



Event:

BATTLE OF FRANCE

Date:

5700



The Rebbe and the Rebbetzin spent the 5690s (1930s) in Berlin and Paris. Towards the end of 5698, Germany attacked Poland, starting World War II. The Rebbe spoke a few times about that time in France and how they fled to the south ahead of the invading Germans.

Everyone had seen the way Germany operated. A world war had burned over Europe enveloping nations, destroying them. Pushed to the brink, Germany had surrendered, but suffering from humiliation it was only a matter of time before they broke out again. This time they were prepared.

Germany annexed Austria, Czechoslovakia and prepared for further expansion. On the 17th of Elul 5699 they attacked Poland, overwhelming the country in less than a month, and by Nissan of the next year they had added Norway and Denmark to their conquests.

The French military had seen this coming and ever since WWI they had been preparing a strong defense. Different ideas had been floated and the one that became policy was that of a strong defensible wall-like barrier on the border between France and Germany.

The Maginot Line, named after French Minister of War André Maginot, was a line of fortresses, barriers, weapons and blockades. The line was deep, in some sections reaching 15 miles back from the border, and was considered extremely strong. The state-of-the-art fortifications were well protected from all types of attack—air, artillery, tank and infantry. The bunkers had food, water and ammunition. It was thought the line could hold for months without being overcome.

Surprisingly, when the Germans attacked in Iyar of 5700, they completely outmaneuvered the line, shocking the French and their allies. Within five days the Germans swept around the line, going through the Ardennes Forest—which had been thought to be impenetrable—and Belgium and the Netherlands. Within a month and a half the French surrendered and the Nazis had set

up a puppet government. The French had the largest military build up of all the Allies in the months before the war broke out, but this swift attack destroyed the morale of their leaders and was the direct cause of the French defeat.

Fourteen years later, the Rebbe recalled being in France during those tense days:

The Germans had not yet recovered from their Poland invasion and were in no position to properly attack. Add the Maginot Line and it was almost impossible to conceive of a German victory. Even so they attacked France. What was their reason? Not to quote their actual words (may they be erased) but the *tochen* was: Strength and aggression that has no logic behind it.

What was the outcome? They won!

After their victory the tables were turned and it was very hard to imagine a successful recapture of France and the entire European peninsula. But again, unexpectedly there was an upending of the expected and the Allies were able to beat the Nazis back.

לזכות
הת' מנחם מענדל שיחי'
לרגל הכנסו לעול המצוות
כ"ה טבת, ה'תשע"ז

נדפס ע"י
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THE REBBE AT THE JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG PARK IN PARIS.

BAR-LEV LINE

Following the Six-Day War, the government of Israel built a chain of fortifications known as קו בר-לב (the “Bar-Lev Line”) along the eastern coast of the Suez Canal, to avoid an Egyptian attack.

In a letter to then general Ariel Sharon, the Rebbe described the complacency that the Bar-Lev Line would bring, and the great disaster it will cause in event of an attack. As it turned out, when the Egyptians attacked during the Yom Kippur war, the Bar-Lev Line was breached in less than two hours and there was nothing stopping them from continuing their attack in Israel.

When discussing the aftermath of the war at a Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe addressed an interesting point, drawing on the example of the Maginot line:

People are asking, why haven’t we seen miracles in the Yom Kippur War like we saw during the Six-Day War?

The truth is, an even greater miracle occurred during this war; more so than any of the miracles in the Six-Day War:

When the Egyptians breached the Bar-Lev Line, there was nothing stopping them from continuing forward and reaching Tel-Aviv or Yerushalayim—the catastrophe that *chas v’shalom* could have resulted...

