



# Unlocking the Code

*The Letters of  
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson*

**פורים תרצ"ב**

*Purim Letter 1932*

**TRANSLATION AND  
EXPLANATION**

**Shlomo M. Hamburger**

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

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## Preface

On the 18<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> When Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was 24 (in 1902), his wife Rebbetzin Chana gave birth to the Rebbe.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

The Rebbe and his father last saw each other in the fall of 1927 (29 Tishrei 5688).<sup>6</sup> They spent hours together learning before the Rebbe left home to join and help with the communal activities of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe.<sup>7</sup> From the various descriptions of these final days together it seems that, at some level, they knew that it would not be likely they would 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 in the bibliography 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](https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/4095623/jewish/11-Facts-to-Know-About-Rabbi-Levi-Yitzchak-Schneerson.htm), last viewed July 31, 2019.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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

<sup>5</sup> Miller, *supra* p. 14-15; *Rabbi, Mystic, Leader, supra*, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, *supra*, p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> *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.<sup>8</sup> 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 1932 Purim Letter: What Type of *Mishloach Manos* did the Rebbe's Father Send to the Rebbe?**

In 1932, the Rebbe and his youngest brother Yisroel Aryeh Leib were in Berlin, Germany. It came time for Purim and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak could not be with his sons. Sending a basket of food for *mishloach manos* was not feasible; nor was it appropriate. Instead, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sent his sons a beautiful letter and pamphlet filled with deep Kabbalistic messages and heartfelt greetings that could only come from such a father to such sons.

In the letter, one can see how Rabbi Levi Yitzchak explains in detail the theme of *Hagadol v'hakatan gam yachad* (great and small together) in the context of *Megillat Esther*. We can learn how one reaches the level of equivalence between otherwise opposite ideas. We can also reach a place where "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordechai" are equivalent – we cannot tell the difference – and all value judgments are put aside.

The letter also shows how much Rabbi Levi Yitzchak longed to be re-united with his sons (which was never to happen in the physical world). We also get a glimpse into the writing process and how Rabbi Levi Yitzchak actually wrote his letters and other material to the Rebbe over the years.

I am very 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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<sup>8</sup> 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.

## Purim Letter 1932<sup>9</sup>

ב"ה, אור ליום ה' ט' אדר שני, התרצ"ב.

בניי אהוביי מחמדיי ויקיריי שיחיו לאויט"א.

לקיים ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו (שהמכוון בזה הוא מאב לבנים, שזהו איש יסוד אבא, ורעהו יסוד ז"א, כמ"ש בפע"ח בכוונת פורים) רצוף לכם בזה קונטרס א' לשניכם ביחד הגדול והקטן גם יחד, (שבפורים מגלת אסתר משתווים הגדול והקטן, כי המשתה דשבעת ימים כתיב בה למגדול ועד קטן, וכן ביקר לבעליהן כתיב למגדול ועד קטן, וכן עצם ענין פורים בהשמות הרמוזים בו, הוא התחברות דגדול וקטן גם יחד. וכן רבה שפירושו גדול, ור' זירא שפירושו קטן, (כי שמו הוא זעירא, והע' נבלע) קטינא חריך שקא, אכלו סעודת פורים בהדי הדדי, שמהתחברותם יחד, נעשה הת"ך השייך להנס דפורים, כי בפורים מאיר בחי' השוה ומשוה קטן וגדול. שוה דוקא, היפך מהמן שאמר וכל זה איננו שוה לי, שלא רצה בבחי' שוה, ויצא ממנו בתר בירור ותיקון, רב שמואל בר שילת שהי' מלמד תינוקות, התחברות דגדול וקטן. ושילת ר"ת שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד. שויתי דוקא, בחי' שוה, היפך מהמן שאמר איננו שוה לי. והשרש הוא מרדל"א, שוה ר"ת שאמר והי' העולם, כידוע. ולכן הביסוס דפוריא הוא עד דלא ידעי, ומתגלה זה ע"י בינה בחי' מלפניו, ששם הוא בחי' שוה ומשוה, כמ"ש ואל מי תדמוני ואשוה, אל מ"י דוקא. והמנה השולח לכם ביחד בזה, הוא בענין מלפניו, ויש בה שתי מנות ביחוד השייך לענין פורים, הב"פ מלפניו הכתובים במג"א, ויהי' זה לכם מנה אחת אפיים. וכשתדקדקו בה, ותטחנו אותה היטב, אדמה שיונעם לכם. והראוי הי' לקיים לשלוח לכם גם מנות בגשמיות, ואולם לע"ע ההכרח להסתפק בשלום דתורה, שבזה מסתיימת המגלה ודובר שלום לכל זרעו. חפצי שתגיע לכם ליום הפורים להסעודה אי"ה, ומטובכם להשיבני בקבלתה מיד. מהיושר הי' לשלוח לכם ענינים לפרקים יותר קרובים, ואולם מחמדיי, מלאכת ההעתקה קשה עלי מאד, וזה נמשך יותר משני ימים אצלי עד שהעתקתי. ויעזרנו השי"ת לשנה הבאה לקיים משלוח מנות לכם גם בגשמיות בפועל, לשמוח בסעודת פורים בהדי הדדי בכל טוב הגלוי גם לנו סלה. כבר מונח אצלי מענה כתובה על הערותיך הקודמות ורק איזה דבר עוד נצרך לכתוב, כאשר הודעתך מכבר, ותקותי לשלחה באלו הימים אי"ה ...

