



# “I Had Them in Mind”

As told by Rabbi Yosef Minkowitz

### The following story happened in Tammuz, 5729.

Nine bochurim, myself included, traveled to a wedding in Boston. As it happened, I had asked Reb Dovid Raskin for permission to leave yeshiva for the occasion. Our plan was to leave after Mincha, and return early the next morning, in time for *seder*.

When the wedding ended, we got back into the Station Wagon to head back to Crown Heights; each of the three rows of seats filled with three bochurim.

About an hour away from Crown Heights, approaching our exit, the driver slowed down to merge into the exit lane. Directly behind us was an 18-wheeler truck zooming down the lane. As the driver of the truck saw us slowing down and realized that he was about to crash into our station wagon, he moved into the next lane. Unfortunately he hit the left side of our car, sending us spinning into the air and landing on a guardrail.

The car was engulfed with flames, and the road was full of gasoline; fire was everywhere. The gas tank was right behind my seat, and I knew I had to get out of the car immediately. When I tried opening the door, however, I couldn't. The handle had melted from the fire, and the door was completely out of shape. I couldn't get out. The three bochurim sitting in the front were able to get out of the car right away. Those sitting in the back had a miraculous escape route; the impact of the crash had sucked out the back window and they immediately jumped out.

Everyone in my row, however, was trapped. The fire surrounded us, flesh was even coming off my hands, I said *Shema*

*Yisroel*, and didn't know what would happen next.

Then a miracle happened: One of the other bochurim managed to open the door on the right hand side, and we managed to get out. Thankfully, I was wearing my suit jacket, made of synthetic fiber which didn't catch fire easily. My arm was not burned so badly, but many other parts of my body, like my hands and face were severely burnt. I was in terrible pain.

Literally seconds after we managed to escape from the car, it went up in flames; nothing was left.

Shortly afterward, the police arrived at the scene, they asked us how many people had been killed in the accident. When we told them none, they couldn't believe it. They said they had never seen an accident of this magnitude with any survivors. Boruch Hashem, we were all alive. It was a big miracle.

Earlier that year, on Acharon Shel Pesach, the Rebbe spoke about maintaining the integrity of the Crown Heights Jewish neighborhood, and not running away.<sup>1</sup>

After Yom Tov, the Rebbe asked Reb Yoel Kahn to prepare the *sicha* for publication in the Hapardes journal, and said that it could be published on its own as well. Reb Yoel worked on it and sent it to the Rebbe for *hagaha*. The Rebbe added many notes and references. It was later sent to the Rebbe again for an additional edit. The Rebbe went through it again, but for some reason, the Rebbe did not release these *hagahos* (edits) to be printed for several months. All of a sudden, on Monday night, 7 Tammuz before Maariv, the Rebbe gave the *sicha* for publication, with some additions. The Rebbe had cited the

נדפס ע"י ולזכות  
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק  
וזוגתו מרת שיינא ח'י'  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גרינברג

THE CAR  
AFTER THE  
ACCIDENT.



Alter Rebbe, that after experiencing a fire one becomes rich, and that this point is elaborated on by the Mittler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek as well. The Rebbe said it should be printed immediately with these additions. This occurred approximately 6 hours before the accident.

Following the accident, the three bochurim who had been sitting in the middle row were taken to the hospital, The other six Bochurim left without a scratch.

In the morning, my cousin Meir Minkowitz went to 770 and told Rabbi Hodakov what had happened with our car. As soon as he heard it, he went to the Rebbe's room to tell the Rebbe. When he left the Rebbe's room, he was pale. He explained that the Rebbe said that with the addition to the *sicha* on the subject of a fire, "I had them in mind."

Later, after Mincha, Rabbi Groner went into the Rebbe's room, and the Rebbe asked him for more details about the accident. The Rebbe told him, "It seems that specifically for them, I gave out the *sicha* last night, which speaks about becoming rich after a fire..."

The Rebbe then instructed him to give a copy of the *sicha*, even before it officially became available, to each of the nine bochurim. The Rebbe also wrote this instruction on a note.<sup>2</sup>

The Rebbe also gave me a *bracha* for a "*Refuah shleima u'krova*."

After this incident, I was in the hospital, where I was bandaged on my head, face, and hands, and then discharged, able to return home to Crown Heights, where I was to see a doctor regularly for further treatment. When I came back to Crown Heights, I received a telephone call from Rabbi

Hodakov, and he asked how I was faring. I told him that I was thankful to Hashem to be alive, and I asked him to ask the Rebbe what I should do now. Rabbi Hodakov put me on hold, and after a few seconds, he told me that I was to follow the instructions of two doctors. I understood that the Rebbe was on the line and listening to my question.

In the next two farbrengens, the Rebbe spoke about our situation, on Shabbos Parshas Chukas-Balak<sup>3</sup> (when he again mentioned the statement from *kadoshei elyon* that after a fire one becomes rich) and Motzaei Yud-Gimmel Tammuz<sup>4</sup> (when the Rebbe again mentioned the statement that was printed, about an occurrence stemming from the side of "*Gevurah*," which would be followed by an unending manifestation of *middas harachamim*).

As time went on, the skin on my hand wasn't healing, and the doctor was adamant that I would need a skin graft. When I went into yechidus the following Tishrei (before my birthday), I asked the Rebbe what to do about this issue. When the Rebbe reached that point in my letter, he said, "*Vos veisin doktorim veggen azelche zachin*—What do doctors know about these things?" And he instructed me not to go ahead with the skin graft. Miraculously, my skin healed completely on its own. **1**

1. See "*Crown Heights*," Derher Cheshvan 5777.

2. This *sicha* was later published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 6, with the Rebbe's additions.

3. Toras Menachem vol. 57, p. 25.

4. Ibid. p. 108.