



QUIET

לזכות
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ומשפחתם שיחיו
ריטשלער



DIPLOMACY

THE REBBE'S BATTLE
TO SAVE RUSSIAN JEWRY

Penetrating the Impenetrable

For many generations, the Jewish community in Russia was one of the biggest throughout the world. As the Rebbe pointed out, that area was actually home to “רוב מנין ורוב” —the majority of the Jewish community both in numbers, as well as when measuring by importance. After all, it was there that the Baal Shem Tov was born and began the revelation of Chassidus.

But for most of the twentieth century, the immense Jewish population was tormented and

persecuted, until it went almost completely silent. What became known as the “Iron Curtain” was sealed shut, and it became a crime even to try to leave the clutches of the oppressive regime.

Throughout all those years, Lubavitcher Chassidim held a clandestine network of underground Jewish activity, guided and encouraged (sometimes in the most miraculous of ways) by the Rebbe in New York.

For decades, leaving the Soviet Union for most Jews was an unattainable fantasy. Aside

for a handful of Yidden who managed to escape in a special operation shortly after the war, leaving the country proved to be impossible.

A world away in Crown Heights, the Rebbe never ceased to act, speak, and cry on behalf of Russian Jewry. At almost every major farbrengen, the Rebbe would say a special “*l'chaim*” for them, blessing them that very soon they’ll merit a complete *geula* from their bitter predicament.

Finally, at the end of the 5710s, small amounts of Yidden were able to trickle out and



10 SHEVAT 5735, JEM 102927

penetrate the curtain to freedom. In a letter written to the administration of Tzach in Eretz Yisroel in 5716 (Igrosh Kodesh vol. 12, p. 154), the Rebbe urges them to use the opportunity and do all they can to help Yidden get out of Russia. (“Remember what the Torah says about a *ger*,” the Rebbe writes candidly, “and the reason why we need to be sensitive to him: כי גרים הייתם— you yourselves were strangers in Mitzrayim. The analogy is obvious...” I.e. the Rebbe was telling the Chassidim in Kfar Chabad, most of whom were themselves immigrants from Russia, to remember what it felt like being trapped behind the Iron Curtain.)

At the same time, the Rebbe warned that all efforts in persuading the Russian government to allow people to leave should be done in a calm and civilized manner. (Igrosh Kodesh vol. 12, p. 312).

Then as the 5720s progressed, the situation seemed to be easing. In 5726, some families were able to leave. (See Igrosh Kodesh vol. 24, p. 49, “Now is an opportune time to receive a permit to leave...”)

Then came the Six-Day War.



The victory of the Six-Day War in 5727 raised Jewish pride throughout the Soviet Union. Many began to openly identify themselves as Jews, and there was a surge in the amount of people trying to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel. But the difficulties of living in Russia grew in tandem: following the Arab nations’ defeat, Soviet Russia cut ties with Eretz Yisroel and many

of those who tried obtaining visas lost their jobs, were interrogated and sent to prison.

It was during this period that demonstrations for the Jews of Russia became the most popular Jewish cause worldwide, with huge events taking place in Washington, Tel Aviv and other capitals throughout the world. One might think that this was a positive development: Jewish people were finally expressing solidarity with their brothers in exile and pushing for them to be released. In fact, most of the Jewish establishment was on board with the movement. “Let my people go!” they proclaimed, as they sought to isolate the Soviet government until they would open the doors to immigration.

The Rebbe was the single voice against these protests. As he would later articulate at length at various farbrengens, the Rebbe said that public pressure was only serving to antagonize the Russians and causing them to harden their stance. Furthermore, it was endangering the lives of millions of Russian Jews, who were hostages of the Communist regime. Shortly after the first major demonstration was held in New York in 5729, the Rebbe summoned Mr. Yoram Dinstein, a member of the Israeli consulate and Mossad, along with Mr. Zvi Kaspi, to a *yechidus*.¹

The Rebbe told them that, in his opinion, any further demonstrations should be held off for the time being. Noting that Pesach was coming around the corner and that the channels needed to remain open for the



A SOVIET VISA.

Yidden to receive their needs for Pesach, the Rebbe emphasized that he was only asking them to delay the demonstrations temporarily, with the expectation that the Russians would reciprocate. If no further demonstrations were held, the Rebbe said, he had information that 5000 Jews would be freed that year (a bold statement when immigration from Russia at the time numbered in the hundreds). If this doesn’t work, the Rebbe added, you can always continue the demonstrations after Shavuot. The Rebbe completed his words by saying, “This is my request from the Israeli government.”

