. Thus, by concluding with the idea of Shabbat and *Ana Bekoach*, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak calls attention to *mochin d'gadlus* represented by the first line of *Ana Bekoach* sweetening *mochin d'katnus* represented by the last line of *Ana Bekoach*.

⁷⁴ *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, vol. 3, pp. 303-304.

⁷⁵ At the beginning of the seder, the middle matzah is broken in two. The larger portion of the middle matzah is set aside as the afikoman. The smaller portion of the middle matzah is kept with the other two whole *matzot* and is used for the blessing on the matzah. Thus, for the Passover seder purposes, the middle matzah is the most significant of the three *matzot*.

[*Matzot are Chochmah and the four cups of Wine are Binah.*]

Matzah⁷⁶ represents *mochin* of *abba* and the cups represent the *mochin* of *imma*, as is written in *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Chag HaMatzos*, the beginning of chapter 2, see there.⁷⁷

Matzot, which are for eating, are *chochmah*. The four cups of wine, which are for drinking, are *binah*. See *Torah Or*, *Parshat Mishpatim*, in the *Drosh* of *levnat hasapir* with regard to ויאכלו וישתו (and they ate and drank).⁷⁸ Also, matzot are based on the written Torah which is referred to as *musar avicha* (discipline of your fathers),⁷⁹ which is *chochmah*, and the four cups are rabbinic-based and referred to as *Toras imecha*⁸⁰ (the teaching of your mother) which is *binah*.⁸¹

(And it should not trouble you that in *Likutei Torah* in the discourse that begins ושאבתם מים בששון it seems to say the opposite, *i.e.*, that things derived from the written Torah are in *binah* and things that are merely rabbinic are in *chochmah*.⁸² Because there, the intent is

⁷⁶ Presumably, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is specifically referring to the middle matzah just described, which serves these two functions of the blessing over matzah and the afikoman.

⁷⁷ *Pri Etz Chaim* explains that *moma'arat machpelachin d'abba* hints at bread (לחם) which is the matzah because the gematria of bread (78) is 3 times *Havayah* (י-ה-ו-ה), the gematria of which is 26 (3 x 26 = 78). Separately, cup (כוס), referring to the cups of wine, has the numerical value of 86, which is the same as *Elokim* (א-ל-ה-י-ם) and is *mochin d'imma*. See also *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 7, p. 277, where the Rebbe explains that matzah is associated with *mochin d'abba* and the number 3 (three patriarchs) corresponding to the 3 *matzos*, whereas wine is associated with *mochin d'imma* and the number 4 (four matriarchs) corresponding to the 4 cups at the seder.

⁷⁸ *Torah Or* (78c-d) explains that eating is associated with *chochmah* because it is more of a targeted flow process from above to below (to the stomach) and then spreads to the rest of the body. Drinking is a more expansive process that softens the blood and allows it to flow freely. As such, it is associated with *binah*. So, when it says (*Shemot* 24:10-11):

“They [Nadav and Avihu] saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was something resembling a sapphire brick [*Livnat Hasapir*], and like the essence of a clear sky. And to the [seventy] elders of the Jewish people, he didn't stretch out his hand; they had a vision of G-d, and they ate and drank,”

the eating and drinking is a reference to *chochmah* and *binah*.

⁷⁹ *Mishlei* 1:8.

⁸⁰ *Igeres Hakodesh*, end of Epistle 29 (*Lessons in Tanya* (Kehot Publication Society 2001), vol. 5, p. 224, n. 67 includes the following additional references: *Kanfei Yonah*, vol. 1, chapter 4 (The written Torah is *Musar avicha* and the oral Torah is *Toras imecha*.) and *Hashmatot to Zohar* vol. II, 276b where it refers to *imecha* as the oral Torah.).

