



THE TRUE RULERS

The spiritual power of our Rabbeim
over governmental affairs

By: Rabbi Sholom Posner

Special thanks to Mendel Teitelbaum for his
assistance in the research of this article.

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



Heads of state and politicians are the apparent world leaders. Their decisions have a profound influence, and they are respected, revered, and feared.

Yet, the Gemara¹ teaches that “The Rabbanan” are the true kings. By virtue of their unity with Hashem, they have the power to alter the order of the world.² When faced with such kings, all other would-be powers dissolve entirely.

There have been many episodes in which our Rabbeim, through their holy words and actions, compromised the perceived powers in the world, demonstrating who is the true King of the world.

THE CANTONISTS' TYRANT

NIKOLAI I

Nikolai (Nicholas) I of Russia (1796–1855) is remembered infamously in the annals of Jewish history. After the death of his older brother Alexander in 1825, Nikolai took the throne. He was a powerful and unrelenting king who ruled with an iron fist. The Jews in particular were often targets of his tyranny. His ministers and advisors were of similar disposition, which did not make things any better for the Jews under his reign.

Among his infamous edicts was the decree of the Cantonists, under which Jewish communities were required to provide a quota of young Jewish boys for army conscription. The explicit goal of this decree was to separate the young conscripts from their families and communities, making them vulnerable to forced conversion.

From his earliest years, and continuing throughout his reign until his death, our Rabbeim worked to mitigate his power and alleviate the suffering of the Yidden.

Nikolai's unexpected death, shortly before Purim 5615 (1855), sparked controversial conspiracy theories. In fact, the exact circumstances of his demise are still debated to this day. However, there is another cause of death that finds mention only in the tradition of Chassidim.



A Fracture In The Royal Scepter

In the yard of a government facility in Peterburg, young Nikolai, prince of Russia, played with another child from a royal family. Though peculiar, regulars in the capital were used to the sight of Nikolai wielding his baton in hand, ready to strike at all times. Even at a tender age, he displayed vicious and cruel tendencies.

Noticing a contingent of officers returning a prisoner

to his cell from the interrogation offices, Nikolai lunged at the inmate as if to strike him—hoping to make him flinch.³ The prisoner turned his stern gaze toward the young prince. Nikolai was thrown off balance by the fearless reaction. He dropped his baton, lowered his eyes, and hung his head. Crying in fear, he told his tutor that his heart had grown faint within him due to the terrifying gaze of that prisoner.

The prisoner whose gaze had such an impact on Nikolai's assumed superiority was the Alter Rebbe—this episode occurring during the last days of his



JEWISH CANTONIST SOLDIERS.

internment leading up to the miracle of Yud-Tes Kislev.

Nearly three decades later, Nikolai was crowned emperor of the Russian Empire. His predecessor had been tolerant, at times even favorable, to the Jews, but Nikolai's anti-semitism left little room for doubt as to his intentions for the Jews of Russia.

On his coronation day, the Tzemach Tzedek remarked, "The Alter Rebbe could accomplish with his vision what one of his holy peers could through speech. And his accomplishment was on a yet higher plane, as with the superiority of vision over speech."

It was heavenly orchestrated, the Friediker Rebbe explained, that Nikolai would be playing in precisely the courtyard through which the Alter Rebbe would be led. When the Alter Rebbe placed his holy gaze on Nikolai, terrifying him to the extent that he lost his baton, he created a fracture in the evil spirit of the future Czar. The Alter Rebbe "broke the scepter"—or in this case baton—of Nikolai's rule. Without his intervention, we could not have survived—G-d forbid—the decrees Nikolai would have enacted against us.⁴

A Grip On The Capital

Upon being crowned, Nikolai wasted no time in beginning his intense persecution of the Jews. His reign was marked by countless decrees targeting the Jews spiritually as well as physically.

CROWNING THE "KINGS" ON ROSH HASHANA

The Rabbeim spoke little, if at all, on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, because of the solemnity of that time. In contrast, the Tzemach Tzedek would regularly use that time to speak about politics, directing the course of the "earthly kingdom" in that coming year. However, on a number of occasions, other Rabbeim acted in the same, or similar, fashion.