Mr. Dinstein wrote up a detailed memo of the *yechidus* and sent it to his superior, who in turn brought it up to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. After two weeks, Mr. Dinstein returned to the Rebbe—together with a higher-up in the Mossad, Mr. Nechemia Levanon—to relay



DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION IN ISRAEL.

that the Israeli government had decided to continue with the demonstrations, against the Rebbe's advice.

In their recollection of the *yechidus*, the two officials noted that the Rebbe was very disappointed, as he again laid out the reasoning against the demonstrations. The discussion turned heated at times but ended with the diplomats promising to pass the information to their superiors.

Prime Minister Eshkol died of a heart attack just ten days later. Mr. Dinstein says that had he survived and heard the Rebbe's position again, the government's approach may have changed. But when Golda Meir took over the government, he says, it seems that the Rebbe realized that she wouldn't be open to outside opinions, and he stopped pursuing this avenue.

The Rebbe would continue fighting the public demonstrations on various fronts for almost two years: in *yechidus'n* with activists, letters,

press-releases and in at least one Shabbos farbrengen in 5730, but it remained relatively muted. Finally, at the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5731, the Rebbe came out against it publicly, in two long *sichos* that were heard around the world.

The Rebbe's opinion on this matter went against the Israeli government and the entire Jewish establishment.

The False Narrative

In order to appreciate the Rebbe's stance, one must first understand how others portrayed the issue, with many still erroneously seeing it this way today. In their view, at one point in the late 5720s, the Jewish world began to wake up to the plight of Russian Jewry, and more and more people started demonstrating on behalf of their brethren. As the pressure ratcheted up, the Russian government began allowing Jews to emigrate.

These efforts were given a boost when, in 5730, a group of

seventeen refuseniks hatched a plan to hijack a plane out of the Soviet Union. They were caught by the KGB as soon as they arrived at the airport, and two of them were subsequently sentenced to death. Following demonstrations in Jewish communities around the world, their death sentences were commuted to hard labor. In addition to galvanizing the Jewish community to demonstrate, this episode proved (according to them) that the pressure was effective. As the demonstrations continued throughout the following years, more and more Jews were freed from the Soviet Union and the refuseniks asked the Jews in the diaspora to raise awareness for their plight, not to allow their suffering to pass in silence.

The Effectiveness of Demonstrations

In this farbrengen,² the Rebbe spoke with great anguish about the situation of the Jews in Russia, and dissected the narrative of the protestors piece by piece, showing their fallacies on both a factual and a logical level.

The only actual effect the demonstrations were having, the Rebbe said, was that hundreds of people who had been promised exit-visas were now stuck in Russia. "People ask, how do I know that my approach is then correct one?" the Rebbe said. "I will relate the story as it occurred—although it puts Yidden in a negative light, I no longer have a choice in the matter. This was at the beginning

of my work, in private, to stop the public demonstrations.”

The Rebbe went on to speak publicly about his *yechidus* with the Israelis two years earlier (not mentioning any individuals by name), while explaining the background of the story. At the time, certain people in Eretz Yisroel were having daily telephone conversations with the Russian Jews, coordinating with them to arrange exit-visas. Matters had progressed to the extent that the Russian government had promised to give them exit-visas, and had even said that this would continue with more families in the future. “When I found out about this,” the Rebbe said, “I knew that those who were arranging the demonstrations certainly had the same facts, possibly even before I did, for this was common knowledge. It wasn’t in the newspapers, but anyone who had any interest in the matter knew about it. I had an opportunity to speak to two of their representatives, and I pleaded with them: Don’t adopt my approach! But instead of making your demonstration before Pesach—I plead with you to push it off until Erev Shavuos.”

If the Russians would hear that a demonstration was in the making, they were liable to cancel the visas. On the other hand, the Rebbe emphasized to the officials, even if his argument turned out to be wrong, the demonstration could always happen before Shavuos. “The matter was discussed,” the Rebbe said, “and then I received the answer that they wouldn’t take



it into consideration: [they felt that] my information was probably not correct, and the demonstrations would take place on Erev Pesach.

“What was the result? Those hundred families are stuck in Russia until this very day. But [the difference is that] before this incident they lived peaceful lives; now that they were under suspicion of having a connection to the demonstrations—some of them lost their jobs and some were stuck far from their homes.”

