



לעבן מיט'ן רבין

# *Prime Minister Begin Visits The Rebbe*

2 MENACHEM AV 5737



לע"נ  
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In 5737, Menachem Begin was elected prime minister of Israel. As he prepared to meet with President Carter in the summer of that year regarding peace negotiations, he came to 770 to meet with the Rebbe and ask for the Rebbe's bracha for the meeting. The following is an account from a bochur in 770 at the time, of the day leading up to this historic meeting, as well as the meeting itself.

#### THE SHABBOS BEFORE

As Prime Minister Menachem Begin's visit to the Rebbe draws closer, the anticipation grows. This is the first time that a sitting leader of a nation will visit and many wonder how it will be, what will happen, etc.

During the *farbrengen* on Shabbos parshas Matos-Masei, Rosh Chodesh Menachem-Av, the day before Begin's scheduled arrival, the Rebbe mentioned something that seemed to have a connection to the upcoming visit: an explanation based on Rashi in *Parshas Devarim* on the *possuk* "Go forth and inherit the land." Rashi says, "Nobody will protest and you will not need to wage war, [and] were the *meraglim* not been sent, you would not [even] need weapons." The Rebbe explained that there can be no question as to the ownership of Eretz Yisroel by the Yidden, as Hashem gave it to them, that there will not need to be war. The fact that weapons must be stockpiled to frighten the nations out of any attack is only as a result of the sin of the *meraglim*.

In the days before Begin was due to arrive, police officers began making special preparations unloading trucks of police barriers; these were to be set up for the duration of the visit. They also put up signs prohibiting parking on Eastern Parkway and Kingston Avenue.

Hours were spent cleaning the *mazkirus* office, shining the closets and windows.

On Motzei Shabbos, Rabbi Groner arrived with one of his sons, and they worked until the early morning hours preparing the Rebbe's room for the visit. They removed about 50 boxes full of *sefarim*, and with the help of several *bochurim*, they brought them to the building next door. They also brought *sefarim* to the Rebbe's library. In the morning,

V SCHILDKRAUT via JEM 108477





A SMALL CROWD OF INDIVIDUALS APPROVED BY SECURITY OFFICIALS JOINS THE REBBE FOR MAARIV IN THE ZAL BEFORE PRIME MINISTER BEGIN ARRIVES.

Rabbi Groner returned with a vacuum cleaner and vacuumed the entire room.

It was planned that only a small number of people would be allowed in the building during the visit: the *mazkirim*, several *shluchim* and *askonim*, and a number of *bochurim* whose duty it would be to welcome the Prime Minister's entourage. Even these few were only allowed in after having submitted their passport numbers or work permit numbers.

Members of the "Division for Hebrew-Speakers" prepared refreshments for the Prime Minister's entourage, the advisors, the embassy staff, the security staff, the reporters, and the photographers.

Media folders containing the most recent material about the Rebbe and Lubavitch activities, like the "Uforatzto" booklet, material about the Twelve *Pesukim*, a picture of the Rebbe, and copies of the recent "Lubavitch News Service" press releases were also prepared. The folder for the Israeli reporters, also contained a copy of the book "Faith and Science" (אמונה ומדע) which includes a selection of the Rebbe's *sichos* and letters on Torah and science.

A set of silver dishes was brought to the Rebbe's room, and tea and cake were prepared.

Meanwhile, several instructions were given by the Rebbe: 1) The Prime Minister should not be greeted with song, as it is the Nine Days (despite the



A LARGE CROWD STANDS BEHIND POLICE BARRICADES AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AT 770.

fact that in the past, distinguished guests had been greeted with song.) 2) Not to distribute the *mashke* that the Rebbe gave Rabbi Hodakov during the *farbrengen* on Shabbos. 3) The Rebbe will come out to greet Begin at the door of 770.

(Few people knew about these instructions at the time, as they hadn't been released to the public)

Many people tried getting a spot inside 770 from which to watch—it was 100 degrees outside!—but were told by security to leave the building.

In the afternoon, newspaper photographers began arriving and taking pictures of 770 and the immense crowd that had gathered outside, numbering in the thousands.

Meanwhile, American security personnel arrived. They spoke with Rabbi Groner, and went over the list of people who would be allowed in the building during the visit.

#### 770 EMPTIES OUT

At around 7:00 PM, the passports of eight *bochurim* were checked to ensure that they were those who had received permission.