One year the Rebbe Maharash, who otherwise never engaged in conversation on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, remarked, "*Machshava* is good and *dibbur* is certainly good. Today that there is both, let him (referring to an anti-semitic governor) die already." The governor immediately fell ill.⁹

At the conclusion of Rosh Hashanah 5743, the Rebbe said at the farbrengen that with regard to Torah and *mitzvos* we pay no heed to the government in power. On the contrary, an order ("*sedarim*") is made in kingdoms throughout the world for the good of the Yidden—as with the Tzemach Tzedek who made "*sedarim*" in the *hanhagas hamalchus*.

Weeks later, Leonid Brezhnev, leader of the Soviet Union, died. He was succeeded by Yuri Andropov under whose leadership a positive shift began in the Soviet approach to religion.

The following year, the Rebbe again made mention of this story of the Tzemach Tzedek. In the course of that year Andropov died and, with time, was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev who introduced serious liberal reforms in the USSR.¹⁰

Throughout most of Nikolai's rule, the Tzemach Tzedek served as *nossi* and fought valiantly to defend the Yidden and Yiddishkeit. The *tzaros* of the Yidden in that era and the Tzemach Tzedek's efforts to combat them—both through overt as well as clandestine activities—are fascinating stories in their own right.⁵ But aside from the

Tzemach Tzedek's "natural" resources, he also made use of his access to supernatural channels to better the lives of the Russian Yidden.

Notably, at the *seudos* of Rosh Hashana, the Tzemach Tzedek would—in the words of his son, the Maharil—"practice ownership in Peterburg." Or as the Rebbe

SPEECH THROUGH THE MOUTH OF ANOTHER

The Rebbe Maharash once told the Rebbe Rashab about one of the extraordinary ways the Tzemach Tzedek would affect governmental affairs:

When communal affairs were dire, the Tzemach Tzedek would utilize his powers of vision, hearing, and speech, in a way reminiscent of the Baal Shem Tov. He could see hundreds of miles away and eavesdrop on discussions in the capital. When necessary, he spoke from his location and ensured that someone "on the ground" would feel compelled to articulate the same.

During the winter of 5619, there was an urgent matter to take care of in Peterburg, but due to the bitter cold, the Tzemach Tzedek was unable to travel. Instead, he sent Reb Aharon Belinitzer—a shrewd, courageous individual capable of holding conversation with government officials, and an impressive *lamdan*—as his agent.

Before Reb Aharon departed, the Tzemach Tzedek advised him that whenever a debate arose, he should think deeply, make a decision, and "*yamid al dato*" (understood to mean—he *should* stand firm by his opinion).

Some time after Reb Aharon's journey, the Tzemach Tzedek remarked, "A pity on Aharon, he's stuck in a dilemma and doesn't know what to do." This was perplexing, as a recent letter from Reb Aharon had mentioned no dilemma. Shortly thereafter the Tzemach Tzedek continued, "Aharon is a *bar daas*, he is *maamid al dato*, good good."

The Rebbe Maharash then understood the meaning of the instruction "*viyamid al dato*": he *will* stand by the Rebbe's opinion.¹¹

Reb Shmuel Levitin related another story which seems to demonstrate this same supernatural faculty:

In 5603, the Russian Government convened the "*Asifas Harabbanim*," a conference intended to address their issues with Jewish life and impose reforms. Four delegates were invited to represent the Jewish factions in Russia (Chassidim, Misnagdim, the business class, and Maskilim). The Tzemach Tzedek represented the Chassidim and Reb Itzele Volozhiner represented the Misnagdim, the two fighting together on behalf of authentic Yiddishkeit.

At one point, the discussion turned to an offensive Midrash, which the officials pointed to as reason for censorship and banning of *seforim*: The Mechilta¹² reads, "*Tov shebagoyim harog*" (The finest of *goyim*, you should kill).¹³ The Tzemach Tzedek deferred the question to Reb Itzele for explanation.

A novel explanation suddenly flashed into Reb Itzele's mind. He explained that the original version of the Midrash had read, "*Tov shebagoyim katol*"—"K*atol*," referring to the Catholics, being described as the best of the nations. A copyist, mistaking it for the Aramaic word "*katol*" (to kill), replaced it with "*harog*" to be consistent with the Hebrew.

When the government officials asked for proof, the Tzemach Tzedek directed them to a certain manuscript in the imperial library, where indeed the Midrash appeared with the word "*katol*."

Reb Itzele later related that this answer was not his own, the Tzemach Tzedek had surely planted it in his mind. He searched extensively afterward, but never again found a version of the Midrash that read *katol*. He concluded that not only the answer, but even the existence of the manuscript, had been a miracle performed by the Tzemach Tzedek.¹⁴

Maharash put it, “He prods the wagon” (in the direction he desires). The Tzemach Tzedek would speak of governmental matters—ministers and the like—and his words would manifest in the political reality of the coming year. One example is the Lilienthal saga.

