

The Telling Picture

As mentioned in the previous article, the Rebbe spoke very emphatically of his father's ultimate Mesirus Nefesh. In this spirit, it would seem appropriate to retell the following story of the two extant photographs we have of Rav Levi Yitzchok, which serve as testimony to the suffering he endured during his painful exile.

In the year 5712, the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, once summoned Reb Dovid Raskin and requested a favor: she had in her possession a photograph of her late husband, and she wished to doctor it up a bit. Reb Dovid responded that Reb Moshe Groner dealt with photographs and would possibly be able to assist her.

The next day, Reb Dovid and Reb Moshe arrived at her apartment. The Rebbetzin showed them the picture that she had; it only contained half a face (it was torn down the middle), and was full of cracks and smudges. She asked Reb Moshe if he would be able to make anything of it, to which he responded that he knew of a studio in Manhattan where the photo could be properly completed.

The Rebbetzin thanked him, adding that this was the only photo she had, so he ought to be careful with it, and try to do as best a job he could.

Two weeks later, Reb Moshe returned with the altered photograph. The Rebbetzin pointed out a few corrections and Reb Moshe had them inserted. Seeing the photo again, the Rebbetzin added a few more corrections, and only upon Reb Moshe's third return to her apart-

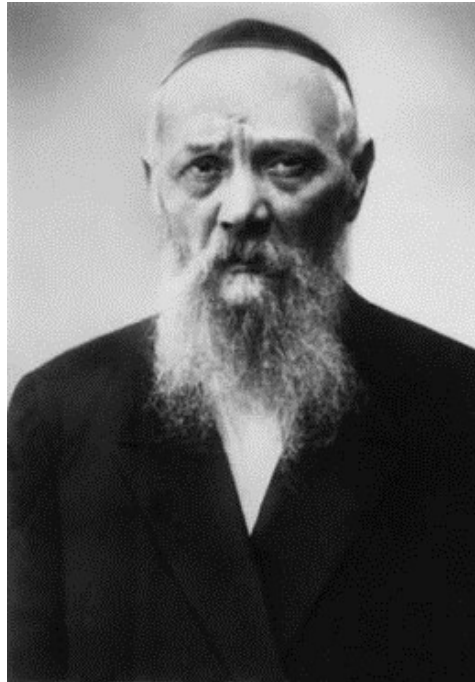
ment was she satisfied, and said, "This is how he looked two weeks before he passed away".

She then requested of Reb Moshe to produce four copies of the photo; one for herself, another for her son - the Rebbe, another for Reb Moshe himself, and one more for Reb Dovid.

During the Rebbe's next visit in his mother's home, Reb Moshe and Reb Dovid stood nearby in hiding. When the Rebbetzin handed the photograph to the Rebbe, he asked her, "Who is this?" and she replied "This is your father!"

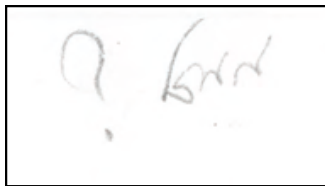
Seeing how different his father's appearance had become after enduring the hardships of exile, the Rebbe began to tremble in disbelief and placed the picture face-down on top of a nearby dresser.

Years later, in 5730, when Kehos printed the first volume of *Lekutei Levi Yitzchok*, the Rebbe wished to have the picture appear at the beginning of the *Sefer*. When the *Mazkir*, Rabbi Groner asked the Rebbe where they would obtain a copy of it, the Rebbe responded that he had one at home, but he wouldn't have time to locate it now. "I believe your brother Moshe has one as well", the



RIGHT: PHOTO OF THE REBBE'S FATHER, REB LEVI YITZCHOK, FOLLOWING HIS ARREST IN 5699. LEFT: HIS PICTURE FIVE YEARS LATER, THE SUMMER OF 5704 IN ALMA-ATA, A SHORT WHILE BEFORE HIS PASSING.

BELOW: THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN REMARK UPON SEEING HIS FATHER'S PHOTO FROM 5704: אאז"ל? "אבי אדוני ז"ל?" (IS THIS MY FATHER Z"L?" I.E. WAS THIS THE EXTENT OF HIS SUFFERING...?)



Rebbe said. "You can get it from him."

Reb Moshe brought his copy of the picture to the Rebbe and it remained on the Rebbe's desk for

one night, after which the Rebbe gave it over to be used for the printing of the *Sefer*.

A NEW LOOK

In 5751, after the fall of the Communist Regime of the USSR, many new files containing documents pertaining to Lubavitch became accessible, among them also the file regarding the arrest of the Rebbe's father, Rav Levi Yitzchok. It was there that a new photograph was found as well, taken shortly after his arrest when he looked much younger and in better health.

