A photograph of a flooded field with a wooden walkway and yellow buoys. The water is murky brown, and the surrounding area is overgrown with green and brown vegetation. A wooden walkway made of planks and posts extends from the left towards the center of the frame. A line of yellow buoys is attached to the walkway, floating in the water. In the background, there are more trees and a wooden structure.


לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' משה וזוגתו מרת שרה חנה  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גורארי'  
טאמס ריווער, ניו ג'רסי

פסוק

# Sacred & Secure

The Rebbe's Campaign to Ensure  
"Shleimus Haaretz"—the Integrity  
of Eretz Yisroel





One of the Rebbe's most famous campaigns is *Shleimus Haaretz*, the call for Eretz Yisroel to remain complete and secure. In countless *sichos*, the Rebbe addressed the issue time and again, calling on the leaders of the Israeli government to chart a path that would lead them to be safe, strong, and following Hashem's directives.

For a comprehensive collection of the Rebbe's *sichos* on the topic, see *Karasi Vein Oneh*. For a more general overview of the Rebbe's connection to Eretz Yisroel, see *B'rega Ha'emet*, Kineret/Zmora-Bitan, 2017.

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# FOUNDATION 1: It's All Ours

Before approaching the topics of wars, land for peace, and Israeli policies, we need to ask ourselves a simple question. What right do we Yidden have over Eretz Yisroel?

Some might respond that the modern Israeli state gained its legitimacy with the United Nations vote of 1947, or perhaps earlier, with Lord Balfour's declaration in 1917. Others might point to the recognition of the international community in our day, and, more specifically, to the support of the United States. Some might even say that the Land of Israel is the Jewish homeland, where our kings, prophets, and farmers lived thousands of years before any of its current residents.

But many of these rational arguments can be refuted. The British revoked Lord Balfour's declaration. The United Nations could overturn their vote at any time and the international community could change its mind overnight. And was Israel really always the Jewish homeland? Our own Torah describes how we expelled the Canaani, Chiti, Emori, Chivi, Prizi, Yevusi and Girgashi from their comfortable homes to make room for the Jewish nation emigrating from the desert. And what if we were there first? The White House sits on land that once belonged to the Native Americans. Does that mean that the president will willingly give up his seat to any Native American that demands it?

So there is only one answer that remains.

In the beginning, Hashem created the heavens and the earth. Naturally, He retains full rights to

His handiwork, and He chose to take Eretz Yisroel from those nations and give it to us. It may have legitimately belonged to the Canaanim at a time, but the moment Yehoshua and the Jewish people came marching through the Jordan river, the land became ours forever.

This is expressed in the first Rashi on the Torah. Did you ever wonder why Torah, a book of laws, begins with the story of creation? The answer is, Rashi says, so that nobody should ever be able to say, "You stole the land from us." We didn't steal it from anyone, then or now. It is ours, granted to us by Hashem Himself — the ultimate owner, by virtue of being its Creator.

This leads us to two very important points:

## 1) You Can't Just Give It Away.

The Land of Israel isn't the personal possession of any Israeli politician, nor is it the collective possession of all Israeli citizens.

Every Jew owns a parcel of Eretz Yisroel, measuring at least one square *amah*. Did you know that that is the only way you are permitted to do a *pruzbul*? A *pruzbul* can be conducted only by someone who owns land in Eretz Yisroel. The fact that we all do so regularly, every seven years, is because we actually *do* own land in Eretz Yisroel, albeit a very tiny portion.

Therefore, no politician has the mandate to negotiate, let alone transfer, any piece of Eretz Yisroel from Jewish hands to anyone else.

### Everyone's Question

When journalist Moshe Ishon was in *yechidus* with the Rebbe, he asked the Rebbe a question, that, in his own words, "many people were asking."

"What gives a person in America the right to opine on policies regarding Eretz Yisroel?"

"The Rebbe smiled," he later recounted, "as if he had heard the question before and was well-versed in all the articles published against him."

"Every Jew," the Rebbe responded, "owns a portion of Eretz Yisroel." The Rebbe explained the idea of the *pruzbul*, and every Jew's one square *amah*.