הקונטרס לא הגהתי, ואפשר יש איזה פליטת הקולמוס ותבינו בעצמכם.

<sup>9</sup> See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 267-268.

*Free translation and explanation of the letter from  
Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Rebbe)  
and his brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib Schneerson*

*From Purim 1932<sup>10</sup>*

B”H

Evening Prior to Thursday, 9 Adar Sheini, 1932<sup>11</sup>

My dear beloved children,

In order to fulfill the requirement for *Mishloach Manot*<sup>12</sup> from one to his fellow (אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ/“*Ish l’rey’eyhu*”),

*(i.e., from a father (אב) to his sons, where אִישׁ (“Ish” – a man) is a reference to “yesod of Abba (father)” and רֵעֵהוּ (“rey’eyhu” – his fellow) is a reference to “yesod of zeir anpin” {the six emotional attributes which are the “offspring” of Abba}<sup>13</sup>, as written in *Pri Eitz Chaim* in the section of Purim<sup>14</sup>)*

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<sup>10</sup> At this point in 1932, the Rebbe and his youngest brother, Yisroel Aryeh Leib were in Berlin, Germany. Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib managed to leave Russia in the spring of 1930. He spent the next two years with the Rebbe and his wife. See Miller, *supra*, pp. 97-98. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was in Denepetrovsk, Ukraine.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase אָר לַיּוֹם refers to the evening before the next day. This date corresponds to Wednesday night, March 16, 1932, in the secular calendar. This letter was sent in advance of Purim to arrive on Purim as *Mishloach Manos* (see footnote 12).

<sup>12</sup> The requirement for *Mishloach Manot* on Purim is that every adult is to send, on the day of Purim, at least two ready-to-eat food items to one other person. This is certainly satisfied by a father sending *Mishloach Manot* to his sons, which is the allusion made by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak in the opening of this letter.

<sup>13</sup> Kabbalah refers to intellectual and emotional attributes as the source of how we ultimately act in this world. *Kesser*, *Chochmah*, and *Binah* are the “higher” intellectual attributes from which are developed the emotive attributes known as *Za* and *Nukva*. As such, the intellectual attributes represent the father (*Abba/Chochmah*) and mother (*Imma/Binah*) to the son represented by *Za* (the six emotional attributes) and to the daughter represented by *Nukva* (also referred to as *Malchut*, which incorporates and then further transmits all that is received from the intellectual and emotional attributes).