Although the newly found photograph was undoubt-

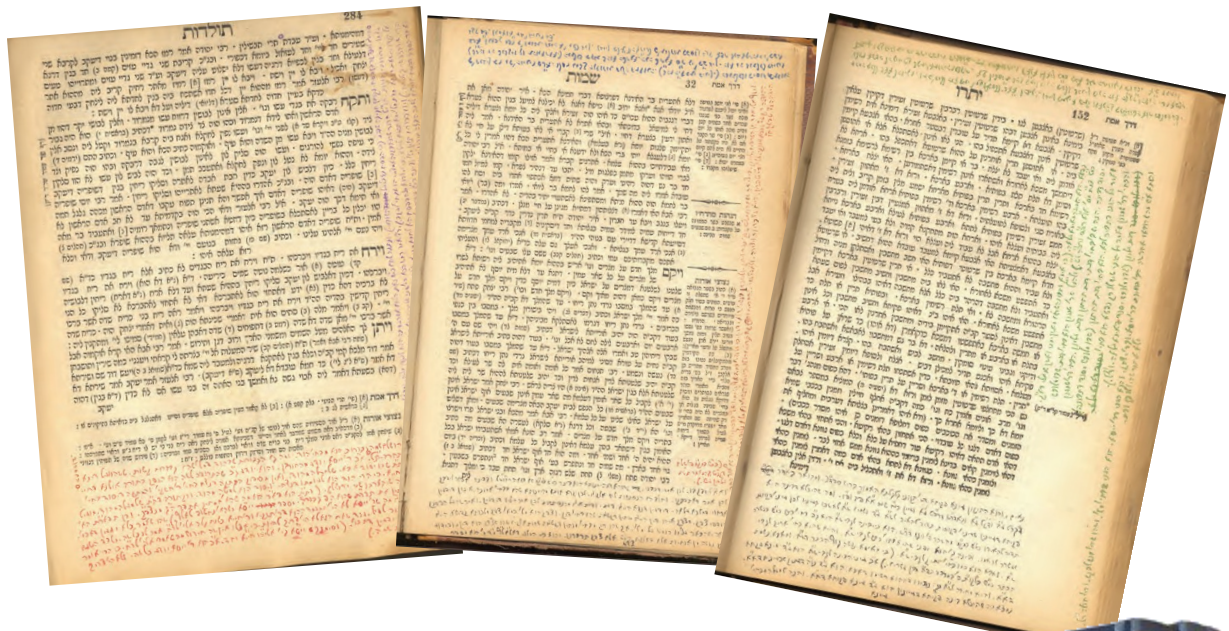
edly nicer than the one that was available until then, Lubavitch refrained from publishing it, due to some flaws in it that rendered it inappropriate for publishing.

When the members of Vaad Hanochos Be'LaHak prepared to publish the second volume of "Toras Menachem – Tiferes Levi Yitzchok" (a compilation of the Rebbe's *Sichos* explaining his father's *Ha'oros* on *Zohar*), it was decided that the newly found picture should be placed at the beginning of the *Sefer*. They located a professional artist in Manhattan who would be able to doctor the photo and make it fit for publishing, and they hoped that the Rebbe would agree with their idea.

After they produced the proper picture, they sent it in to the Rebbe with the *Mazkir*, Rabbi Krinsky, along with a letter explaining their idea and asking the Rebbe's permission to go ahead with it.

When the Rebbe saw the restored photo, he asked Rabbi Krinsky "Can this remain with me?" Rabbi Krinsky explained that they needed to have the photo back

BEHIND THE PICTURE



ABOVE: WHEN RAV LEVI YITZCHOK FINALLY RECEIVED A FEW PRECIOUS SEFORIM, HE WROTE HIS BIURIM ON THEIR MARGINS, WITH HOMEMADE INK CAREFULLY PREPARED BY REBBETZIN CHANA; HENCE, EACH BATCH OF INK HAD IT'S OWN DISTINCT COLOR AND TEXTURE. UPON DISCOVERY THEY WERE PRINTED AS "LEKKUTEI LEVI YITZCHOK".

RIGHT: THE THREE VOLUME SET "TORAS MENACHEM - TIFERES LEVI YITZCHOK", A COMPILATION OF THE REBBE'S SICHO'S EXPLAINING HIS FATHER'S HA'OROS ON ZOHAR. IT WAS IN VOLUME 2 (SHEMOS) OF THIS SET, THAT THE REBBE INSTRUCTED TO PUBLISH BOTH PICTURES OF RAV LEVI YITZCHOK.



for printing (to point out one copy of the photo cost an immense amount of money). The Rebbe responded "Can it stay with me at least over-night?"

The next day, the Rebbe went to the Ohel. While in the car on the way, the Rebbe wrote a response to the letter of the members of LaHak. The Rebbe suggested that they publish both photographs, and point out that one was taken before Rav Levi Yitzchok suffered in his years-long exile, and the other was taken afterwards, which can give us a bit of understanding as to what he had undergone.

Indeed, that is what was done and in the introduction to the *Sefer*, they wrote:

At this time, we are publishing for the first time a photograph of Rav Levi Yitzchok depicting his holy face at the time when he was taken to prison (in Nissan of 5699), **before** enduring the terrible suffering of prison and exile for a lengthy period of time, which weakened and deteriorated his health (to the point that he passed away in exile). This is apparent by noticing the difference between this photograph and the already published

one, taken while he was in exile in Chili, where his face is hardly recognizable.

Observing the difference between these two pictures helps us appreciate the true greatness of Rav Levi Yitzchok: even while in exile in Chili, pained under the worst of conditions, his genius wellsprings of wisdom flowed nonetheless, which he jotted down on the margins of the *Seforim* which he had with him at the time, eventually being published in the set of "Lekutei Levi Yitzchok". ■