It was decided, with the agreement of the security personnel, that by 8:00 no one would remain inside 770 (besides those who had received permission). The *shul* downstairs would be emptied only at 9:10, to allow for people to *daven maariv* there. It was also decided that the barricades would



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be set up from the corner of Kingston Avenue until the middle of the block on Eastern Parkway, and the crowd stood behind those barricades.

Many security personnel began arriving, equipped with in-ear transmitters and with microphones in their sleeves.

At 8:00, tens of police officers arrived. Some of them spread out in the area, while others went up to nearby roofs in order to observe the entire area.

All vehicles had been moved away from near 770 and Kingston Avenue. The Hatzalah ambulance, which was always parked outside 770, moved to Union Street, near the Kollel, with its driver, R' Leibel Bistritzky, standing by in case of emergency, *chas v'sholom*.

A number of *bochurim* were asked by *mazkirus* to assist the police officers in maintaining order outside. They were identifiable by a small piece of paper attached to their jackets.

As scheduled, at 8:10, everyone was instructed to leave the building, besides those who had permission to remain. These individuals received special badges to put on their lapels. Around 15 people wore badges with the letter "R," while the rest of them wore badges with the letter "S."

The security personnel used a bomb-sniffing dog (for the first time in 770) to search every corner of the building. They searched every room, every crevice; they even searched the *ezras noshim*,

the restrooms, and the elevator. They originally demanded that the lockers be removed for security reasons, but in the end they agreed to allow them to remain.

Many more reporters and photographers began arriving. Those who had permission (and carried credentials) were allowed to stand on the floor of the Rebbe's *sukkah* (to the left of the door), while the rest tried to gather information from further away, as the police officers wouldn't allow them any closer.

Meanwhile, the crowd grew ever larger.

As the time for *maariv* approached, 770 was empty. Men were counted to make sure there was a *minyan*.

The Rebbe left his room at exactly 9:30, and saluted the American and Israeli security personnel. There was exactly a *minyan*. Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson was the *chazzan*. It was a very unique sight: The Rebbe's *minyan* consisting of just ten people wearing badges on their lapels; a historic occasion!

Immediately following the davening, the refreshments were prepared. The tables of the upstairs *zal* were covered with tablecloths and filled with various types of cake and cold drinks.

Dan Patir, an advisor to Prime Minister Begin, spoke with Rabbi Groner, and discussed the possibility of the Rebbe going out from 770 to welcome the Prime Minister, to allow the journalists to photograph the event without having to push their way inside and cause a commotion.

#### THE PRIME MINISTER ARRIVES

It was 10:00 PM. The enormous crowd gathered outside, waiting anxiously in the oppressive heat, as the reporters stood, alert and strained, like a spring waiting to be released at any moment.

The moment came; a police car arrived, followed by an American security vehicle, then an Israeli security vehicle, and finally a black Cadillac flying two flags—American and Israeli—and inside the car was Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The security officers jumped out of their vehicles while they were still in motion, with guns drawn. The Prime Minister emerged from the car and was greeted by the crowd clapping their hands excitedly. He turned to face the crowd and waved with both hands.

Suddenly, a hush fell on the crowd. The Rebbe had left his room to greet the guest, and before walking out of 770, the Rebbe informed Rabbi





THE REBBE WELCOMES PRIME MINISTER BEGIN UPON HIS ARRIVAL.

Groner that the door to his room should remain open. The Rebbe appeared in the entrance, he walked down the stairs, took several steps, and to the flashing of the cameras, approached with a wide smile and shook Begin's hand. The Rebbe introduced the Prime Minister to his *mazkir*, Rabbi Hodakov, before continuing to walk inside while clasping Begin's arm. Upon reaching the door, the Rebbe honored the Prime Minister to enter first; the Prime Minister declined.

As they entered, the Rebbe held the Prime Minister's arm, and when they reached *Gan Eden Hatachton*, the Rebbe again signaled to the Prime Minister that he should go first, and once again the Prime Minister refused. And again, before entering the room, the Rebbe turned to the Prime Minister with a wide smile, and the same thing happened a third time, but this time they entered together. They walked into the room, followed by the entourage. Despite the pushing, the security officers were able to maintain order.