<sup>14</sup> *Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Ha’Purim, Perek 6.*

I am attaching for you one pamphlet for the two of you to review together,<sup>15</sup> the “older and the younger” (הגדול והקטן) both together<sup>16</sup>

(For on Purim in *Megillat Esther* there is equivalence between great and small<sup>17</sup>. For example: {1} on the seven day feast it is written<sup>18</sup> that it was celebrated by everyone from great to small; {2} likewise, regarding the edict of the king that wives should honor their husbands, it is written<sup>19</sup> “from great to small;” and {3} also the essence of the concept of Purim, in the names hinted at in “Purim,” is the unity between great and small.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The pamphlet referred to is published in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 69. It seems that the 9<sup>th</sup> of Adar Sheini is when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak wrote the essay, and Berlin is the destination where he intended to send the essay. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak wrote other letters specifically on *Erev Chag* (Erev Pesach, Erev Shavuot, etc.) and explained in that context that we go by when the writer is writing, not when received (See Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s letter from *Erev Pesach* 1928, *ibid.*, p. 197). However, because Rabbi Levi Yitzchak sent out the pamphlet together with this letter as *Mishloach Manot* for his children, it was important for him that this letter and pamphlet arrive prior to the Purim meal. Therefore, he sent the material on an early enough date that the letter with the pamphlet would arrive in Berlin on time. (See also the letter that Rabbi Levi Yitzchok started writing the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (and did not complete until the 21<sup>st</sup> of Adar Sheini) at *ibid.*, beginning at p. 258: “I sent the two of you as *Mishloach Manot* a big pamphlet, with an express letter, on Thursday prior to Purim...”, *ibid.*, p. 267. In 1932, the Thursday prior to Purim was the 9<sup>th</sup> of Adar.).

<sup>16</sup> Here the phrase used הגדול והקטן גם יחד “*Hagadol v’hakatan gam yachad*” is the key theme in this letter that was written to the oldest and youngest brothers. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s specific message about Purim is that it represents a type of equalization (see footnote 17) of great and small. There is no value judgment being conveyed about who or what is “great” and who or what is “small.” The essential point is that two different and opposite qualities are equalized in celebrating Purim. Extending this idea, we reach a place where “cursed is Haman” and “blessed is Mordechai” are equivalent – we cannot tell the difference – and all value judgments are put aside. Even more significant, our own “self-ness” is put aside (we wear costumes) in order to create a feeling of equivalence with all others.

<sup>17</sup> The word Rabbi Levi Yitzchak used in the letter is משתווים derived from the basic root of שוה. This word is often translated as “equal.” In the context of the letter, however, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak’s point is not necessarily that great and small are “equal” as such; rather, it is that they are on par with each other, or on “equal footing,” and therefore equivalent to each other.

<sup>18</sup> *Megillat Esther* 1:5.

<sup>19</sup> *Megillat Esther* 1:20.

<sup>20</sup> In Hebrew, the word פורים (Purim) has the numerical value of 336. That is made up of the sum of 78 + 258. Seventy-eight is the numerical value of מגילה (megillah) and is also three times the value of the name *Havayah* יה-ו-ה which is 26 (78 is 3 x 26). This idea corresponds to the kabbalistic concept of מוחין דגדלות (*mochin d’gadlus* or the “great intellect”). Two hundred fifty eight is the numerical value of three times the value of the name *Elokim* אלקים which is 86 (258 is 3 x 86). This corresponds to the kabbalistic concept of מוחין דקטנות (*mochin d’katnus* or the “smaller intellect”). See *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, end of p. 167. The ideas are also explored by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak in the letter dated 1934 in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 302). Therefore, Purim and the names of G-d hinted at in “Purim” correspond to a unity between “great” and “small.”

Thus Rabbah, whose name means “great,” and Rav Zeira, whose name means “small” (because his name is really Zeira (זעירא) with an “*ayin*” and the “*ayin*” is swallowed<sup>21</sup>) – he was known as “the short one with singed legs”<sup>22</sup> – were eating the Purim meal (*seudah*) together.<sup>23</sup> When you join the two of them together {*i.e.*, when you combine the letters of their names and add the numerological equivalents of the letters of their names}, it adds up to 425 (הת"ך/*Hathoch*) which is connected to the miracle of Purim.<sup>24</sup> For Purim illuminates the qualities of equivalence and making equivalence {everyone is equivalent to or on par with everyone else} between small and great.

