Shlomo Lutzker's Introduction to Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov

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ABSTRACT: This presentation analyzes Shlomo Lutzker's Introduction to Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov as a key source of information on the process of formation and publication of early hasidic books and the activities of printers and aditors. It also bears on the questions of whether there existed "hasidic publishers" and how it might be possible to identify a "hasidic book".

This presentation is for the following text(s):
• Shlomo Lutzker's Introduction to Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim

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Shlomo Lutzker's Introduction to Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim
Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim, Hakdamat Ha-Sefer
1781

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This is a translation of Shlomoh Lutzker's Introduction to the book, Maggid Devarav Le-Ya'akov (Koretz, 1781), a compilation of the hanhagot (conduct teachings) of Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezerich. Lutzker was the mavi le-vet ha-defus (publisher/production editor) of this and other early Hasidic books.

by

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK*

Awe of His exaltedness and love for the King of the kings of kings (blessed be He and may his immortal name be enshrined forever) should fittingly and properly be implanted in the heart of Holy Israel, servants of the Most High. They are His people and His portion, the patrimony of Jacob, without limit. They cleave to Him, blessed be
He, who is infinite and He to them who are the inconsequential because they minimize and contract themselves, [for] "He who is small is great" (Zohar Lekh Lekha, Sefer Hasidim, par 551). We should praise, glorify and exalt Him and bless Him for the Torah, the beginning and genesis of learning, the fount of wisdom and the fount of profound understanding, made known to us by Moses his prophet, his faithful servant may he rest in peace. By its light we shall go and travel in the light of God so that we shall be tied to Him, blessed be He, [by] a potent and ardent love, that His name not disappear from our progeny until the end of all of the generations, all the foundations. For He surrounds all the worlds [while no one controls Him] and He is below all the worlds. As we see in actuality that in every generation He, blessed be He, admonishes us—through the prophets, the men of the Great Assembly, the tannaim, the amoraim, the geonim and contemporary sages, to contribute. He shows the way, positioning the ethereal light from on high to the very bottom. As [the Sages] zal said, "There is no day whose curse is worse than another's". Indeed light is better than dark, truth sprouts from the earth, and through the great darkness of our exile we did not forsake our God and He shined a light on our face: the primordial, mysterious, enigmatic, wondrous and concealed Torah. God concealed it, until His word, the pure utterance of God, was brought by the holy lamp, the divine Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, in the book of the Zohar, the Zohar Hadash and the Tikkunei Zohar, which flash like lightening to the eyes, the eyes of the community, that is the Sages. On this day wisdom shall live to enliven us through the divine rabbi Moharar Moshe Cordovero who was not confused by any enigma, but with great insight and wondrous originality, in his commentary in the Sefer Pardes and his other holy books, cracked every secret of the light of the aforementioned Zohar, teaching the people knowledge; to know, to inform and to be made known that God, blessed be He, is far and away beyond the dimension of the creatures. He radiates, is immutable and is far removed from materialization (God forbid) by means of this wisdom. They are merely rational beings, or celestial lights, or godly creatures, may they be blessed. The Divine spirit speaks through him [Cordovero], for God's wisdom is within him, as a lion rose up and praised him with the praise becoming the writings, holy writings.

The divine Rabbi Yitzhak Luria zlh, to whom the pathways of heaven were manifest, tempered and contemplated Tikkun [the process of bringing Redemption] [cf. Rashi on Ecclesiastes 12:9] in noble writing, words of truth; the Torah of truth was in his mouth explaining all in detail. He did everything beautifully, in its time, its appointed time; God granted him success. Indeed the holy rabbi, the ARI zlh, needing to expand on everything, each saying well phrased, in great detail, every object and world in its own right, using the correct principle or what is called "characteristics", beautiful homilies, and very long ones, such that time will end but they will not; as is explained in the introduction to the holy book, Etz Hayim. This [the ARI's teaching] is only an outline,
a glimpse though the cracks, revealing a bit while concealing two thousand cubits. He could not expand more upon the non-corporeality and abstraction of God, blessed be He, and what's more he didn't need to because he revealed this only to his holy disciples who were already full of wisdom and profound understanding and learned knowledge from the holy books of the divine Mohar M. C. [Moshe Cordevero] zlhh.