The first to follow the Rebbe and the Prime Minister into the room were the Israeli advisors and

## GREETINGS

*After settling in the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe and the Prime Minister each offered statements to the media.*

*Mr. Begin first spoke in Hebrew, explaining that he has come to seek the Rebbe's blessings before his visit with President Carter in Washington. He then repeated his statement in English:*

I have come tonight to our great master and teacher, the Rebbe, to ask and get from him his blessings before I go to Washington to meet President Carter for the important talks we are going to hold on the future of the Middle East.

The people in Israel do pray for the success of these important meetings. I do not call them "fateful meetings," because the people of Israel, the Jewish people, are an eternal people, and their lot and future are not dependant on a political meeting with the leader of the free world.

However, such a meeting has great importance for our future. And therefore, I have asked for the blessings of the Rebbe, our great teacher.

Rabbi Schneerson is a great man in Israel. All of us respect him, all of us accept his judgement. He is a great lover of the house of Israel. He has shown his deep sentiment and love for our children. His blessings are very important to me. I do hope they will strengthen me on the important mission I am going to fulfill during the meeting with President Carter.

Let us all hope that out of those meetings there, will come an advancement towards security and peace, real peace, between Israel and the Arab countries. The peace for which we yearn and pray, which will eventually reign in the Middle East.

### MAMME LOSHON

*The Rebbe first spoke in Yiddish, saying, "I would like to say a few words in the language of the Jews of Russia..." greeting the distinguished guest and thanking him for the honoring visit. The Rebbe explained that this honor is not seen as a personal one, but rather as an honor to the Lubavitch movement, who fought so strongly to preserve the spark of Yiddishkeit in Russia. The Rebbe also made special mention of the Prime Minister's effort to unite the Jewish people in Israel by including members of other parties in his government, and pointed to this move as a step in the right direction of uniting all the Jewish people in general.*

*Later, the Rebbe was asked to speak in English as well, and the Rebbe said:*

My main pronouncement was in the language of the Jews of Russia, from whom I come.

I would only add a few words: to recapitulate my blessings for the great success of this very important mission of the Premier Minister

And also to underline a second time that I accept this honor of his visit, certainly not on my personal account, but on account of the movement of Lubavitch, which was dedicated for centuries to permeate the Jewish people everywhere with the fear and faith in G-d Almighty, and the

fear and faith in their fate; that they will have all their wishes for good fulfilled. Holding on to our tradition of Torah and mitzvos, to go from strength to strength in spreading kindness and goodness around us. That will also be a good vessel to accept the blessings of G-d Almighty in all their needs, in the diaspora and in the Holy Land. And to have real peace as a preparation for the coming of Messiah speedily in our time.

Of course, a special thanks to the Prime Minister and also, through him, to the Jews in Eretz Yisroel, in our Holy Land, in general.

**Reporter:** So you are giving Mr. Begin your blessings?

**The Rebbe:** Yes. More than one-hundred percent!

*The Rebbe then apologized for his accent. When the reporter said "No problem," the Rebbe responded:*

*"The same thing for Eretz Yisroel, for the Holy Land. Make sure there is 'no problem' for the Holy Land and for the Prime Minister. Make life easier for him, you can do something about the media. The media in the United States is very important!"*

**Reporter:** You have more influence than we do!

**The Rebbe:** Try your best nevertheless.



"IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE JEWS OF RUSSIA, FROM WHOM I COME..." THE REBBE SPEAKS TO THE PRESS.

V. SCHILDKRAUT via JEM 108489







JEM 108896

THE REBBE GREETS MEMBERS OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S ENTOURAGE.

diplomats; Simcha Dinitz, the Israeli ambassador to Washington; Eliyahu Eliav, the deputy Israeli ambassador to the UN; Yehudah Avner, press secretary to the Prime Minister; and others. After them came the photographers, journalists, and television cameramen. The Prime Minister introduced Mr. Yosef Chachnover, a senior security official who had a close relationship with the Rebbe. The Rebbe commented that “he is a Kohen.” The Prime Minister then introduced his aide, Yechiel Kadishai. The Rebbe said that Mr. Kadishai’s grandfather was a “*gutter Yid*” and the Prime Minister added that he is a Lelover Chossid. The Rebbe responded (regarding Lelov), “*Ahavas Yisroel*.”

