

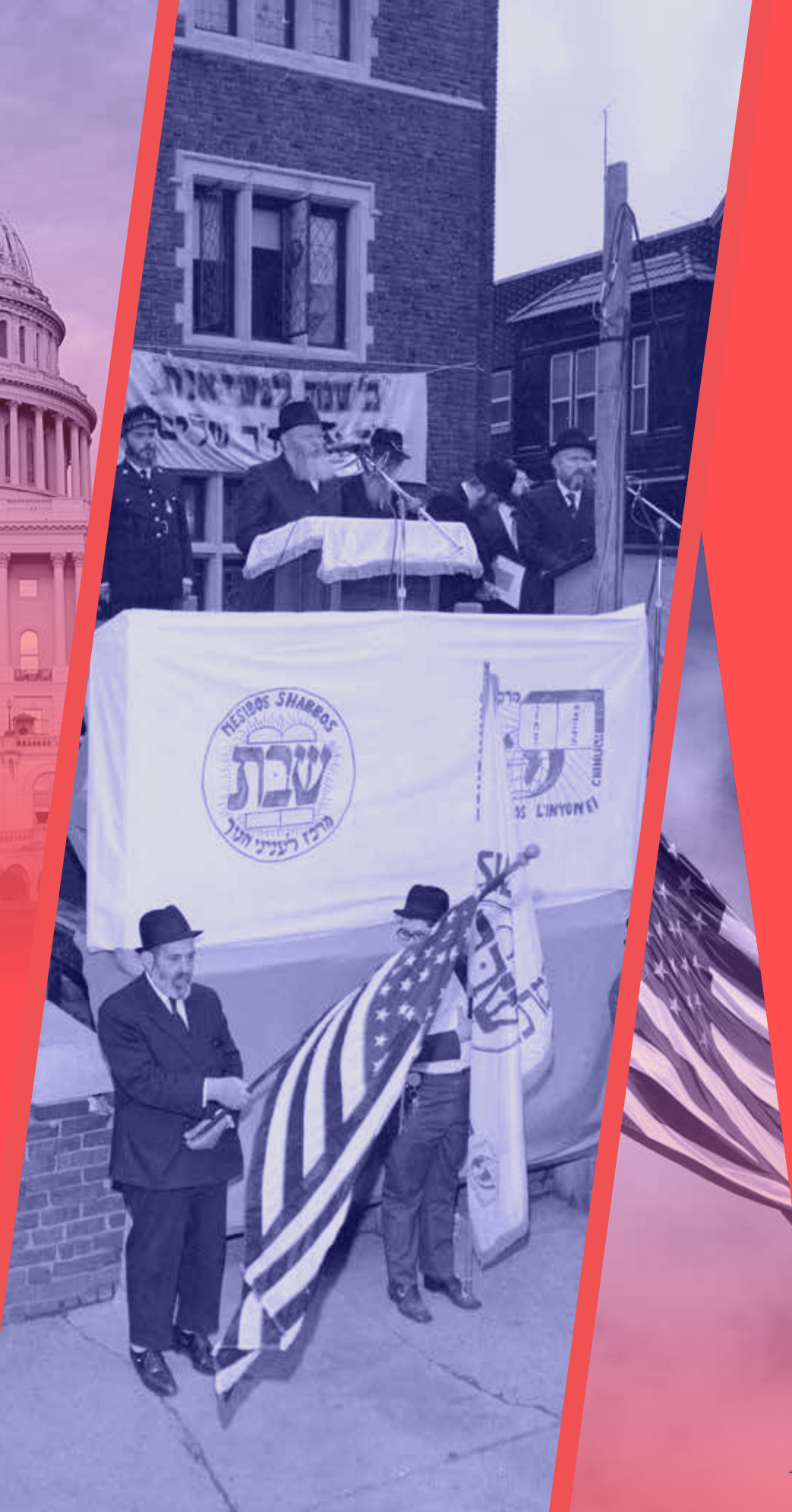
לזכות
הרה"ת שלום דוב בער שיח' שוחאט
לרגל יום הולדתו י"ז מרחשון
לשנת הצלחה בגו"ר



EXPORTING GOODNESS AND KINDNESS

THE REBBE'S VISION
FOR AMERICA

BY: RABBI MENDY GREENBERG



It was 1905. Violent pogroms broke out in Russia. The infamous Black Hundreds rampaged throughout Jewish neighborhoods, killing and pillaging at will while the authorities turned a blind eye. The Czar thought it a useful outlet for revolutionaries itching for change.