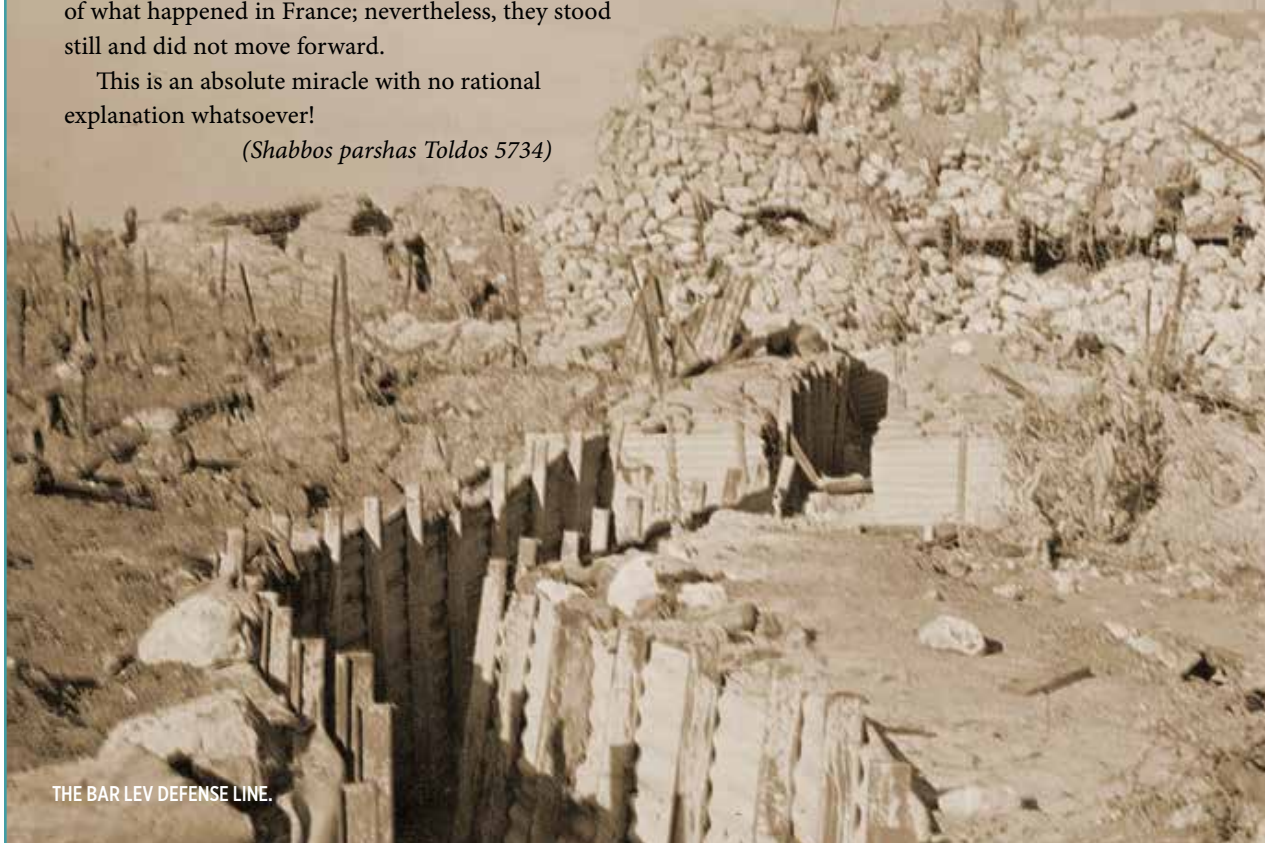
But for some inexplicable reason, 12 kilometers after the Bar-Lev Line, they stopped.

Proof of the magnitude of this miracle can be learned from occurrences of WWII. The French had built a fortification called the “Maginot line.” The fortification in the Sinai was miniscule compared to the Maginot. Yet the Nazis *yemach shmom* stormed the fortification with full-force and went on to conquer France within one day!

In France, the Nazis were passing through heavily guarded cities. Here, the Egyptians were attacking deep in the desert with almost no opposition. The Egyptians certainly knew of what happened in France; nevertheless, they stood still and did not move forward.

This is an absolute miracle with no rational explanation whatsoever!

(Shabbos parshas Toldos 5734)



THE BAR LEV DEFENSE LINE.

[A similarly unexpected turn of events took place in Eretz Yisroel a few years later. Both the exit of the British, and the subsequent assumption of government by the Yidden, were unexpected and had every reason not to happen. There were even some that didn't want to attempt a government takeover because they were sure it would fail. And here we are three years later and the country is operating, not logically, but with a pure *nes*.]

The world is upside down, events with no rhyme or reason have occurred. I don't know if this is a generally good thing, but for us it is very important.

This upside down world is an inspiration for us, in our mission to spread Chassidus to the outside. We don't need to enter into debates and arguments over the value of Chassidus, like they did in the years past. If someone is to attack Chassidus you simply respond, "Why are you asking for logical reasons? Don't you see the world is not operating according to logic? Look at the reality if you want your answer!"

In years past it may have been possible to reach high levels in *avodas Hashem* without Chassidus. Today,

however, reality shows that you must have Chassidus. And there are many clear indications for this.

Rambam tells us that reality doesn't follow theories, rather theory is created by reality. If you see something in the real world that disputes your longheld theory, the only option available to you is the adjustment, or possibly, the destruction, of your theory.

Another thing we can learn from the Battle of France is that if you are willing to devote yourself to a goal and work at it with determination and *mesiras nefesh*, you will be able to accomplish it, even if there was no logical hope to reach that goal.

If we do this with the spread of Chassidus, *we will merit משיח, the coming of Moshiach.* **1**



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