

شوكو للناا

The Gulf War



לזכות
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק שיחי'
גופין
לרגל יום הולדתו השבעים
שיצליח בהצלחה רבה ומופלגה
בשליחותו הק'
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות
נדפס ע"י
הרוצה בעילום שמו

פֵּי אֵימֹנֵי מִלְחַמַּת הַגּוּף

AS WE MARK 30 YEARS FROM THE INCREDIBLE MIRACLES OF THE GULF WAR, WE PRESENT THE FOLLOWING STORY OF THE FIRST GULF WAR AND THE REBBE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNFOLDING EVENTS. SPECIAL THANKS TO RABBI MENACHEM BROD AND RABBI MENACHEM DUBRUSKIN FOR SHARING THEIR RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EVENTS!

I Told You So

It was 2 Shevat 5751*, the first day of Operation Desert Storm (now known as the First Gulf War). In an unprecedented display of unity, the two Israeli radio channels had joined for one united broadcast.

“And now, we will present an ‘I told you so’ moment,” broadcaster Roni Daniel dramatically announced. “Our reporter Michael Tochfeld just spoke with the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s secretary; he also says that the Rebbe has predicted the end of the fighting.”

Months of tension in the Persian Gulf had finally reached a boiling point. A massive coalition of international soldiers had attacked Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi forces. Israeli citizens were extremely on edge; Saddam had promised to retaliate by attacking Eretz Yisroel and there was little reason to doubt his intentions.

“I just spoke with the Rebbe’s secretary,” the reporter explained, “and he related that when the fighting broke out, the Rebbe repeated his opinion that G-d watches over the Land of Israel, and that these are the final days of exile and the first days of redemption. It is interesting to note that the Rebbe has also predicted the end of the fighting. One of his Chassidim, Yaakov Goldstien, who serves in the United States Military, came to receive the Rebbe’s blessing before his departure to the Persian Gulf and shared that he planned to take a Megillah for Purim. The Rebbe laughed and said that by Purim he will already be home. Purim, let me remind you, is just a month-and-a-half away...”

With this radio announcement, the Israeli public ushered in the first day of a tense and aggravating six weeks. In fact, the Rebbe had made no such promise,² but this was only one in a series of incredible statements emanating from 770...



COL CHAPLAIN YAAKOV GOLDSTEIN GOES BY THE REBBE FOR DOLLARS AFTER HIS RETURN.

30 NISSAN 5751, CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEW 7237

Backtrack

The story of the Gulf War really begins half a year earlier, in the summer of 5750*, when Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi forces overran their small neighbor, the oil-rich country of Kuwait, and declared it Iraqi territory. The international community saw the invasion as a severe breach of international law-and-order and warned Saddam to retreat. At first, the situation did not seem especially relevant to the residents of Eretz Yisroel.

Rabbi Menachem Brod was the spokesman for Tzeirei Agudas Chabad in Eretz Yisroel at the time, and he shared his memories with *Derher*.

“My first encounter with the war was shortly after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. We were in the midst of the Yaldei Chernobyl project, evacuating children from the area of the nuclear disaster to Eretz Yisroel. We had experienced considerable setbacks, but we finally arrived in Minsk with a large group of children ready to leave the country. Then, suddenly, we heard that our planes were stranded in Kuwait. A war had broken out, and they were not able to make it to Russia.”

Saddam had long threatened to attack Israel but it was seen mostly as mere rhetoric. Soon, however, events took a surprising twist. After his invasion of Kuwait, he declared an ultimatum: If he was attacked, he would launch ballistic missiles at Eretz Yisroel. According to intelligence reports, Iraq had missiles loaded with chemical and biological warheads. Saddam was a real *meshugener*; this time, his threats could not be taken lightly. Frightened residents of Eretz Yisroel and Jews around the world began to follow the situation very carefully.

Standing on the Rooftop

Even before the invasion, Iraqi-Kuwaiti tensions had been in the news for some time. Iraq’s expanding influence over the world’s oil supply worried many governments and the conflict was followed carefully.

Rabbi Menachem Dubruskin was a *bochur* learning in 770, where he served as one of the *chozrim* and *manichim*. He shared his recollections of that period in 770:

“One regular Tuesday night, as the Rebbe left the shul following Maariv and dollars, he suddenly paused for

a short moment to look at a sign hanging on the door. It was a quote from Yalkut Shimoni that had been hung up by Reb Yosef Yitzchak Kazen, due to its seeming relevance at the time.”