In Nikolayev, Rebbetzin Chana and her children hid silently in the cellar of a pharmacy with a group of women and children. The terrified children were crying aloud, and the pharmacist realized that the sound would soon jeopardize their safety. Something needed to be done.

Suddenly, he noticed a young child, just three years old, going from child to child, calming them down. Without making a sound, this child—the Rebbe—gestured with his small hands and somehow managed to comfort the children. Soon, the danger passed.¹

The dangers of living under the Czar’s regime were obvious to everyone in Russia at that troubled time. Even before the Rebbe turned three, his grandfather Reb Meir Shlomo Yanovsky, Rov of Nikolayev, noticed him walking around the house calling out, “*Daloi samaderzhavye*, End the dictatorship!” Rebbetzin Chana writes that the Rebbe had heard people chanting this slogan and seemed to understand, even at that tender age, that Yidden were suffering terribly as a result of the Czar’s tyranny. Fearing that the Rebbe would be heard outdoors ‘spreading dangerous propaganda,’ Reb Meir Shlomo quickly instructed him to stop.



FARBRENGEN, 10 SHEVAT 5735.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

During those very moments, in a faraway place, a very different atmosphere reigned. A superpower too, but this one was not autocratic, not antisemitic, and not oppressive. Its government's power was given "by the people, for the people," a nation whose most cherished value was freedom. And at that very moment, the United States was countermanning the efforts of Czarist Russia.

When the pogroms broke out, the Rebbe Rashab sent the Frierdiker Rebbe to Germany to find ways to pressure the Czarist government to end them. One method, used a generation earlier by the Rebbe Maharash, was to convince European bankers to stop loans to the Russian government until it acted.

At the time of these pogroms, Russia was involved in a brutal war with the Japanese and was in desperate need of funds, so the tactic was just as relevant. Pressure was put on major banks and government officials to stop cooperating with the Russians until the pogroms came to an end.

America was at the helm of the efforts. Her leading bankers refused to extend loans to the Russian government, and stipulated with all of their borrowers that their loans were not allowed to benefit Czarist Russia in any form. One famous Jewish banker in New York even chose to finance half of the Japanese war effort, in the colossal amount of two hundred million dollars, to punish Russia for its antisemitism and persecution. Over time, the pogroms abated.

At a Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen some seventy years later, the Rebbe reflected on the fact that America had the merit to be involved in securing the release of the Frierdiker Rebbe from prison, and, in general, of being a positive force in the world. The Rebbe mentioned the pogroms and the efforts back when the Rebbe was himself only three years old; even then, the Rebbe said, their kindness towards the Jewish people was evident.²

A common saying heard from the Rebbe was that America was a *Malchus shel Chesed*, a kingdom of kindness that gave the Jewish people safety

and security. America not only did not hinder our observance of Torah and mitzvos, it also found opportunities to aid it.

But viewing America specifically for its benefits to the Jewish people is only half the story.

THE FIRST ARRIVALS

In the early 1600s, a group of families in England faced persecution for their refusal to conform to the ruling religion in England. Desperate for a place of freedom, they set sail on a ship called the Mayflower, enduring a treacherous two-month voyage across the Atlantic.

The first winter in the new world was devastating. Nearly half of the settlers perished. Yet they persevered, and soon learned to cultivate the land and secure their future. That fall, after their first successful harvest, they held a feast of thanksgiving.

These people became known as the Pilgrims—the group that laid the foundations of a new society in America.

