

AGAINST

ALL ODDS

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לזכות
החתן התמיים הנעלה ומצויין,
חבר מערכת של גליון זה
יעקב לוי שי' בעל
והכלה מרת שטערנא תחי' בעל
לרגל נישואיהם בשטומ"צ
ביום י' סיון תשע"ה

THE INNER DIMENSION ≈ OF ≈ OPERATION ENTEBBE



SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL. G-DLY AND MUNDANE. QUALITY AND QUANTITY. THE SPIRITUAL GIVES LIFE TO THE PHYSICAL; THE G-DLY ENLIVENS THE MUNDANE; THE QUALITY DEFINES THE QUANTITY.

Theoretically, everyone knows the world is a combination of spiritual and physical, but different people approach the world in different ways.

Some people view the world as a wholly physical place, all but ignoring the spiritual element. When they want to obtain something—whether it is success in business or healing from ailments—they put their focus on the physical element; figuring out how to hustle their way to more money or the best doctors, forgetting the G-dly element.

But of course, the true way to approach the world is by realizing that Hashem runs everything, and that the spiritual element is much more important than the physical. The mundane is only a shell for Hashem's blessings. Therefore, while we must do what we can in the physical realm, the truly important goal is to secure Hashem's *brachos*; and that is accomplished by fulfilling Hashem's will.

This approach requires one to sincerely 'see' Hashem's presence in the world. In fact, the world itself is the most obvious indicator that Hashem created and runs it. The intricate symphony of the world and the myriad wonders that come together to make the world function, clearly point to a Creator.

However, years and years of experiencing the predictability of life; of dealing with a world that seems to run on physical rules of cause and effect; of drowning in the minutiae of day to daily life; all of this can make it difficult to *really feel* that Hashem

is running the world. It is hard to realize that the essence of the world is *ruchniyus*, quality. We are hypnotized by the "laws of nature."

Once in a while, something happens that wakes us up.

On June 27, 1976, an Air France plane with 248 passengers was hijacked by four terrorists. Their objective: the freeing of 40 Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Israel, and 13 other terrorists held by other countries. The flight, which originated in Tel Aviv and had been destined for Paris, was hijacked during a stopover in Athens, and was carrying over a hundred Jewish passengers.

After a stop in Tripoli, the hijackers flew the plane to Entebbe, Uganda, where they were welcomed by the local government. They separated the hundred or so Israelis from everyone else, and over the next few days, the non-Israeli hostages were flown home. The remaining Israeli passengers, along with the crew, were kept as hostages. The hijackers threatened that they will kill the hostages if their demands were not met.

The Jewish world was thrown into disarray. Throughout the world, Jews gathered to daven for the hostages, while holding their breath to see what was going to happen.

Israeli policy was to not submit to terrorist demands, but here the government was faced with an impossible

choice; either give in to the terrorists, or let a hundred Jews die. So they started negotiations, and at the same time they secretly began looking into military options.

On the night of July 4, 1976, Israeli transport planes carried 100 elite fighters over 2,500 miles to Uganda on a daring mission to release the hostages by force. The operation was on Motzaei Shabbos, Israeli time—Shabbos afternoon Eastern Time—and as the operation was secretly unfolding halfway across the world, the Rebbe was seen saying *Tehillim* during *mincha*.

The operation was a miraculous success. It took only ninety minutes from start to finish, and they were able to save 102 of the hostages. Unfortunately, three hostages and one soldier were killed in the fighting.

The success of this seemingly impossible mission shocked the world, and Jewish pride the world over soared.

At the farbrengen of Yud-Bais Tammuz, the Rebbe proclaimed operation Entebbe an open miracle, a victory of the spiritual over the physical.

At that and at subsequent farbrengens¹, the Rebbe demonstrated how every step of the story, from the hijacking to the successful operation, was clearly directed from on High. The Rebbe said that when looking at the facts of the story, one is astonished that even in a time of *golus*, when *Eloikus* is not revealed, such open miracles occurred.

The following is a summary of some of the amazing insights the Rebbe gave in the farbrengens, including some tidbits of the story to provide context. [The following pages are a only a small sampling of the Rebbe's insight on the topic. The Rebbe spoke at great length with amazing richness; so to get a fuller picture one should look at the original sichos. The best way to get a feel for the strength and passion in these sichos is by listening to the audio recording. The bulk of these sichos were said on 13 Tammuz 5736 Sichas 3 and 4; and 24 Tammuz Sichas 1.]

01. THE HIJACKING

The Rebbe said that the fact that the hijacking was so successful to begin with was totally above nature.

In a normal situation, the hijackers would have failed at some point. First of all, they should have been caught in the airport, because even a cursory check would have found the weapons. Yet, although they were indeed checked (like everyone else), their weapons were not discovered.

Furthermore, they conspicuously stood out from the crowd—in their dress, language, and baggage—so someone from the security should have thought to search them further. (They looked so out of place, that one of the passengers was hesitant to board the flight because she suspected that something was wrong.) Yet no one stopped them.

Even once they got on the flight they could have easily been stopped. First of all, they were greatly outnumbered; a mere four hijackers against over two hundred passengers. Additionally, some of the passengers had the training to stop them. But no one did.

According to all natural calculations, the hijackers should have been stopped at some step along the way; yet against all odds, the hijacking went off without a hitch.

PLANNING

The following is a description of some of the planning, based on testimony of the soldiers involved.

Dan Shomron, one of the generals that ran the operation, later recounted:

"After I presented the plan, [Defense Minister Shimon] Peres asks everyone present: 'What chance do you give this? How many casualties do you think there will be? Do you recommend the execution of this plan?' Most of them didn't want to answer..."

As the aircraft were well on their way to Uganda, the Israeli cabinet was still debating this weighty decision, and the high risk of casualties weighed heavily on everyone's minds. Another consideration was political in nature, but weighty nonetheless: The planes and vehicles used in the operation were from America, and the American government had a policy that their weapons they had sold to Israel may be used for defense purposes only. After such an operation, the Americans might demand them back, and all future sales could be on the line as well.

After hours and hours of debate, the decision was unanimous: Operation Entebbe was on.