The Rebbe went on to say that, over the years, as a direct result of the demonstrations, hundreds of Jews had been killed, sent to Siberia (which is essentially a death sentence), or lost their jobs (which was also a life or death issue in Soviet Russia). And it wasn’t as if the people arranging the demonstrations were unaware of the issue—they knew exactly what had happened!

Though the Rebbe didn’t speak explicitly on this point,

it must be emphasized that, contrary to public opinion at the time, it wasn’t Jewish organizations behind these efforts. As they themselves later said publicly, the driving force was the *Netiv*, a branch of the Mossad dedicated to matters of the Soviet Union, that operated in secrecy. Ironically, these were people who the Rebbe knew on a personal basis, and who had assisted Lubavitch’s underground network for over a decade, including smuggling the Rebbe’s *sichos* and *maamarim* into Russia. This is why the Rebbe had summoned these Israeli officials to stop the protests—yet it was to no avail.

The Logical Fallacy

The Rebbe explained that the notion of *convincing* the Russians

What was the result? Those hundred families are stuck in Russia until this very day.

He should have told Haman: You owe me hundreds of franks, you thief! He should have given him the blow he rightfully deserved!

instead of publically putting them against a wall, isn't some novel idea in foreign policy.

The Rebbe referred to recent events with President Pompidou of France that clearly showed that when a public outcry was orchestrated against him, it only resulted in a negative outcome for the Yidden, not a better one.

The Rebbe didn't elaborate much on the story, but this is what happened: In the early years after Israel declared independence, the French were its only allies, providing critical arms and so on. During the Six-Day War, however, the French president at the time switched sides, imposing an arms embargo on the Middle East which mostly affected Israel. The next president to take office, Georges Pompidou, continued the arms embargo, though he quietly supplied small arms to Israel. Then, in 5730, he sold 110 airplanes to Libya, while refusing to sell them to Eretz Yisroel. During a visit to America, he and his wife were picketed and spat upon, and he nearly cut his trip to America short over the protests.

The Rebbe pointed out that these protests had been a strategic mistake. By labeling him as anti-Israel, the Jewish community had caused him to stop selling even small arms

to Eretz Yisroel. After the demonstrations ceased however, he resumed supplying small arms to Eretz Yisroel, and was later instrumental in—*quietly*—helping 300 Yidden escape Egypt.

A similar error had been made a year earlier, shortly after Pompidou had become president, by the famous Israeli operation, the *Cherbourg Project*. When the arms embargo had commenced in 5727, the French had been in the midst of building several ships for the Israeli navy, and they continued doing so. Realizing that the political situation was getting worse, Israel secretly stole ships from under France's nose, in an operation that was hailed in Israel. The Rebbe said that it was a grave mistake to imagine that the upper echelons of the French government had been unaware of the operation: They had been fully aware of it, and they had allowed it. They would have continued allowing such "mistakes" if the story had been kept under the radar. But because Israel had publicized the operation, celebrating their ingenuity, any such further "mistakes" were prevented.

Bringing an example from the Megillah, the Rebbe explained: When the Yidden faced a death sentence at the hands of the Haman and Achashveirosh, Mordechai's response was to arrange public fasts and intercede through Queen Esther. Using the logic of the demonstrators, he should have taken another route: Instead of davening, he should have shouted and informed everyone

that Haman is his slave and a lowly barber. He should have told Haman: You owe me hundreds of franks, you thief! He should have given him the blow he rightfully deserved! By the same token, he should have screamed at Achashveirosh and told him that he was a fool!

Yet, for some reason Mordechai—who was a seasoned politician, as is evidenced by the fact that he was the viceroy—never even considered doing such a thing!

The logic is simple: You cannot rail against a person that he is a thief—"You owe me money and I know you won't pay me back!"—and then proceed to ask him to pay you back. You have to convince him *not* to be a thief, and hopefully he will change his ways. If he claims not to be a robber, take him by his word (even if he's just saying it) and encourage him. By the same token, you cannot label someone as an anti-semitic and then expect him to help you.