⁸¹ *Torah Or* (78d) (the written Torah is *chochmah* and the oral Torah is *binah*). See also *Likutei Sichos*, Vol 26, p. 47, n. 40 where the Rebbe explains the idea of the connection between matzot being *Musar avicha* and wine being *Toras imecha*. The *Torah Or* reference above (text at note 78) also explains this concept and the notion that matzah is associated with written Torah (*Torah she'bektav*) and wine is associated with the oral Torah (*Torah she'beal peh*).

⁸² *Likutei Torah*, discourses for *Sukkos* 80a.

the opposite, that things derived from the written Torah are in *zeir anpin*⁸³ and things that are merely rabbinic are in *malchut*. In their source in *chochmah* and *binah* it is the opposite: that *malchut* has its source in *chochmah* as it says:⁸⁴ “with *chochmah* he established earth (*malchut*)”, and *zeir anpin* has its source in *binah* as it says:⁸⁵ “the heaven (*zeir anpin*) he established with understanding.” However, in our case, the intent is the way they specifically are in *chochmah* and *binah*. In their source, it will be the opposite, because the source of *binah* is higher than *chochmah*, as stated in the Talmud:⁸⁶ “understanding [people] couldn’t be located”⁸⁷ ...)

The four cups of wine correspond to the four expressions of redemption found in the Torah.⁸⁸ The essential nature of redemption from Egypt is from *binah*, the world of emancipation.⁸⁹ And we see the connection to *binah* from the Torah portion, placed in the *tefillin*, *ki y’viacha* that corresponds to *binah*.⁹⁰ Moreover, the Torah mentions *yetzias mitzrayim* (exodus from Egypt) 50 times, corresponding to the 50 gates of *binah*.⁹¹

⁸³ The six masculine emotions of *Atzilut*.

⁸⁴ *Mishlei* 3:19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ *Eruvin* 100b, *Nedarim* 20b.

⁸⁷ This is based in *Devarim* 1:13 where it says that Moshe told the Jews: “designate for yourself men who are wise, understanding, and known to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your leaders.” But *ibid* 1:15, Moshe said: “I selected wise and well-known men from among your tribal leaders, and I appointed them as your leaders...”. There, he did not mention “understanding” because understanding men could not be located. Because wise men were located, we see that understanding has a higher source than wisdom.

⁸⁸ Jerusalem Talmud, *Pesachim* 68b. These are the four expressions of redemption mentioned in *Shemot* 6:6-8 (וְהוֹצֵאתִי, וְהַצֵּלְתִּי, וְגִעַלְתִּי, וְלִקַּחְתִּי) “I will free you,” “I will save you,” “I will redeem you,” “I will take you”). *Midrash Rabbah*, *Va’eira*, 6 §4 explains that these four aspects of redemption correspond to the four cups of wine at the seder, to fulfill the statement in Psalms (116:13): “I will raise the cup of salvation and call out to G-d.” (כּוֹס יְשׁוּעוֹת אֲשֶׁר וּבִשְׁם ה' אֶקְרָא). Because there are four aspects of redemption (salvation) associated with the four verses in *Shemot* and a cup is raised for each statement, the four cups are used.

⁸⁹ Presumably, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s point is that for there to be a redemption from Egypt, the Jewish people needed to be in mindset or framework of the world of expansiveness or emancipation and not still in the world (or mindset) of enslavement.

⁹⁰ *Shemot* 13:11-16. Tanya, Chapter 41, refers to the connection of this passage with *binah*. See also *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha’ar Tefillin*, *Perek* 16. This passage refers to G-d bringing us to the land of Canaan after freeing us from Egypt, as promised to our ancestors. Because there are 50 references in the Torah to the exodus from Egypt (*yetzias mitzrayim*), this also alludes to *binah* and the 50 gates of *binah* (understanding). See note 91.

⁹¹ As explained in *Rosh Hashanah* 21b, there were 50 gates of understanding created in the world. All but one of the gates of understanding were given to *Moshe*. (The calculation of 49 gates of understanding given to *Moshe* is also derived from verses in *Tehillim* 8:6 and 12:7.)

[הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה Understanding]

And there has to be *הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה* (“*Ha'vein b'chochmah, vachakeim b'binah*,” “Understand (gain *binah*) through wisdom (*chochmah*) and become wise (gain *chochmah*) through understanding (*binah*).”⁹² The first half of the phrase, *ha'vein b'chochmah*, means that *binah* precedes and is higher than *chochmah* and the second half of the phrase, *vachakeim b'binah*, implies that *chochmah* precedes and is higher than *binah*, as is written in *Sha'ar Oros Nitzutzin v'Keilim* in *Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar* 19, chapter 8⁹³; and see *Pri Etz Chaim Sha'ar Ha'Tefillin* section 15 and 16.⁹⁴

This is the order: first we drink two cups, which correspond to *binah*, after which we eat matzah, which corresponds to *chochmah*. This corresponds to *ha'vein b'chochmah*. After we eat matzah, which corresponds to *chochmah*, we drink another 2 cups of wine, which correspond to *binah*. As such, eating matzah before the final two cups is like *vachakeim b'binah*.

[Understanding the Inter-Connectedness of Chochmah and Binah]

Yetzias mitzrayim is drawn down from *chochmah* and *binah* as is known from the Arizal.⁹⁵ And *Havayah* (corresponding to *chochmah*) *Elokeinu* (corresponding to *binah*) took us out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm.⁹⁶ The two times we eat matzah, at the start of the

⁹² *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:4. In the context of Chassidus, there is an interesting application of the process of acquiring knowledge reflected in the kabbalistic phrase. In *Likutei Dibburim* (English translation), vol. 3, p. 123 (Kehot Publication Society 1990), the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe explained (based on the words of the Alter Rebbe) that the philosophical teachings of Chassidus are *binah* and the stories told by chassidim are *chochmah*. Applying the principles embodied in *הבן בחכמה וחכם בבינה* the Friediker Rebbe explained that *ha'vein b'chochmah* means that we should approach the *chochmah* represented in chassidic stories with *binah* to find comprehensible teachings to be learned. In turn, *vachakeim b'binah* means that one should approach the *binah* reflected in philosophical teachings with *chochmah* to find those stories that can instruct us in conducting our spiritual lifestyles.

⁹³ There, it is written that *binah* that comes from *keser* of *chochmah* of *mah* is higher than *chochmah* of *chochmah* of *mah*.

⁹⁴ In *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Ha'Tefillin*, *Perek* 16, it is explained that “*abba*” consists of two “faces.” The one that looks “up” and draws from above is the upper level *abba*. The one looking “down” is *Yisrael Saba*. So, too, *imma* has two “faces”, one looking “up” and one looking “down.” The one looking “up” (corresponding to the first two cups “looking up” to the matzah) is the upper level of *imma* known as *binah*. The one looking “down” (corresponding to the two cups following the second eating from matzah) is known as *tevunah*.

⁹⁵ In *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar Chag Ha'Matzos*, chapter 7.

⁹⁶ In the Haggadah in the paragraph beginning *avadim hayinu*. See *Devarim* 6:21:

וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבִנְךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפָרְעָה בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה.

See also *Devarim* 4:34:

אוֹ הַנֶּסֶה אֱלֹהִים לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לּוֹ גּוֹי מִקֶּרֶב גּוֹי בְּמַסַּת בָּאֵתָת וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְמִלְחָמָה וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזִרְעוֹ נְטוּיָה וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֻלִּים כָּלֹל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לָכֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ

meal and the afikoman at the end of the meal, are from one matzah corresponding to Levi⁹⁷ because the two levels within *chochmah* – *abba* and *Yisrael Saba* – are really from one aspect which is *binah* of *mah* as is written in *Sha'ar Oros Nitzutzin v'Keilim* in *Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar* 19, see there. This is why they are from one matzah; the Levi matzah corresponding to *binah*.⁹⁸ But it is *binah* of *mah* because, as is written in the *Haggadah*, this matzah that we eat “*ahl shoom mah*” specifically. And this is the reason that the word *mah* (*mem*, *hey*), 45, plus 1 by using the gematria principle of *im ha'kollel*, is the numerical value of Levi (לוי), 46.⁹⁹

