

HERE'S my STORY

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THE SURVIVOR WHO WOULDN'T SIT DOWN

MR. MEIR MOSS

The story I would like to relate concerns my father, Sam Moss, more than me. My father was born in Munkatch, Czechoslovakia, what is now Mukachevo, Ukraine. There he attended the *yeshivah* of Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira, author of *Minchas Elazar*, who was the Munkatcher Rebbe.

In 1944, the Nazis herded the Jews of Munkatch into a ghetto, from where they were taken to Auschwitz and later transferred to Dachau. There they endured unspeakable trials, and at one point my father got very sick and was near death, but he was saved due to my grandfather's intercession with a kitchen hand, Oscar Heller, who slipped him extra food which helped him recover. After the war, he made his way to Australia, where he married and built up a very successful textile business. I was born in Sydney, as was my brother.

Because of his war experiences, my father was not religious. Indeed, between the time of liberation until 1956, he never even walked into a synagogue. He was just so angry with G-d because of everything that had happened to him. Only when I, his first son, was born, did he set foot in a synagogue for my *brit*.

His travails continued when my mother passed away at age thirty-eight, at a time when my brother and I were teenagers. This happened just when my father thought he had gotten his life back together, and it made him more bitter and drew him even further away from Judaism.

Then, to my father's chagrin, I became Torah observant, and after finishing high school, enrolled in the Chabad *yeshivah* in Melbourne. This really upset my father, because he had rejected all that. Now his son was wearing a *yarmulke* and *tzitzit*! This was just too much for him.

When he could not convince me to leave the *yeshivah*,



he decided to go to New York to speak with the Rebbe about it. I think he thought he would make a contribution to Chabad, and the Rebbe would do what he wanted — tell me to leave the *yeshivah*. I really do think that's what he had in mind.

So, in 1975, he arranged an audience with the Rebbe, and I only heard years later what really happened there. First, my father refused to sit in front of the Rebbe; he said, "Back on Munkatch, we learned that you never sit in front of the Rebbe." To which the Rebbe replied, "If you're not going to sit, I'm not going to sit."

So the Rebbe stood up behind his desk, and then at some point in time, he came around and stood next to my father. He asked him many questions about the Munkatcher Rebbe and what it was like learning in his *yeshivah*. Then he began to ask him about the war — the ghetto, the camps, everything that happened to him.

Answering these questions, my father broke down and started to cry. And the Rebbe put his arm around him.

The subject of me leaving the *yeshivah* never even came up. When they were done talking, the Rebbe comforted him, "Don't worry, everything is going to be alright."

continued on reverse

MY ENCOUNTER
with the REBBE

An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in over 1,400 videotaped interviews conducted to date. While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

continued from reverse

My father never talked to me about what happened that night, although he stopped trying to make me leave the *yeshivah*. Only recently did he tell my son Chaim about it, and when I pushed him, he also told me. My father said that, when the audience was over, he felt like a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

Years later — in the late 1980s — my brother and I came with our father to Chabad Headquarters when the Rebbe was giving out honey cake (*lekach*) during Sukkot. We were standing and watching what was going on, when the Rebbe noticed my father. He stopped the line and asked him to come over. They spoke for about three or four minutes. The Rebbe asked my father how he was doing and wanted an update on how things turned out since the last time they met, but my father never told us any details of that conversation.

But he did tell us another story which has to do with Menachem Begin and the Rebbe.

My father was very good friends with Begin before he became prime minister of Israel; he was one of his financial supporters. Once — I believe this was in 1975 — they met in Paris and had dinner together. And my father asked Begin, "Who do you think is the greatest leader of the Jewish people?" To which Begin answered straight away, "The Lubavitcher Rebbe."

My father was surprised and asked, "Why are you saying that?"

Begin explained that he thought this because the Rebbe had lifted up a whole generation after the Holocaust — he helped the Jewish people believe in themselves again.

And my father could certainly identify with that.

In the very early 1990s my father experienced a lot of business problems. He had invested considerable capital in the textile industry in Australia which collapsed due to Chinese competition. He and his partners had started out running small retail shops and then moved into textiles manufacturing, employing thousands of people in the industry, so the ramifications of their business collapse were quite significant.

The Chabad emissary in Sydney, Rabbi Pinchus

Feldman, convinced my father and his partners to write to the Rebbe, which they did. They thought they were asking for business advice, but they got something else instead.

The Rebbe instructed them to check their *tefillin*, but none of them were putting on *tefillin* at the time. So they began to. And their business turned around quite considerably after that, even though it took years for their fortunes to be fully restored.

I just find it fascinating that they were expecting to get some sort of business advice from the Rebbe, but they got another kind of advice altogether. This was very typical of him — to advise people to make of themselves a vessel which could receive the blessing from above.

Mr. Meir Moss is a businessman who lives in Sydney, Australia. He was interviewed in August of 2016.

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין
ע"י בניהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחי

This week in....

- > **5719-1959**, at the Shavuot *farbrengen* the Rebbe pointed out that during a holiday, people often resolve to spend more time studying Torah. Often, when the holiday is over, the inspiration dissipates and the resolution is forgotten. He suggested that, as the mainstay of the Jewish home, women keep their husbands cognizant of their resolutions to study Torah.¹ 7 Sivan
- > **5750-1990**, the Rebbe explained that in addition to studying Torah, it is imperative for every individual to teach Torah to others. As such, men should deliver classes to groups of at least ten other men, women should teach at least ten women, and even children can teach their peers. The Rebbe added that this includes teaching gentiles the Seven Noahide Laws and encouraged people to send him reports about these classes for him to deliver to the Previous Rebbe's resting place.² 7 Sivan

1. Torat Menachem vol. 26 page 39 2. Torat Menachem 5750 vol. 3 page 275

In loving memory of
Leah Feiga bas Meyer

By her children **Simcha** and **Shellee Pollard**, **Bruce** and **Jennifer Pollard**, **Gary** and **Chris Pollard**

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