The quote read as follows:

א"ר יצחק שנה שמלך המשיח נגלה בו
 כל מלכי אומות העולם מתגרים זה בזה, מלך
 פרס מתגרה במלך ערבי והולך מלך ערבי
 לארם ליטול עצה מהם וחוזר מלך פרס ומחריב
 את כל העולם וכל אומות העולם מתרעשים
 ומתבהלים ונופלים על פניהם ויאחוז אותם
 צירים כצירי ילדה, וישראל מתרעשים
 ומתבהלים ואומר להיכן נבוא ונלך להיכן
 נבוא ונלך להיכן נבוא ונלך, ואומר להם בני
 אל תתיראו כל מה שעשיתי לא עשיתי אלא
 בשבילכם. מפני מה אתם מתיראים? אל תיראו
 הגיע זמן גאולתכם, ולא כגאולה ראשונה
 גאולה אחרונה כי גאולה ראשונה היה לכם צער
 ושעבוד מלכיות אחריה אבל גאולה אחרונה אין
 לכם צער ושעבוד מלכיות אחריה.

“Rebbi Yitzchak said: In the year of the revelation of Moshiach, kings of all nations will provoke one another. The King of Persia will provoke an Arabian

king, and the Arabian king will consult with Aram, and the Persian king will return and destroy the entire world, and all nations will tremble and be gripped with fear... and the Jews will become afraid and ask, ‘Where shall we go, where shall we go, where shall we go?’ And Hashem says to them, ‘My children, do not be afraid, everything I have done has been for your sake. Why are you afraid? The time for your final redemption has arrived...’

The next day, Rabbi Groner contacted Rabbi Kazen, saying that the Rebbe had requested the next two lines in Yalkut Shimoni be added to the quote.

”שנו רבותינו, בשעה שמלך המשיח בא
 עומד על גג בית המקדש והוא משמיע להם
 לישראל ואומר ענוים הגיע זמן גאולתכם.

“Our Rabbis taught: When Moshiach will arrive, he will stand on the roof of the *Beis Hamikdash* and declare to the Jewish people, ‘Humble

ones, the time of your redemption has arrived.”

Rabbi Dubruskin continues his account:

“As the tensions began to rise, the Rebbe began to quote this Yalkut Shimoni often, saying that the Jewish people had nothing to fear. To the contrary, the Rebbe said, it was a harbinger of the *geulah*. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the same quote had been hung in 770 in 5741*, during the Iran-Iraq war, but the Rebbe didn’t mention it at all.

“The Rebbe publicly declared that there was no reason to fear. At dollars, many non-Chassidim were lining up to hear the Rebbe’s words for themselves, and every Motzei Shabbos the phones would ring with people wanting to hear what the Rebbe had said at the farbrengen. The Rebbe said there would be no war in Eretz Yisroel, and began speaking about the year, to which he had earlier ascribed the acronym *Ar’enu Niflaos*, explaining that this year’s miracles were going to be much greater than the previous year’s. With the backdrop of the miracles of *Tehei Shnas Nissim*—when the Iron Curtain fell after 70 years, among other miracles—it was quite an exciting declaration.”

With the rise in tensions and fear throughout the Jewish world, some of the Rebbe’s actions in the previous few months began to fall into place.

“One early hint had come in Iyar, when the Rebbe had announced the *roshei teivos* for the new upcoming year — *Tehei Shnas Ar’enu Niflaos*. It was unusual for the Rebbe to announce the acronym so early.

“As events in the Persian Gulf began to play out, there were more unique occurrences. On 15 Tammuz 5750*, the Rebbe went to the Ohel and returned at the shockingly late hour of midnight. On Rosh Chodesh Av, the Rebbe went to the Ohel — something he had never done before (the Rebbe

THE NEXT DAY, RABBI GRONER CONTACTED RABBI KAZEN, SAYING THAT THE REBBE HAD REQUESTED THE NEXT TWO LINES IN YALKUT SHIMONI BE ADDED TO THE QUOTE.



THE REBBE RETURNS FROM THE OHEL.

