



Event:

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

Date:

24TH OF ADAR II, 5741
(MARCH 30, 1981)



THE SHOCK

On 24 Adar II (March 30), President Ronald Reagan delivered a luncheon speech at the Washington Hilton Hotel. The hotel was considered the safest in Washington because of its secure, enclosed passageway called “President’s Walk,” built after the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. While the Secret Service had made him wear a bulletproof vest for some events, Reagan did not wear one for the speech as his only public exposure would be the 30 feet between the hotel and his limousine, and the agency did not require vests for its agents that day. No one saw John Hinckley Jr. behave in an unusual way.

At 2:27 p.m., as Reagan exited the hotel through “President’s Walk” toward his waiting limousine. Hinckley waited among the crowd of admirers. While the Secret Service extensively screened those attending the President’s speech, in a “colossal mistake” the agency allowed an unscreened group to stand within 15 feet of him, behind a rope line. Unexpectedly, Reagan passed right in front of Hinckley. At that moment,

Hinckley fired a revolver six times missing the President with all but one shot. The first five bullets hit staff and officers around the President. The sixth bullet bounced off the armored side of the limousine and hit the President in his left underarm, grazing a rib and lodging in his lung causing it to partially collapse, and stopping nearly one inch from his heart. The Secret Service pushed him into the limousine as soon as the first shot fired saving Reagan from being hit in the head.

Immediately after the shooting, an Ohio labor official standing nearby hit Hinckley in the head, pulling the shooter down to the ground. Within two seconds other officers dove onto Hinckley and pinned him down.

The car diverted to the nearby George Washington University Hospital.

He was then rushed to surgery. The President returned to the White House on 8 Nissan.

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Two days later, in honor of the Rebbe’s 79th birthday, the President

participated in the celebrations by sending a telegram (see sidebar).

That evening, at the televised farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the President’s birthday wishes:

The Rebbe began by offering his blessings to all those who offered birthday wishes and blessings.

Following the command of התפללו אל שלום העיר—pray for the welfare of the country in which we reside, the Rebbe made a special mention of the leader of this country, thanking him for his wishes, especially considering his recent injury.

There is a well-known saying (based on a *possuk*), לב מלכים ושרים ביד, ה’—“the hearts of kings and princes are in the hands of Hashem,” which means that the will of Hashem is fulfilled through him for everyone’s benefit—for the country’s Jewish citizens as well as all others living here. As such, he deserves a special personal blessing.

True, the blessing of the President was in essence intended for the entire movement of Chabad-Lubavitch, which was brought to this country by the Friediker Rebbe. But practically,

April 15, 1981

Dear Rabbi Schneerson:

I am delighted to join with your many friends and followers in wishing you a very Happy Seventy-Ninth Birthday.

Your dedication and devotion to the spiritual and intellectual well-being of the Jewish people are an inspiration to all Americans.

For more than two centuries, the Chabad-Lubavitch Movement has been a vital force in Jewish life and culture and a source of hope and sustenance during many difficult and tragic moments in Jewish history.

With your emphasis on moral and ethical values and your interest in education, you have contributed greatly to both the intellectual and spiritual

THE REBBE'S RESPONSE

By the Grace of G-d
12 Nissan, 5741
(April 16, 1981)
Brooklyn, N.Y.

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington

Greeting and Blessing:

Thank you very much, dear Mr. President, for your good wishes on the occasion of my birthday.

As I noted in my remarks at the annual celebration last night, your kind and thoughtful congratulatory message is doubly reassuring. While all of us are still under impact of the recent trying days for you and the Nation, in connection with the demented attempt on your life (Heaven forefend!), it is remarkable, and most gratifying, that the President has been able to give personal attention also to matters which, under the circumstances, might have justifiably been postponed, or overlooked.

Your message, particularly in reference to the importance of emphasizing moral and ethical values in education, is as meaningful as it is timely. It is heartening to know that you, Mr. President, and your administration are committed to upgrading the education of all the citizens of this country.

לזכות ידידנו, חבר המערכת שפעל
רבות להרמת קרן המוסד כולו
הרה"ת יוסף דוד ומשפחתו שי'
שטראקס
לרגל יציאתם בשליחות כ"ק אדמו"ר

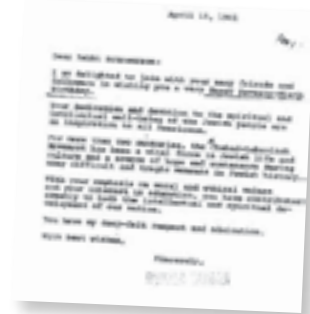
מאחלים אנו בזה שתהי' להם הצלחה
רבה ומופלגה במילוי שליחותם, ומתוך
הרחבה

development of our
nation.