The Rebbe said that the fact that the troops agreed to go was completely against any physical calculations. The body of a person has a very basic law: it wants to live. To risk one's life in such a drastic way is completely against any physical calculations—it is beyond even spiritual calculations. The only reason the soldiers were ready to go there was due to a spiritual instinct which is beyond anything physical. The fact that they agreed to go was itself a victory of spirituality over physicality.

Similarly, the fact that the government

and officers decided to go ahead with the operation also made no sense. The risks involved were enormous. The slightest hitch could have spelled tragedy for both the hostages and the soldiers. Furthermore, when going into war, one usually takes into consideration the opinions of all political allies, and only if they agree does one enter into war.

Here, they ignored the considerations of time, the considerations of place, the considerations of what "good friends" would say—knowing all along that the chances of success were small—yet they decided to go ahead anyway. The decision itself was a victory of their spiritual side over their physical side.

THE OPERATION

Soldiers involved in the operation later recounted some of the risks the Israelis were dealing with:

Firstly, it was a hostage situation. If at any time the terrorists realized what was happening and discovered that the Israelis were coming, they would have killed all the hostages immediately. They had to be able to arrive in the building where the hostages were being held without the terrorists expecting anything.

That was all once they arrived. Getting there was a huge risk in itself, as they would be flying a distance of 2,500 miles (!) over countries who were Israel's most bitter enemies, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. If they were detected at any point on the way, the mission would be doomed, since they would lose the element of surprise. Additionally, they ran the risk that these countries would shoot them down. They decided to fly extremely close to the ground, and hopefully they would avoid detection. But their success was far from guaranteed.

Compounding the risk was the fact the Ugandan government was aiding the terrorists, and there were hundreds of Ugandan soldiers guarding the airport; so that even once they killed the terrorists, they were facing a sizable force of soldiers. If anything went wrong in the operation, they would have faced a much larger enemy;



THE RESCUE PLANE FILLED WITH HOSTAGES LANDS IN ERETZ YISRAEL.

almost half of the 21,000 troops in the Ugandan army were stationed only a few miles away.

Several plans had been offered, but the need for secrecy in order to keep the element of surprise, and the fact that they needed to get in and out of Uganda as fast as possible, left them with only one viable plan: to storm the airport with a tiny force of 100 commandos.

At the farbrengen, the Rebbe explained in detail how the success of the operation was the greatest miracle of all. The normal way to enter a battle is to show up with a huge army, and try conquering the enemy with brute force, coupled with intimidation tactics, which will overpower them into submission.

In this case, on the other hand, it was impossible to come with a huge army, since they had to come in secrecy, so they had no choice but to suffice with only a small number of soldiers. The Israeli forces had much less troops and ammunition than the Ugandan forces stationed there. Furthermore, they potentially faced much bigger armies: all the hostile countries they had flown over to get to Uganda. The fact that they were victorious over the Ugandan soldiers, and weren't shot down by any of the other countries, was a huge miracle.

The fact that they reached Entebbe without the terrorists finding out was a miracle for itself, for there is no natural way that they could fly such a massive distance, over so many countries, without anyone finding out. Furthermore, there were dozens of soldiers on those planes, and each one had families who knew somewhat about the operation; so several hundred people in total knew about the operation. But although it was bound to get out, the terrorists had no inkling that the Israelis were coming, and that was another open miracle.

And so, every single step of the operation—the hijacking, the planning, and the operation itself—were all above nature.

The Rebbe said that this episode showed



ISRAELI SOLDIERS RETURN HOME FROM THE OPERATION.

“WHAT CHANCE DO YOU GIVE THIS? HOW MANY CAUSALITIES DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE? DO YOU RECOMMEND THE EXECUTION OF THIS PLAN?’ MOST OF THEM DIDN'T WANT TO ANSWER...”

to the entire world that Hashem runs the world, and when it comes to saving Jewish lives, no physical considerations come into play. Spirituality is always victorious over physicality.

The Rebbe continued, saying that the first lesson we should learn from this is the following: Just like in Entebbe the spiritual was victorious over the physical, so too every person should make sure that his spiritual side is victorious over his physical side. This is achieved by revealing the spirituality in our day to day lives, by behaving like a proud Jew in all our endeavors.

02. WARNING

However, this wasn't just a beautiful miracle. It had come as a warning.

The Rebbe said that if the deeper point of this whole operation was solely to show Hashem's hand in the world, why then did it come at such a high cost? Why did Yidden have to suffer for a week in captivity, fearing for their lives, and why did four Yidden have to die?? There must be other ways to show Hashem's involvement in the world without making Yidden suffer!

The fashion in which the hostages died was especially tragic, as eyewitnesses later recounted:

During the rescue, the Israeli commandos stormed the terminal. As they ran into the room with the hostages, the commandos shouted in English and Hebrew that everyone should lay on the floor; but tragically, several hostages jumped up, and the commandos immediately shot them thinking they were terrorists.

The Rebbe pointed out that had the hostages listened and stayed on the ground, they would have survived; meaning that in the natural order of things, they didn't have to die.

Similarly, the fact that the soldier was killed, *Hashem yinkom damo*, was also not a natural consequence of the operation. Some casualties seem inevitable in an operation; in this case, however, his death seemed to be caused by random bullet.

Clearly, the fact that people died during the operation was ordained from on high, and *behashgacha pratis*.

SPIRITUAL SECURITY

The Rebbe said that this was a warning from Hashem that we have to strengthen our spiritual security by adding Torah and mitzvos.

Following the operation the Israeli government reached out to foreign governments demanding that airport security be strengthened so that a hijacking like this wouldn't happen again. The same way that Israel demanded that all other nations strengthen their security for the benefit of the Israeli passengers, the collective Jewish nation must strengthen its own spiritual security.

Now, when it comes to the Jewish people, spiritual security is paramount. Torah is our life, and the security of the Jewish people is dependent on learning Torah and keeping mitzvos.

Like a faithful shepherd concerned for his flock, the Rebbe entreated the Jewish people to heed this warning and strengthen security in order to avoid any further tragedies. Throughout these farbrengens, you can see the Rebbe's deep worry for the Jewish people as he brings powerful parables and rich allegories to address every Jew with their excuses and concerns.