ROSH CHODESH TAMMUZ 5750, CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEM 49286

almost never went to the Ohel on Rosh Chodesh). We heard that the Rebbe had explained to Rabbi Klein that it was the *hilula* of Aharon Hakohen, and ‘Why is it Aharon’s fault that he passed away on Rosh Chodesh?’ By the time the next Rosh Chodesh came around, panic had begun to set-in in Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe went to the Ohel on Rosh Chodesh Elul once again.”

The Ultimatum

As Saddam Hussein entrenched himself in Kuwait, the United Nations condemned the attack and threatened retaliation. In Kislev of 5751*, after failed attempts at negotiations, the UN issued an ultimatum. If Saddam would not withdraw by January 15, 1991, corresponding with 29 Teves 5751, they would declare war.

“As the date drew closer,” relates Rabbi Brod, “President Bush arranged an international coalition of armies, and Saddam continued to threaten Israel. People began to become very

afraid. The government started preparing for biological attacks, distributing gas masks and so on. Families were instructed to buy plastic and tape and to close up one room in the home to protect them from the gas. They began to prep everyone for what to keep in the room — transistor radios with batteries, food, etc. All this talk about biological attacks did not help to calm anyone’s nerves, and people began to panic.

“Meanwhile, the Rebbe kept repeating the Midrash and saying that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place in the world, that there was no need to hoard food or shave beards for the masks. In my capacity as *dover Chabad*, I began to publicize the Rebbe’s words and, from the very beginning, it received widespread attention in the press. Even Prime Minister Shamir publicly said afterwards that he had been very encouraged by the Rebbe’s words.”

Rabbi Brod shared with us a number of newspaper clippings that he collected at the time. *Hatzofeh* ran

a headline, “The Lubavitcher Rebbe: Publicize that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place.” *Yediot Acharonot* declared, “The Rebbe: These are the times of Moshiach.” Jerusalem Post wrote, “Schneerson: Have no fear, Gulf crisis heralds the messiah.”

One unique news bulletin by A. Kohen in *Hamishmar Hachotem* put it succinctly:

“Rabbi Yosef Ralbag of Kiryat Yovel... was told by the Rebbe that there is no reason to fear a gas attack on the Holy Land. From my perspective, this is the most calming message that has been received until now. All the information from intelligence agencies and governments, however accurate, pale in comparison to the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s assessment which is based on reliable sources. If anyone doubts this fact, he should check out how the Rebbe’s assessment was correct before the Six Day War...”

Rabbi Dubruskin relates:

“The impact of the Rebbe’s words need to be taken into proper context



THE REBBE’S REASSURANCES WERE REPORTED IN MANY OF ISRAEL’S NEWSPAPERS.



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PEOPLE FLEEING ERETZ YISRAEL BEFORE THE WAR.

of the time-period. Although we know of countless stories of miracles from the Rebbe, there were essentially two times when the Rebbe made massive predictions about world events and took responsibility for the lives of millions of people in tandem. Those were the events of the Six Day War and the Gulf War.

“For decades, the Rebbe had been very publicly involved in all the affairs of Eretz Yisroel, meeting with its leaders and impacting their policy decisions, and it had all been widely publicized in the press. Just months earlier, the Rebbe had shaped the composition of the Israeli government during a story known as the *Targil Hamasriach*, and just two years earlier, the Rebbe had wielded major influence over the Israeli elections, so by 5750*-51*, during the Gulf War events, the Rebbe was the most well-known and beloved living Jewish leader.

The newspapers in Israel reported—sometimes in awe and sometimes with exasperation—about the irony that a rabbi in Brooklyn was running the country.

“So when the Rebbe gave his assurance that everything would turn out well, it made major waves throughout the Jewish world and beyond. From our perspective, it was a time of unprecedented *malchus*, and it even seemed to be expressed in the Rebbe’s shining countenance during those times. We clearly saw—as the Rebbe said—that it was a new period, it was Moshiach’s times.”

Holocaust vs. Miracles

“As war became imminent,” relates Rabbi Brod, “many frum Jews began fleeing the country. Israeli television played videos of the airport packed with religious yeshiva *bochurim*. These reports brought greater prominence

to the Rebbe’s words; in countless conversations and *maanos*, the Rebbe remained adamant that there was no reason to leave the country and whoever planned to travel there was encouraged to continue.