In the early 5600’s the Maskilim were aggressively campaigning their cause of general education. Led by Dr. Menachem (Max) Lilienthal⁶ from Munich, they persuaded Nikolai’s government to reform the Cheder system. After establishing Haskalah-style schools throughout the Russian Empire, they worked toward forcibly implementing their curriculum in the *chadarim* as well.

One Rosh Hashanah⁷ while Lilienthal was in the midst of implementing his scheme, he was suddenly betrayed. In a strange turn of events, the Russian government, who had held Lilienthal in high regard, accepted a libel accusing him of major theft.

Based on Lilienthal’s character, this libel was entirely unrealistic. However, as a result of the Tzemach Tzedek’s davening and *Seuda*-conversation, the government was inclined to believe it.

He was forced to escape Russia by sneaking across the border, thus halting his detrimental activities. He eventually came to America, where he settled in Cincinnati and founded the Reform seminary there.⁸

Hapodeinu Miyad Melachim

The Tzemach Tzedek’s activism on behalf of Russian Jewry bothered some officials in the government. One minister in particular, by the name of Ignatyev, would regularly create libels about the Tzemach Tzedek. These reports would be presented directly to the Czar, painting in his mind a bad image of the Tzemach Tzedek.

At the height of the Crimean War, the Tzemach Tzedek donated a sum of one-hundred rubles toward the war effort. Nikolai ordered his donation rejected and returned. He ominously remarked, “When I’m finished with the war, I will deal with the matter of what to do with Rabbin Schneerson.”

One night, the Chassidim became aware that the Tzemach Tzedek was davening with extraordinary fire and *dveikus*, unusual for an ordinary Maariv. Understanding that something deeper was transpiring, they created a peephole in the Tzemach Tzedek’s door through which they could better see and hear.

Standing in a circled off area, the Tzemach Tzedek was



“THE WINTER PALACE,” THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE CZARS OF RUSSIA, 5603.

davening with awe-inspiring cries and tunes. This dramatic *tefilla* continued until the words, “*Hapodeinu miyad melachim, malkeinu hagoaleinu mikafkol hearitzim*” (He who redeems us from the hand of kings, our King who delivers us from the grip of all the tyrants). The rest of Maariv was completed as quickly as possible, after which the Tzemach Tzedek sprung out of his circle.

Not long thereafter, shocking and delightful news spread throughout Russia. The fifty-eight year old Czar, who up until this point was in perfect health, suddenly died. Apparently a common cold had quickly turned to pneumonia and claimed his life. Even his physician had seen no mortal danger until the night before Nikolai’s death—the very same night as the Tzemach Tzedek’s passionate prayer.¹⁵

THE REGIONAL OPPRESSOR

VLADIMIR VEREVKIN

The antagonist in this story is the governor of Vitebsk by the name Verevkin. This hot-tempered anti-semitic ruled the Province of Vitebsk in which many Jews, including the Rabbeim, held citizenship. As we shall see, he used his position of power to harass the Rebbe Maharash by attempting to illegally conscript the Rebbe Rashab.

The only documented Governor of Vitebsk bearing the Verevkin name was General Vladimir Verevkin. Verevkin was born in 1821 to Nikolai Verevkin, a distinguished military man descended from one of Russia's ancient noble families.

Official records for Vladimir Verevkin place him as governor between the years 1863–1867, and his death in the year 1896. These dates do not align with the antagonist of our story because, first, in these years of governance, the Rebbe Rashab was no older than six—too young for conscription in the post-Cantonist era. Second, our antagonist died as an immediate result of the Rebbe Maharash's actions, whereas the aforementioned Verevkin died several years after the *histalkus* of the Rebbe Maharash.

The possibility remains that another Verevkin served as governor at a later time. Alternatively, it is possible that the limited records available contain inaccuracies.



Twisted Like A Bagel

In the 5620s, the Russian military introduced general conscription. Every male would be expected to serve in the army, including all Jews. In anticipation of the enactment of this law, the Tzemach Tzedek purchased *Zatchetnye Bilyeten*—exemption certificates—for all of his grandchildren. These limited-time documents, sold for the sum of five-hundred ruble each, were to guarantee their holder freedom from the coming draft. But, in the Rebbe Rashab's case, more than a certificate would be necessary for exemption.

