

אָמו"ר ז"ל

THE REBBE'S PEULOS IN MEMORY OF HIS FATHER

A brief look into the Rebbe's love and affection for any story, Torah thought, or anything related to his illustrious father, organizations and projects orchestrated in his memory, and the appreciation the Rebbe showed for the individuals who were responsible for them.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR OF AVEILUS

Each day, the Rebbe davened *Shacharis* at the *amud* at precisely 9:00. Initially, the Rebbe *leined* from the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays only, but later on, in the summer of 5705, he would *lein* on Shabbos afternoon as well (*Mincha*).

TRUE MESIRUS NEFESH

Beginning from the year 5702 (shortly after his arrival in the US), each month on *Shabbos Mevorchim* following *Mussaf*, the Rebbe farbrenged for the congregants at 770.

In the year 5706, on *Shabbos Mevorchim Av*, the Rebbe spoke of the *Mesirus Nefesh* of his father, quoting the well-known explanation brought in Chassidus of the difference between the *Mesirus Nefesh* of Avrohom Avinu and that of Rabbi Akiva. While Rabbi Akiva anticipated an opportunity to perform *Mesirus Nefesh* throughout his entire lifetime, Avrohom Avinu wished not even for that. His sole objective was to spread the word of Hashem, if need be, it'll be done through *Mesirus Nefesh*...

The *Passuk* tells us that upon the arrival of Moshiach the Jew will say "אָדער ה' כִּי אָנפֿת בִּי..." thanking Hashem for the hardships and suffering we endured throughout the *galus*. Having said those words, the Rebbe began to cry...

TEARFUL RECOLLECTIONS

At an unforgettable Farbrengen which took place on Shabbos Ekev, Chof Av, 5713, the Rebbe requested of Rabbi A. Diskin, an old-time acquaintance of his father's, to recount of his memories from Rav Levi Yitzchok's lifetime and his acts of *Mesirus Nefesh*.

As Rabbi Diskin spoke, the Rebbe cried bitterly and continually wiped away tears. Some recall the Rebbe asking of Rabbi Diskin to articulate the grave conditions to which prisoners in Soviet Russia were subject, but when the Chassidim realized the extent of emotion the Rebbe had displayed upon seeing the constant flow of tears from his eyes, they advised Rabbi Diskin that he discontinue to relate his recollections, so as not to cause the Rebbe unnecessary pain.

During one of the Sichos at that Farbrengen, the Rebbe hinted to, although without making any explicit mention of, his father's noble deeds and their inestimable significance. He spoke of the famous story of the Beis Yosef being promised to merit passing on *Al Kiddush Hashem*, and ultimately "losing the privilege" and living on to write the *Shulchan Aruch* afterwards. Nevertheless, the incident is still referred to as a "loss of privilege"; something that sheds light on the true meaning of *Mesirus*

Nefesh Al Kiddush Hashem...

[It's interesting to note that twice during this farbrengen, the Rebbe requested that the crowd sing "Ani Ma'amin" – the song of the Jews of the Holocaust].

PLEASURE IN THE NAME

In Sivan of 5712, one of Anash in Eretz Yisroel named their son Levi Yitzchok after the Rebbe's father. In a letter to the father, the Rebbe shares how much he appreciated this gesture:

"I have just received your letter in which you notify of the birth of your son (Mazal Tov), and he

WIPING AWAY TEARS, THE REBBE ASKED OF RABBI DISKIN TO ARTICULATE THE GRAVE CONDITIONS TO WHICH PRISONERS IN SOVIET RUSSIA WERE SUBJECT...

was called after my father z"l, may he live many long, good years...

"*Yehi ratzon*, that just as you brought about much pleasure to me by naming your son after my father, so may Hashem grant you pleasure and *nachas* from your entire household, as well as from yourself..."

KEREN LEVI YITZCHOK

In the year 5724, on Rav Levi Yitzchok's twentieth *Yohrtzeit*, the Rebbe established a fund called "Keren Levi Yitzchok" in memory of his father, supporting Torah-study causes. Each year on and around Chof Av, the Rebbe reminded Chassidim to graciously contribute to the fund.

In 5740, when the Rebbe founded Kolel Tiferes Zkeinim Levi Yitzchok for the elderly, he explained that the fund would distribute sums of money to support these institutions.

Interestingly, the Rebbe added that those who would name the Kolel just "Kolel Tiferes Zkeinim"

would receive 18 dollars, and those who would add "Levi Yitzchok" to the name, would receive 100 dollars.