“In the beginning of Teves, one *rosh yeshiva* said that Hashem keeps a *cheshbon* of *aveiros*, and when the cup fills up, he brings a major punishment to the Jewish people, such as the Holocaust. There was no telling, this *rosh yeshiva* said, whether the cup filled up or not.

“The Rebbe was very pained by this statement. He addressed it very sharply during the *sicha* on Asarah b’Teves and the following Shabbosim. The Rebbe said that it was an insult to the *kedoshim* of the Holocaust, and more importantly, an insult to our beloved Father in heaven. We made sure the Rebbe’s words were widely publicized.”

"BY MORNING, THE PHONE WAS RINGING OFF THE HOOK. 'WE THOUGHT THE REBBE PROMISED THAT MISSILES WOULDN'T FALL? DOES THE REBBE STILL MAINTAIN HIS POSITION?'"

As the date for the ultimatum drew closer, the United Nations intensified negotiations with Saddam Hussien. However, it became quite clear that war was inevitable.

Every time there was another setback in the negotiations, the phone lines would ring at 770. "What does the Rebbe say? Does he still maintain his position?"

Time and again, the Rebbe would respond that his position is based on the *possuk*, "עיני ה' אלוקיך בה," and no, that *possuk* never changes. These statements came directly from the Rebbe's office. With the the cost of international phone calls significantly dropping, news stations in Eretz Yisroel—instead of sufficing with the statements from Chabad in Eretz Yisroel—began to call the *mazkirus* phone and speak directly with Rabbi Groner, to hear the Rebbe's words from the closest source possible.

Nachash Tzefah

On the day after the ultimatum, the coalition forces attacked Iraq. In what was code-named Operation Desert Storm, they subjected Baghdad and the entire country to one of the most intensive air-bombings in history. In Eretz Yisroel, everyone sat tight, expecting missiles to come flying their way. But the skies remained calm.

"By Thursday night," relates Rabbi Brod, "the night after the war began, people began to think that perhaps the threats had been a farce.

"At around one or two in the morning, I was listening to the radio broadcast when suddenly there was a jarring noise and two words were recited over the air. 'Nachash Tzefah, Nachash Tzefah.' Nobody knew what those words meant. Literally, it refers to a poisonous snake known in English as a Eurasian Viper. Even the radio broadcasters didn't understand

where the voice had come from. Waiting for information, they began to play music. It was surreal; something was clearly amiss, and yet the radio was just playing music. People became very nervous.

"It turned out to be an army code to set off the alarms all over the country. Within minutes, we heard the alarms ring out and we were instructed to enter our protected rooms. Suddenly, we heard frightening booms. We were sure that we were being attacked, but the radio broadcasters declared that the noise had been thunder. It was quite obviously not true—we later found out that Tel Aviv and Chaifa had been hit by missiles—and the fact that they were so misinformed definitely added to the panic.

"By morning, the phone was ringing off the hook. 'We thought the Rebbe promised that missiles wouldn't fall? Does the Rebbe still maintain his position?'"

"In truth, the Rebbe had never promised that missiles wouldn't come to Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe had simply stated that Eretz Yisroel was the safest place. But people on their



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 180524

THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES THE MAAMAR "BARUCH SHE'ASA NISSIM 5664."



own had deduced that if the Rebbe said Eretz Yisroel was the safest place, it must mean that missiles would not be coming. After all, a missile attack is not a very safe thing at all. We, in Tzach, were also partially responsible for this assumption. For example, in the Sichat Hashavua the week before, I had ended my article by saying, ‘Instead of waiting for missiles, let’s wait for Moshiach...’ We were all convinced that Saddam’s threats were empty.

“We nonetheless insisted that the Rebbe’s position remained the same. We continued to say that Hashem is watching over Eretz Yisroel and that everything will be fine. Indeed, within just a few short hours, we were able to point to miracles. The massive missiles had wrought significant material damage, but no lives had been lost. It was quite miraculous indeed.”

Rabbi Dubruskin relates what happened in New York:

“After the first missiles fell in Eretz Yisroel, there were conflicting news reports; some reported massive deaths and terrible tragedies. Nonetheless, the Rebbe kept to his position. Before Shabbos, he sent a very encouraging message to Eretz Yisroel, telling them to be joyful. Dancing broke out in Kfar Chabad and around the country, and it was widely reported in the news.