"You might think," the Rebbe said after a pause, "that a Jew can only give an opinion about his own portion. But that is not the case. He is obligated to give an opinion about the entire situation, and if he remains silent, he carries responsibility for everything that happens there."

(*Karasi V'ein Oneh* pg. 74)

## Abraham's purchase in Hebron entered in records at UN

UNITED NATIONS, Pa. (AP) — The purchase of the land in Hebron, which was entered in the Bible as the first deed of Abraham, has been entered in the United Nations records.

In the report of the United Nations, the purchase of the land in Hebron is recorded as the first deed of Abraham, which was entered in the Bible as the first deed of Abraham.

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Chaim Halevi Hertzog, Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, speaking at the podium during his speech at the United Nations.

THE JERUSALEM POST REPORTS ON DR. HERZOG'S SPEECH AT THE UN

## Say That Chevron is Yours

Chaim Halevi Hertzog was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations (and later its president), and was famous for his proud and unabashed defense of the Jewish people. In 5736, he attended the Rebbe's Simchas Torah farbrengen. During the *sichos* and the conversation with him, the Rebbe told him to declare from the pulpit of the United Nations that Chevron — which was being hotly discussed at the time — belongs to him personally, as a Levi. He soon did exactly that, and his speech made a significant impact.

Doing so would be theft in broad daylight. It simply does not belong to them.

In addition to this basic point, the Rebbe would often say that the thought of returning land is the greatest slap in the face to the *Aibershter*. In His abundant kindness, He gave us large portions of Eretz Yisroel through amazing miracles. Are we really going to simply turn around and hand them to other nations?

## 2) Say It As It Is

When presenting your case for Eretz Yisroel, make Torah your foundation.

Israeli representatives have always loved to ingratiate themselves with the international community by talking about its rights based on the United Nations vote or referencing the Holocaust as a reason the Jewish people need a homeland.

But those explanations don't hold water, and the world knows that as well as we do.

The only way to present a legitimate case for Eretz Yisroel is by basing it on the eternal foundations of the Torah.

## What is its name?

Geulah Cohen, a well-known journalist and politician, asked the Rebbe why he refuses to use the term “the State of Israel.” The Rebbe responded:<sup>1</sup>

“The reason is simple: Eretz Canaan was given to *b'nei Yisroel* at the *Bris Bein Habesarim* with Avraham Avinu, and its name became Eretz Yisroel. This became established over thousands of years, in the Torah, and among all people...

“Changing the name weakens the claim of *b'nei Yisroel* to the land... a new name paints the entire topic as something new that occurred in 1948, seemingly indicating that our claim to the land begins then... contrary to the Torah's perspective.

“Furthermore, there are those that interpret the name ‘the State of Israel’ as part of a general approach: to become a regular nation among the family of nations. This approach has been disastrous, and has caused countless losses, both physically and spiritually.”

The land belongs to us because, “So said G-d!”

It may seem to be an odd explanation for the modern world of the twenty-first century, but its effect is surprising. First of all, a vast amount of the world's population firmly believe in the “Bible.” But moreover: Even if a listener doesn't agree, he will

learn to respect and understand your perspective. People respect people who respect themselves. If you don't have the strength to lay this foundation, all the buildings you will erect on top will just come crashing down.



# FOUNDATION 2:

## Stay Safe

While many in Eretz Yisroel agree that the land belongs to us, they maintain that there is another factor that compels us to negotiate with the Arabs and give away portions of land: The overarching Jewish value of human life, the *halacha* of *pikuach nefesh*.

This theory is known as “land for peace.” If only we were to give land to the Arabs, whether Sinai to the Egyptians, Golan Heights to the Syrians, or Yehuda, Shomron and Gaza to the Palestinians — we would finally be able to live in peace with our neighbors and no more bloodshed would occur.

Doesn't the *halacha* of *pikuach nefesh* override the value of Eretz Hakodesh belonging to the Jewish people?