LIKE FISH IN WATER

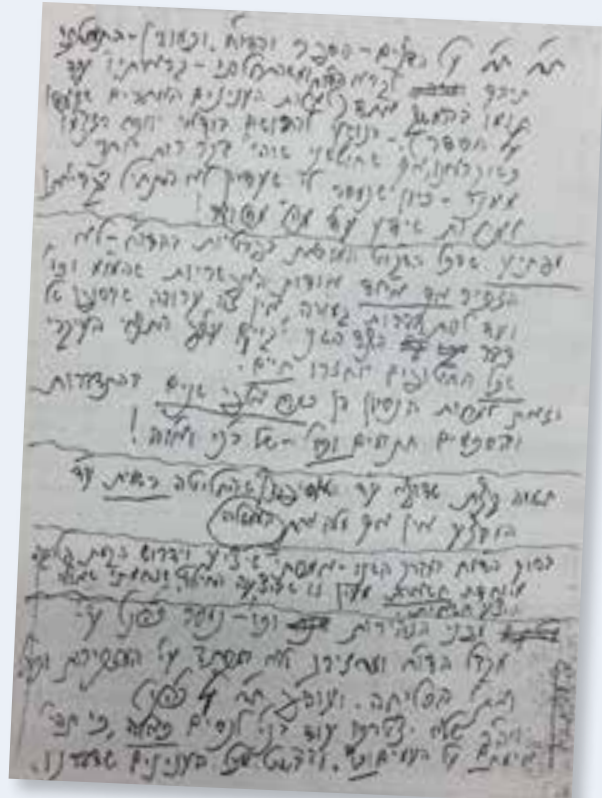
The Rebbe said that a Jew might think that he can be safe some other way, without adding in Torah and mitzvos. To counter this, he gave a fascinating parable from fish in an aquarium:

The fish shouts, 'I want to live on dry land!' The aquarium owner agrees; it's easier to hold the fish in a dry place, and

In this *ksav yad kodesh*, we learn that the Rebbe was given a report of the entire operation by one of Israel's security officials.

The Rebbe notes that as soon as he was given the report, he put his other tasks aside to read the entire report from start to finish.

The Rebbe also notes that for security reasons, the response is given directly to the official and not written on the regular stationary through the *mazkirus*.



ת"ח על השניים - הספר והדו"ח, וכמובן - התחלתי תיכף לקרא הדו"ח ומשהתחלתי - קראתי עד תומו ובהמשך אחד (למרות העניינים האחרים שעמדו על הסדר).

- בנוגע להרושם בוודאי יווכח בעצמו כשיקראנו, אף שחוששני שיהיה בקור רוח יותר ממני - כיון שנמסר לי שעדיין לא התחיל בקריאתו למרות שידע ע"ד מה מדובר!

מפתיע שבכל השקו"ט המובאת בפרטיות בהדו"ח - לא הזכיר אף-אחד אודות האפשריות שהמו"מ וכו' ועד להתדברות גמורה, אין שה ערובה שבסופו של דבר הצד השני יקיים עכ"פ התנאי העיקרי שכל החטופים יוחזרו חיים.

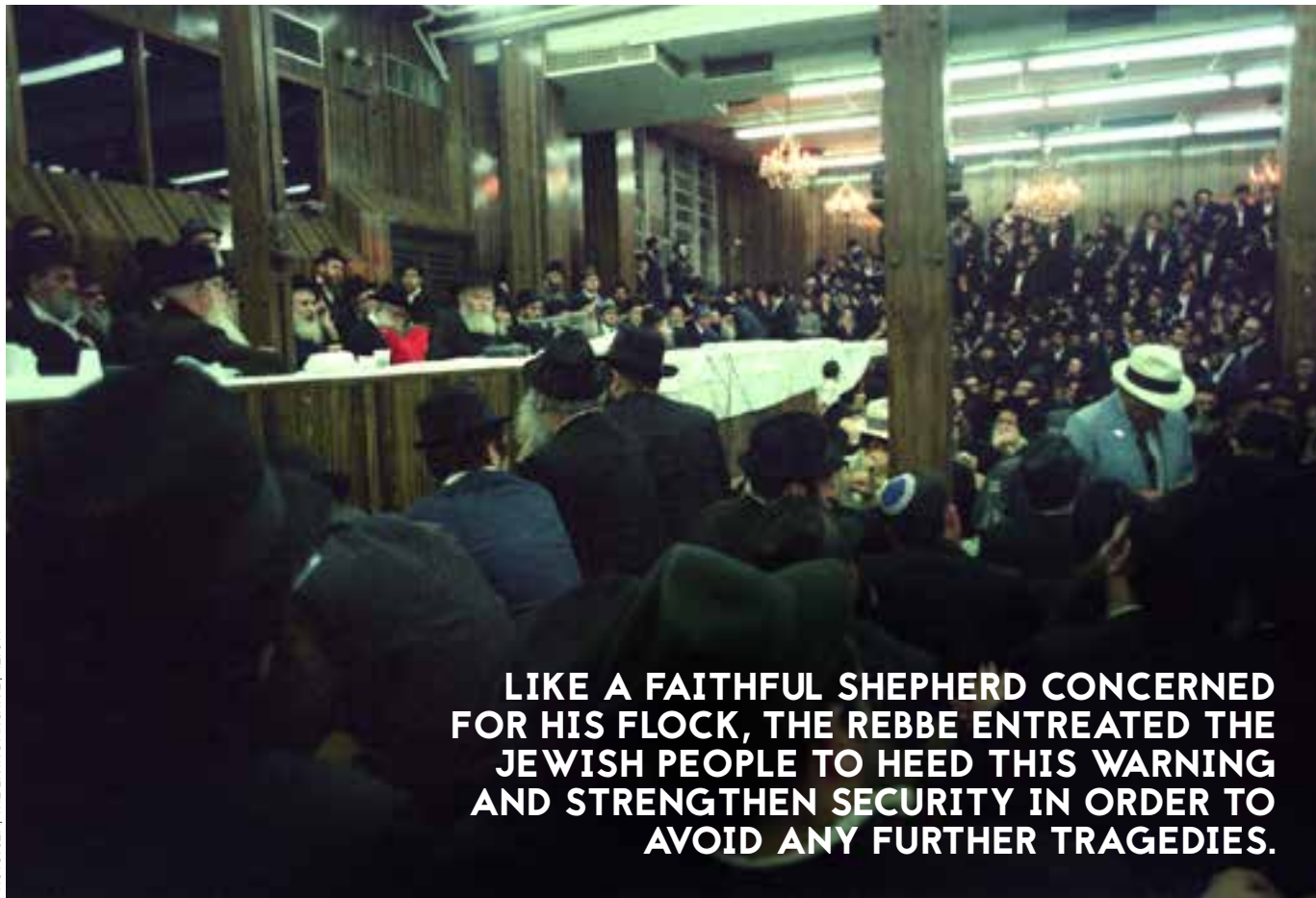
וזאת למרות הנסיון בן כמה אלפי שנים בהתדברות והסכמים חתומים וכן - של בני ואו"ה!