The Rebbe often pointed to the story of the Pilgrims when speaking about the United States. Unlike the other superpower of the time, founded on Communist ideals that rejected the existence of a Supreme Being, American society was founded with a deep belief in Hashem, and was born out of a desire to serve Him freely according to each person's conscience.

The Rebbe spoke highly of the fact that one of the country's most cherished traditions was for families to gather each year to give thanks to Hashem. Some societies profess belief in a Creator, but ignore the fact that Hashem pays close attention to every detail of their lives. Thanksgiving, however, as the Rebbe pointed out, is a holiday that recognizes Hashem's active presence in world events; it celebrates the *Hashgacha Elyona* in America's success.³

Another common theme in the Rebbe's *sichos* about America is the words etched onto the currency, "In G-d We Trust." Instead of saying, "In G-d We Believe," which would imply a more distant recognition of Hashem, it uses the word "trust," which means that we feel Hashem's presence in our

“QUIET DIPLOMACY” WITH THE SOVIET UNION

Jacob Hecht was elected to the United States Senate in the early 5740s, and his brother Martin and nephew Dr. Chaim Hecht soon brought him to a farbrengen. Between *sichos*, he was introduced to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe told him that his top priority should be to get the Jews out of Russia. “The key,” the Rebbe said, was “quiet diplomacy.”

About three years later, a vote came to the U.S. Senate. When Reagan needed his vote to break a tie, Senator Hecht decided to use the opportunity. He met with the President and reminded him that thousands of Jews were imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain. He said that he would vote for the President’s proposal, but asked him to pressure the Russians at the next summit with the Soviets.

Right before Reagan left for Reykjavik, Iceland, to meet with Gorbachev, Senator Hecht gave him a list of names of 1200 Soviet Jews who had applied to emigrate from Russia. Reagan gave the list of 1200 names to Gorbachev and emphasized how important this would be to him. Within weeks, a trickle of Jews began to leave Russia. Soon the trickle grew to tens of thousands.

Years later, Senator Hecht met with Reagan at an event, and thanked him for his efforts. He asked him why he never mentioned the act in public, and Mrs. Reagan said that the answer was quiet diplomacy. Mr. Gorbachev had told them that there were many around him that did not want the Jews to leave Russia. “If we made it public, the exodus would stop.”¹⁶

lives in a tangible way. On several occasions, the Rebbe derived lessons in our *avodas Hashem* from those words, as well as from the other phrase on the currency, “E Pluribus Unum,” which means, “Out of Many, One.”⁴

America’s founding ideals, firmly rooted in a belief and trust in Hashem, are central to understanding the Rebbe’s view of America, and its role in the world.

This was expressed for the first time in a major way at a special and historic farbrengen.

THE FIRST GLOBAL ADDRESS

Yud Shevat 5735 marked twenty-five years of the Rebbe’s *nesius*, and the farbrengen was an exciting event.

“At 7:15 p.m.,” writes Reb Zalmon Jaffe, “around 1,000 people had arrived to reserve their seats or places for standing. The entire area of the hall was prepared for this Farbrengen, making it four times the original size. By 9:00 p.m., about 6,000 people were present....”

“Herman Wouk, the author, was present, as was Jan Peerce, the opera singer. Abraham Beame, the Mayor of New York, had arrived in person, together with the comptroller of the City of New York. A message was brought from the Senate that a unanimous resolution had been passed, extending greetings to the Rebbe on this eventful occasion. President Gerald Ford had also thought fit to send a personal representative with a special message. The world press, TV, and radio were all represented, and the Farbrengen was being broadcast live to all parts of the world.

“It was a real royal occasion.”

After the second *sicha*, a prominent Washington lobbyist



SENATOR CHIC HECHT GIVES PRESIDENT REAGAN A LIST OF 1200 RUSSIAN JEWS, SHORTLY BEFORE THE PRESIDENT’S TRIP TO REYKJAVIK, ICELAND TO MEET THE SOVIET PRESIDENT.



