

לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה'
שטערנא שרה שתח'
לרגל יום הולדתה ב' תמוז

נדפס ע"י הוריה
הרה"ת חיים אפרים וזוגתו
מרת ח' מושקא שיחי
גאלדשטיין

Let's Talk About Eretz Yisroel

THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE REBBE'S TORAH

PART 10
Fake Peace (1)

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On 27 Adar 5739, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty at an elaborate event hosted by US President Jimmy Carter on the White House Lawn. The ceremony was witnessed by 1,500 guests and millions of television viewers worldwide. The world called it a historic step in bringing peace to the Middle East. Two nations that had been at war for decades agreed to reconciliation and friendship, and the three leaders were hailed as heroes for making it happen.

But in truth, these accords were a humiliating disaster for Israel, from the negotiations to the final treaty and its implementation. All that was gained through the miracles of the previous wars—security, energy resources, prestige, and deterrence—was squandered in exchange for a piece of paper.

Peace is a very good thing, but peace has a specific definition. When two opponents decide to stop fighting, reconciliation will demand concessions from both sides. Inevitably, the stronger side will get more than the weaker side, but only an arrangement where both sides walk away with wins can be defined as peace. When one side receives everything and the other receives nothing in exchange, it's a humiliating retreat for that side. Calling it peace is a farce.

General Timeline

26 Kislev – 4 Teves 5734: Following the Yom Kippur War, the United Nations convenes the Geneva Conference, co-chaired by the United States and the Soviet Union, to promote Arab-Israeli peace. Representatives from Israel, Egypt, and Jordan attend, but it is a failure.

Shevat 5737: President Jimmy Carter moves to rejuvenate the Middle East peace process.

4 Menachem Av 5737: Prime Minister Menachem Begin meets Carter at the White House to discuss how to move toward an overall settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

28 Cheshvan 5738: President Anwar Sadat shocks the world by announcing that he is ready to go to the Israeli Knesset to discuss peace.

Motzei Shabbos, 9 Kislev 5738: Sadat is received in Israel as an honored guest and delivers a speech in the Israeli Knesset, calling for peace.

3–15 Elul 5738: Carter invites Begin and Sadat to a summit at Camp David, the presidential retreat in rural

Maryland, to negotiate a peace treaty. After thirteen days of intensive negotiations, the Camp David Accords—a framework for an eventual peace treaty—are signed at the White House.

27 Adar 5739: Begin, Carter, and Sadat sign the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.

Tough Negotiations

Entering the negotiations, the Egyptians demanded full Israeli withdrawal from the territories it liberated during the previous wars (including the Sinai, West Bank, and Gaza Strip) and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Israel focused on maintaining its security, preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state, ensuring free naval passage through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, and securing official Egyptian recognition of Israel.

The demands from the respective sides were asymmetrical. Retreat from territory is an action that can never be reversed, but official recognition, diplomatic relations, and trade agreements can be easily revoked. Whereas Egypt was demanding irreversible actions on Israel's part, the Israelis were pushing for paper promises at best.

Most of Egypt's demands were ridiculous, in the first place, since they were not within Sadat's purview at all. He could not speak on behalf of other Arab nations, who all condemned his readiness to negotiate, and surely not on behalf of the Arabs living in the territories. Sadat's main objective was to open with an outrageous demand and negotiate down to his main objective, forcing Israel to withdraw from 23,500 square miles of the Sinai Peninsula, an area more than double its original size.

During the twelve years Israel controlled the area, it established 18 settlements and built air force and naval bases, which enhanced its defense capabilities throughout the region. Most importantly, during the Six-Day War, Israel captured the Abu Rudeis oil fields and developed them to provide a significant portion of Israel's fuel supply. Additionally, the Alma oil fields were explored and developed approximately 100 kilometers to the south, near El Tor. By the time the two leaders convened at Camp David, Israel no longer depended on foreign nations for oil and was on track to become an oil exporter, a prestigious position in the Middle East.

The crucial importance of these oil fields to Israel cannot be overstated. Fuel is the most vital commodity for every modern society. Most importantly, a modern army with all its sophistication is useless without major oil supplies, especially during wartime. Giving up these resources is essentially suicidal for any country. Turning them over to your mortal enemies is unthinkable.