תמוה קצת שדוקא ע"ד אסיפת הממשלה שהחליטה רשמית ע"ד המבצע אין אף מלה אחת.

בסוף הדו"ח במברק השני - אמרתי שיציע וידרוש הקמת פלוגה מיחדת חשאית מעין זו שביצעה החילוץ, וניחמתי שאולי הוצע חשאית.

מפני הזהירות וכן נמסר כהנ"ל ע"י מקבל הדו"ח ומחזירו ולא במכתב ע"י המזכירות וכו'. ואתו הסליחה. ועוה"פ ת"ח על כהנ"ל.

ויה"ר שלא יצטרכו בני"ע עוד לנסים כאלה, כי תהי' אימתם על העמים וכן. ויבש"ט בכל העניינים שדברנו.



LIKE A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD CONCERNED FOR HIS FLOCK, THE REBBE ENTREATED THE JEWISH PEOPLE TO HEED THIS WARNING AND STRENGTHEN SECURITY IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY FURTHER TRAGEDIES.

FARBRENGEN OF 13 TAMMUZ 5736.

it looks nicer. All are in agreement that the fish should move to a dry area.

But their opinions don't change the reality. If the fish is moved to dry land he will immediately die.

Similarly, the Jew shouts, 'It's a democracy! I can live however I want!' He takes polls, asks the newspapers' opinions, and everyone agrees that he should live in 'dry land,' dry from Torah and mitzvos.

But that doesn't change reality. The Jewish people have only one way of existence: Torah. The same way a Jew cannot change the fact that he is Jewish, he also cannot change the fact that he is dependent on Torah.

Therefore, in a time of danger like this one, when the Jewish people must add in their security, the one and only way to add in their security is by adding in Torah and mitzvos.

ONE BIG SHIP

This is all in regards to each person individually. The security of every Jew comes from Torah. But what if someone isn't interested in helping himself? What about the people who say 'stop mixing in to my private life'?

The Rebbe said that this is incorrect, because the actions of every single person affect the entire Jewish people, so no one is a person on his own. Every person has a responsibility to the entire Jewish nation to strengthen his own Torah and mitzvos, and through this, he strengthens the security of the Jewish people.

Some people might have an excuse. "I am a person for myself!" he says. "This is a democracy, and it's against all 'correctness' to force your religion on me!"

The Rebbe illustrated their attitude with a famous allegory: He is like a passenger

on a ship who drills a hole in the floor of his own cabin. "I paid for this room!" he says. "I paid full price for a ticket, so I can lock the door to my room and do whatever I want!"

"No!" he is told. "You are on a ship together with all six hundred thousand Jews! Not only shouldn't you be drilling a hole, you should be going around the ship and making sure no one else makes a hole either." We are a nation sailing together in the dangerous waters of *golus*, and every single action of every single person affects the entire ship. In such a time of danger, every person must put aside all trivial, selfish considerations, and add in Torah and mitzvos, for their own benefit, and for the benefit of the entire Jewish nation.

A TINY MATCH

Some might think, 'What's the importance of one, small action? I'm a

good Jew in my heart - who cares about my small, insignificant actions?’

Imagine: One of the soldiers in Entebbe is hiding under the cover of darkness. Suddenly, he decides to light a match – giving away his cover. That one, small insignificant action, would have spelled doom for hundreds of Jews, both hostages and soldiers, and would have sent reverberations through Washington and throughout the world.

Seemingly, what significance does it have? This person has put his life on the line to save the hostages - who cares about one small action?

Yet, we see that the smallest actions can change everything.²

Once a person realizes that his smallest action affects the entire Jewish nation, then no matter how much he thinks of himself, he will expend all his energy on strengthening his own spiritual security and on encouraging others to strengthen their own security as well. The fate of every single Jew is intricately bound with one another, and every person who adds in security is adding in the security of the Jewish nation.

MEZUZAH

The Rebbe then urged that special emphasis be put on the mitzvah of mezuzah.

One area of Torah and mitzvos that is specifically related to security is mezuzah. We see this clearly, for on the outside of the mezuzah the letters of Hashem's name **ש-ו-ד-י** are written, which also stand for **שומר דלתות ישראל** ‘Guardian of the doors of Yisroel.’ Furthermore, the Zohar says that the *possuk*—**השם ישמר צאתך ובואך**—Hashem will guard your going and your coming” refers to mezuzah, meaning that the mezuzah watches over the person, whether in the house or outside. And the mezuzah doesn't only watch over the person who has it on their house, but every additional mezuzah adds to the protection of the Jewish nation as a whole.

Therefore *every single person should check their mezuzos*. It makes no difference if you checked it two years ago or even last year, you should check your mezuzah now. [Note, that usually when the Rebbe encouraged the *mitvza* of mezuzah, the point was that every Jewish person should have a kosher mezuzah on every door. However, if one already had a kosher mezuzah that had been recently checked, there was no *hora'a* to check it again. Here, the Rebbe said that every single person should check their mezuzos, regardless of how recently they were checked!]

The Rebbe continued that this is especially true in regards to the soldiers. Every soldier involved in the operation should

ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS
REPORT THE REBBE'S
REACTION TO ENTENBE.

check their mezuzos, and make sure that they have a mezuzah on every door that requires one.

Furthermore, since the Jewish nation is all together on the same ‘ship,’ the mezuzah of every single Jew adds to the security of the Jewish nation. Therefore,



every person has the responsibility to reach as many Jews as possible, wherever they may be, to ensure that they have kosher mezuzos on every door. The security of the Jewish nation is at stake, and every person must do everything in his power that every single Jewish home has a mezuzah.

In addition, the freed hostages should check their mezuzos to see if they are kosher, and to publicize the results. The point isn't to catch them on a mistake; rather, seeing the results will give everyone else a sense of urgency to check their mezuzos as well. [In the later farbrengens, the Rebbe discussed the results; see below.]