The Rebbe pointed out the irony involved: One would imagine that the Jews would be convincing the Russians not to be anti-semites, and that the Russians would be saying that they *are* anti-semitic. The situation is exactly the opposite: The Russians are going about saying that they are a single, unified country without discrimination, and the Jews are coming and telling them that they are anti-semites! They're saying they aren't robbers—so people make demonstrations and say that they *are* robbers. They scream that they will let certain families out—so people

go out to the streets to say that they are liars, and that no-one will come out. This is against common sense!

The fact is, the Rebbe said, that in areas where there weren't any hidden agendas, the Israeli leaders themselves had taken the approach of quiet diplomacy:

- When President Pompidou helped Yidden get out of Egypt, the Israeli newspapers were directed not to write about it.
- When Soviet Jews were granted permission to speak on the telephone to the diaspora, it was not publicized.
- There were other communist countries that were allowing Jews to emigrate during the same time period—and it was kept quiet with the understanding that any fuss would ruin it.

The Rebbe also pointed out that he wasn't alone in this opinion. "The one sitting in the Vatican" had sent a message to President Nixon that the Russians should be worked with quietly, and the State Department had adopted this stance. Nixon himself had given the same message to the Jewish community: If you want a cold war, continue with the demonstrations, but if you want people to get out of Russia you must work quietly. This message had been sent by governments from around the world: London, Washington, Paris, and the people in the Vatican! In addition to what it was causing in Russia, the current attitude of

demonstrations was ruining the Jewish people's connections in the White House and in France.

The Hijackers

But weren't the demonstrations helping? Weren't thousands more people coming out than before?

The Rebbe said that this was a factual error: The change in the Russian foreign policy had been *notwithstanding* the demonstrations, not because of them.

There were other reasons that Yidden were being let free—but it was in spite of the demonstrations. In fact, at a convention in London, the organizers themselves had admitted that the demonstrations weren't effective in saving Yidden (though according to them it was worth it because public opinion had been awakened to the issue), and those hundred families were a prime example.

Perhaps the most prominent example of the false-information campaign was the case of the hijackers whose death sentences had been commuted. The proponents of demonstrations had held this up as a direct result of the international furor on the matter, but in fact it was due to an unrelated geo-political issue: On the same day that the appeals court was convened for the refuseniks in Russia, the dictator of Spain, General Franco, had commuted the sentences of six political dissidents who had been sentenced to death in the infamous "Burgos Trial." Being that Franco had commuted the sentences of *six* people who

had *actually* committed crimes, Moscow had no choice but to commute the sentences of the two refuseniks who had only tried hijacking.

The Rebbe said: "One of the leaders was by me [in *yechidus*], and I asked him, 'How can you allow such a thing to be published? You yourself know the real reason their sentences were commuted! The proof is that initially, the newspapers were bringing this story as confirmation that the demonstrations were helping, but once the non-Jewish newspapers published the true story, the Jewish newspapers stopped citing it. [...] Do you really believe that you can fool the entire world and bring this as a proof that the demonstrations helped, when you yourself know that there was no connection?! It was a miracle that the demonstrations didn't cause the Russians to get upset and *keep* the death sentence, notwithstanding Franco!"

The Rebbe also brought an example from a Gemara in Avoda Zara: *Zunin said to Rabbi Akiva: Both my heart and your heart know that there is no substance to idol worship. Nevertheless, don't we see people who go with broken limbs to worship idols and come back when they are whole? What is the reason for this?*

Rebbi Akiva replied that suffering is sent to a person for a certain amount of time, by the end of which the suffering must cease. Should the suffering change its course and remain because this person went to worship idols?



SOVIET JEWS IN MOSCOW

However, there were a number of other factors that were blurring the issue.

Cold War Motivations

The Israeli leaders were politically motivated to drive the Cold War with Russia, and it was therefore in their interest to shame them on the world stage. Incidentally, this was not the foreign policy of President Nixon who favored a strategy of detente, a lessening of tensions with Russia; this is (presumably) what the Rebbe referred to in the farbrengen when he said that the demonstrations were ruining connections with the White House.

By the same token, from a political perspective it wasn't necessarily a loss when the Russian government heightened their persecution of the Russian Yidden: it served to highlight the viciousness of the Russian government. The Rebbe spoke very sharply about these political tactics taking precedence to the lives of three million Jews, hostages in the hands

of the government, especially considering the fact that they were being orchestrated by people who were on safe territory. Sacrificing lives for a political statement transgresses "*Lo sa'omod al dam rei'echa*, [You shall not stand by the blood of your brother]."