This question was especially relevant in the late 5730s\* and early 5740s\*, when Israel negotiated the surrender of the Sinai Desert. As one politician told a Chabad delegation, “Sinai is not a part of the historic Land of Israel, so why is the Rebbe opposed to the idea?” To the Rebbe's profound consternation, the delegation did not know what to reply. In countless *sichos*, the Rebbe had spoken specifically about this very issue.

The concern of *pikuach nefesh* is valid. Saving a single Jewish life is absolutely a priority. The question is, however, what will actually save a life? Some people maintain that by surrendering land we can achieve peace and thereby save lives. The short term risk would be outweighed by the positive result of peace, which will undoubtedly save many lives. The opponents of this theory say that peace

can easily cease in a moment, while the danger posed by relinquishing land is irreversible. Which side is right? How do we approach *pikuach nefesh*?

The answer to any question, the Rebbe answered, must be found within *halacha* itself; “*D'var Hashem zu halacha*” — Jewish law must be the basic guide for everything in our lives. And in fact, Shulchan Aruch — in Hilchos Shabbos *siman shin-chof-tes* (329) — has a clear *halacha* for just this scenario!

נכרים שצרו על עיירות ישראל, אם באו על עסק ממון אין מחללין עליהם את השבת. ואם באו על עסק נפשות, ואפילו באו סתם ויש לחוש שמא באו על עסקי נפשות, ואפילו עדיין לא באו אלא ממשמשין לבא, יוצאים עליהם בכלי זין ומחללים עליהם את השבת. ובעיר הסמוכה לספר, אפילו אינם רוצים לבא אלא על עסקי תבן וקש, מחללין עליהם את השבת שמא ילכדו העיר ומשם תהא הארץ נוחה ליכבש לפניהם:

“When non-Jews besiege a Jewish city: If they come for monetary issues, we do not desecrate Shabbos [to protect ourselves]. If they come to kill or come with no clear reason, and even if they didn't come yet but plan to come, we go out with weapons and desecrate Shabbos. In a city that is near the border, even if they just come for straw or hay, we desecrate Shabbos, because they might conquer the city and from there, it will be easy for them to conquer the entire land.”

The source of this *halacha* is a Gemara in Eiruvin.<sup>2</sup> In the *sugya* there, it is clear that it has nothing to do with the sanctity of Eretz Yisroel. In fact, the Gemara applies the *halacha* even to the city of Neharda'a, in Bavel. The

Gemara explains that we see this same *halacha* applied in a story in Tanach:

While Dovid was escaping the wrath of Shaul, he heard that the city of K'ilah, a border town, was under threat by the Pelishtim, who were plundering the town's threshing floors and stealing their harvest. Dovid was told by Hashem that despite the fear of Shaul he was to march to K'ilah and fight the Pelishtim. He did so and wrought severe defeat upon them.

This *halacha* seems to focus on *chilul shabbos*, but its underlying message is about the Jewish approach to *pikuach nefesh*. The first and foremost priority, the *halacha* says, is securing the borders of the Jewish settlement. The very possibility that the enemy might conquer the border town necessitates that we go to war — where we might sustain losses to Jewish life — because leaving the border unsecured leaves us open to much greater danger.

Dovid Hamelech could have argued otherwise. “If we allow them to take the grain, they will leave us alone,” he could have reasoned. “But if we go to war, soldiers will die in battle. Shouldn't we retreat for the sake of *pikuach nefesh*?”

Clearly, *halacha* chooses the opposite approach. The law of *pikuach nefesh* dictates that first and foremost, we secure our borders and strengthen our military standing. Peace accords are nice, but not on the account of our ability to protect ourselves.

In our day, this *halacha* clearly applies to areas like Gaza, Yehudah and Shomron, the Golan Heights and even most of the Sinai Desert. Eretz Yisroel is a small country; putting

any of those areas under Arab control means bringing the potential front line of war closer to home.

The Rebbe also clarified another point about *pikuach nefesh*: *Halacha* is, by definition, applied only to immediate and definite circumstances. One is not permitted to transgress *halacha* to learn to become a doctor, in the hope that he will save lives in the future. Likewise, the immediate danger of giving land to the enemy overrides any potential risk or danger that may arise in the future by retaining control over it.