However, the first two cups and the last two cups are not really part of one level, because *binah* and *tevunah* are two separate attributes, one is from *chochmah* of *ban* and the other is from *binah* of *ban* as is explained there¹⁰⁰ and there are two “*binot*” and two “*tevunot*.” See *Likutei Torah* of the Arizal on *Parshat Chayei Sarah* on *מַעֲרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה* / *ma'arat machpela*.¹⁰¹

This is the four cups.

⁹⁷ The three matzos on the seder plate are known as symbolic of the three divisions of the Jewish people: Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael. The middle matzah represents Levi.

⁹⁸ Typically, *Levi* is associated with *gevurah* and not *binah*. See, e.g., *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 197 (Rabbi Levi Yitzchak letter on Erev Pesach, 1928). In this context, however, *binah* is appropriate for at least two reasons. First, *Pri Etz Chaim* associates the three matzos with the *Cohein*, *Levi* and *Yisrael* as well as *chochmah*, *binah*, and *da'as*. See *Sha'ar Pesach*, 6:4. Second, *binah* is the source of *gevurah*. Based on *Mishlei* 8:14 (אֲנִי בִינָה לִי גְבוּרָה; “I am understanding, I have courage”); see *Yalkut Levi Yitzchak Al Ha-Torah*, vol. 5, p. 47, note 2 (Kehot Publication Society 2020).

⁹⁹ For a further explanation of this and the next paragraph, see Appendix A.

¹⁰⁰ Although not cited in the letter, see *Tanya*, chapter 16 – explaining that *tevunah* is different from *binah*. In a letter from the Rebbe to R. Nissan Mindel (18 Adar II 5708), the Rebbe explained the difference between *binah* and *tevunah* as follows (translation directly from Chabad.org): “With regard to the different levels of intellect, *Binah* represents an elevated level within the intellect, or to quote the *Zohar* (III, 291a): ‘*Binah* surpasses *Tevunah*.’ *Binah* represents a level where a concept has already come into the level of explanation; it can be grasped with its particulars and one can deduce one idea from another idea. {*Chochmah*, by contrast, refers to a flash of conceptualization and the initial revelation within the mind (*Tanya*, chapters 3 and 18).} Nevertheless, [within *Binah*,] the fundamental dimension is the intellectual give-and-take and logical reasoning. After this intellectual give-and-take, one arrives at decisions to be applied in actual practice, and they become the fundamental focus. The person becomes involved with them and the logical reasoning becomes an auxiliary and hidden factor. At this level, the name *Tevunah* is appropriate. (See the *Zohar*, *loc. cit.*, and the commentaries to *Mishlei* 2:3 which cite both terms *Binah* and *Tevunah* together.”) See https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/letters/default_cdo/aid/2281933/jewish/Mitzvos-of-Rabbinic-origin-Biblical-sources-for-expression-Chochmah-Binah-and-Daas-difference-between-Binah-and-Tevunah-eirev-rav.htm (last viewed April 17, 2024).

¹⁰¹ The word *הַמַּכְפֵּלָה* begins with a *hei* and it ends with a *hei*. Since the *מִלּוֹי* of the *hei* is with a *hei*, there is a total of four *hei*'s in the word *הַמַּכְפֵּלָה*: 1) the first *hei*, 2) its *מִלּוֹי*, 3) the last *hei*, 4) its *מִלּוֹי*; and the Arizal explains in *Likutei Torah* that it alludes to the two levels of *binah* and the two levels of *tevunah*.