“Some people still felt tension. At the Karastirer *mikveh*, the radio was left on over Shabbos, so that people could hear the news. However, we already understood—after hearing the Rebbe’s words for so long—that immense miracles were on the way. When the Rebbe came into the *farbrenge*, we sang with a *lebedikeit*, ‘*Ki gadol atah v’oseh niflaos*.’ The Rebbe was very *oifgeleigt* at the *farbrenge* and again he assured us of the safety of Eretz Yisroel.

“Throughout that entire period, the Rebbe kept repeating the same points. On Yud Shevat, he even gave out a



APARTMENT BUILDING DESTROYED BY A SCUD MISSILE.

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kuntres called ‘*Boruch She’asa Nissim*,’ a *ksav* of a *maamar* of the Rebbe Rashab that had been in the Rebbe’s room for many years. Now, as missiles were falling in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe publicly distributed the *kuntres*.”

I Will Show You Wonders

“After the first Shabbos of the war,” relates Rabbi Brod, “we anxiously awaited the Motzei Shabbos broadcast of the *chazarah* of (Rabbi) Yossi Jacobson—a young *bochur* at the time—to hear what the Rebbe said. The Rebbe gave us an immense feeling of safety. Although we continued to follow the government’s instructions, as per the Rebbe’s *hora’ah*, we were very comforted.

“As the weeks passed, people began to see that unbelievable miracles were taking place. They had been expecting huge numbers of dead. I had been enlisted in the army with 200 others where we were taught how to do *taharos* with bodies that were contaminated with gas—but the calls never came. Still, Eretz Yisroel was basically on lockdown. Schools were shuttered. People rarely left home and

when they did, they were obligated to carry a large gas mask with them. An intense nervousness lingered.

“Over the next few weeks, 39 missiles fell. The American government provided a system that was supposed to shoot down the missiles, but it turned out to be an abject failure. Nonetheless, the missiles failed to wreak the havoc they were intended to. Over the weeks, the government also helped lower the tension. They began to focus the alarms in the specific places where the missiles were falling, instead of throwing the entire country into panic. Slowly, people began to return to normalcy.

“In an amazing turn of events, the war actually came to an end on Purim. On Israeli radio, they replayed their broadcast from day one of the war where they had reported, erroneously, that the Rebbe had promised the war’s end by Purim.”³

Miracles of Miracles

“Following the war,” says Rabbi Dubruskin, “the Rebbe released a series of three *michtavim kloli’im*

where he emphasized the greatness of the miracle and explained that it was really all a harbinger of Moshiach's times. The Rebbe used particularly strong language in the *yechidus klolis* after Pesach, even mentioning Saddam by name. He explained the greatness of the miracle where the Yidden didn't have to defend themselves at all, and instead had the non-Jews doing the work among themselves — *I'makeh Mitzrayim bivchoreihem*.

“The Rebbe also encouraged dancing during that *sicha*. Some time earlier, an interviewer had asked a certain prominent Chossid why a Yom Tov wasn't being established, and this individual responded that ‘we don't need to dance, but we surely should be happy.’ It seemed that the Rebbe was hinting to that statement.”

Throughout the entire period, the Rebbe made it clear that these weren't just random miracles. All these events hinted to the coming of Moshiach.

“In light of the aforementioned events and miracles,” the Rebbe writes in the *michtav kloli*, “one should become even more cognizant that this is the time of urgent preparedness for the fulfillment of the prophecy, ‘and the kingdom shall be Hashem's,’ when all nations will recognize that ‘this mansion (the world) has a Master,’ a recognition that will lead ‘all of them to call upon the Name of Hashem, to worship Him with one consent.’”

May it be speedily in our time. **T**

1. For a more in-depth article on the topic, read *Biregah Ha'emet* ch. 13. See also *Miracles In Our Times*, Derher Adar I 5774.
2. The Rebbe did tell him that a Megillah would not be necessary, and then he was redeployed to Eretz Yisroel. To read the full story, see *Here's My Story*, Tzav 5774. jemedial.org/email/newsletter/My_Encounter/3-15-14.pdf.
3. At the time, the story circulated in 770 that when the Rebbe heard that Israeli radio was reporting his ‘prediction,’ he asked Rabbi Krinsky about it in surprise, and then waved his hand, “Nu...”



PURIM 5751.

YITZHOK ZEY GOLDSHMID