Emotional Blunders:

In 5730, the Rebbe had a *yechidus* with the famous refusenik Nechama Lifshitz.³ She had recently escaped the Soviet Union, where, among other things, she had been active in arranging the Simchas Torah celebrations in Moscow, which were legendary as being a single bright light in the Soviet darkness, as hundreds of young Jews gathered in shul once a year to celebrate their Yiddishkeit.

At one point, she showed the Rebbe a letter she had received from a singer in Moscow asking for help in escaping to Eretz Yisroel, and she asked whether she should arrange protests. The Rebbe replied that instead she should utilize her personal

connections in helping people get out. When she argued that the demonstrations had been proven to be effective, the Rebbe said that the world opinion doesn't yield the results that one would like, bringing an example from a recent Arab hijacking, where the plane had landed in Syria. The furor from the world opinion—the United Nations, the State Department, the worldwide demonstrations—didn't cause the Syrians to yield a single inch; only the release of thirteen terrorists bought the freedom of the Israelis onboard. If Damascus wasn't bothered by the threat to its prestige, can one truly believe that Moscow is?

Still, she said, the Russian Jews are demanding that we scream out to the high-heavens on their behalf—how can we ignore their plea?!

The Rebbe answered her at the time, and further elaborated on the point at a farbrengen (though it seems the Rebbe is actually referring to a *yechidus* with another activist).

"...Someone told me that his relative has a question regarding a medical operation. I asked him whether they had consulted with several people, and he said 'yes.' Then I asked him whether the patient himself had joined the consultation. He looked at me like I was from a different planet ("שלא מן הישוב").

"Before he had told me about the operation, he had been arguing that demonstrations must be held because the Yidden in Russia were demanding them. I wanted to see whether he would understand the connection, so I asked him a

second time, ‘Did you ask the opinion of the patient?’ Again he said, ‘No.’

“So I asked him to explain it to me: Seemingly, the patient is the one in pain—it’s his foot or his hand. Why are you consulting with random people who are giving their advice solely because they are being paid for their services—shouldn’t you ask the patient first?!

“He said to me, ‘What are you saying? The patient has no understanding in medicine!’

“Nu!’ I said to him. This still didn’t help, and again I said, ‘Nu!’

“I finally had to explain it explicitly: A Yid who lives in that location [...] one may not ask his opinion, and even if he says his opinion, one cannot rely on it. If you do so, you are putting the ‘patient’ in danger—even if the patient himself is pleading with you to follow his advice!”

The Rebbe continued that anyone who is familiar with life under a dictatorship knows that a regular Russian citizen has no awareness whatsoever about the policies of the Kremlin. They are too afraid to even ask about what’s happening in their own police station! In reality, a person outside of Russia who is interested in these issues and reads up on them in the newspapers has a better understanding of the Kremlin than someone who has been living in Moscow for fifty years. The fact that *they* want a public furor is understandable—when it hurts, you scream! But that doesn’t mean we should follow

their advice and knowingly put them in danger.

Confusion:

Addressing the motivation of the Jewish leaders involved, the Rebbe said that some were being put under tremendous pressure, and some were simply uninformed and going with the flow. This was especially true of the young activists, whose passion to help their brethren was commendable, but were being misled by their leaders.

The Rebbe noted the irony that after so many decades, people were suddenly getting involved in an issue in which so many were completely misinformed, many of them fighting for religious rights that they didn’t seem to care about.

There was an Israeli leader, the Rebbe related, who had found himself on an airplane with a Soviet politician. It was during Pesach, and he used the opportunity to speak to him about the lack of matzos in the Soviet Union. After explaining eloquently how the Russian Jews needed to have their religious rights, this Israeli proceeded to nonchalantly partake of the airplane-meal and eat *chametz* on the spot. The Russian was shocked, although “obviously [the Israeli leader] didn’t lack explanations: The Russian Yidden are being forced and he is doing it on his own free will; the Russian Yidden are people from the dark ages, while he is a cultural person—all types of explanations.” The point is, said the Rebbe, that this Israeli didn’t even realize that there was any contradiction—that’s how

After explaining eloquently how the Russian Jews needed to have their religious rights, this Israeli proceeded to nonchalantly partake of the airplane-meal and eat *chametz* on the spot.

comfortable they are with the false life of diplomacy!