THE LEVI YITZCHOK LIBRARY

In 5733, in response to the Rebbe's encouragement to open new Jewish libraries, Tzach of New York opened a library in Crown Heights.

Two years later, during the farbrengen of Chof Av, 5735, Rabbi Dovid Raskin approached the Rebbe along with a donor and handed the Rebbe a note. Earlier on that day, the Rebbe had given official permission to name the library after his father.

POSTCARD

Once while in Yechidus, Rabbi Moshe Weizman of Brownsville brought the Rebbe an original handwritten postcard from Rav Levi Yitzchok. Seeing the precious treasure, the Rebbe stood up from his chair in excitement!

TEHILLIM

The following story is told in the book "Yemei Bereishis" (p. 255):

On Yom Kippur night, 5711, the Rebbe read *Tehillim* before *Kol Nidrei* from a *Sefer Tehillim* with *meforshim*. It has been told that the Rebbe's father, Rav Levi Yitzchak, gave this *Tehillim* as a gift to the Friediker Rebbe, who in turn gave it to the Rebbe. Some noticed that the words "Cha" k Admu"r" were inscribed inside the cover.

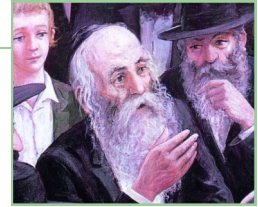
SHOFAR

In a letter to Reb Y.Y. Raskin dated Chof-Aleph Av, 5710, the Rebbe writes:

"I have been informed sometime ago that you managed to bring my father's *Shofar* out of Russia. As Reb Dovber Chaskind will be traveling here in the beginning of the upcoming Elul, I would greatly appreciate if you would send the *Shofar* with him. Obviously, any cost this would entail are my responsibility to cover at your word, in addition to the many thanks I would owe you for it..."

On 3 Slichos, 5710, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Y.Y. (in reply to his letter in which he wrote that he sent the *Shofar*):

"...I have also very, very gratefully received my father's *Shofar*... As you requested, I have given your



son Reb Dovid a piece of the [Friediker] Rebbe's handkerchief on your behalf. Please write your son how to get it to you..."

RAV LEVI YITZCHOK'S ASSISTANTS

More than once during the Chof Av farbrengens, the Rebbe singled out those who had the privilege of assisting Rav Levi Yitzchok during his lifetime and gave them special credit.

In 5744, the Rebbe specifically requested that they not act modestly and attempt to hide themselves; rather they should approach to receive *Mashke* which was sent here from a farbrengen behind the Iron Curtain.

The Rebbe writes in a letter:

"I was pleased to read your letter... especially after hearing so much of the assistance you offered my father in those [difficult] times. The help you offered then brings along with it great blessings, and the fulfillment of your hearts desires; your own as well as those of your relatives..."

QUEST FOR DIVREI TORAH

As much of Rav Levi Yitzchok's written Torah thoughts were lost to the Russian government, the Rebbe made a desperate effort to salvage whatever piece of information was available from his father by questioning those who knew him during his lifetime.

In a letter dated 6 Iyar, 5712, the Rebbe writes:

"...Many thanks for mentioning in your letter of what you heard from my father during his visit to Kiev, explaining the Mishna "I thank you in advance if you can fill me in with more details of the story, both of the meeting and especially about the explanation – whatever remains in your memory..."

In 5710, Reb Dovid Raskin (then a Bochur learning in 770) wrote down a Torah thought which he remembered from Rav Levi Yitzchok. It was an explanation on Tanya Perek Mem-Aleph that Reb Betzalel Wilcshanski had found written on the margin of his Tanya. The Rebbe thanked him for the note, and later discussed this explanation at the Chof Av farbrengen. (See *Toras Menachem* vol. 1 p. 168).

A short while later, in a letter written to his fa-

THE THREE
VOLUME TOLDOS
LEVI YITZCHOK



ther, Reb Y.Y. Raskin, the Rebbe writes:

"...I have asked your son, Reb Dovid to write down his recollections about my father. While speaking with him he told me that in his estimation you would know and remember a lot more. I therefore request of you that when time permits, you should record on paper all that you recall in this regard, in as great detail as possible; the more, the better, and send it over to me. Many thanks in advance..."