You have my deep-felt
respect and admiration.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan



Please be assured that we in the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, along with all good citizens of this country, continue to pray for your rapid and complete recovery, and for your robust health consistently thereafter, so that you can carry out the awesome responsibilities of the President of this great and leading Nation in the world. In keeping with our basic belief that everything is by Divine Providence, how much more so being elected to the highest office in the land, we are convinced that G-d has endowed you with the capabilities and strength to carry out your G-d-given responsibilities in the fullest measure, with joy and gladness of heart.

There is no better way in which I can reciprocate your good wishes than by reiterating the Divine promise to our Patriarch Abraham,

"I will bless them
that bless thee" (Gen.
12:3). May you and
the First Lady and all
your family be blessed
with all good from the
Source of all blessings.

With utmost esteem
and blessing,

Cordially,
M. Schneerson



it was extended to an individual who represents the movement, therefore it is important to publicly express personal thanks to him.

THE GRAVITY OF THE ACT

The Rebbe addressed the recent assassination attempt, saying that the act “is incomprehensible.” But this regretful event did occur, and with Hashem’s help the injuries are being treated, so the present recovery will be speedy and complete.

Then the Rebbe examined the cause behind the attack and the message it carries on the state of public education:

The rationale that is generally given to crime, is that criminals come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, where they feel angry and bitter with the general population and wealthier people in particular. This anger leads them to commit crimes, either directly out of anger, or to “take back their rights.” This perception creates victims out of the criminals and asks us to feel bad for them. Certainly we should not punish a person who commits a crime because his circumstances led him to such a dark and terrible feeling. No human would commit a crime if not for this bitterness or anger, we are told.

However, this attack did not follow that pattern. Hinckley was from a wealthy family and he never lacked anything in his life. Even so, he attempted to murder at the age of 26.

The Rebbe traced the source of the attack back to a major shortfall in public education. During the early 5740s the Rebbe constantly worked on enriching education, not only in the Jewish world, but also in the public, secular world. That was when the Moment of Silence movement began. A moment of silence is when students pause at the beginning of the day to

be silent for a minute. The purpose is to allow the students to think about the meaning of the upcoming day of learning, and to pray if they want to. The teacher or principal is not to tell the child what to think; this they should discuss with their parents. This way, Jewish children will think about Hashem, and while children of other religions would think about G-d in their own way, it would still be about a Creator of the world.

President Reagan believed in much of this as well, and when he became president a correspondence between him and the Rebbe began, not only through letters and telegrams, but also through his public speeches and policies and, *lehavdil*, when the Rebbe spoke about these topics at farbrengens.

This relationship continued to manifest with the President honoring the Rebbe’s birthday every year, designating it as Education Day¹ and by signing a scroll of honor for the Rebbe’s birthday in 5748. In each of the proclamations President Reagan recognized the Rebbe’s influence in the sphere of education. The Rebbe also sent people to encourage Reagan to negotiate the release of Russian Jews with the Soviet government, and in general to keep the plight of Russian Jews on agenda.

The President felt so strongly about these issues, that he would often pen his letters to the Rebbe himself. (Most letters would be drafted by a bank of secretaries and go to him for approval.)

And of course, as was mentioned, two days after returning from the hospital to the White House, Reagan sent his personal wishes for Yud-Aleph Nissan. Now the Rebbe was explaining that the reason behind the attacker’s motivation is precisely the very topic he, and *lehavdil* the President, had

been speaking about for the previous few years.

THE RATIONALE OF CRIME

The reasons behind the attack, the Rebbe said, has nothing to do with poverty. According to Torah, children of the impoverished are the ones from whom Torah emerges, *הזהירו בבני עוניים שמהם תצא תורה*—Be aware of the children of the poor, for from them Torah will emerge.

This is mirrored in the physical world as well. Children who grow up in poverty are more motivated and driven due to their circumstances. Combined with a healthy character, emphasizing humility and determination, these children, with the proper education, are able to overcome their challenges and reach greater achievements, even more than their affluent friends. Their past is not a liability, dragging them down, rather it is a boost, providing the push to work harder and accomplish more. And they are also usually more charitable than their wealthier friends.

Poverty is not the reason for crime. It can be a catalyst, which when channeled correctly, is the reason for one’s greatest accomplishments.

What is the source of crime?

There are two missing components in modern secular education: 1. Teaching right and wrong, good and bad. 2. Belief in a Creator of this world.

Education has become the equivalent of iPod loading. Bring in the student, plug him in, load his brain with all sorts of tasty bits of information, useful or not, and push him out to the world. There he is left to his own wits, devoid empty of direction.

The goal of this information overload is simply to allow him to



NISSAN 5741, JEM 105381

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52
 VADNEY HADAY?
 In his case, but to ~~all~~ children. The failure to instill in children
 the awareness of G-d causes the eccentric, self-centered life
 style of today's youth - the "me" generation. Unfortunately, ~~parents~~
 today do not or cannot provide such an education; the responsibility
 to do so must devolve on the public school system. I have stressed
 this in many ~~occasions~~, and indeed, a special Education Day has
 been enacted to emphasize the importance of education. An education
 that provides not just knowledge, but that trains ~~the~~ children
 to be decent and productive citizens.