The Rebbe said that he knew for a fact that several of those leading the demonstrations had already realized their mistake, but were being put under tremendous pressure not to reveal their true opinion. The Rebbe put out the call to all those involved: Don’t trust me—go demand, with a *tumal*, to be given the true information on the subject. How many people were freed because of the demonstrations? Get them to show you the numbers, black on white! The very fact there are people asking for this information will allow those who are only agreeing to this policy because of pressure to affect a change.

The Rebbe completed the landmark *sicha* on this issue on Yud Shevat 5731 by saying, ה' לי בעוזרי, may Hashem save the Russian Jews from the people who are misguided and trying to help them; ואני אראה בשוואי, then we will be able to figure out how to deal with the enemies, using the same quiet tactics that had worked until now.

The Results of Pressure

Unfortunately, with some notable exceptions, the Jewish leadership was set on the demonstrations (although the foreign policy establishment was, and still is, split on the issue).

They also worked on a “linkage” policy, which would link America’s economic policy with the Russians to their treatment of the emigration issue. This, too, the Rebbe fought, with the same rationale: public pressure and shame was counterproductive and put the Jews in danger.

Their efforts reached their zenith in 5734, when Congress passed the Jackson-Vanik amendment, denying Russia the coveted “most favored nation

status” if they continued to restrict emigration. The result: emigration was cut by two-thirds.

In the following years, President Carter continued to ramp up the pressure on Russia, pushing linkage policies and condemning the Soviets’ human rights record. Within a few years, emigration had almost completely come to a halt.

The Strategy is Proven

At the Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen of 5743,⁴ the Rebbe called for the President to apply the American government’s influence on the Soviets regarding the issue of Jewish emigration: that people should be permitted to leave and that they shouldn’t suffer

consequences for applying for exit-visas. The Rebbe emphasized that it should be done quietly (albeit firmly), and without linking it to other matters. Saying that the Soviet Premier’s (relatively) recent appointment presented a unique opportunity, the Rebbe said that everyone with any government influence should set aside all other matters to focus on this issue. Senator Jacob “Chic” Hecht was present at the farbrengen and the Rebbe encouraged him personally to work on the issue.

At the time, United States Ambassador Max Kampelman was working on a breakthrough human rights deal, negotiated with KGB General Sergei Kondrashev. Rabbi Avraham Shemtov met with him just as he was about to get on a flight to Europe and relayed the Rebbe’s message.

Within a month of the Rebbe’s *sicha*, the deal was completed, with the Russians agreeing only on condition that it remained in utter secrecy. George Shultz later wrote that this was a turning point: “Ronald Reagan did not crow... and the Soviets got the message that President Reagan cared about the fate of Soviet Jewry in a nonpolitical way.”

There were other ways that the legitimacy of the Rebbe’s approach was being felt. “About three years later,” Senator Hecht related, “a very important vote came before the U.S. Senate. President Reagan needed my vote to break a tie. The vote was very important to the President. I had been a top supporter of

An Empty Chair?

So you symbolically leave an empty chair at the Seder table, indicating that you await the arrival of the Jews from behind the Iron Curtain.

The empty chair at your Seder will have no effect on the *goy* sitting in the Kremlin. Nothing will come as a result. If you indeed have an unoccupied seat at your Seder, go bring your own son and sit him down at the Seder. Bring him from Greenwich Village and sit him down in the empty seat. After all, he’s your son!

But no, he says. He can’t tell his son what to do. His son wants to be a “hippy” in Greenwich Village and is uninterested in the Seder. Why should he tell his son what to do? He’s a big boy!

But if you have an empty chair at your Seder, instead of leaving it empty and waiting for the Yidden from there [Russia], go around your own block and find a Yid who doesn’t know how to make his own Seder, or doesn’t even know what a Seder is, and sit him down at your table! Teach him how to make a Seder...

(Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5730)

President Reagan as I felt he was the best friend Israel had in the White House.

“I met personally with President Reagan and told him of my decision to back him with my tie-breaking vote. I then asked if I might bring up a concern on my mind. President Reagan graciously agreed. I told President Reagan that my late mother was an immigrant from the Soviet Union, and only by the grace of G-d am I standing before you today in the United States Senate. I urged the President to place increased emphasis on the release of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews before the next summit conference. [I said:] ‘Those who are allowed to leave the Soviet Union, Mr. President, should not be just the elderly, but also children, teenagers, doctors

President Reagan gave the list of 1200 names to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the Reykjavik Conference and spoke of its importance. Within weeks a trickle of Jews began to leave Russia.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM, 9967

SENATOR JACOB "CHIC" HECHT VISITS THE REBBE FOR LEKACH, HOSHANA RABBAH 5747.