### The Big Problem: The Goy Within

When the idea of a Jewish state arose in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many of its supporters thought it would solve anti-Semitism. Not because Jews would be able to protect themselves, but because Jew-hatred would cease to exist if we only became a nation like all others. If we would somehow transform ourselves from a religious and ethnic minority scattered across host countries to a nation with its own land, language and culture, there would be no reason for the non-Jews to hate us.

The immediate result was the association of Zionism with secularism. Being *frum* was a part of the “*Galus*-Jew”; once we had a national homeland, there would be no need for “external trappings” to preserve our Jewish identity. Unfortunately, countless Jews lost touch with their Yiddishkeit as a result of this approach.

But there were also long-term ramifications.

In the eyes of many politicians in Israel’s early years (and among some to this day), the greatest achievement was to be welcomed among the nations. They would go to great lengths to earn the approval of the western world. Before every political decision, one

question loomed large: What would the world say?

Before Yom Kippur 5734\*, it had become clear that the Egyptians were planning a surprise attack on Eretz Yisroel. From a military perspective, the best approach would be to surprise the enemy first. But during a secret meeting, Prime Minister Golda Meir refused to authorize the move.

A surprise attack on the enemy — when no apparent war seemed to be on the horizon — would be too difficult to explain to the international community. It was a fateful decision. Israel paid with many lives for the decision to allow the enemy to strike first.

This was a problem during peacetime as well. Right after the

### Who gets to decide?

Who gets to decide whether a certain piece of land constitutes a “border-town” that cannot be returned? Who do we ask to determine if a certain parcel of land is vital to the safety of the rest of the country?

The Rebbe explained that as in every matter of *halacha*, we turn to the experts of the field. With a question of a person who is ill, we turn to a professional doctor. In this case, the doctor is the currently acting military expert — and not the politicians leading the country or retired military officials. A military expert needs to be asked to make a simple determination: If we return this parcel of land, will it be harder or easier to defend the country?

A politician is usually not an expert in military matters. He has political concerns that he inevitably needs to consider as well — will giving back land make him more popular internationally? Will it help Eretz Yisroel in the United Nations? But *halacha* doesn’t allow us to make those considerations in the face of *pikuach nefesh*. There is only one question to be asked: does the retreat endanger lives now?



EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS PLANT THEIR FLAG ON ONE OF THE BAR LEV LINE OUTPOSTS

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE



Six Day War, when the world was astounded by Israeli victories, the government sent a delegation to Washington informing them that they were willing to return the conquered

land in exchange for peace. Their offer shocked the Americans, but to the politicians in Eretz Yisroel, it was a sensible decision. One of their greatest priorities was to feel welcomed in

the world. If the Arab states would make peace with them in exchange for that land, it was a sacrifice they were willing to make.

When Yitzchak Rabin came for a *yechidus*, the Rebbe spoke with him at length about this issue. The Rebbe cited the posuk, "הן עם לבדד ישכון, ובגוים לא יתחשב." The Jewish people are fundamentally separated from the other nations, and there is nothing we could do to change that. When we continue to pursue the goal of being like everyone else, we will only weaken ourselves.

In *sichos*, the Rebbe would often speak about the Israeli leaders' irrational fear of "what will be said about us." It seemed to be a fulfillment of the *tochacha* — that we will fear a קול עלה גידף, the mere sound of a leaf fluttering. The Rebbe explained that it stems from a deep-seated feeling of inadequacy next to the gentiles. Those leaders were held sway by the א-ל זר אשר בקרבך, the little *goy* inside every person's heart. This feeling of inadequacy made them yearn for acceptance, and dictated their disastrous approach to public policy.

The result of this inferiority complex was as amusing as it was sad. The Israelis would enter into negotiations by offering to give everything they had conquered. Every negotiator realizes the foolishness of this approach. In any situation, one should begin at the very extreme end and only slowly pull to the middle.