CHILDREN

The Rebbe added that because “מפי עוללים—From the mouths of babies you have established strength”—in times of danger we depend on the young children—now is also a time to focus on *chinuch* of the young children.

TAANIS

The Rebbe said that since this was such a powerful warning, and it is incumbent on us to do everything in our power to prevent anything else from occurring, it would theoretically be appropriate to institute a fast. However, the Alter Rebbe writes that fasting is not correct for our generations, and in general, *shitas* Chabad is to work *with* the body rather than against it. Therefore, instead of fasting, every person should take upon himself that (*bli neder*) this Erev Rosh Chodesh Av, he will give the value of two or three meals to tzedaka; and that he will add in Torah and tefilla. Erev Rosh Chodesh is a few weeks away, but since the *hachlata* is being taken now, its ramifications on High will occur immediately.

These words are directed to everyone; men and women, boys and girls.

A SPECIAL FARBRENGEN

Three days later, on 15 Tammuz, the Rebbe held a special farbrengen. The

THE REBBE DELIVERS THE MAAMAR
נתת ליראיך נס להתנוסס
ON 13 TAMMUZ 5736.



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 130443



נס להתנוסס

During the farbrengen of 13 Tammuz, the Rebbe said a maamar on the *possuk* נתת ליראיך נס להתנוסס, clearly in connection with the recent events. This was in continuation to the maamar *dibur hamaschil* נתת ליראיך, which had been said at the Shabbos farbrengen. And at the next farbrengen, on 15 Tammuz, the Rebbe said yet another maamar on this same *possuk*.

Interestingly, the Rebbe asked that the maamor be prepared for publishing shortly after the farbrengen, but unfortunately the hanocha wasn't prepared on time and the Rebbe was not magiah the maamar then. Ten years later, in 5746, when the Rebbe began editing a maamor for every yom tov, this maamor (a combination of the three maamorim together, Shabbos Yud-Beis Tammuz, 13 Tammuz, and 15 Tammuz) was muga by the Rebbe and published.

IMAGINE: ONE OF THE SOLDIERS IN ENTEBBE IS HIDING UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS. SUDDENLY, HE DECIDES TO LIGHT A MATCH – GIVING AWAY HIS COVER.

Rebbe said³ that one of the reasons for the farbrengen is in order emphasize again the *shTUREm* that needs to be made to ensure that every Jew has a mezuzah on every door.

He also spoke⁴ about the fast-equivalent that would be held on Erev Rosh Chodesh, and explained at length the reasoning for giving tzedaka equal to the value of two or three meals, instead of giving tzedaka in the equivalent of a *korbon* (as the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya).

One of the reasons was that children cannot bring *korbonos*, so giving tzedaka in the equivalent of a *korbon* wouldn't include children. Since children are especially crucial in these critical times, מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עוז, it is important that children participate as well.

A SERIES OF WARNINGS

Then, a few days later, on the eve of 24 Tammuz, the Rebbe held another special farbrengen. He spoke at length about the greatness of the miracle on the one hand, and the seriousness of the warning on the other.

The Rebbe⁵ first mentioned a famous Rashi in *parshas Behar*, who brings an explanation from the *Gemara Kiddushin* on the order of the *pesukim* in the *parsha*:

...The *pesukim* are written in a purposeful order, [as follows]: First, the Torah admonishes us to observe [the laws of] *shemittah*; then, if one covets money and becomes a suspect of [doing business with produce of] *shemittah* he will eventually [become poor and] have to sell his personal belongings....

If he still does not repent, he will

eventually have to sell his inheritance. If even then he does not repent, he will eventually have to sell his home, and if even then he does not repent, he will eventually have to borrow money with interest...

...If he still does not repent, he will eventually have to sell himself [to his fellow Jew as a servant]; and [finally,] if he has still not repented, not only will he have to be sold to his fellow Jew, but he will [be forced to sell himself] even to a non-Jew!

From here we see that when Hashem warns someone about his behavior, He doesn't start with the person himself. First the person loses a small amount of money, which forces him to sell his belongings; then the loss is of a larger amount of money, which forces him to sell his inheritance; and so on. If he doesn't repent after losing all his belongings, only then is he sold as a slave.

If so, how is it that the warning of Entebbe—at the cost of four Jewish lives—came without any prior, lesser warning?!

In truth, there *was* a prior warning in regards to money matters, and just like the warning of Entebbe affected all Jews in the entire world, this too was a warning which affected all the Jews who live in Israel, and, hence all Jews in the world. It was a warning as clear as daylight, but it was completely ignored.

LOSS OF AID

The following is a brief summary of the episode the Rebbe was referring to:

In mid-5736, a short while before the Entebbe rescue, the Israeli government was

shocked to find out that President Gerald Ford—who was running for re-election a few months later—was reneging on a former pledge he had made to Israel, and he was cutting monetary aid by five-hundred-million dollars (over 2 billion dollars in today's currency). A cut that large would seriously undermine Israel's military capabilities, and the Ford administration was pressured by many influential Israel supporters, and by the government of Israel itself, to re-commit the funds. But he stubbornly refused and nothing seemed to be working.

The Rebbe said that in an election year, candidates for office do everything in their power to satisfy and impress their constituents; and they certainly avoid raising the ire of the public. A candidate never backs out of a commitment he has made at the risk of public anger.

The first time such a thing happened was just a short while before Entebbe. Israel was promised a certain amount of aid, and then, without any explanation, the president cut it drastically. To put it into perspective, the amount of money which will be lost is more than double the amount of money that is collected—with huge effort—through Israel Bonds and the United Jewish Appeal. All sorts of avenues were used in trying to convince the president otherwise, all to no avail.

The president is up for re-election, so it's completely against the natural order of things that he would renege on a commitment he had already made and risk the good-will of American Jews.

So we must say that this wasn't, in fact, a natural occurrence; it was a warning.

But the warning was not heeded; the Jewish nation didn't feel the jolt to add in Torah and mitzvos. Then the warning came in a sharper form; Jews were kidnapped and put into a hostage situation. If people would have woken up, and would have made a *shTUREm* in adding in Torah in mitzvos, we could have gotten away with a hostage situation and not more. Unfortunately that warning, too, went by unheeded, and it

came to the point where four Jews lost their lives.