A PUBLIC MENORAH GRACES THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

named Mr. Ken Davis approached the Rebbe to present the President's letter. "On your twenty-fifth anniversary as Lubavitcher Rebbe, I want to join with those who applaud the dedication and wisdom that have characterized your leadership of this inspiring religious movement," Ford had written.⁵

In the following *sicha*, for the first time, the Rebbe spoke at length about the United States and its role in the world.

In America's earlier generations, isolationism was a common sentiment. Problems existed elsewhere in the world, but Americans were comfortable saying, "It's not my problem." This was a mistake, the Rebbe said. If, by *Hashgacha Pratis*, America had been granted the ability to influence other countries, it had a responsibility from Hashem to use that opportunity.

By this time, America was deeply involved in world affairs. Isolationism came to the fore once in a while, but America was sending aid and assistance to many different locations around the globe. America was even providing aid to its arch-enemy, the Soviet Union, which had experienced a series of disastrous harvests; despite being a world superpower, they were unable to feed their own people, and millions of tons of American wheat were shipped across the globe.

Returning to this theme on numerous occasions,

the Rebbe pointed out that America's widespread assistance meant that it was uniquely positioned to demand something in return. In the words of the Gemara, "*Ein adam me'iz panav b'fnei bal chovo*, a person isn't brazen with his debtor." If this is true for even a small debt, how much more so for the vast resources streaming across the world.⁶

Given America's history as a country founded upon faith in Hashem and its pride in upholding values of *tzedek v'yosher*, it was obvious that it needed to use every opportunity to spread its message. In that light, the Rebbe used the opportunity at that farbrengen to make three proposals.

THE FIRST PROPOSAL

The first suggestion was that the government provide financial aid for religious private schools.

What about the separation of church and state?

The Rebbe pointed out on many occasions that it was a fallacy to understand the principle of "Separation of Church and State" to mean that the government cannot fund anything related in any way to religion.

The entire foundation of the United States is belief in Hashem; the First Amendment was intended to ensure freedom of religion, not to free schools from religion. In America's earliest days, religious ideas were so commonplace that it



never occurred to anyone that they might contradict the Constitution.

This was a theme which the Rebbe repeated whenever speaking about school funding, Moment of Silence, or anything that inserted some sort of religious presence into the public sphere. After one Jewish leader wrote several letters to the Rebbe in protest of public menorahs, the Rebbe responded as follows:

“I am fully certain that none of all those who participated in, or witnessed, the kindling of a Chanukah Lamp in a public place... felt that his or her loyalty to the Constitution of the USA had been weakened or compromised thereby... The U.S. Congress opens with a religious invocation by a representative of ‘one of the major religions’ in this country; and, surely, the U.S. Congress, comprising each and every State of the Union, is the place where the Constitution of the USA should be most rigidly upheld.”⁷⁷

In later years, in response to opposition to the Moment of Silence, the Rebbe added a further point.

The Constitution is not a Divine document. “When I was becoming a citizen,” the Rebbe shared, “I was told to review this point: that the constitution was made ‘by the people, for the people.’” Built into its rules is the ability to change it, and many amendments were indeed made. So, if the Constitution seemed to forbid prayer in public school (which, the Rebbe argued, it did not), there is a simple solution—change it!⁸

THE OTHER PROPOSALS

The Rebbe’s second proposal at that Yud Shevat far-brenghen concerned Russian Jewry. The Rebbe asked the U.S. government to intervene quietly with the Soviet authorities to help Jews emigrate. The Rebbe explained that public protests and loud pressure would not be effective and might even be harmful, arguing instead that discreet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy was the most effective way to secure freedom for the Jews trapped in the Soviet Union.

WHO TO VOTE FOR?

A king once arrived in a town with his entire entourage. The townspeople excitedly ran for the opportunity to host members of the delegation; there were connections to be made, power to be gained, and money to be earned. A royal entourage was a lucrative place.

One person waited on the side, watching as all the ministers were quickly settled. He wasn’t looking for them. “I want to host the king himself,” he said. In the famous words of the Midrash, “*Ana nasiv malka.*”

A simple question could be posed to the townspeople, the Rebbe pointed out when he cited this famous *mashal* from the Midrash. Why didn’t they all jump at the opportunity to host the king? Why go for the “small potatoes” if they could have the real deal?