The Rebbe once pointed out that there are several types of negotiators. Some come with the intent to retain — and receive — as much as they possibly can. Others come with the intention to make a show and leave without any real results. And then there are the Israeli negotiators: They don't come with a goal to gain or give away land. Their goal is to find favor in the eyes of the other side. If giving

### When Achav begged for recognition

There was once a child in *cheder* who was mortified to hear the story of Yosef being sold by his own brothers. But the next year, he didn't seem perturbed. "If Yosef was already sold by his brothers last year," the child explained, "He should have learned his lesson by now..."

The Rebbe cited this story when he spoke about the Israelis' attempt to give away the land conquered during the Six Day War.

This same occurrence happened in Tanach [Melachim I, *perek* 20], the Rebbe pointed out.

Ben Hadad, king of Aram, attacked the army of Achav, king of Yisroel. By the seventh day, Achav had won a decisive victory.

Seeing the disaster, Hadad's advisors suggested another approach. "We heard that the Israelite kings are kind people," they told him. "Let's offer to make peace."

They sent a delegation to Achav to offer peace. To their absolute shock and delight, Achav said to them, "Ben Hadad? He is my brother! How is he doing?"

Needless to say, they left with good terms for their peace treaty — with disastrous results for the Jewish people. The decision to make peace would haunt them for a very long time.

(13 Tammuz, Matos-Masei 5729)



BULLDOZERS LEVEL THE HOUSES ADJOINING THE KOSEL HAMAARAVI TO ENLARGE THE PUBLIC AREA. THE AREA WAS CLEARED IN ONE NIGHT TO AVOID INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION, AND MAYOR TEDDY KOLLEK DIDN'T WAIT FOR OFFICIAL PERMISSION BEFORE DOING IT.

away everything will do the trick, they are willing to try that option too.

This resulted in a repeating sequence of events: Whenever the Israelis would gain an advantage, they would immediately offer to give it up for the sake of peace.

### How To Do Business: Make the Most of It

In wartime and peacetime, the Rebbe always encouraged the government to use the exact opposite approach. Always maximize your potential gains and reject pressures to retreat. Every time you give in to demands, the Rebbe said, you invite a new set of demands in their place.

A common occurrence during the Israeli-Arab wars was that when the Israelis would begin to win, the Arabs would ask the United Nations to broker a ceasefire. The Israelis would agree, and then the Arabs would use it to bolster their positions — even against the rules of the very ceasefire they requested.

The Rebbe was diametrically opposed to these ceasefires, instead always insisting that Israel conclude their campaigns with a decisive victory. During the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe encouraged the Israelis to continue their conquest until they occupied Damascus and Cairo, the capitals of Syria and Egypt, even if only for a short time. The very image of Israeli tanks in an Arab capital would totally change the rules of the game.

During the years after the Six Day War, when the Egyptians were hoping to regain control of the Suez Canal, the Rebbe told the Israelis to destroy it — albeit “mistakenly” — to show the Egyptians that they mean business.

The Rebbe maintained the same approach in negotiations for peace. The Rebbe was not fundamentally opposed to peace treaties. Quite to the contrary. However, he was opposed



RABBI PINCHAS HIRSCHPRUNG GIVES A PSAK DIN ON SHLEIMUS HAARETZ. FOR THE FULL STORY BEHIND THIS PICTURE, SEE A PSAK DIN FOR THE WORLD, DERHER IYAR 5776

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to the manner in which the Israelis negotiated.

In the early 5740s\*, President Jimmy Carter pressured Prime Minister Menachem Begin into surrendering the entire Sinai Desert to Egypt. The Rebbe pointed out that President Carter and President Sadat of Egypt were politically motivated to come home with a peace treaty. If Begin would have been stronger, Carter would have shifted his pressure to Sadat, and they would have reached an agreement with much more favorable terms for the Israelis. Instead, Begin capitulated in short order and gave up the entire Sinai to Egypt in return for no more than a piece of paper with a promise of peace — which they proceeded to violate not too soon afterwards.

