

Excerpts from “Avital Sharansky at Oz veGaon”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWXVncoCLrw&t=146s>

32:36 – “To my despair, I discovered that in this newspaper they were accusing my husband of being the spy among the group of other refuseniks. That night, we were at the house of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. It was just as Purim ended. We came to him at 2:00 A.M. He woke up and immediately understood why we were there – because of the terrible danger that all the Jews of Russia were in, because of the way it works with the anti-Semites. He began to cry and scream “our brothers in Russia are in danger! We have to save our brothers in Russia!

And they started to come – it was on Ovadia street in Geula, in his house – and they began to come to his small house, his students from Mercaz Harav and rabbis...”what can we do?” asked a young man. “To go out into the streets and to scream “our brothers in Russia are in danger! It is forbidden for this to happen to us again in this generation! We can’t allow it!

And so, with the screams of the Rabbi, we went out. We travelled, out of Israel...from mouth to ears we used all kinds of connections. We burst into synagogues and communities with the cry of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda “our brothers in Russia are in danger!”

34:45 – When I came to Israel, I was 23 years old. I turned to the army. I wanted to be drafted, I wanted to do something for this paradise. I wanted to contribute something. So I turned to the army because I wanted to be drafted to the army and they told me “you are too old. Sit at home and wait for your husband”.

And suddenly, here I felt, here, this is the battle. In this I need to be a soldier. And so we started to fight. There was a headquarters in Jerusalem...neighbors brought phones, the simplest people brought money to donate to us for our activities...we met with Golda Meir, with Moshe Dayan, anyone who was anyone in Israel, and we cried to them “our brothers in Russia are in danger”, and slowly but surely, with lots of hard work, the Jewish world began to wake up and come together.

Our motto – because it happened on Purim was “gather the Jews and the salvation will come”. Today I very much believe that only when the Jews are together will salvation come.

36:21 We just saw it happen. Slowly but surely we reached the communities, the communities turned to their elected representatives in their countries. This is how we got to Congress and the Senate, to the prime ministers and kings and all kinds of delegates.



36:38 One time I had a meeting with President Reagan and so I asked Rabbi Tzvi how can I, who am I to go and meet the president of half the world? He said, “first of all, you are flesh and bones and he is flesh and bones. Secondly, he is a king, and the heart of kings is in the hand of God (Proverbs 21:1).

So you do need to address him with respect, but you need to look him in the eyes and tell him ‘We, our nation, has come back to life after two thousand years of terrible exile. If there are any morals in this world, or remnants of morals, it is we who have contributed it. It all came from us. And now we are coming back to life and returning to our home, to Israel. And there are some evil people there in Russia who are putting sticks in our wheels. So I am asking of you – you have the honor of helping this great and holy nation.’

And you won’t believe it, but that’s how I spoke to Reagan – word for word.

41:22 We had “court Jews” in the U.S., Jews who were very close to the government, who helped us a lot. We called David Wolfson who was the secretary of Margaret Thatcher. I called London from Washington. I was very confused – I may have crossed the ocean three times that week. Suddenly I was talking to him, “Mr. Wolfson, tomorrow I am coming to England and I would like to meet Mrs. Thatcher then.” Suddenly, there was this silence – furious, English, and then “Mrs. Sharansky, do you know what time it is now?” Oh, no. I look at my watch. The time difference, and I’m all confused. And I say, “oy but I’m begging you (there it was night) – but in the morning I’m landing at the airport and I’m asking to meet Mrs. Thatcher.” “Who do you think you are?” he says. “What do you think of yourself? You think that you and your husband are the center of the world, which the whole world revolves around? Do you know how many people have been waiting for years for their turn to meet Mrs. Thatcher?”

And I, I’m telling you, I’m very shy, and suddenly I felt I was under the floor from his shouting, and I apologize. And then, as if someone was pushing me from the inside, I say “And Mr. Wolfson, do you know who you are? You know what? Yes, I think that my husband and I are the center of the world. And do you know that we are a nation coming back to life, and we are on our way home to Israel, and this is the most optimistic process that is happening in the world today, and anyone who has eyes in his head needs to help and to push, and to lobby for this? And you are a Jew! Maybe this is the reason you got to where you are – for this!”

He hung the phone up on me, and I caught a plane and flew. He was waiting for me there next to the plane with a big limousine. We both apologize, drive and meet with Mrs. Thatcher. And that day she reprimands the Russians harshly.

Now, don’t think that I am such an impertinent person – the opposite is true. But I felt that I was fighting the battle of the whole nation, and there was no place for my personal shyness. This is the battle of the entire nation and I am a soldier in this army.