The answer is that standing before the king requires *bittul*. Ministers and servants of the king can be sources of money and prestige. When a townsperson hosts one of them, he sees him as a source of benefit to himself. But when you are

standing before the king, you don’t get to ask what benefit the king will be to you; on the contrary, the question is, “How will you benefit the king?”

Nonetheless, there was one man, the *pikeach*, who chose the king. *Pikeach* doesn’t just mean wise, like a philosopher or historian. A *pikeach* is someone who is shrewd in the ways of the world. He makes a choice that, in the short term, doesn’t seem to offer as many benefits, but in the long term will result in many benefits indeed.

When elections come, the Rebbe said, we need to remind ourselves to be that *pikeach*. As Yidden, we choose the *Aibershter*. Every question that arises in our lives, elections included, should raise the question: What is better for Shulchan Aruch? What is better for Yiddishkeit? What is better for Torah and Mitzvos?

When choosing between candidates, we cannot ask whether they will give us more money, more honor, or more benefits. There is one question, and one question alone: What does Hashem want?

Chof Cheshvan 5735 (Toras Menachem 5735 vol. 1 pg. 261)



THE REBBE RECEIVES
PRIME MINISTER
MENACHEM BEGIN
UPON HIS VISIT
ON 2 AV 5737.

Finally, the Rebbe spoke about the need for America to support Eretz Yisroel, especially in light of the recent Yom Kippur War. The U.S. had reduced its arms shipments to the Middle East, making it difficult for Israel to acquire necessary weapons. The Rebbe emphasized that the best way to ensure peace was not by limiting Israel's access to arms but by providing them with a sufficient supply. A well-armed Israel would serve as a deterrent to potential aggressors and help maintain peace in the region.

The *sicha* of Yud Shevat 5735 seems to be a blueprint for the Rebbe's vision for America. As the years progressed, the Rebbe returned to these themes often; on Yud Alef Nissan—which the government declared “Education Day,” at the Yud Shevat farbrengens, which fell out close to Inauguration day, and during many televised farbrengens.

The point was very straightforward: America exports arms, aid, technology, and so much else to the world. It was time to export *tzedek v'yosher* as well.

When speaking of Education Day in the United

States, the Rebbe would add that we should demand that it be adopted by countries receiving our aid. Instead of receiving just American goods, they should receive American goods and ideals.

If countries were receiving weaponry, for example, it should also be impressed upon them that weapons must be used only in self-defense. The Rebbe said that every arms shipment should come with a silver dollar coin, upon which is etched the words, “In G-d We Trust,” to remind the recipients that the true purpose of the armaments was to further the cause of peace in the world. The Rebbe recommended specifically a coin, even though those words are printed on the dollar bill too, because the words are *etched* into the coin, a far greater level of connection, as explained in Chassidus.⁹

WHAT POLITICAL PARTY DID THE REBBE SUPPORT?

Many Americans are very partisan. They identify strongly with the political party of their choice, and see everything that takes place in the political



sphere through that lense. If their party does something, it must be good, if the other party does it, it must be wrong.

This is just as common within the Jewish community, which often sees politics in the context of a party's support for Eretz Yisroel. A political party or candidate which is supportive of Eretz Yisroel is wildly popular, while others are rejected.

This was not the Rebbe's approach.

The Rebbe's *sichos* about America were mostly delivered during the administrations of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. During those same years, the Rebbe spoke countless times about Eretz Yisroel and its relationship with the United States, often with strong criticism regarding the state of affairs. The criticism was directed, however, at the Israeli government.

When the Rebbe opposed the Camp David Accords, the *sichos* were not directed at President Jimmy Carter for brokering them, but toward Prime Minister Menachem Begin for agreeing to them. When the Rebbe opposed the constant cease-fires during the Lebanon War, the criticism was not directed at President Ronald Reagan, who facilitated them, but at the Israeli leaders who accepted them. The responsibility to protect Eretz Yisroel was the sole responsibility of the elected government in Eretz Yisroel, regardless of American pressure.