Specifically, the word for equality here is שווה/“*Shaveh*.” This represents the opposite of Haman who said that all of his wealth and fame meant nothing to him<sup>25</sup> if Mordechai would not bow down {*i.e.*, there could be no inherent equivalence between Haman and Mordechai as long as Mordechai remained steadfast in his opposition to Haman’s orders}. Haman did not want the equivalence between great and small {which allows for equivalence between different types} as did Mordechai. However, Haman’s descendant was able to escape from the consequences of Haman’s way of thinking, such that Rav Shmuel bar Shilas {who

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<sup>21</sup> In the Jerusalem Talmud, he was known as Rabbi Ze’era (זעירא) with an “*ayin*” as opposed to Zeira (זירא) (without an “*ayin*”) in the Babylonian Talmud.

<sup>22</sup> See *Bava Metzia* 85a and *Sanhedrin* 37a. Rav 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 Rav 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.

<sup>23</sup> The story Rabbi Levi Yitzchak refers to is from *Megillah* 7b. There, it is explained that Rabbah and Rav Zeira celebrated the Purim feast together בנהדי הדדי. They became intoxicated. Rabbah stood up and “slew” Rav Zeira. The next day, Rabbah prayed for mercy and brought Rav Zeira back to life. The following year, Rabbah again invited Rav Zeira to celebrate together. Rav Zeira answered him: “A miracle does not happen every day.” For an English language explanation of this story based on the Rebbe’s *sichos*, see [https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article\\_cdo/aid/93598/jewish/A-Perplexing-Purim-Feast.htm](https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/93598/jewish/A-Perplexing-Purim-Feast.htm).

<sup>24</sup> The Hebrew letters of *Hathoch* (הת"ך) correspond to 425 (*hey* is 5, *taf* is 400, and *chaf* is 20) and the numerological correspondence of Zeira (זירא) joined with Rabbah (רבה) is 425 (*zayin* is 7, *yud* is 10, *reish* is 200, *aleph* is 1, adding up to 218 for Zeira, and *reish* is 200, *beit* is 2, and *hey* is 5, adding up to 207 for Rabbah. When combined, they add up to 425). This is also a play on words as *Hathoch* refers to the messenger called by Esther to send messages back and forth with Mordechai (*Megillat Esther* 4:5). At this crucial point in the story, Mordechai must convince Esther to be “on the same page” as Mordechai in delivering a message to the king to save the Jewish people. A messenger also joins (or makes a type of equivalence between) the two communicating parties.

<sup>25</sup> Literally, after recounting the glory of his wealth, his sons, and his renown within the palace, Haman said: “all this is worth nothing to me (איננו שוה לי) every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king’s gates.” *Megillat Esther* 5:13.



descended from Haman,<sup>26</sup> after the refinement and repair by Haman's descendants<sup>27</sup> } became a teacher of children.<sup>28</sup> This connection between teacher and student (children) represents a type of binding or connection between great and small.

Now, if we look closely at the name Shilas (שילת), we see that it is an acronym for the phrase שויה תמיד לנגדי (Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tomid)<sup>29</sup> ("I will place G-d before me always"). The word *Shivisi* is specifically relevant because it has the root meaning of שוה "*Shaveh*" (equivalence), which is the opposite of Haman who said it was all not worth it (no equivalence) to him [if Mordechai would not bow down].