Therefore, at least now, it is of the utmost importance that every single person should heed this warning and add in Torah and Mitzvos in general, with special emphasis on mezuzah.

HOSTAGES' MEZUZOS

In the previous farbrengen the Rebbe had asked that the hostages check the mezuzos in their homes. The Rebbe now said⁶ that it turns out that the vast majority of the hostages who checked their mezuzos indeed found some problem with their mezuzos.

This only adds to the urgency of the previous request. Every hostage has the holy obligation to check their mezuzos and publicize the results, in order that

everyone else will see the importance of having kosher mezuzos, and it will strengthen their own spiritual security.

In the following farbrengens, the Rebbe continued urging the Jewish people to heed this critical warning and to add in their spiritual security. A farbrengen was held on the day that was set as a fast-equivalent, Erev Rosh Chodesh Av, and again the Rebbe urged that special care be taken in the mitzvah of mezuzah. In particular, everyone involved in Entebbe—both hostages and soldiers—should make sure they have kosher mezuzos themselves, and to publicize the importance of mezuzos wherever they can. The soldiers should also ensure that every soldier in the Israeli army—wherever they are stationed—have kosher mezuzos.

AN ATTACK IN ISTANBUL

The story didn't stop there. A little while later, terrorists attacked an Israeli plane as it was being boarded. Below is the story in brief.

On August 12, 1976, an El Al flight in Istanbul, Turkey was in the process of boarding. Most of the passengers had already boarded the plane, and the last group of passengers emerged from the airport terminal to board a bus which was to take them to the plane. Suddenly, three terrorists burst out of the terminal and began firing their machine guns into the crowd. A loud explosion was heard; a hand grenade had been thrown. The passengers scattered, screaming. People were falling all around, bleeding and crying in agony.

The Turkish police and El Al security immediately responded and rushed the passengers to safety. The terrorists took a Turkish policewoman hostage, but after an hour long standoff, the terrorists surrendered. After the dust settled, a tragedy revealed itself before their eyes.

Three people had been murdered, and twenty-four injured, fourteen of them seriously.

The terrorists stated that this was in continuation to what happened in Entebbe.

YET ANOTHER WARNING

In the farbrengen of Chof Av, the Rebbe addressed⁷ this episode:

It seems that all the other warnings weren't enough, so another warning was given—the tragic terrorist attack in Istanbul. It was abundantly clear that this was a heavenly warning in continuation to Entebbe. In fact the terrorists themselves said so!

This only adds to the urgency that every Jew must add to their security through checking their mezuzos.

In the previous farbrengen, the Rebbe had said that the vast majority of hostages had problems with their mezuzos. In the weeks that passed, it had been brought to light that every single one of the Entebbe



SHORTLY BEFORE TISHREI 5737, THE REBBE SENT LETTERS ADDRESSED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF SHULS URGING THEM TO ADD IN TORAH, AVODA, AND GEMILUS CHASODIM IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. THIS LETTER WAS LATER PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPERS (ABOVE).

hostages who had agreed to check it out had problems with their mezuzos.

The Rebbe added that one of the hostages is a frum Jew who lives in New York, and he said without hesitation that his mezuzos are fine; he is after all an observant Jew! After much begging, he allowed someone to come to his house and check them, and it turned out that he was, in fact, missing mezuzos. Even an observant Jew! And it was even more shocking: the first time they checked his house, they found one mezuzah missing, but in a place that is debatable whether it needs a mezuzah. They asked permission to check again, and this time, they found

two mezuzos missing, both in places that definitely require mezuzos.

In order to illustrate the importance of mezuzos, the Rebbe briefly mentioned another story that had recently occurred in Israel.

There is a yeshiva bochur in Eretz Yisroel, who happens to learn in one of the yeshivos that is 'kanai' according to all opinions, and something tragic recently happened to him. Due to the recent activity in checking mezuzos, someone went to check the mezuzah in his room, and it was possul. Halevai that his father—a rosh yeshiva—will realize what has occurred and make a true

shturem about mitvza mezuzah among his talmidim. The sharp warning will at least have some benefit.

The Rebbe finished the sicha with the prayer that we will be 'yoitze' with these warnings, and that the collective efforts of the Jewish people will bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our days.

LETTERS

Throughout the summer, the Rebbe sent letters to individuals and organizations throughout the world encouraging them to heed the warning of Entebbe, and to add in Torah and mitzvos in general, and in mezuzah in particular.

In one letter, addressed to Nishei U'bnos Yisroel, the Rebbe wrote that the Jewish woman, the *akeres habya'is*, and the Jewish girl, the future *akeres habayis*, have a special responsibility to make sure they have kosher mezuzos in their house, and to spread this mitzvah to everyone they can.

MEZUZOS FOR THE SOLDIERS

That summer, the Rebbe had a special *yechidus* with Israeli veterans that had been injured. The Rebbe famously called them *metzuyanai Tzahal*—the exceptional soldiers—as opposed to *nechei Tzahal*—the disabled soldiers. The Rebbe shook hands with each soldier individually, and spoke a sicha in Hebrew, which was extremely rare.

During the sicha, the Rebbe encouraged them to ensure that they have kosher mezuzos in their homes, adding that it would be a great honor to him if they accepted mezuzos as a gift from his representatives in Israel. The Rebbe said that when they get back to Israel, his representatives will visit them in their respective homes to help them with their mezuzos.



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 24024

03. GIVING THANKS

Following Operation Entebbe, members of a certain community came out saying that the operation was not a miracle. Their reasoning was that Hashem would never do miracles through 'transgressors' (people who don't keep Torah and mitzvos), and since the Israeli soldiers weren't religious, the operation could not have been a miracle.

In a sicha on Simchas Torah 5737, the Rebbe spoke sharply against this⁸.

The *gemara* says that Hashem wished to appoint Chizkiyahu as Moshiach. Why didn't he? Because when the *malach* wiped out the camp of Sancheriv, thereby saving the Jewish people, Chizkiyahu didn't say *shira* to Hashem, thanking Him for the miracles. Since he didn't thank Hashem for his miracles, he didn't become Moshiach.

Thousands of years have passed since then, and Moshiach has still not come; Moshiach was pushed off thousands of years because Hashem was not thanked for the miracle.