Vladimir Verevkin, governor of the Vitebsk Province (Gubernia) where the Rabbeim were registered as citizens, was no friend of the Jews. In a petition to the government in Peterburg, he insisted that the Jews in his region were evading the new draft. He suggested, as a propaganda strategy, to have a member of the Schneerson family serve

in the army. This, he assured, would influence the Jews to cease concealing their sons from the draft board.

Attempts were made to sway the Rebbe Maharash to allow the Rebbe Rashab to be drafted. However, despite assurances that various accommodations would be made for him (he would not be required to live in the barracks and his clothing would be free of *shatnez*), the Rebbe Maharash adamantly refused.

Seeing that diplomacy failed, the government overrode the *Zatchetnye Bilyet* and issued a warrant, allowing Verevkin to seize the Rebbe Rashab and draft him by force.

Although the Rabbeim were officially citizens of Vitebsk Gubernia (Province)—Verevkin's territory—the city of Lubavitch actually belonged to the province of Mohilev. Verevkin, therefore, sought consent from the Mohilev Governor to carry out his scheme. The Mohilev Governor replied, with seeming indifference, that he

would neither impede nor assist in Verevkin's activities.

One night, the Rebbe Maharash summoned Ivan the wagon driver with instructions to take the Rebbe Rashab far away. First, he was to travel to Husayn and, after resting, to a suburb past Smolensk. The entire journey was to take no longer than four hours—even if the horses died from the strain. He then instructed the four watchmen of the Rebbe's *chatzer* that nobody should be given entry until 6:00 a.m.

Less than 45 minutes later, a group of Gendarmes, dispatched from Vitebsk, arrived in Lubavitch with orders to bring the Rebbe Rashab. To their dismay, they were informed that they could not enter until the morning. (It would be illegal for them to perform a police inspection during night hours, since the Rebbe Maharash held the status of "Hereditary Honored Citizen".)

The Gendarmes were forced to find lodgings for the night and returned at 9:00 a.m. They entered the *chatzer*, but were greeted with a message from the Rebbe Maharash: he was currently unavailable to receive them—at 12:00 they could enter his office.

When granted an audience, after their humbling experience, the officer said that they needed to perform a search of the property. The Rebbe Maharash responded, "Nu, make a search. I'm unaccustomed to being searched; usually they ask me and do as I say." The shocked officer replied, "Do you know who sent me?" The Rebbe Maharash retorted, "I know who he is, does he know who I am? But he will know! I will be in Vitebsk and will meet with him. Now search," and with that he left for the Sukkah.

The Mohilev Governor, sympathetic to the Rebbe Maharash, scheduled his regular inspection of the province earlier than usual, in order to meet the Rebbe Maharash and inform him of his dialogue with Verevkin.

The Rebbe Maharash then traveled to Vitebsk and met with the Governor together with an entourage of Chassidim. Verevkin was welcoming but unforthcoming. He claimed to be simply acting on the orders of his superiors in the Capitol, leaving the power to revoke the order beyond his jurisdiction.

The next day, Verevkin paid a visit to the Rebbe Maharash to continue the conversation. Before leaving, Verevkin asked the Rebbe Maharash to visit him again in his private residence.

At their third meeting, the conversation was more explicit. The Rebbe Maharash declared unequivocally that his son would not serve in the army. Enraged by



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

AN EXEMPTION
CERTIFICATE FOR THE
REBBE RASHAB, DATED
5639.

the Rebbe Maharash's fearlessness, Verevkin dropped his friendly pretense and retorted harshly.

Undeterred, the Rebbe Maharash continued, "Tonight I travel to Peterburg. Tomorrow night I will arrive there. And by the following morning, I'll be in the Ministry, and I will nullify the decree. If they refuse, I have only one option left: to renounce my Russian citizenship and relocate my entire family to Eretz Yisroel. So I ask you, at any rate, to prepare all necessary documents. But if this matter is in your hands, cancel the decree. Don't force me to travel, because you will pay a steep price. I give you the time until departure." And with that, he left.

The Governor called after him, "Be well," but the Rebbe Maharash ignored him.

In Peterburg, the Rebbe Maharash met with officials and presented evidence that, contrary to Verevkin's claim, the Jews of Mohilev and Vitebsk were not evading the draft. Within a few days, the decree was annulled and the Rebbe Maharash was on his way home. But Verevkin had yet to pay for his machinations.