The source of this type of equivalence is from the level of *Radla*,<sup>30</sup> from which *Shaveh* (שוה) is derived as that word (שוה/*Shaveh*) has the initial letters of שאמר והיה העולם "*She'amar v'Hayah Ha'olam*" as is known.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> According to the Talmud (*Gittin* 57b and *Sanhedrin* 96b), Haman's descendants taught children (Torah) in B'nei Brak. In the version printed in *Ein Yaakov* on *Sanhedrin* (*Perek* 11, paragraph 163, and quoted in *Menoras HaMaor*, 5:3:2:3 (written by Isaac Aboab, 14<sup>th</sup> century Jewish scholar)), the following words are added: "and who is he? Rav Shmuel bar Shilas." (See also *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 167-168.)

<sup>27</sup> This refers to a Kabbalistic idea based on the existence of "sparks of holiness" here on Earth. It is our obligation to elevate sparks of holiness. The process of retrieving (often translated as refining) the sparks is called "*birur*." Through that *birur* process, we can affect a "*tikun*" (repair or restoration) of the broken vessels from which the sparks derive, thereby restoring cosmic order. In the context of this letter, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak appears to be referring to the process whereby after refinement and repair over many generations, a spark of holiness that existed in the genes of Haman's descendant (Rav Shmuel bar Shilas) was able to repair the damage of Haman. See also *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 167-168. For more information on the Kabbalistic ideas, see [https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article\\_cdo/aid/380805/jewish/Rectifying-Sparks.htm](https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380805/jewish/Rectifying-Sparks.htm).

<sup>28</sup> See *Bava Basra* 21a.

<sup>29</sup> Psalms 16:8.

<sup>30</sup> *Radla* (רדל"א) is an acronym for רישא דלא אתיידע/*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. With regard to Purim that level of the unknown is where one does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai. *Megillah* 7b. The level of the unknown is a level of equivalence. At this level, all things are equally possible or comparable one to another. See also the discussion in the footnote 32.

<sup>31</sup> In the daily liturgy, there is a prayer known as ברוך שאמר (*Baruch She'amar*) which introduces the section of the prayer service known as "*P'sukey D'Zimra*" ("verses of praise"). The opening line of this prayer is: ברוך שאמר והיה העולם ("*Baruch She'amar v'Hayah Ha'olam*"); Blessed is the One who spoke and the world came into being. According to *Pri Etz Chaim* (*Shaar Ha'Zemiro*s, chapter 4), the acronym *Shaveh*, made from the opening verse, refers to the equivalence that encompasses all the different Kabbalistic worlds (upper and lower); the worlds are all on equivalent levels without any specific hierarchy.

Therefore, the inebriation of Purim is “*ad d’lo yada*” (until one does not know),<sup>32</sup> and this is revealed through *Binah* which is the level of מלפניו “*milfonov*” because at that level there is a quality of “equivalence” and the “making of equivalence.” This is understood from the phrase<sup>33</sup> ואל מי תדמיוני ואשוה (“*v’el mi s’damyuni v’eshveh*”/“To whom will you compare Me that I should be equal?” Or, more particularly in this context, “Who is My equal?”). In particular, the question in this verse is phrased specifically as *el* “*mi*” מ”י (*mem, yud* {which corresponds to 50 and alludes to *Binah*}).<sup>34</sup>

And the essay that I am sending as a portion to both of you together (which is enclosed) is about the meaning of מלפניו “*milfonov*.”)

And there are within it two portions that are specifically connected to Purim:<sup>35</sup> {1} the two times that the word מלפניו *milfonov* is written in *Megillat Esther*;<sup>36</sup> and {2} may this be for you one portion doubled (*i.e.*, one essay to be enjoyed by the two of you). When you examine it closely and study it well, you will have a great deal of pleasure from it.

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The Alter Rebbe’s *Siddur* also refers to the connection between the *Baruch She’amar* prayer and *Radla*. See *Hayom Yom* for 11 Kislev.

<sup>32</sup> Aside from the similarity in sounds between the two phrases, *Radla* (standing for *reisha d’lo ityada*) and *ad d’lo yada* (until it {the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai} is not known), they both refer to a place of the unknown and unknowable.

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 40:25 and also at 40:18 in a slightly different phrasing.