In the earlier years, the Rebbe held a farbrengen on the second night of Pesach after the Seder. In 5718, the Rebbe said: "Just before Pesach, I received a *Haggada* that carries a written approbation ("*Haskama*") from my father. I will therefore review a Torah dissertation from that *Haggada*..."

The *Haggada* was brought to the Rebbe by Reb Shabsi Halperin (who was then learning in 770) who had found in the "*shaimos*".

TOLDOS LEVI YITZCHOK

Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Gottlieb had the *z'chus* to compile the only biography of Rav Levi Yitzchok, while the Rebbe directed and assisted in many ways. He relates:

When I came to be with the Rebbe for Tishrei, 5735, I passed by to receive Kos Shel Brocha on Motzi Simchas-Torah and the Rebbe stopped me and said: "You promised me a book about my father.

Where is the book?"

I was shocked. Just around ten years earlier I had written to the Rebbe about an idea to write a biography of his father, but I never received an answer so the thought never materialized. Suddenly now, ten years later, the Rebbe was asking about the book!

I responded to the Rebbe that since I had never received an answer, I never actually took to the task. The Rebbe smiled and said, "For such an important matter one must wait for an answer?! During your stay now, you must begin to collect the material, so

"YEHI RATZON, THAT JUST AS YOU BROUGHT ABOUT MUCH PLEASURE TO ME BY NAMING YOUR SON AFTER MY FATHER, SO MAY HASHEM GRANT YOU PLEASURE AND NACHAS FROM YOUR ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD, AS WELL AS FROM YOURSELF..."

that the book can be published as soon as possible."

The task of gathering the information was a tedious and difficult one. There was almost nothing to begin with (aside for the memoirs of Rebbetzin Chana). The elderly individuals who knew Rav Levi Yitzchok during his lifetime were spread around all over the world and it was necessary to meet with each of them and pick up pieces of information, stories, and words of wisdom that they each knew from him. Slowly, the book began to take shape, and I sent all the chapters to the Rebbe for editing. The Rebbe commented on the minutest details, adding, omitting, and changing as he saw fit.

I was once conveyed a message from Rabbi Hodakov not to overlook any details even if they seem small and insignificant, for they may in truth be of great importance.

Collecting all the information took a long time and the publishing was stalling. In Shevat 5736, the Rebbe wrote to me in his holy handwriting:

"חבל במאד שמתארך כ"כ [=כל כך] הר"ד [=הרשמות-דברים] ע"ד [=על דבר] אאמו"ר כו'. ועד מתי? וכנראה שגם ליא"נ [=לי"א ניסן] לא יו"ל [=יוצא לאור]!?"

"It's a real pity that the transcriptions about my father are taking so long. How much longer [will this take]? As it seems now, it will not even be published by Yud-Aleph Nissan!?"

Receiving this sharp letter from the Rebbe really gave us a thrust forward; there was no more time for procrastination. Indeed, just about half-a year later, the *sefer* "Toldos Levi Yitzchok" was finally published.

The Rebbe cherished the new *sefer* very much. The *mazkir*, Rabbi Klein relates that after the *sefer* came from print, it remained on the Rebbe's desk for many long months.