Due to our sins the generations have been ever degenerating, hearts have diminished and this wisdom has been almost forgotten. [It remains] only with a very few extraordinary individuals, but even some of them thirstily drank the words of the ARI zal only in the sense of their plain meaning, grasping and holding on only to the extent of the [revealed] bit mentioned above in order to use it to moisten [i.e. vitalize; in Hebrew "bit" and "moisten" are homonyms]. One thinks of God but his knowledge does not extend to "45" [a numerological construction of God's name; that name that is the Essence]. As [the Rabbis] zal said in Sefer Yetzirah: the ten sefirot without "45" [or: the essence]; that is that they are merely godly creatures because people threw the aforementioned ancient books behind their backs. Until, thanks to God's pity on us, the light of Israel gleamed, that is the divine holy rabbi Moharar Israel Besht. His holy disciples reveled in the dust of his feet, thirstily drinking in his words, the words of the living God. With every gesture, movement, word and action, he revealed the precious source of the glory of this wisdom. On every jot and tittle [he explicated] mounds and mounds of the customs of the upper world and its unification with the lower world. As [the rabbis] zal said about Enoch, that he sewed shoes and with every stitch he would say, "For the sake of the unification of the Holy One Blessed Be He with his Spirit (Shekhinah)("לשם ועומד ברוך ברך וחסנית").") Thus his [the Besht's] commentary will appear in the contents of this book, God willing, as many of his holy words were brought in the house of Yosef, in the books that were joined together; they are the words of his holiness, of the honored rabbi, the gaon, holy and ascetic, Moharar Yaacov Yosef Hakohen, may he live.

The truth is I feared approaching the inner sanctum to offer up the holy words of Admo, the divine Moharar Dov Ber, the author (zlhh),on the altar of print; for these are words that stand at the highest echelon. He speaks words of the highest dimension which not every brain can absorb. In his holy words are clues for understanding sayings from Etz Hayim, from the meditation of the ARI zal and from the Zohar, as is known to all those of the who hear his pleasant sayings by the hundreds and the thousands—among the greatest in the world. His words entered their heart like flaming fire and ignited
their soul to the service of God. This composition is but a drop from the ocean of the
greatness of his wisdom, which each day he articulates like a well of living waters, out of
holiness, purity and several years worth of celibacy. Who can tell the great praise of the
holiness of the rabbi our master, teacher and rabbi; the wondrous signs will not be
believed when recounted. His prayer and utterance were heard; God decrees but he
annuls. About him it was said: "You will decree [and it will be fulfilled] (Job 22:28)".
We saw with our own eyes the great, very high, span of his ranking. Yet he was modest
and humble with reverence for God always on his face and God's dignity enveloping him
all the time. Sometimes he would talk and speak of the praises of the compleat rabbi,
Rabbi Israel Besht (mentioned above). I heard from his holy mouth: "Why do you
wonder that Elijah was revealed to him, and still much higher levels [of holiness]?") And
he began to allude to the substance of the levels of Elijah revelation and to how many
aspects there are to this, one higher than the other. Once I heard from his holy mouth
itself that the Besht zlhh taught him the language of the birds and the language of the
palm trees, [and the spirits/winds], and also studied with him the secrets of the holy
names and the yihudim (adjurations). He also taught him the book Maayan
Hokhmah and explicated every word for him. Moreover in Sefer Raziel he showed
him letters and writing of the angels and said that he taught him all this because each
angel has a different form of the letters of the alphabet than the others, reflecting his
nature and his essence and the world of his origin, and a word to the wise is sufficient.
He also showed me in that book some names of angels and told me explicitly that by
means of these names the Baal Shem Tov knew at the month of Nissan each year which
angels were appointed over the world, in order to know how to behave and what to
expect. I asked, "Why at the beginning of Nissan?" and he answered, "Because that is the
new year for Kings." I said to him, "Didn't my Admo tell me that [the Besht] taught him
everything and surely Admo knew [this] too." He replied, "Why wouldn't I know this?
However, it requires performing several yihudim (adjurations) [in preparation]." And
because of his great modesty he did not want to discuss his own eminence at all. I asked
him, "Why doesn't Admo want to reveal his greatness? Didn't the Besht zlhh show his
stature?" He answered that aside from the tiniest fraction [of his greatness] and the
revelation of Elijah [to him], the Besht also did not disclose [his eminence]. "Except
perhaps before he died, when I alone appeceived it, with the help of God, when I visited
him and there occurred several happenings that this medium cannot adequately
convey."