The route the Rebbe Maharash chose to return home passed through Vitebsk. He stopped there briefly to say a *maamar*. In the midst of his recitation, he uttered the words, "*haichail hanegef*"¹⁶ (the plague has begun), which had no relation to the content of the *maamar*.

Immediately, Verevkin was seized with a horrific illness, his body convulsing in excruciating pain "like a bagel." His wife sent an agent to Lubavitch to ask forgiveness, but the Rebbe Maharash said, "It's too late," and would not see him. Verevkin perished three hours later amid great suffering.¹⁷

THE LAST MONARCH

NIKOLAI II

Nikolai (Nicholas) II Romanov (1868–1918) was the last Emperor of Russia. His reign was marked by an explosion of revolutionary sentiment and its brutal repression by the Czar’s military.

For the Jews, his reign is remembered for the persecution they endured. Aside from the perpetuation of discriminatory laws, a nationalist anti-semitism developed in Russia as a reaction to the Revolutionaries. Scores of deadly pogroms were perpetrated with general tolerance, and some degree of admiration, from the Czar and his government.

Nikolai continuously held onto the belief in his inherent superiority and gave little to no recognition of the need for liberalization. The world saw no end to the Romanov control over the Russian populace.

Suddenly, in a swift series of protests and military mutinies known as “The February Revolution,” the Czar was forced to abdicate. This effectively ended the Russian monarchy in a way nobody could have conceived. How was it possible?



A Revolutionary Maamar

With the German advance into Russia during World War I in 5676, the Rebbe Rashab fled Lubavitch because he did not want to come under the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm.¹⁸ Despite the ongoing war, Lubavitch eventually managed to reorganize in the city of Rostov.

On Shabbos, 26 Teves 5677, the Rebbe Rashab recited a *maamar* as usual. He chose as a *dibbur hamaschil* the *possuk* “Vayomer... re’eh n’saticha Elokim l’pharoh.”¹⁹ Chassidim reviewed the *maamar* diligently, delving into the deep concepts explained therein, but most of them failed to see its broader significance.

Only the Chassidim to whom every detail of the *maamar* was of utmost importance, realized the message contained—primarily—in the opening and conclusion of the *maamar*. (These elements of the *maamar* are sometimes seen as “passports” to the core of the *maamar*. Therefore, they are sometimes studied in a more cursory manner.)

In those unassuming lines, the Rebbe Rashab

explained the remarkable power required of Moshe to break Pharaoh. When *kelipa* is in its full strength—retaining its G-dly vitality—*tzaddikim* do not have the power to eliminate it entirely. However, Moshe destroyed Pharaoh at the height of his unquestionable authority—possible only with the power of *Atzmus Ein Sof*.

Not long thereafter began the “February Revolution,” a series of protests and uprisings which could not be quelled by Imperial forces.²⁰ Merely weeks later, Nikolai II abdicated from the throne, nominating his brother in his stead. Seeing his slim chances of maintaining control, his brother refused to accept the throne. Thus, three centuries of unbreakable Czarist rule came to a sudden end.²¹

(Interestingly, on Parshas Va’era 5742, the Rebbe said a *sicha* about the Children’s Sefer Torah and its power to break *kelipa*. As part of that theme, the Rebbe mentioned this story of the Rebbe Rashab. Two days later, Mikhail Suslov, an important member of the Communist party, suddenly died.)²²

THE NOTORIOUS DICTATOR

JOSEPH STALIN

After the death of Vladimir Lenin—leader of the Communist party in Russia—a fierce power struggle ensued.

Joseph Stalin, who previously held a marginally significant position, managed to fight his way up in prominence. Through undermining, exiling, and executing his political rivals, he consolidated his power over the USSR, creating a dictatorship with himself at its helm.

For the Chassidim in Russia, Stalin's power brought an increase in religious persecution—as part of his general policy of aggression.

In the late 1940s, Stalin's media began warning the public against “rootless cosmopolitans.” The reports gradually become more explicit in their warnings—the danger referred to was the Zionists and Jews.

The smear campaign morphed into “The Doctors Plot.” In 1953, the government claimed to discover a “terrorist cell” of doctors. These doctors—agents of the West (Jews and Zionists)—were plotting to undermine the Soviet utopia and its leaders through medical malpractice. Most of the accused were Jews and had obviously Jewish last names.