The Prime Minister said jokingly to the Rebbe that photographers are one of the things “שאין להם שיעור— that have no set limit.” The Rebbe commented regarding the media coverage that whether it’s an advantage or a disadvantage, this is part of democracy.

R’ Chaim Boruch Halberstam was holding a microphone and the Prime Minister asked who he is. The Rebbe answered that R’ Chaim Boruch is

from Eretz Yisroel, and is in fact a “Sabra” (Israeli-born).

Afterwards, the Prime Minister said a few words in Hebrew for the Israeli reporters, and the Rebbe spoke in Yiddish. Then the Prime Minister spoke again for Israeli television, as well as in English for the American media, and the Rebbe spoke in English to the American media.

#### A PRIVATE AUDIENCE

When these discussions ended, everyone left the room besides for the Prime Minister, who remained with the Rebbe alone for *yechidus*.

At this point, the entourage and members of the media were invited to the *zal* for refreshments. The distinguished members of the group were seated at a special table. A *bochur* said over the Rebbe’s *sicha* from the past Shabbos, and discussed Yiddishkeit and work of Lubavitch with them. They were then invited to the broadcasting room (used to broadcast live hookups of the Rebbe’s *farbrengens*) and they all expressed how impressed they were. Some of them stayed to visit the Levi Yitzchak Library, while others joined the crowd outside. At



this point, the material that was prepared earlier was distributed, as well as a cassette recording of the conversation in the Rebbe's room minutes before, which was recorded by WLCC. Rabbi Krinsky also spoke with the American media.

Throughout, there was strict security. Nobody was allowed into *Gan Eden Hatachton*, and from time to time a security officer would check to make sure that everyone in the building was wearing a badge.

At 12:40 AM, after more than two hours of private conversation, the door to the Rebbe's room opened, and the Prime Minister emerged, with the Rebbe walking out after him. The photographers jumped up, and snapped pictures relentlessly.

The Rebbe and the Prime Minister stopped at the door to *Gan Eden Hatachton*, to allow the photographers to do their job. Prime Minister Begin turned to his people, asked how they're doing, and apologized for the long wait. The Rebbe said that it's his fault, and they answered that it's no problem, as they learned some Torah in the meantime.

The Rebbe and the Prime Minister parted by shaking hands. Prime Minister Begin said, "Shalom, honorable Rabbi," and the Rebbe wished him success and that we should hear good tidings.

Afterwards, Mr. Dinitz, the Israeli Ambassador in Washington, shook the Rebbe's hand. The Rebbe said that he hopes to meet again during his stay in the US. Mr. Dinitz replied that for now, he's staying in the US.

The security personnel sent out all the photographers. The Prime Minister went out, and then the Rebbe went out and kissed the mezuzah amongst all the pushing. Prime Minister Begin turned from time to time towards the Rebbe and announced that the people need to be more careful out of respect for the Rebbe. The crowd greeted them with applause and whistles.

As they walked down the stairs, they stopped, and Prime Minister Begin answered questions



A BOCHUR ADDRESSES THE RECEPTION OF THE MEMBERS OF BEGIN'S ENTOURAGE.

YOSSI MELAMED via JEM 140120

posed by journalists. They asked if he feels more secure now, to which he answered that speaking with the Rebbe has given him a feeling of security, and he is more confident for his upcoming talks with President Carter. They asked if he showed the Rebbe the peace plan that he would present to President Carter, to which he answered that he had met in the past with the Rebbe (before he was elected as Prime Minister), and as is customary among those who go in for *yechidus*, the content of the private discussion with the Rebbe isn't divulged.

The Rebbe stood and listened throughout.

Afterwards, the Rebbe accompanied Mr. Begin to his car, and the Prime Minister again asked his entourage to be more careful and show respect to the Rebbe. When they reached the car, the crowd again began applauding, and the Rebbe and Begin again shook hands in parting. Several members of the entourage also shook the Rebbe's hand. The Rebbe wished them well. The Rebbe asked for Eli Eliav and asked about his work and inquired as to his wellbeing.

Prime Minister Begin entered his car, accompanied by security personnel. The Rebbe waved goodbye to him and he waved back, as the motorcade departed. The Rebbe then returned to his room.

At around 1:00 AM, the Rebbe left 770 to go home, and on the way out, he saluted Chaim Kenan, who was the editor and producer of the Israeli radio program broadcast on WEVD. **T**