God knows that I have the truth. Let the fact that I am writing these things about this
holy book composition testify. I wrote down all of this so that all of God's people should
know that even in this bitter exile and in this defiled land our God has not abandoned
us. He has sent us great Zaddikim who know the secrets of the heart to inspire us even
today. Certainly there are always Zaddikim that the entire house of Israel looks to. Also
[I have written] so that they will believe in God and in his holy servants.

The upshot of all of these things is that because of them I could not find my bearings to undertake the printing of this holy book. Just writing these things down was, in my view, very difficult to do because they are sublime wisdoms that may not be spoken by the mouth. They are mountains hanging by a thread, similar to "Her husband is known by the gates", i.e. the size of his heart [In Hebrew thread, gates and size are homonyms]. How much more difficult it is to bring to press these truly beautiful words. We might assert that this is what the Tanna Rabbi Meir meant when he would say:

Whoever studies Torah for its own sake, merits many things; not only that, but [the creation of] the entire world is worthwhile for him alone. He is called friend, beloved, lover of God, lover of humanity, rejoicer of God, rejoicer of humanity. The Torah enclothes him with humility and awe; makes him fit to be righteous, pious, correct and faithful; distances him from sin and brings him close to merit. From him, people enjoy counsel and wisdom, understanding and power, as is stated (Proverbs 8:14): "Mine are counsel and wisdom, I am understanding, mine is power." The Torah grants him sovereignty, dominion, and jurisprudence. The Torah's secrets are revealed to him, and he becomes as an ever-increasing wellspring and as an unceasing river. He becomes modest, patient and forgiving of insults. The Torah uplifts him and makes him greater than all creations.

The commentators asked why in the first part he generalized, [saying that a person who studies Torah for its own sake] "merits [many things]"; while in the second part {"not only that..."}) he listed the virtues [of such a person] one by one. It is obvious: When a person studies Torah for its own sake and for no other reason, he cleaves to the Torah with all of his fervor and his personality and it is his genius, may it be blessed. He merits the most lofty divine wisdoms to the point where they cannot even be verbalized (see above) and certainly cannot be specified and written down. This is what "merits many things" means, that is, the aforementioned sublime wisdoms with every movement and step and everything that he sees. But all of this he attains himself. There are, however, many other praiseworthy virtues that are apparent to all other people, testifying to the aforementioned genius embedded in his heart. This is the meaning of [the second part] "not only that...".

All of this we actually saw. All of the virtues that Rabbi Meir enumerated were found in Admo zlhh as is well known and familiar to all who know and are acquainted with him;
because he studied Torah for its own sake.

Once Admo asked me why I do not write down what I hear [from him]. I answered what I have written above. I also said that I have observed that writers of writings severely abridge Admo's message and sometimes they do not comprehend and write according to their own understanding. He said to me, "Even so! However it may come out it is all written to the good, to be a reminder about the service of the Creator, blessed be He." I said to him, "Why does Admo want and yearn for this?" He replied thus, "Do you consider something that King David sought to be unimportant? As to the verse: 'I will live in your tent forever [lit.: for worlds]', what he meant was in the two worlds [this world and the world-to-come]."