This ongoing media campaign landed on the fertile ground of centuries-old, carefully cultivated, Russian anti-semitism. Jews immediately felt the violent reaction and dreadfully awaited the end of the story. All were sure that a mock trial of the doctors would be followed by even worse persecution. Some historians even posit that Stalin's plan was for the doctors' plot to culminate in the mass deportation of Russia's Jews to extermination camps.

Nizkarim V'naasim

“The recitation of this maamar... was connected, it appears, with the events at the time leading to the demise of the ruler of “that country”—a tzorer Yisroel—as was understood at the time from the story the Rebbe said as a preface to the maamar...”

These words, edited by the Rebbe for the introduction to the maamar “Al Kein Karu 5713,” confirmed speculation which had been circulating amongst Chassidim for close to forty years.

As the details of this story have been elaborated upon in many other sources,²³ it will be presented here briefly.



A SCENE FROM THE FARBRENGEN OF PURIM 5713, WHICH EVIDENTLY DEPICTS THE REBBE SHOWING HOW THE CHOSSID PROCLAIMED “HOORAH!”

The Rebbe's Purim farbrengen in 5713 began quite ordinarily. The Rebbe opened with a *maamar*, spoke of things related to Purim, and encouraged all those present to celebrate with unbridled joy.

However, a nervous feeling was also present at the farbrengen. The Chassidim, many of whom had only escaped the USSR relatively recently, were worried for their brethren still trapped in Stalin's grip. Throughout the farbrengen, *Lchaims* and requests for *brachos* were made on behalf of Russian Jewry.

At around 4:00 a.m., the Rebbe related a curious story with no apparent relevance: After the revolution that ousted the Czar of Russia, the Rebbe Rashab instructed the Chassidim to partake in the government elections.

Among the Chassidim who came to vote was a man totally oblivious to worldly affairs. Not knowing the politics, he nonetheless came to fulfill the Rebbe's directive. (Obviously, he first went to *mikvah* and put on his gartel—as is fitting for the Rebbe's directive.)

After carefully following his friends' instructions on how to vote, he saw a group of people excitedly cheering, "Hoorah!" The chossid joined in as well and, still on his divinely focused mission, proclaimed with all seriousness, "הוא-רע! הוא-רע! הוא-רע!"—he is bad. (In telling the story, the Rebbe mimicked the innocent chossid's cheering—with his hands positioned in a triangle and imitating the serious tone in which the chossid spoke.)

The crowd was in for a further surprise. After concluding the mysterious story, the Rebbe repeated it while facing the crowd on his right, and once more while facing his left! The Rebbe paused, and the Chassidim sensed that the Rebbe expected them to follow suit. They jumped up and proclaimed "Hu Ra! Hu Ra! Hu Ra!"

Immediately thereafter, the Rebbe's face took on a serious tone and he began the *maamar* "Al Kein Karu." Aside from the strange circumstances surrounding the *maamar*, this was also the first time that the Rebbe recited two *maamarim* on one occasion.

Days after Purim, the news was released that Stalin *ym"sh* had died, and the "doctor's plot" was quickly dropped.

THE POWER OF TORAH

Amazingly, the Rebbe not only confirmed his role in that event, but gave us an inkling into how it was done as well—"the recitation of this maamar." Chassidus explains that Torah—especially *pnimiyus haTorah*—has the power to transform the world. By merely explaining a concept in Torah, that concept can be manifested in tangible reality.²⁴

In the *maamar* of *Al Kein Karu*, the Rebbe explained the spiritual significance of Haman's lottery. In brief, Haman wished to tap into Hashem's transcendence above *hishtalshalus* and, consequently, above the differentiation between good and evil—much like a lottery in which all options are of equal appeal. Only then would it be possible for Haman—evil—to decree annihilation on the Jews—*kedusha*.

Nonetheless, the *maamar* concludes, Haman failed. Because although Hashem is indeed completely beyond the universe, and nothing contains value before his sublimity, he chooses to love the Yidden above all else. Thus, even with a lottery, Amalek is destroyed, and the Yidden are victorious.

The connection is ever apparent. Stalin wished to annihilate the Jews—only from the level of "lottery" is there even a possibility for such a scheme. Even then, Hashem's love for his chosen nation shines forth—Stalin suddenly dies and his scheme dies with him.

A SOVIET GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT PUBLISHED JUST WEEKS AFTER STALIN'S DEATH, STATING THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS CONDUCTED A REVIEW OF THE "DOCTOR'S PLOT" CASE AND FOUND THAT THE CONFESSIONS WERE FORCED THROUGH "INADMISSIBLE AND STRICTLY FORBIDDEN METHODS OF INVESTIGATION." THE DOCTORS WERE DECLARED COMPLETELY INNOCENT OF ESPIONAGE, TERRORISM, AND SABOTAGE.

