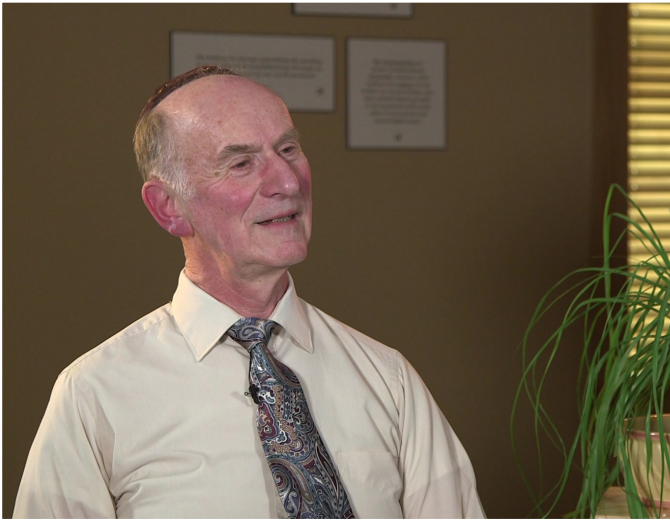


HERE'S my STORY

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MY AUDIENCE 43 YEARS AGO

MR. LUKAS VAN DER WALDE



I'd like to describe my audience with the Rebbe back in May of 1971. But first I want to say a word about my background.

My parents were both Jewish refugees who fled Germany in 1939. They came over on the proverbial last train and made it to England. They were married in 1945, and established a Reform Jewish home.

I was born in London and, in the late 1960s, I attended Manchester University where I was introduced to Hillel House, which was my first experience with the Torah observant lifestyle. After university, work took me 20 miles outside of London to Surrey, where I was introduced to Jewish mysticism. I was really quite excited about it. I felt there was something really deep and meaningful behind all of this. My quest to know more brought me in contact with the Chabad-Lubavitch UK organization.

Before long, I was invited for Shabbos at the local Chabad House. I really enjoyed the free-wheeling atmosphere of the place, and I felt this was the form of Jewish

observance that fitted me best. I went back again and again for Shabbos after Shabbos. And, in May of 1971, I joined a group of very excited Lubavitchers traveling to New York to meet the Rebbe.

I remember that we all assembled in the hallway of Chabad Headquarters at about midnight and we waited. While we waited, we recited Psalms. Eventually, my turn came — I believe it was at 4:30 a.m. So, it was quite a long wait.

I had my question written out on a piece of paper — something about Kabbalah — and when I was finally ushered into the Rebbe's office, I handed it to him. The Rebbe answered my question and spoke to me for 40 minutes. Then I left.

When I came out of his office, people asked me what we had talked about for so long, but I couldn't remember most of what he said! I recalled only that he advised me to study Torah for a half-hour each day, to concentrate on my career, and to get married. That's all. The rest of the 40-minute conversation was completely gone.

I followed the Rebbe's advice as best I could. I pursued my career and eventually I immigrated to the United States — to Spokane, Washington. I got married. But I was only minimally involved with Judaism.

And then, a couple of years ago, Chabad came to Spokane. What happened next was really very strange — it was as if a switch had been thrown, from one moment in time to the next. I became a frequent visitor at the local Chabad House. And I remembered my meeting with the Rebbe some 43 years ago.

I prayed and asked to be given back what the Rebbe had said to me. And over a period of a couple weeks, I found myself waking up with a recollection of bits and pieces of what the Rebbe had told me. I wrote it all down and, to the best of my ability, I reconstructed what the Rebbe said back then.

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 over 1,100 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemediia.org

The Rebbe told me that it was useless for me to study Kabbalah as if it were a secular field, like mathematics or physics. The mystical works of Judaism can only be understood at the higher level. If you are not at that level, it is a fruitless quest — it is like asking a desk to explain the process by which it was made and who its maker was. The desk will never have the capacity to reply.

He said that a person can lead his life on many levels. Many people are trapped at the lower level of existence — they are servants of material, vegetable, animal and ordinary elements of their lives. Those elements were created by G-d and, indeed, are necessary to life on earth. The material force leads us to design and create objects for our pleasure and comfort. With the vegetable force, we clothe ourselves, shelter our bodies and make use of the wondrous things that nature provides. The animal force drives us to make an effort. And, finally, the ordinary human force gives us power to relate to others, to marry and to procreate. These are tools that are necessary for life in this world, but all too often, without even realizing it, we allow ourselves to be controlled by these forces, rather than choosing to be the masters of them.

He said that as newborn babies we are still in touch with heaven, but when our senses develop, our awareness becomes clouded until we are no longer aware of the Source of all things. When we grow up, we start to believe that everything we achieve is due to our cleverness, and we sometimes stop believing in G-d. But our task is to reestablish that divine connection during our lifetime, so that our every action can become infused with holiness.

Additionally, we Jews have the task to be a light unto the nations. This is where daily Torah study comes in — at least a half-hour each day. If we start by studying the plain text, the deeper meanings will emerge with repetition, in accordance with our growing capacity to absorb it. Torah tells us how to regulate our daily lives, from the moment we get up in the morning, to the moment we go to bed at night. All the commandments enable us to reestablish our connection with G-d. The more we observe, the clearer the connection becomes.

The Rebbe also said that to study the hidden reasons behind the commandments is not the main thing. The important thing is to actually fulfill the commandments — whether this means putting on *tefillin* in the morning, or reciting the correct blessing when eating. The very act repeated many times will bring about a change in feeling

and understanding.

If you have never tasted sugar, but you read many learned books on how sweet sugar is, you wouldn't really understand what the books are talking about. To you, the taste of sugar will be theory until you actually put a sugar cube in your mouth. Once you do that, you will understand, and you will not require more explanation.

Finally, the Rebbe said that the purpose of making a successful career is not only to provide for yourself and your family, or to help those less fortunate — there is a greater purpose to this. Your every action, no matter how seemingly trivial, can become infused with holiness. Everything you do can be an inspiration to others and add much good to the world.

That's what I remember from that audience with the Rebbe. After 43 years, I finally understood his words. I'm not proud of the fact that it has taken me so long to get to this point, but I'm still alive, thank G-d. And I still have time to do my small part in bringing the *Moshiach*, speedily in our days.

Mr. Lukas Van Der Walde currently lives in Spokane, Washington where he was interviewed in June of 2014.

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

This week in....

> **5747 — 1987**, the Rebbe gave matzah to Professor Herman Branover and Rabbi Shlomo Maidanchik of Kfar Chabad, in honor of the upcoming groundbreaking ceremony for the new Chabad neighborhood in Jerusalem, which was being built for Jews from the Soviet Union who, the Rebbe predicted, would be arriving shortly. The Rebbe also said he would send a check towards the expenses of the ceremony. ¹
22 Nissan

> **5751 — 1991**, the Rebbe stood at the entrance of 770 to escort the *chasidim* walking to synagogues across New York City to bring the joy of the festival to fellow Jews. Upon their return, the Rebbe once again came out to greet them and, unexpectedly, delivered a talk. ²
21 Nissan

1. *Toras Menachem* 5747 Vol. 3, p. 149 2. *Yoman Avenu Niflaos*

In honor of
Shmaya and Rivkee Krinsky

for the birth of their son
23 Adar, 5775

By their siblings

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