Still, I did not want to write his words down and for certain I stopped myself several [times] from bringing them to press, for all of the reasons I have given. What's more [his words] are excerpted by some writers who excerpted from his sayings, but they were not arranged well with the proper language. Moreover, because of their popularity they were copied over several times and were full of mistakes and missing some [words] in places. If I were to edit [these anthologies] as I would really want to, I would have to write everything from the beginning, like new. This was very difficult for me.

In the event, after I saw God's help against the warriors, with the strength of Torah, the light of the books we printed; after completing the printing of the Zohar, the Tikkunei Zohar, and Sefer Yetzirah with the Shoshan Sodot Commentary of Nahmanides' (zllhh) student [Moshe ben Yaakov Hagoleh], the book Toldot Yaakov Yosef and the book Ben Porat Yosef (with the epistle of the rabbi, the Besht zllhh)—the compositions of the aforementioned, his honor, the gaon, the hasid the holy Moharar Yaakov Yosef Katz—I said that with four[!] holy articles like these, now is certainly a propitious time to succeed. Having witnessed it, I remembered the great yearning and desire of Admo as expressed in the words he said to me cited above. So like a man I girded my loins and God brought to me several writings from several writers and the principal part was copied from the writing of the great rabbi, the hasid, the humble, the aged Moharar Zev Wolf from the great community of Horodno in Lithuania. I checked it and found delicious delicacies, sweeter than honey, pleasing sayings that I still remembered, but that I couldn't write anew and put in the proper language as I have explained already. From Heaven they helped me and urged me on. One night my partner, the great, rabbinic, aged Moharar Shimon, may he live, and I dreamed a dream pressing us in this matter; for this partner of mine urged me on and repeatedly insisted.
Blessed be God who did wondrously with us and we were privileged to complete and finish this pure and holy composition successfully.

Are these not the words of the most junior in the brotherhood, a servant before the king and a relative of Admo, the rabbi, the author zlhh.

Shelomoh bemoharar Avraham from Lutsk, now living here in Koretz.

Endnotes
*Key to honorific acronyms:

Admo(r) = אדמ"ו or אדמ"ו = our master, teacher and rabbi

Besht = באה"ט = [lit.:] Master of the good (i.e. divine) name = Israel ben Eliezer the Besht or the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism

(Ha)ARI (= ארי"ה) = The Divine Rabbi Yitzhak Luria. The Hebrew word Ari literally means lion; so this acronym is intended as a pun to express Luria’s greatness.

Mohar (ז"מ) = Моֹרָה"ר = My/Our teacher and rabbi, the rabbi

Moharar (מוהר"ר) = Моֹרָה"ר = the son of Moharar [XXXX]; bemoharar (במוהר"ר) = the son of Moharar [XXXX]

Zal (ז"ל) = ז"ל = of blessed memory (referring to single person/group)

Z(l)lhh (誌lh) = ז"ל = of blessed memory) May he be remembered for the life of the world to come

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Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov: Likutei Amarim, Hakdamat Ha-Sefer

1781

Prepared by Shlomo Lutzker
אין לךwayne, "יומם" תרבותך, ובכפי רוד ויתרה ונתיתת הנשמעה מפיו, י"ע, וlogan. והם לא_flg
ואו דה-הتبادل הקדמיש ש试验区 בכ-מודלינו הטה בו העבר לע瑚 והמדחה של האולמות וה-
ולדה"ו."ו

והנה בש"ה [זרועות הרבים] בכי רוד ויתרה ונתיתת הנשמעה מפיו, י"ע, וlogan. והם לא_flg

 teammates פלוסר מודים הנרי, והם לא_flg. ונעשתו הקבליות והמדחה是我们 של התitude שהודר ב

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אmuşך או אמשך ולשפת ונשף？”[משה בריי]”ולב ברעה.”[בעלותה.”]ולדו.”

שלום רב,” שמחה, לעזר书院, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת לברון, "תהלים" ש"ת לברון, "הלל" ש"ת ل