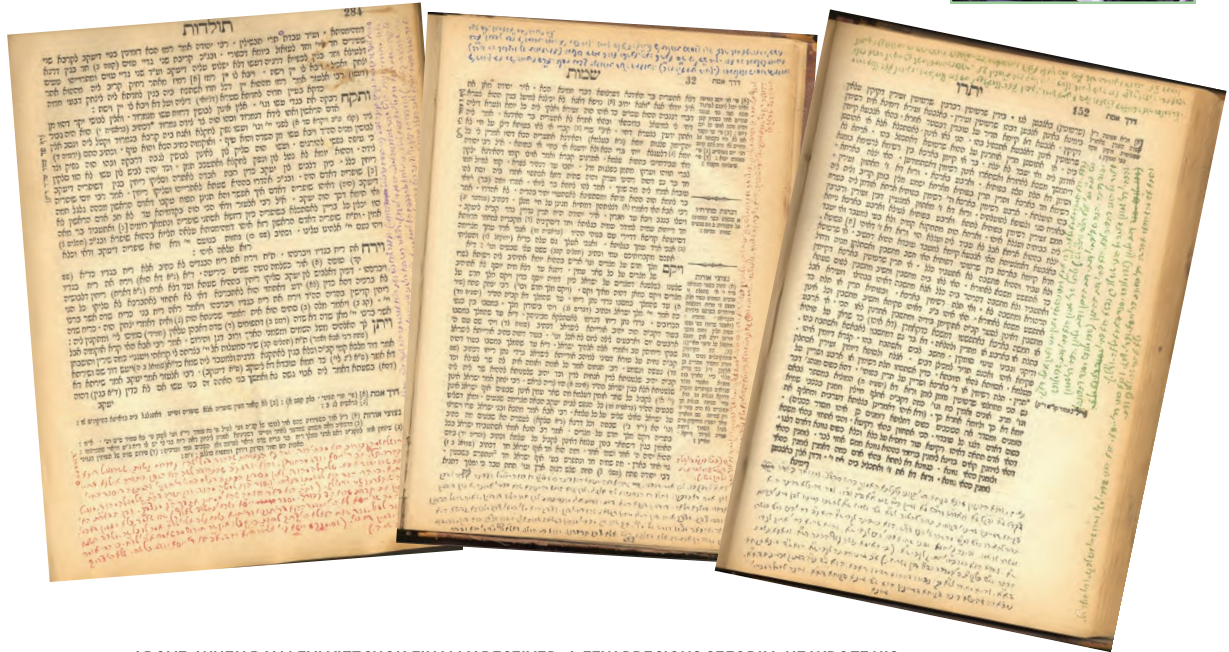
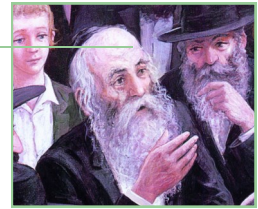
Interestingly, Reb Yosef Niumatin, a Chossid who knew Rav Levi Yitzchok and was privileged to have assisted him during his exile, once told the Rebbe that Rav Levi Yitzchok had given him a handwritten manuscript, but the KGB confiscated and burned it. He therefore asked the Rebbe to replace it by giving him another handwritten manuscript of Rav Levi Yitzchok. Instead, the Rebbe gave him the *sefer* "Toldos Levi Yitzchok", explaining that it contained facsimiles of his holy handwriting. "Let this be considered as if I gave you an original *Ksav-yad*!" the Rebbe said.

Rabbi Gottlieb relates:

A few years later, during Tishrei 5742, I was

THE FIVE
VOLUMES OF
LEKUTEI LEVI
YITZCHOK





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".

summoned by Rabbi Hodakov who told me: "You should know that you bear a very great *z'chus* to have dealt with this idea. The Rebbe has told me to ask you on his behalf to visit a few more individuals (including Reb Yosef Niumatin and Reb Moshe Binyomin Kaplan) who knew Rav Levi Yitzchok during his lifetime to hear more first-hand encounters about him."

When I was ready to print the third edition of the *sefer*, the Rebbe encouraged me to go ahead with it and even sent 100 dollars as his own personal participation in the expenses.

LEKUTEI LEVI YITZCHOK

Throughout his lifetime, Rav Levi Yitzchok wrote thousands of pages containing his innovative Torah thoughts. Tragically, most of them were lost to the KGB upon his arrest allowing almost nothing to survive and escape the Iron Curtain.

Despite the unspeakable pain and torment experienced by Rav Levi Yitzchak in his exile, he managed, with the assistance of his illustrious wife, Rebbetzin Chana, to transcribe his innovative Torah

thoughts. With ordinary writing utensils unavailable, he made use of a homemade ink comprised of an herbal mixture, and wrote on the margins of the few books she had brought from home.