To all those who have sent their best wishes on this
 occasion I extend my thanks and appreciation. Especially to the
 President of the United States of America, who, notwithstanding
 his state of health, has written to convey his congratulations
 and best wishes. I am deeply grateful for his kind thoughts
 and sentiments, and send my blessings for a full and speedy
 recovery. May he use the powers invested in him as the elected
 leader of the U.S.A. for the good of America and all Americans.
 The trust in G-d who gives the abilities and strength to fulfill
 this mission, will undoubtedly help him to a full recovery, and
 to achieve the immense tasks and goals that lie ahead.

The first-~~attempting~~ ~~assassination~~ attempt, which thank G-d
 failed, gives us food for thought. The assailant came from a
 wealthy family, and no excuses of poverty or hardship can be
 offered: the cause must be sought elsewhere. The fault lies in
 the education he received as a ~~child~~. And this applies not just

THE REBBE'S HAGAHOS ON THE ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT OF THE REBBE'S SICHA ABOUT PRESIDENT REAGAN.
 11 NISSAN 5741.

stand independently on his two feet and survive in the world. Once there, it has no real purpose on its own. The focus should instead be to help myself be the best I can be, help my surroundings be the best they can be. Those are two purposes that would be good, yet the world is lacking them.

Let the child run free, comes the shrill demand, don't mix into his private decisions, his private life. Allow him to find his own path! So what if a person is born as a wild animal? That's none of your business; you should allow him to find his own way.

This is the mistake and it is what is missing in schools. A school is not an information spigot, a place to fill empty brains with knowledge. A school must be a place to better the students; to guide, direct, and educate them on right and wrong, good and bad, what to do and what must not be done.

The only directive the schools offer today is: Don't get caught.



LEVI FREIDIN via JEW 189916

Crime and bad behavior are discouraged merely because society will look down on the violator, and because he will get caught. The lesson learned are do what you want, just remember the cardinal rule of “Don’t Get Caught.”

The independent streak fostered by this purposeless education, in which the goal of study is simply the furthering of self, does not allow for the humility needed to seek a mentor. This student now will never ask for advice or help from the older, more experienced people in his life.

TRUE PREVENTION

This leads to the second component missing from education, teaching about the Creator.

The students don’t learn or hear about the belief that there is a Creator of this world, and there is an Eye that sees and an Ear that hears every action that takes place.

This is not the space for a comprehensive discussion on the separation (and non-separation) of Church and State. Suffice it to say that the purpose of separation was never to ban Hashem from the public arena, from public sight.

The founders of this country came here specifically because they wanted to be able to worship in their own way, to follow their own religion. They established a country **for** religion. Separation was simply to keep the government neutral in relation to religion and not to lend its weight to any specific one.

In education today there is “no religion” or non-religion preached in the place of separation.

Additionally, when children spend their entire day focused on the greatness of humanity with no focus on the greatness of a Creator, it creates a self-centered, self-indulgent human

being, with no regard towards right and wrong, or the wellbeing of others.


The solutions offered after every major episode to fix the problems with society, are merely bandages on a deeper wound. If the deeper wound will not be healed the problem will never go away.

Children must be taught that there is a Creator, who created everything. And He commanded us not to steal and not to kill. This will direct and educate the students what to do and what not to do. And this will heal the wound, saving all the later wasted efforts.

Once there is this foundation, the child is able to study and become educated. And education is key to allowing him to understand his surroundings, to understand the world, and to become a part of that world as a productive member of society.

This was highlighted recently by the President in his letter of blessing, as he expressed his appreciation for our work in education.

The practical outcome of this is to establish a moment of prayer at the beginning of the school day² in which the students are to mention only two things. That there is a G-d, and that this G-d has Eyes that See and Ears that Hear our actions. Nothing else, so as not to make discord between the religions.

When children start their day in this way, and is educated throughout the day with purpose, they will never begin searching for weapons to attack or damage other people. Peace will prevail. 

1. This custom began with President Jimmy Carter in 5738.

2. This was before the Rebbe proposed the “Moment of Silence” idea, in response to fierce opposition from other sources to the Moment of Prayer.

G-D GIVEN POWER

In the *sicha* that followed, the Rebbe charged Reagan with the gigantic task of ending the Cold War. Because he had survived the attack on his life, and because he had the ability to end the war, he must do his utmost to do so. Reagan would be able to use diplomacy, act tough and nice at the same time, to accomplish this goal, but it must actually be done. Were he not to, it would be a waste of the powers given to him by Hashem, who has not created anything to go to waste.

As we later saw, President Ronald Reagan was indeed the one that brought about the end of Soviet Union and the Cold War.



TO READ THE ORIGINAL:

For more on the Rebbe’s connection with President Reagan:
www.chabad.org/142535

To read the original: *Yud-Aleph Nissan 5741 sicha 2-3*,
Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 3, p. 104

Video of these *sichos* has also been released in JEM’s
Farbrengen Series—Yud Aleph Nissan 5741