JEM 108118

SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON (LEFT) IN YECHIDUS, 18 CHESHVAN 5735, SHORTLY BEFORE THE DETRIMENTAL JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT OF 1974 WAS PASSED.



COURTESY OF THE RONALD REAGAN LIBRARY

SENATOR CHIC HECHT GIVES PRESIDENT REAGAN A LIST OF 1200 RUSSIAN JEWS, SHORTLY BEFORE THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO REYKJAVIK, ICELAND TO MEET SOVIET PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV. OCTOBER 7, 1986.

and scientists. All should be allowed the basic human right of freedom.” President Reagan expressed tremendous concern.

“I was President Reagan’s last appointment before leaving for the Reykjavik, Iceland Conference which took place in early October 1986. At that meeting I presented President Reagan with a list of names of 1200 Soviet Jews who had applied to emigrate from Russia. I reminded the President that the numbers could reach in the millions, but this would be a start. I used “quiet diplomacy” as only the President, an aide and myself were in the Oval Office.

“President Reagan gave the list of 1200 names to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the Reykjavik Conference and spoke of its importance. Within weeks a trickle of Jews began to leave Russia.

“After President Reagan left office... Mrs. Reagan said that



PRESIDENT REAGAN MEETING WITH SOVIET PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AT THE REYKJAVIK CONFERENCE.

Mr. Gorbachev told them that there were many around him that did not want the Jews to leave Russia and if we made it public, the exodus would stop. President Reagan used “quiet diplomacy” with Mr. Gorbachev.”

The Final Push

“Solidarity Sunday” was one of the most public annual

demonstrations for Russian Jewry. By 5748, it had grown to two hundred thousand people, and in a declassified transcript of the Washington Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev which took place shortly afterwards, one sees quite evidently the Rebbe’s concern: Gorbachev began by saying that “he always appreciated the tact with which the President

Henry Kissinger told him: 'Had we listened to the Rabbi, we would have gotten them out years earlier.'

addressed this delicate issue”, but when Reagan mentioned the huge rally, Gorbachev’s attitude changed. He said that he “would not sit as the accused before a prosecutor,” and they were forced to move on to other matters.

The Rebbe persuaded Senator Patrick Moynihan to cancel the rally the following year. Dr. David Luchins, who advised the senator and brought him the Rebbe’s message, relates:⁵ “Senator Moynihan went into the lion’s den. He went to the leadership of the conference on Soviet Jewry, and told them, ‘Gentlemen, ladies, it’s time to reach out; cancel your demonstration.’ A battle ensued that was somewhat awful. The senator stuck to his guns and did not budge. And it worked. It succeeded. We sent a letter to the Soviets, with fifty seven United States senators signing. That letter was approved word for word by the Rebbe.[...] It was a letter telling the Soviets that we understood that they were interested in revisiting the issue [of emigration] and that if they would show good faith we would meet them partway, and Congress would be prepared to accommodate. This went against the wishes of the political right wing in America, against the wishes of the organized Jewish community.

“The Rebbe was a *daas yochid* throughout the years, holding that demonstrations

were counterproductive, that they were a mistake; both Rabbi Yoshe Ber and Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik deferred to the Rebbe and agreed with him. And in the final analysis, Senators Hubert Humphrey and Pat Moynihan also felt that the Rebbe’s approach was the right one.

“And it worked. Senator Moynihan told me that Henry Kissinger told him: ‘Had we listened to the Rabbi, we would have gotten them out years earlier.’” **T**

1. See *Diedushke* p. 450.
2. For the sichos below, see *Sichos Kodesh* 5731 vol. 1, p. 442-453, 466-474; *Sichos Kodesh* 5730 vol. 1, p. 658-662.
3. See *Diedushka* p. 462.
4. *Hisvaaduyos* 5743 vol. 4 p. 1735.
5. Living Torah program 250, *Lone Voice*



TOP SECRET DOCUMENTS OF THE MEETINGS BETWEEN PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN AND SOVIET PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AT THE REYKJAVIK CONFERENCE.



SENATOR PATRICK MOYNIHAN VISITS THE REBBE FOR DOLLARS, 21 ADAR 5750.

CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEM, 429ZT