СООБЩЕНИЕ Министерства внутренних дел СССР

Министерство внутренних дел СССР приняло решение немедленно начать всестороннее расследование в отношении и против докторов по делу о вражеском заговоре, организованном против Советского государства и угрожающем безопасности и территориальной целостности Советского Союза.

В результате проверки установлено, что проводились по этому делу профессором Васильевым М. С., профессором Бондаревым В. И., профессором Мухоморовым М. В., профессором Ковалевым В. С., профессором Грозовым В. И., профессором Фельдманом А. И., профессором Зингером Г. Г., профессором Васильевым В. Л., профессором Грозовым А. М., профессором Замановым В. Ф., профессором Прохоровым И. С., профессором Павловым Н. А., профессором Зюковым В. И., а также другими лицами Министерства внутренних дел СССР противозаконно, без каких-либо законных оснований.

Процесс проводился, что установлено, исключительно против докторов, а не против вражеского заговора, на основании которого докторов обвинили в организации и проведении заговора.

В Президиуме Верховного Совета СССР

THE ARABIAN KING

FAISAL

Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (1906–1975) was proclaimed King of Saudi Arabia in 1964. Under his direction, Saudi Arabia underwent a transformative process of modernization and bolstered its world prestige.

His influence was not limited to his own territory. As a key player in the Arab League, he stood behind the Arab attacks on Eretz Yisroel, even providing military support.

Aside from sending thousands of troops to attack in the Yom Kippur War, he thought of an economic weapon which would give him global power: oil. Saudi Arabia, and a host of Arab countries under its influence, placed an oil embargo on countries that supported Eretz Yisroel.

Throughout the U.S., Western Europe, and many more countries, oil prices skyrocketed (if oil was available at all), and the economy plummeted. In those five months, the Western world was brought to its knees in desperation from which it would not recover for a while. King Faisal, sworn enemy of the Jews, became a force to be reckoned with in the eyes of the international community.



Limakei Mitzrayim Bivchoreihem

On Shabbos Hagadol 5735, which fell on 10 Nissan (the same *kvius* as the original Shabbos Hagadol), the Rebbe spoke at length about Shabbos Hagadol from various angles.

In the opening of the farbrengen, the Rebbe explained the straightforward story of Shabbos Hagadol and why it merits to be called “*nes gadol*”—a great miracle. Egypt’s firstborns—their finest and most dignified—turned against their country and dealt a crippling blow on their own. From the *kelipa* itself came its attackers—the advantage of *is’hapcha*—that’s a great miracle.

The Rebbe then explained that when remembered properly (*nizkarim*), these events are renewed every year (*naasim*). Even while still in *galus*, as the Yidden were in the time of the story, the great miracle of “*Limakei Mitzrayim bivchoreihem*” is accomplished.

Less than three days after this farbrengen, King Faisal hosted a “Majlis,” a traditional Arab event in which the King entertained guests. One of the guests present was the King’s nephew, Prince Faisal.

Prince Faisal approached his royal uncle to greet him in the traditional manner—a kiss on the King’s nose. As he leaned over, the prince suddenly withdrew a pistol from his robes and shot the King twice at point-blank range.

The shocked spectators rushed to apprehend the assassin and bring the King medical attention. The King received the first bullet to his brain and died within hours, if not instantly. News agencies scrambled to report the sensational scandal, desperately trying to point to a motive for Prince Faisal to murder his uncle.

Rabbi Leibel Groner—one of the Rebbe’s *mazkirim*—recorded an entry in his diary that day. “The Rebbe read a *tzetel* that someone had written to him. He then asked, ‘Has anything happened to Faisal?’ I replied, ‘Yes, he was killed by his nephew.’” After asking about the details of what happened, the Rebbe asked if the assassin’s motives

were known. Reb Leibel reported that the narrative presented on the radio stations was that the prince was mentally unstable.

“Some time went by while the Rebbe replied to a few more letters. Then he said, with a smile, ‘By *krias yam suf* there were also such Yidden who said that a wind blew’ [the waters apart]. I replied to the Rebbe, ‘This is what the Rebbe spoke about on Shabbos—‘*Limakei Mitzrayim bivchoreihem*’. The Rebbe smiled again, ‘So you are not one of those who don’t believe in miracles!’”²⁵

The True King

Everything one encounters—certainly stories of the Rabbeim—serves as a lesson and directive in *avodas Hashem*. Let us suggest one lesson that can be gained from these stories.

