

HERE'S *my* STORY

HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD IN TEN MINUTES

REB EPHRAIM (FREDDY) HAGER OBM

When one developed a relationship with the Rebbe - I think this is true for most people - it helped one realize more about oneself. It wasn't about analyzing the Rebbe - like going to interview a great man and finding out more about him; it was about meeting yourself.

The second time I went into *yechidus* - a private audience with the Rebbe - was *Yud Shevat 5730* - 1970. Many of us flew over especially for it, the 20th anniversary of the Previous Rebbe's passing and the Rebbe's succession to the leadership.

I never expected a *yechidus*, because I had been in *yechidus* some five months previously. It was Sunday evening, and Rabbi Groner called me over and said that the Rebbe wants to see all the guests in *yechidus*.

It was a ten minute *yechidus*, which was much shorter than the previous time. There were hundreds of people going in that night. In that *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked me, "What do the students in London University do about kosher food?" So I said, "Well, they are now rebuilding Hillel House; it'll be finished in October and then there will be facilities." This was January, 1970.

So the Rebbe looked at me, a piercing look...and he says, "So tell me: Until October is it permissible to eat non kosher food?" I felt very, very stupid. - Before I go on, I must say this: As far as I know, the Rebbe never ever visited London and had no first-hand knowledge of London.

"As far as I understand," the Rebbe continued, "the University of London is not a typical university campus with all the colleges in one location, but the colleges are



spread out and dotted around parts of the town; so would I not be correct in saying that only a committed student who is specifically looking for Kosher food will come to the Hillel House?"

Of course I agreed.

So the Rebbe says, "What do we do about the other students?"

Silence from yours truly...

The Rebbe said, "Wouldn't it be a good idea to make a meal service and actively invite people to come and eat Kosher food?"

So I got very enthusiastic and I warmed to the theme and I said, "That's a wonderful idea! And we could have lectures and guest speakers and be *mekarev* them, bring the people closer to *yiddishkeit*..."

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 the 800 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemediia.org

The Rebbe held up his hand and said, "That's very nice and it may be a good idea, but that's not what I have in mind. What I have in mind with this suggestion is purely that a Jewish boy should sit next to a Jewish girl, he should sit eating a kosher meal next to a Jewish girl rather than eating a non-kosher meal next to a non-Jewish girl."



Anyway, to cut a long story short, I told the Rebbe "We'll do it." And we did it.

I came back to London and talked to a friend of mine, a very enthusiastic young man, and we arranged a meal service. We collaborated with one of the then major restaurants in London and they delivered meals to three colleges; I think it was *London School of Economics, Kings College* and *Imperial College* in London. And the service went on for many years. I think, in some sort of transmuted way, it still continues.

The service was a tremendous success. We used to go out two or three times a week raising money because it needed a lot of subsidy and I think I did more of that than studying at university. And I think my grades reflected that, but we won't dwell on that...

This came out of one ten minute *yechidus*! And it was only *part* of a ten minute *yechidus*...It was a monumental, cataclysmic idea which must have changed many peoples' lives. There are a number of leaders, Rebbes, Rosh Yeshivas, who worry about their communities - and that's great, that's very laudable, and that's wonderful, and we need more leaders like that. But the Rebbe had a breadth.

He was concerned about the wider world. He was concerned about people that he'd never met, that he may possibly never meet but that concerned him, and it wouldn't let him sleep and it wouldn't let him rest until he did something about it...

Freddy Hager was interviewed in his home in London in the summer of 2007. He passed away in 2011.

In honor of our dear parents

Moshe Melech and Gutte
of blessed memory

by their children

Leah and Moshe

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This week in...

- > **5730—1970**, final letters of Moshiach's Sefer Torah are written in the Rebbe's presence at a special Farbrengen on Friday afternoon. *9 Shevat*
- > **5734—1974**, the Rebbe visited the newly purchased building of the *Machon Chana* girl's school, in the middle of the night, using a flashlight. Gave Rabbi J.J. Hecht \$500 towards furniture.¹ *15 Shevat*
- > **5747—1987**, sent a letter addressed "To all Jewish Children" starting a new campaign, for every child to turn their bedroom into a "Chabad House."³ *15 Shevat*

1. *Sichos Kodesh 5735 p443* 2. *Sichos Kodesh 5736 p272* 3. *Likutei Sichos 31 p242*

New Interviews

- > In Migdal Ha'emek, Israel, we interviewed **Mr. Tzvi Aldruti** about his 1974 audience with the Rebbe. He was the Chief of Staff to Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres.
- > We interviewed **Rabbi Joseph Bronner** in Los Angeles, California about the Rebbe's advice on building a new *mikvah* in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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