<sup>34</sup> The numerological equivalent of מ”י (*Mi*) is 50, corresponding to the 50 gates of *Binah* and at the level of 50, you have reached a place of equivalence (there are no distinctions) and likely a place of equanimity because there is no place for distinctions at that level. See [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4437931/jewish/Appendix-A.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4437931/jewish/Appendix-A.htm) for more of an explanation of the 50 gates of *Binah*. The logic here appears to be that *milfonov* means “before him.” That idea connects to the phrase from Isaiah where G-d asks who can stand before Him. In that phrase is the word *Mi* which corresponds to 50 and then to *Binah*. This connects *milfonov* to *Binah* and then below, *milfonov* is connected to Purim.

<sup>35</sup> It is also relevant to consider that *Mishloach Manot* is fulfilled by two different types of foods; and Rabbi Levi Yitzchak is trying, in a way, to “fulfill” his obligation of *Mishloach Manot* through this letter.

<sup>36</sup> *Megillat Esther* 1:19 and 4:8. In the first reference, King Achashverosh is instructed by his advisors to let an edict go out from him (*milfonov*) directly concerning the queen. The edict would not be done by consensus of the ministers or the government; it would come specifically and only from the king. The second use of *milfonov* was where Mordechai explained to Hathoch that Hathoch had to convince Esther to appear before the king to beg for mercy for her people. In each of these references, the context suggests that there is no one who can compare to the king in authority.

It certainly is appropriate that I fulfill the obligation of *Mishloach Manot* by sending you something physical, but for now we have to be satisfied with the peace of Torah,<sup>37</sup> with which the *Megillat Esther* concludes, using the words: וְדוֹבֵר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל זֶרְעוֹ “*v’dover shalom l’chol zaro*” (Mordechai is known as “one who speaks peace to all his descendants”).

It is my wish that this should reach you by Purim in time for your Purim meal (*seudah*). Please let me know when you receive it.<sup>38</sup>

I also hope to send you letters more frequently; however, my dear children, it is very difficult for me to copy over the letters. For example, this letter alone took me more than two days to copy.

With G-d’s help in the coming year, I will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of sending you physical *Mishloach Manot* as well, and celebrate the Purim meal (*seudah*) together<sup>39</sup> with all good that is revealed to us as well for eternity.

I already have in my possession a written response on your previous comments;<sup>40</sup> I have only one more thing to add, as I have already notified you. And I hope to send it to you soon, G-d willing.<sup>41</sup>

...

I have not thoroughly proofread the pamphlet, and it is possible that there are some errors (typos),<sup>42</sup> and you will figure it out on your own.

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<sup>37</sup> See *Yalkut Shimoni, Yitro*, paragraph 273 (“The Holy One blessed be He said: ‘The whole Torah is peace. And to whom do I give it? To the nation that loves peace!’”). Also, *Mishloach Manot* is meant to encourage peace amongst people and Torah accomplishes the same objective.

<sup>38</sup> In the letter that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak finished writing on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Adar Sheini (*Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 267), he wrote: “I sent the two of you as *Mishloach Manot* a big pamphlet, with an express letter, on Thursday prior to Purim; you definitely received it. Please respond by acknowledging its receipt (I don’t need you to copy it, because I have a copy), and sharing your opinions on it, once you examine it well; but of its reception you should notify me immediately.”

<sup>39</sup> Here Rabbi Levi Yitzchak uses the phrase בְּהִדְדֵי הַדָּדִי (“together”) which is the same phrase used in the story of Rabbah and Rav Zeira. (See footnote 23.) This connects the beginning of the letter to the end of the letter.

<sup>40</sup> This refers to the work that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak started writing the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Shevat (and was later published in *Likutei Levi Yitzchak*, Vol. 3, p. 258-261).

<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Levi Yitzchak completed the work on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Adar Sheini and that portion of the work was later published, *ibid.* p. 261-267.

<sup>42</sup> Literally, the phrase פְּלִיטַת הַקּוֹלָמוֹס means “protrusions of the pen.” It refers to writing something that was not intended and needs correction.