The Rebbe said that this story is a powerful lesson about the importance of thanking Hashem for His miracles. When a miracle on the scope of Entebbe occurs, it is of utmost importance that the Jewish people acknowledge the miracle. Therefore, for somebody to come and say that Entebbe was not a miracle is a terrible thing.

RABBONIM SHOULD PASKEN!

However, the Rebbe said that in order to clarify the issue, it should be brought into the realm of *halacha*. The Rebbe said that all rabbonim throughout the world should *pasken* regarding what a person should do in the following two scenarios:

1) If one of the hostages returns to Entebbe is he obligated to recite the *bracha* שְׁעֵשָׂה לִי נֶס בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה?

2) When a person has a serious injury *r"l*, and he has a choice between two doctors. He can either go to a doctor that is a *yirei shamayim*, davens three times a day, and proclaims that Hashem is the one and true healer, but who does not have expertise. Or he can go to a doctor who is a bigger expert, but is not religious.

The crux of the issue is this: If one assumes that Hashem does not send healing through a doctor that is not religious, then it would be counterproductive to go to that doctor. It would be against his medical benefit to go the non-religious doctor. If, however one believes that Hashem sends His healing through all doctors—whether they are religious or not—then one would obviously choose the bigger expert.

**EVERYWHERE,
IT SEEMED, WAS
THE SOUND
OF SHRIEKING
SIRENS, MILLING
CROWDS, AND
POLICE SNIPERS
POISED ON
ROOFTOPS**

What is the correct choice? Should he go to the better doctor or the religious one?

However a *rov paskens* in regards to this scenario will also apply to Entebbe. If Hashem performs the miracle of healing through non-religious doctors, then He performs miracles through non-religious soldiers. (And if someone will claim that healing is different than miracles, *rachmana litzlan* to say that healing is not a miracle.)

The Rebbe added that the rabbonim should take this issue seriously because it is a very realistic question that affects all Jews wherever they may live. Should one go only to religious doctors, or may one

go to the best doctors, regardless of their religious standing?

The Rebbe continued that, in truth, these people—who said Entebbe was not a miracle—have already answered this question with their own actions. Everyone knows that when they have an illness in their family, when it mattered to them personally, they went to the biggest and best doctors, without checking his level of observance!

NO AVOIDING

The Rebbe wanted the *psak din* to these questions to be short and succinct; if the *psak* is longer and starts bringing *pilpulim* and back and forth, then the issue will get buried. Rather, the rabbonim should provide a simple *psak* to these two issues. Every *rov* throughout the world should write his answer to these questions; yes or no.

Rabbonim shouldn't try to skirt this issue by burying their heads in the ground, every *rov* should courageously take a side in this issue!

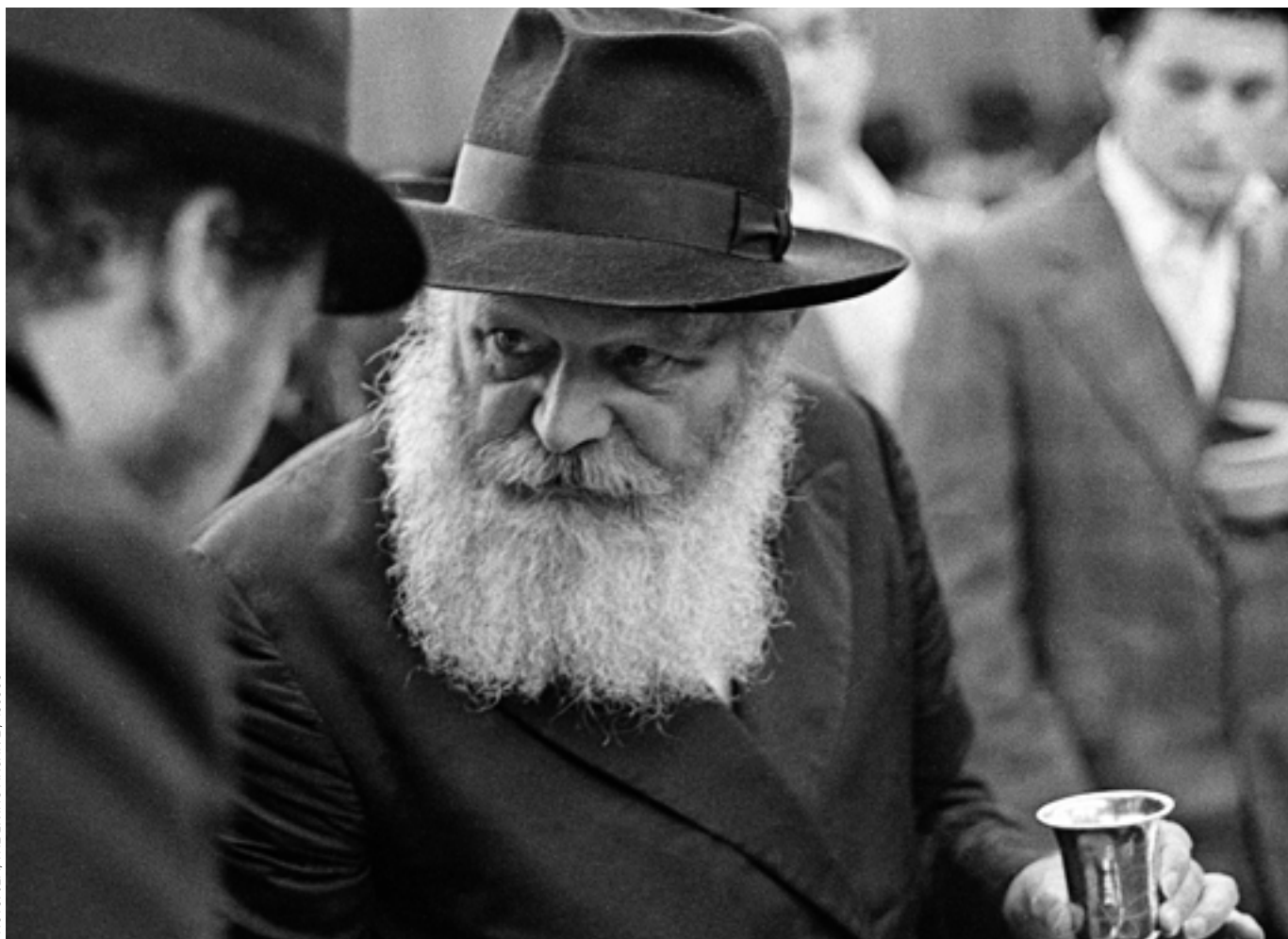
LETTERS FROM RABBONIM

Following the Rebbe's call, many rabbonim sent out letters throughout the following summer affirming the *psak din* in relation to these two issues.