The Rebbe spoke about America and its government in a very different tone. Even as an American president

would be in the midst of pressuring the Israeli government to make one concession or another, the Rebbe would speak in the most respectful terms about America's role as a safe haven for the Jewish people and the Lubavitch movement, and speak about the positive role it could play in the world. Whether the sitting president was Democrat or Republican, the Rebbe would promote issues that were likely to be accepted by the administration.

THE TWO ADMINISTRATIONS

President Jimmy Carter, for example, had a special passion for education. He spoke about it during his major addresses and made it a big focus of his administration.

It was during this period that the Rebbe pushed for the establishment of an independent Department of Education. Until then, the federal government's education-related responsibilities were handled by an assortment of federal entities and departments, but the Rebbe said that a U.S. Department of Education would bring a new sense of prestige and importance to issues relating to education.¹⁰

The Rebbe wrote letters to congressmen pushing them to support the endeavor, and sent Rabbi Avraham Shemtov to lobby on its behalf. Ultimately, the endeavor was successful, and Rabbi Shemtov was actually appointed to the "Intergovernmental Advisory Council on Education"

in recognition of the Rebbe's efforts. At an event marking Gimmel Tammuz many years later, the sitting U.S. Secretary of Education made note of the fact that the Rebbe was instrumental in making it happen, "so I owe my job to him."

Carter was the president who established Education Day USA, and the *sichos* about America during those years—at the very time America was pushing the Camp David Accords—spoke highly about the President's devotion to education.

An especially fascinating window into the Rebbe's approach is evident from the time after President Carter was voted out of office.

Carter was notoriously unpopular and widely derided as a failure. Yet, on Yud Shevat 5741, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of *hakoras hatov*—in contrast to the common approach in politics, which is to ignore or even denigrate the outgoing president—and thanked him for his focus on education and on maintaining world peace, despite the tense situation with the Soviet Union.¹¹

The incoming president was Ronald Reagan. He was a strong proponent of prayer in public schools and private school funding, and believed in the importance of religion in the public sphere. He frequently spoke about the Founding Fathers' belief in the Creator, and saw this idea as central to keeping America strong.

It was during his presidency that the Rebbe pushed strongly to establish a Moment of Silence in public schools and to bring the knowledge of "An Eye that Sees and Ear that Hears" into the consciousness of American children.

Those were also the years when the Rebbe emphasized the importance of bringing the messages of Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach to the world, and directly mentioned the President's support on several occasions.

In a letter to Elie Weisel after he won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Rebbe asked him to focus his address on Sheva Mitzvos. The Rebbe pointed out that this was something that was already on the President's mind, and could be a useful opportunity to draw him in that direction: "President Reagan already mentioned this (briefly). Knowing his attitude, I am almost certain that he will join your call

and demand on this topic, publicly and strongly."¹²

Another aspect of the Reagan presidency was his belief in American power. Outspoken against America's enemies, he believed that the correct approach to foreign policy was "peace through strength."

In the months after his inauguration, the Rebbe spoke about energy independence.

America's reliance on foreign oil had become a major challenge. When the United States supported Eretz Yisroel during the Yom Kippur War, the Arab nations retaliated by imposing an oil embargo on the U.S, leading to severe shortages and an economic crisis that culminated in a major stock market crash. As a result, America pressured Israel into making dangerous concessions.

The Rebbe saw this as more than just an economic problem—it was a spiritual issue. For America to spread *tzedek v'yosher* to the rest of the world, it needed to free itself from the influence of dictatorships that held power through their control of oil.