The result was a never-ending disaster. Instead of oil independence, the Israelis were forced to purchase oil at high rates from other sources, putting a major strain on the economy and putting their military at a disadvantage. Instead of having a wide swath of land holding back potential enemies, the Egyptians were now

right at the border of Eretz Yisroel. And, most importantly, the Israelis had demonstrated that they would give land away for nothing more than empty promises. This gave way to a never-ending list of demands which continues — unfortunately — to this very day.

Two more cases are worth mentioning:

### Autonomy:

After the Six Day War, the Israeli government retained control over the entire Arab population of the newly recovered territories. Over time, they began to talk about autonomy. As a gesture to the population, Israel would allow the Arabs to control their own administration, including their own police force. The Rebbe opposed the move. Giving weapons to hostile Arabs was dangerous in itself, but moreover, the very statement that the Jews were willing to relinquish control was a sign of weakness and the Arabs would immediately take advantage of it. From autonomy, it would be a short road to full-on statehood, an even greater danger.

\*📅 5740S-1980S



## Prisoner Exchange Deals

When warring countries capture enemy soldiers, they often use them to broker deals for the mutual benefit of both sides. In the early years, Israel also swapped prisoners with Arab countries, usually for an equal number of captives.

But as time went on, a worrying trend emerged. Jewish captives would be ransomed for increasingly large numbers of Arab prisoners. In 5739\*, Israel released 76 terrorists for a single Israeli soldier.

The Rebbe pointed to the very clear danger in such lopsided deals: it was an open invitation to kidnap Israelis in order to free terrorists. Needless to say, the deals have only grown since then.

The Rebbe would often repeat these themes whenever there was a terrorist attack in Eretz Yisroel, pointing out that the terror attacks often occur right after the government shows weakness — by agreeing to return land, grant autonomy, or free many prisoners.

## Settle Everything

What is the best way to declare that you are not willing to give away land? The Rebbe said that deeds, not words, are the most important statements.

In many *sichos*, the Rebbe encouraged the Israeli government to settle Jews all over the territories they had conquered — in the Golan Heights, Yehudah and Shomron, Gaza, and the Sinai Desert. There is no way to better say, “We are here to stay,” than by establishing a physical presence.

However, the Rebbe never instructed individual families to settle in the so-called “occupied territories.” When Arik Sharon asked the Rebbe to encourage Chassidim to settle in Chevron, the Rebbe said that he couldn’t trust the government to fully support the people who would choose to settle there. Unfortunately, it was Arik Sharon himself who forcibly removed all Jews from Gaza and gave it up to the Arabs. The devastating results are still felt until this day.

The only way to ensure the safety and security of Eretz Yisroel is by firmly rejecting any such proposals.

Merely speaking about the topic already endangers Jewish lives.



PURIM 5729\*. AT MANY FARBRENGENS IN THOSE YEARS, THE REBBE WOULD SPEAK AT LENGTH ABOUT THE SITUATION IN ERETZ YISROEL

JEM 287133

# Timeline

## No Gain

In 5716\*, in response to Egyptian aggression, the IDF attacked Egyptian forces and advanced through the Sinai Desert all the way to the Suez Canal. Due to American pressure, they soon retreated without any tangible gains.

Many years later, when the Rebbe recounted the history of the Israeli government's many mistakes, this was named "Mistake number one."<sup>3</sup>

"The reason for the retreat was a desire to please Washington. And recently, it has been published that someone in Washington said clearly that they had never imagined that Israel would so foolishly agree to give the enemy an opening. They put pressure because they had no choice, but they never imagined the Israelis would agree."

## A Miracle in Six Days

The first messages about *Shleimus Haaretz* came from the Rebbe in the aftermath of the Six Day War. The war itself, the Rebbe said, was a profound miracle. The army acted correctly by striking first and gaining the upper hand.

However, the Rebbe criticized the government for their lackluster campaign to reconquer the Old City of Yerushalayim. Hoping Jordan would

stay out of the fray, the government didn't prepare any battle plans for Yerushalayim. And once Jordan attacked and Israel decided to take the Old City back, they instructed the soldiers to engage in hand-to-hand combat instead of shelling the area with massive bombs. They wanted to preserve the non-Jewish religious shrines, but it came at great cost to human life.