APPENDIX A – KABBALISTIC EXPLANATION OF MATZAH AND CUPS OF WINE

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's discussion of the relationship between the four cups of wine and three *matzos* is intended to demonstrate an intentional connection between the seder order and kabbalistic concepts of the relationship between *chochmah* and *binah*. Here is one explanation of these ideas.

The order of the seder is that we drink two cups of wine and then eat matzah (the middle matzah over which we say the blessing). Then, we eat the portion of the middle matzah designated as the afikoman and then drink two more cups of wine. The matzah is one matzah, just divided in two parts and associated with a single attribute -- *chochmah*. However, the cups of wine are actually two sets of two cups and connected to two related but slightly different attributes. What are those attributes and how are they connected?

Generally, matzah is associated with *chochmah*. The cups of wine are associated with *binah*. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak initially explained that these attributes specifically apply separately to matzah and to the cups of wine. However, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak concludes by explaining that the matzah is from *binah* of *mah*. He then explained that the cups of wine are from *binah* and *tevnuah* which are attributable on the one hand to *chochmah* of *ban* and one from *binah* of *ban*.

How does that work? If matzah is associated with *chochmah*, what does it mean to say it is associated with ***binah*** of *mah*? Also, if the cups of wine are associated with *binah*, what does it mean to say that they are attributable to *chochmah* of *ban* and *binah* of *ban*?

Here is one possible explanation.

1. Matzah is associated with *chochmah*. In fact, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak instructed the Rebbe not to concern himself with authorities that say the opposite because those other authorities are distinguishable for various reasons.
2. *Chochmah* is associated with *mah*.¹⁰²
3. Also, from the perspective of kabbalah, *chochmah* has within it two sub-attributes – *abba* and *Yisrael Saba*.
4. Directionally (meaning directionally from the language perspective as these are non-physical attributes), *abba* “looks up” and *Yisrael Saba* “looks down.”
5. At this point, we have one matzah but with two pieces or parts derived from *chochmah* (*mah*) which is a single attribute with two parts – *abba* and *Yisrael Saba*.
6. At the same time, the middle matzah is associated with Levi. Levi is associated with *binah*. How does Rabbi Levi Yitzchak resolve the seeming contradiction of matzah being associated with *chochmah* and *binah* simultaneously?
7. Because the Levi matzah is sourced in *binah* of *mah*! *Mah* is spelled *mem-hey* which by gematria (using *im ha'kollel*) is 46 which is the same as levi. Thus, the matzah is still *chochmah* by associating with *mah* – it is just from the *binah* (levi) part of *mah*. As we say

¹⁰² According to kabbalah, the word *chochmah* can be broken into *koach ma* – the power of “what is”. See Zohar III:235b. It is also associated with male attributes (Rabbi Levi Yitzchak refers to *chochmah* and matzah as associated with *mochin d'abba*) as Adam and *mah* share the same gematria of 45.

in the Haggadah, matzah is “*al shoom mah!*” (Normally translated as a question: “What is this matzah for?” and *mah* in that context means “what.” Rabbi Levi Yitzchak turned that phrase around. It is not a question; it is a statement. The matzah we eat is attributable to *mah!*)

Now, consider the four cups of wine.

1. The cups of wine are from *binah*. However, the order is to have two separate cups before the middle matzah and then two separate cups after eating the middle matzah. They are all separate cups and, therefore, not associated with a single attribute the way matzah is (two parts but one matzah and, therefore, one attribute).
2. Instead, we have the first two cups associated with *binah* and the second two cups associated with *tevunah*.
3. The difference between *binah* and *tevunah* is that *binah* represents an elevated level in the intellect.¹⁰³ The Zohar (III, 291a) says “*Binah* surpasses *Tevunah*” (בינה עלאה מתבונה) *Binah* represents that quality which takes the initial conceptual idea of *chochmah* and, through logical reasoning and intellectual give-and-take, produces a decision to be applied in practice. *Tevunah* is the part of *binah* that allows one to become involved with the fundamental ideas. *Binah* thus represents abstract intellect as opposed to *tevunah* which is more of an applied or practical intellect.
4. Although *binah* and *tevunah* are both associated with *binah*, they are sourced separately, one from *chochmah* of *ban* and one from *binah* of *ban*.
5. That leaves two “*binos*” and two “*tevunos*.”