Jewish continuity is unlike that of any other nation. The existence of every nation is dictated by the rules of nature, but Yidden are not connected with nature. Our lives are directed exclusively by Torah and *mitzvos*.

When a difficult time or decree arises, *Rachmana litzlan*, we cannot rely on diplomacy or political activism with the nations of the world—our endurance does not come through those means. We must rectify our shortcomings and deepen our commitment to Torah and *mitzvos*.

To panic regarding the situation of the Yidden, as perceived by our physical and nature-biased vision, has no

place as well. Although by all natural calculations another nation in such a situation would cease, we survive and flourish through our commitment to Torah and *mitzvos*.

To be sure, we are expected to work through natural means, but this is not the cause of our salvation. Diplomacy and activism are merely “clothing” of nature with which to “dress” our miraculous salvation (in line with the concealment of *Elokus* during *galus*). So long as our strengthening in Torah and *mitzvos* is sufficient, our subsequent salvation will be perfectly fine with dressing in “threadbare clothing.”²⁶

This point is emphasized in a poignant way in the stories we have recalled. Without any political maneuvers—without any natural activities at all—the highest echelons of leadership were manipulated and brought down. The Rabbeim slipped away the cloak of nature from upon the miraculous, helping us realize what lies beneath the surface of our survival.

We may not have the power of the Rabbeim. We may need to reckon with the apparent leaders of our governments, but we are not at their mercy. As the adage goes, “*Lev melachim visarim biyad Hashem*” (the heart of kings and ministers are in the hand of Hashem). Let us remember that Hashem is truly directing every aspect of our lives in a miraculous way, and may this bring us to the day that all will recognize the true King—“*Vihayah Hashem l’melech al kol ho’oretz*.” **T**

1. Gittin 62a.

2. Maamar Shir Hamaalos 5722 ch. 4 based on Torah Or (Vayeshev 27b) and Likkutei Torah (Tazria 22c).

3. In Sefer Hasichos 5701 it is implied that Nikolai actually struck the Alter Rebbe. However, in Sefer Hasichos 5703 it seems that Nikolai merely attempted to scare him.

4. Based on Likkutei Dibburim vol. 3, p. 799 (Sefer Hasichos 5703 p. 61). Sefer Hasichos 5701 p. 28.

5. See “We Want To See The Rebbe,” Derher Cheshvan 5782; “Confluence of Worlds,” Derher Nissan 5782.

6. Dr. Lilienthal was the grandson of Shimon “Hakofer” (Sefer Hasichos 5703 p. 91), the infamous undercover Maksil who was exposed by the Alter Rebbe. See Divrei Yemei Chayei Admur Hazaken p. 32.

7. It seems that this occurred Rosh Hashana 5604, shortly after the Asifas Harabbanim leading to the establishment of the government schools, and coinciding with Lilienthal’s mysterious disappearance from the Russian scene.

8. Based on Sefer Hasichos 5704 p. 4. See also Toras Sholom p.79.

9. Sefer Hasichos 5701 p. 27.

10. Diedushka p. 610.

11. Based on Sefer Hasichos 5696 p. 141. See Igros Kodesh vol. 3, letter #717.

12. 14, 7. It also appears in other Midrashim.

13. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 148 (first *sicha* for Beshalach).

14. Based on Likkutei Sippurim Tzemach Tzedek story #12.

15. Based on Toras Sholom p. 80. See the *Sapir* journal, vol. 1 (Sivan 5785), pp. 11–34 for a

comprehensive overview on this story.

16. Bamidbar 17:11.

17. Based on Reshimas Hayoman pp. 200–202, and Toras Menachem vol. 3, p. 300.

18. Lubavitch Vichayaleha p. 98.

19. Printed in Sefer Hamaamarim 5677 p. 129.

20. Not to be confused with the October Revolution—the Communist coup against the Democracy that replaced the Czar.

21. Based on Hamelech Bemisibo vol. 2, pp. 120, 125. Sichas Parshas Vaera 5742.

22. Diedushka p. 609.

23. See *Samarkand* (Hebrew), p. 303.

“Heavenly affairs,” Derher Adar 5777.

24. Based on the *maamar* Shir Hamaalos 5722.

25. Based on Hamzkir vol. 1, pp. 224–225.

26. Based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, p. 215.