In the years that followed, the government didn't encourage Jews to settle in the newly acquired areas like the Old City, and even declared that they were willing to return land for the sake of peace. The Rebbe spoke out against both elements, first in *yechidus* and private correspondence, and then publicly, at the farbrengens.

## A Disaster of a War

On Yom Kippur 5734\*, the Arab countries launched a surprise attack against Israel. From the outset, the Israeli response was a disaster. Despite clear warnings, Prime Minister Golda Meir refused to strike the Arabs first, because she was worried it would harm Israel's international reputation. When the army managed to turn the tide, the Israelis agreed to ceasefires that allowed the Arabs to regroup and negotiate. The Rebbe hoped

that the army would push until the Arab capitals for a decisive victory, but instead, they agreed to deals that allowed the Arabs to go home with a sense of triumph.

Over the following years, the Rebbe occasionally addressed these issues at farbrengens. The Rebbe called to settle all the "occupied territories" with Jews, especially Chevron and other historic Jewish sites. Those years were plagued by occasional terrorist attacks by the newly forming Palestinian terror groups. The Rebbe criticized the government whenever the response was too weak, but also praised them for their strong responses — such as the Mivtza Litani, which cleared terrorism from the Lebanon border.

Pressure to surrender land didn't abate, and the Rebbe constantly encouraged Israeli leaders to remain steadfast in their refusal and to assert from every possible platform that Eretz Yisroel belongs to the Jews because it was given to them by Hashem Himself.

## The Wretched Deal

In 5738\*, President Sadat of Egypt visited Eretz Yisroel and offered to make peace. President Jimmy Carter jumped on the bandwagon and began to put immense pressure on Prime Minister Begin to return Sinai and even reach a deal with the Palestinians, while promising that America would ensure that all sides keep the deal.

Over the next few years, the Rebbe spoke about the issue at almost every single farbrengen, in long, painful *sichos*. The Rebbe constantly repeated a few basic points:

- Giving land to the enemies puts lives in imminent danger.



EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT SPEAKING IN THE ISRAELI KNESSET





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REPORTER ODED BEN-AMI ASKS THE REBBE WHO SHOULD BE THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

(This is when the Rebbe began to focus on *siman shin-chof-tes*). Sinai also has vast oil reserves, which were a major advantage for the Israeli military and economy.

- A peace deal can be revoked at a moment's notice.
- You can not rely on another country for your defense and America cannot be trusted to protect the interests of Eretz Yisroel at all costs. (The Rebbe pointed out that due to political concerns, America had just revoked their support for Taiwan, despite long-standing agreements.)

- Giving in to pressure is an invitation for even more pressure.
- Giving away land is a slap in the face to the *Aibershter* who gave it to us with profound miracles, and a slap in the face to the *kedoshim* soldiers who gave their very lives to attain it.

To the Rebbe's profound dismay, Begin buckled under pressure and agreed to give away the entire Sinai Desert in exchange for an official "peace deal." The Rebbe continued to speak about it often. He dubbed it the "*chozeh ha'umlal*—the wretched deal," and called for the Israelis to stop the deal in its tracks and salvage whatever was still possible.

## Peace in the Galilee

In 5742\*, Israel launched a second mission into Lebanon to rid the area of Palestinian terrorists. They immediately botched the invasion by agreeing to numerous ceasefires at a disadvantage and getting bogged down in the Lebanese political mess, instead of entering, eliminating the terrorists, and immediately making an exit.<sup>4</sup>

## From Autonomy to Statehood

In the 5740s\*, a strong movement got underway to give autonomy to the Palestinians living under Israeli control. The Rebbe warned that establishing a quasi-government would only result in a desire for full statehood, and would embolden the

residents to carry out attacks against Jews throughout Eretz Yisroel.