The Rebbe explained that the solution lay in tapping into the abundant resources within America itself. Beneath American soil lies a wealth of natural resources—oil, coal, and more—that, if developed, could free the country from foreign pressure. The Rebbe also advocated the use of solar energy. The sun-rich southern United States could provide abundant, renewable energy that would not only meet its own needs but allow America to become a global energy leader. By embracing these resources, America would be able to break free from foreign manipulation and focus on spreading justice, morality, and the Sheva Mitzvos worldwide.¹³

A SIGN OF REDEMPTION

At the end of Nissan 5751, a revolt took place in northern Iraq. Thousands of Kurds protested the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi forces had brutally suppressed earlier Kurdish revolts, even using chemical weapons in doing so. When Iraqi forces subdued this uprising, more than one million Kurdish refugees fled to Iran

and Turkey. Hundreds of thousands of additional Kurds remained along the border of Iraq and Turkey, where thousands died due to a lack of food, water, clothing, blankets, shelter, and medical supplies.

In response, the United States organized a task force and launched Operation Provide Comfort, delivering as many as 600 pallets of supplies per day. In addition to the air drops, US Air Force planes flew thousands of tons of cargo from the United States to Turkey.

In a *sicha*, the Rebbe explained the uniqueness of the occurrence:

“It is well known that this country has recently used its might to help and save people in a distant place, sending vast amounts of soldiers from its army, together with food, clothing, and medication. Instead of using the food and clothing for the citizens of this country, they are using it to save unfortunate people, especially small children, from the cold, and even from the opposite of life.

“When they heard that people are suffering—although they are not their relatives, and they never had a connection to them—they immediately rushed to help them.

“We see how the nations are performing acts of goodness and kindness, which reveals furthermore that ‘there is a Master to this palace.’ It is a preparation for the time when “*vehaysa laHashem Hamelucha*,” with the true and complete redemption.”¹⁴

In the later years, the Rebbe often pointed out how America (as well as many other nations) were doing acts of kindness that had been unfathomable just a few generations earlier. In earlier times, war was considered inevitable, but suddenly countries were downsizing their armies, signing treaties to have fewer nuclear weapons, and using their military might to come to the aid of others. It was clearly a sign of Moshiach’s times.

The fact that the President had spoken about the Sheva Mitzvos was evidence of the same. During a *sicha* about Sheva Mitzvos, the Rebbe pointed out that “The President of the country has spoken publicly about the importance of the Sheva Mitzvos for every individual, and he has repeated this idea several times. It has indeed been accepted, not only in this country, but in many others as well.”

The Rebbe pointed out that, ultimately, *lev melachim v’sarim b’yad Hashem*, the hearts of kings and ministers are in the hands of Hashem. So, the fact that the President was promoting Sheva Mitzvos was actually a sign from



PRESIDENT REAGEN PROCLAIMS THE REBBE'S 80TH BIRTHDAY "NATIONAL DAY OF REFLECTION" AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, CALLS UPON THE NATION TO HEED THE SHEVA MITZVOS, "A MORAL CODE FOR ALL OF US REGARDLESS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH."

Hashem to us.

What was the sign?

As we get closer to the *geulah*, the Rebbe explained, we need to prepare the world to serve Hashem—together—with Moshiach’s arrival, and one key way is through spreading the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach. If Hashem showed us that the President himself is promoting the Sheva Mitzvos—it is a sign that there is more work to do.¹⁵ **T**

1. Early Years pg. 27.
2. 12 Tammuz 5736. Sichos Kodesh vol. 1 pg. 430
3. See Yud Tes Kislev 5747. Toras Menachem vol. 2 pg. 54.
4. Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 2. Pg. 58. Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 2 pg. 130. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 2 pg. 176.
5. See Derher Shevat 5775 pg. 10.
6. Yud Shevat 5739, Sichos Kodesh 5739 vol. 2 pg. 17
7. Sarna and Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience*, pp. 288–300.
8. Yud Shevat 5743; Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 2 pg. 902.
9. 11 Nissan 5738. Sichos Kodesh vol. 2 pg. 130.
10. Yud Shevat 5739, Sichos Kodesh vol. 2 pg. 11.
11. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 2 pg. 169.
12. See Derher Shevat 5777 pg. 24.
13. See Derher Nissan 5777 pg. 30.
14. Hisvaaduyos 5751 Vol. 3 pg. 187.
15. Shabbos Hagadol 5747. Toras Menachem 5747 vol. 3 pg. 67.
16. Chabad.org/523711.