HOSTAGES IN WASHINGTON

A few months later, another, horrifying hostage situation happened; this time in America itself.

On March 19, 1977, seven members of an extreme Islamic group burst into the headquarters of B'nai Brith, a national Jewish organization, in Washington, D.C. and took more than 100 people hostage. Less than an hour later, two terrorists stormed another Washington building, taking eleven hostages; and a little later on, two terrorists took hostages in the District building, a mere three blocks away from the White House. (This group ultimately killed one person and injured several others.)



DURING THE FARBRENGEN ON SIMCHAS TORAH, THE REBBE SPOKE OUT AGAINST THOSE WHO DENIED THAT A MIRACLE HAD OCCURRED. ABOVE, THE REBBE GIVES KOS SHEL BROCHO ON MOTZAEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5737.

The terrorists had 149 hostages in all.

Life in Washington ground to a halt. The capital was under siege. Everywhere, it seemed, was the sound of shrieking sirens, milling crowds, and police snipers poised on rooftops. Extra guards were posted at government buildings, and members of Congress were offered armed police escorts.

The terrorists had several demands, and the negotiations began. A large part of the negotiations were conducted by three Muslim ambassadors, who used an unconventional method in negotiating. They appealed to the faith of the terrorists, speaking to them about their religion and the importance of compassion and mercy.

Finally, after 39 hours of horror, the terrorist surrendered, and all the hostages were set free.

THE REBBE'S RESPONSE

In a farbrengen shortly thereafter⁹, the Rebbe said that this episode was in continuation to Entebbe, and that this was another clear warning for the Jewish people. The Rebbe spoke at length about this, gleaning fascinating insights from every detail.

This was an episode completely out of the natural order. The hostage situation didn't happen in some Third World country, it happened in America, one of the most powerful countries on earth, the superpower of the world! In the most powerful country itself, it transpired in the epicenter of power—Washington D.C.—only a few blocks away from the president.

The fact that terrorists took hostages in the most powerful city in the most

powerful country in the world is absolutely against nature.

Furthermore, the reason that it ended peacefully was not due to the power of America; the hostages were freed only because the terrorists surrendered on their own volition. In fact, most observers had assumed that there would be casualties. This shows that the terrorists had absolute control over their hostages, even though they were in the capital of America.

The Rebbe continued that when an event like this happens, it is critical to take measure of the occurrence and learn from it. It would really make sense to fast after such an episode, but since Chassidim don't fast, it will not be set. But we must try to learn what Hashem is telling us with this episode.

The Rebbe then explained a few powerful



THE REBBE GIVES KOS SHEL BROCHO ON MOTZAEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5737.

lessons that can be learned from this:

1) This episode showed that even America is vulnerable. When the story in Entebbe happened, there were those who shrugged it off as an event that could only happen in uncivilized, Third World countries. They felt secure that it could never happen in America; the hijacking seemed like a far off reality.

Similarly, a person can sometimes convince himself that he is completely secure in this world, and that he doesn't need Hashem's help. He has a lot of money or powerful political connections, so he has no need to rely on Hashem. Not that he doesn't believe in Hashem—he davens three times a day, and fulfills Torah and mitzvos—but he feels comfortable without Hashem's help.

This hostage situation showed that the most powerful country in the world can sometimes be rendered powerless. America had no real solution to the crisis, and it was only through open *hashgacha pratis* that all the hostages survived.

The most powerful country is vulnerable, and by the same token, even the most powerful, most affluent person is vulnerable as well. Every person relies on Hashem for protection. And when a

person realizes that Hashem is the one who runs the world, he will ensure that his every deed is in tune with Hashem's will.

2) Another thing we saw in this story was that among the hostages there were individuals from all strata of society; rich and poor, sophisticated and simple, strong and weak. Yet when it comes to a hostage situation, everyone is exactly the same; class and distinction lose any meaning. They were all in the same danger, and they were all released at the same exact moment.

The lesson from this is that when it comes to saving Jews from losing their Yiddishkeit, when it comes to giving Yidden their life—Torah—there are no distinctions to be made. Every effort must

be made to reach every single Jew, from the greatest to the smallest; and the same enthusiasm one expends dealing with the greatest person must also be used for the smallest person.

3) Another lesson can be learned from how they were freed. The terrorists were convinced to release the hostages because their faith in G-d was aroused. When their faith was woken up, they changed their behavior completely. Earlier they had said that if their wild demands weren't satisfied they would kill their hostages; but after their belief in G-d had been stirred, they agreed to set the hostages free without their demands being met.

This teaches us the power of *emuna*. Even a non-Jewish terrorist changed his behavior completely because his belief in Hashem was awoken.

This applies, but on a much larger scale, to Yidden as well. Even when a Yid is going full steam ahead to do something against the Torah, if his *emuna* is aroused, he can change completely. **D**

1. Sichos Kodesh p. 408-433; Ibid. 457-464; Ibid 470-480; Ibid 510; Ibid 542-543; 602-607.
2. In addition to the farbrengens, the Rebbe expounded on this point in a letter to Reb Zalman Jaffe.
3. Sichos Kodesh 5736 p. 460
4. Ibid 460-464
5. Ibid 472-475
6. Ibid 476-477
7. Ibid 604-607
8. Sichos Kodesh 5737 168-177
9. Farbrengen Adar, 28 5737, Sichos Kodesh 5737 p. 537-542

Learning these sichos, one is struck by the rich parables, profound concepts, and life changing lessons in *avodas Hashem* they contain. What seemed to be ordinary world events and political negotiations actually contain layers of spiritual meaning. Every detail is of significance. The Rebbe's words truly give a person a deeper, truer perspective on life.

Perhaps this is another important lesson we can learn from all of this. To delve into the Rebbe's words; learning the sichos, listening to the audio recordings of farbrengens, and watching them on video. Our world-view is shifted and will never be the same.