In 5750\*, Shimon Peres attempted to break apart Prime Minister Shamir's right-wing government and create his own coalition which would further the cause of "peace." Just before the plan materialized, the Rebbe once again reiterated that his long-standing position on *Shleimus Haaretz* hadn't changed. Several *frum* politicians immediately backed out of the plan, causing it to fall apart.

Some time later, Prime Minister Shamir seemed to be moving in the direction of autonomy as well. In a long conversation on Yud Shevat 5752\*, one of the Rebbe's last references to *Shleimus Haaretz*, the Rebbe warned a visiting politician that he — the Rebbe — would do everything in his power to dismantle the government if they went in that direction.

(Unfortunately, the Rebbe's call went unheeded. Over the next few years, Israel went ahead with the Oslo Accords, which gave the Palestinians limited autonomy over certain areas. Israel went so far as to welcome Arafat and his cohorts into areas under their control. Just as the Rebbe predicted, the move gave rise to two intifadas and never-ending demands for full Palestinian statehood. The disengagement from Gaza just exacerbated the mess and gave rise to a full terrorist organization right next to Eretz Yisroel's borders.)

## The Best Prime Minister

Analysts and reporters have often attempted to define the Rebbe's stance on Eretz Yisroel as aligned with a certain party or a certain politician. However, the Rebbe always clarified that he was apolitical; he never endorsed the right-wing parties over the left-wing parties. Instead, the Rebbe encouraged them all to follow the dictates of Torah.

In 5750\*, a reporter tried to get a statement from the Rebbe endorsing Yitzchak Shamir for prime minister, knowing that the Rebbe approved of his strong stance against autonomy.

"Should Mr. Shamir be the prime minister?" he asked.

"I don't mix into politics," the Rebbe responded. "And more importantly, I hope that very soon, the prime minister will be Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

"However, in the few moments that are left before Moshiach arrives, they should follow his policy — that we cannot relinquish a single inch of land.

"This will bring peace to the country and to its surroundings; if they give in, there will be no end to it, and the more you give, the more the enemies of Israel will demand, and that will result in the opposite of peace and tranquility."<sup>8</sup> ⑦

1. Igros Kodesh vol. 26 lt. 9698.
2. 45a.
3. 15 Tammuz 5739.
4. See *Peace in the Galilee*, Derher Nissan 5779.
5. *Karasi V'ein Oneh* pg. 694.
6. *Karasi V'ein Oneh* pg. 701.
7. Pesachim 113a.
8. 6 Nissan 5750, to Oded ben Ami.

## Halachic Questions

Rabbanim and Rebbes would often ask the Rebbe to clarify his opinion regarding the halachic status of *Shleimus Haaretz*. The following are several examples:

**The Gemara says that Jews made a promise not to take up arms to conquer Eretz Yisroel. Does that still apply?**

No. That was only a question before the state was established. In our day, Jews live in Eretz Yisroel and they are obligated to defend themselves — just as Jews anywhere — based on *siman shin-chof-tes*.

**Does the modern state have the halachic status of a *kibbush rabim*? Does returning land transgress the prohibition of *Lo Sichanem*, not allowing idol worshippers into our land?**

Both questions are irrelevant. *Lo sichanem* applies only to Eretz Yisroel and can be overruled by an issue of *pikuach nefesh*. Here, the prohibition to give land is itself a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, which is applicable in Eretz Yisroel and in the Diaspora equally.<sup>5</sup>

**Is there a mitzvah to go to war to conquer more land?**

No. Going to war necessitates approval of a *melech* or Sanhedrin, and so on. But a war of self-defense is an obligation, due to *pikuach nefesh*.<sup>6</sup>

**The Gemara<sup>7</sup> tells us not to provoke non-Jews, even those who are not powerful (אל תתגרה בגוי קטן). Is that no longer relevant?**

It is relevant, but it cannot overrule our obligation to fulfill Torah and mitzvos, including the *halacha* of *pikuach nefesh*. (The Rebbe did reference this concept when the Israelis went out of their way to accuse the French president of anti-Semitism. Their accusation didn't protect any lives and only served to anger a potential ally.)