Finally, this process is not a separate three-part process (cups – matzah – cups). It is all connected as follows:

1. Two cups associated with *binah/imma* “look up.”
2. Matzah associated with *abba* “looks up.”
3. Matzah associated with *Yisrael Saba* “looks down.”
4. Two cups associated with *tevunah* “look down.”

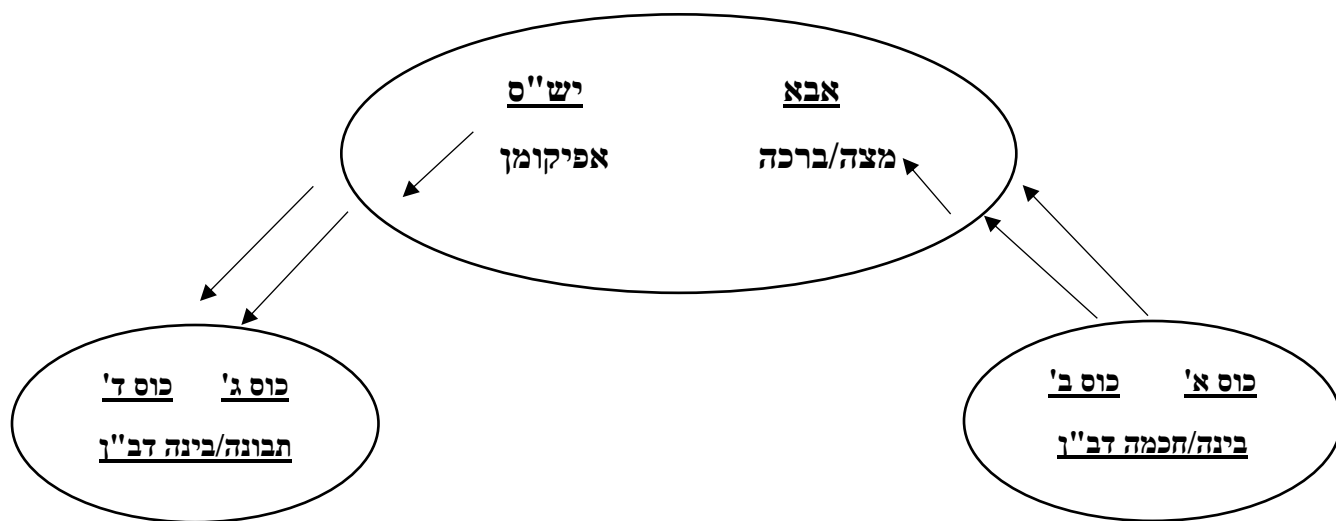
The following page includes a diagram of the process and the flow of these principles.

¹⁰³ See *supra* note 100.

ATTRIBUTES OF MATZAH AND CUPS OF WINE

כוסות	מצה	כוסות
ב"ן	מ"ה	ב"ן
שתיה	אכילה	שתיה
ב' כוסות	מצה אחת ברכה/אפיקומן	ב' כוסות
מוחין דאמא	מוחין דאבא	מוחין דאמא
בינה	חכמה	בינה
תושבע"פ	תושב"כ	תושבע"פ

DIAGRAM OF MATZOS AND CUPS OF WINE WITH ATTRIBUTES



NOTES:

The smaller circle on the right side represents *Ha'vein b'chochmah*¹⁰⁴ because the first two cups are *binah* expressing a priority level to the *chochmah* represented by the first eating of the middle matzah.

The smaller circle on the left side represents *vachakeim b'binah* because the afikoman part of the middle matzah express a priority level to the *binah/tevunah* represented by the second set of two cups.

¹⁰⁴ See *supra* note 92 and related text.