At Camp David, Egypt demanded that the settlements and military bases be destroyed and that the oil fields be transferred to Egyptian control. Israel should have rejected these demands as impossible. Retreating from the Sinai would mean retreating from a strategic security buffer zone, an egregious error from a military standpoint and absolutely forbidden according to Halacha, as explained at length in a previous article. Whereas some areas of the Sinai could be determined non-essential from a security perspective, a wholesale retreat from the peninsula should have been a non-starter.

The Political Map

Although there was tremendous American pressure on Israel to accept the Egyptian demands, Israel was in



JIMMY CARTER AND MENACHEM BEGIN WITH MEMBERS OF THE ISRAELI DELEGATION DURING NEGOTIATIONS AT CAMP DAVID.

a political and moral position to withstand it. When Sadat demanded Israel give up its sovereignty of Yerushalayim, Begin emphatically rejected this outright, and it never came up in the negotiations again. The same attitude was perfectly justified and would have worked regarding all matters crucial to Israel's security.

Both Sadat and Carter needed a deal to happen more than Begin did. Sadat was very unpopular in Egypt and needed to regain lost prestige following the defeat of the Yom Kippur War. Carter, who struggled with a poor economy and high inflation, desperately needed an international diplomatic win. Threatening that Begin would be held responsible for the summit's failure was a bluff. If he had not budged from Israel's vital security interests, Carter would have applied more pressure for Sadat to accept a face-saving formula of an Israeli withdrawal from non-essential security areas in the Sinai, sign the treaty, secure American foreign aid, and call it a win.

Instead, the Israelis misread the political map and backtracked from most of their red lines. The "physics of pressure" dictates that giving in to pressure only invites more pressure, and eventually, they agreed to all of Egypt's "logical" demands. Egypt recovered all the territory it lost in a war it had started, regained control of oil fields, and received new ones, returning Israel to utter dependence on foreign oil.

Israel secured passage through the Suez Canal, which Israel had controlled just a few years earlier, and extracted an Egyptian commitment to sell oil for a steep price, from oil fields it had controlled and greatly enhanced, as well as some it had explored and developed itself! Most humiliatingly, it considered Egyptian recognition and the newly created diplomatic ties between the two countries as the two crowning achievements of the treaty.

Although Egypt did not receive all of its demands regarding the West Bank, Gaza, and a Palestinian State, it had achieved all of its goals in entering the negotiations. Everything else was either aggressive posturing or meant to signal to its Arab allies that it was also looking out for their interests.

During the Six-Day War, Egypt lost the Sinai in a humiliating defeat. Six years later, it attempted to regain the territory and restore its prestige through war, but failed. Consequently, Sadat reverted to peace talks and succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

Even if the fragile peace agreement held and Egypt



THE ABU RUDEIS OIL FIELDS IN THE SINAI DESERT UNDER ISRAEL'S MILITARY CONTROL.

no longer engaged Israel in direct conflict, this treaty signaled to the world that Israel was willing to trade away its most vital security assets for recognition and international acceptance.

Many more details of the treaty endangered Israel, and the eventual withdrawal caused tremendous humiliation, impacting the general morale in Israel and its economy. In addition, Egypt violated clauses of the treaty with impunity. Nevertheless, the government ratified it, implemented it, and concealed many of the incriminating details from the public to contextualize this resounding defeat as a moral and political victory for Israel.

Perhaps, the most poignant way to frame the disaster of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty that resulted from the Camp David Accords is to quote Sadat, who laughed during an October 1980 interview with *The New York Times*: "Poor Menachem [Begin] ... I got back ... the Sinai and the Alma oil fields, and what has Menachem got? A piece of paper." ¹

NEXT MONTH:

When diplomats discuss ideas divorced from reality.

Primary Sources: *Sichos Kodesh* 5739 vol. 2, p. 723; *Hisvaaduyos* 5742 vol. 3, p. 1722; *Daas Torah* Chapter 7; *Berega Haemet* Chapter 7.