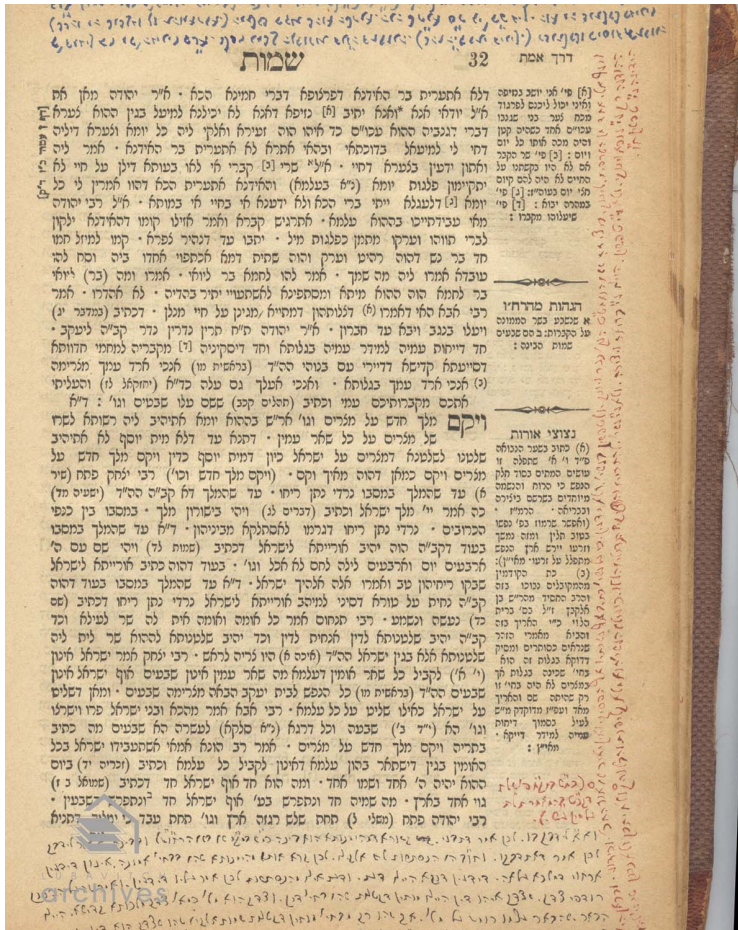
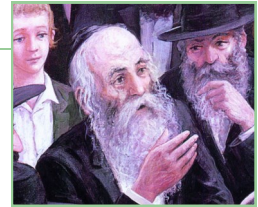
It was these writings which were smuggled out from behind the Iron Curtain to reach free soil, subsequently published and studied to this very day.

Speaking about his father's writings, the Rebbe once mentioned the irony of the fact that of all the numerous writings of Rav Levi Yitzchak, most were confiscated by the soviets and have never been seen and enjoyed by the public. Only this collection compiled under the direst of circumstances managed to be published and made available for forthcoming generations! (Sefer Hasichos 5750 vol. 2 p. 621).

When Rebbetzin Chana escaped from Russia in 5707, she was forced to leave behind the *seforim* containing Rav Levi Yitzchok's notes with Chassidim who would remain there.

In a letter dated 3 Teves, 5720, the Rebbe writes to Reb Moshe Shuv of Tel-Aviv:

"I wish to express my thanks to you from the



LEFT: A CLOSE UP OF ONE OF THE PAGES OF RAV LEVI YITZCHAK'S ZOHAR. ONE CAN SEE THE DIFFERENT COLORS INKS USED TO WRITE IN THE MARGINS. THE COLORS DEPENDED ON THE VARIETY OF PLANTS AVAILABLE TO REBBETZIN CHANA WHEN SHE WOULD MAKE THE INK.

depth of my heart, for your efforts to salvage the set of Zohar containing my father's notes, which I have just received.

"In addition to the great merit you have for saving Divrei Torah of any sort; in this instance there is special significance for me personally, especially when I recall the toil and excitement with which my father studied these books..."

Although the Rebbe did mention the notes on Zohar a few times after their arrival in 5720, it wasn't until 5730 that the Rebbe allowed them to be printed and available for the public.

The story of the Rebbe's intimate involvement in their publishing is beyond the scope of this article.

We'll suffice by stating that the Rebbe himself wrote and signed a very unique and heartfelt preface to these seforim (although in those years the Rebbe no longer signed his name to the prefaces of ordinary Kehos seforim):

"ת"ל שזכיתי זכות רבה ונפלאה והגיעו לידי כמה

מכתבי אאמו"ר וכן ספרים אחדים, אשר אמי מורתי הרבנית... הביאה אותם אליו, כאשר קבלה הרשיון לנסוע להעיירה לשם הגלה ולהיות שם אתו עמו..."

"Thank G-d, I have been given a great, incredible z'chus, upon receiving a few of the writings of my father, as well as a few seforim, which my mother... brought to him when she received the permit to travel to the town where he was exiled and join him there..."

From then on, at almost every single Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe would quote a short selection from his father's writings on the Zohar and offer his own explanation on it.

Let us hope that the z'chus of learning the Torah of Rav Levi Yitzchok which did reach the free world and was subsequently published will lead to the redemption of the majority of his writings which are, for the time being, still in exile, along with all the seforim and ksovim of Rabbosinu Neseinu. ■