

HERE'S my STORY

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WAKE UP CALL

MR. MOTTI EDEN



In 1980, I was working as a journalist for the Israeli radio network, *Kol Yisrael*. On a visit to New York, I had the *mazal* to secure a private audience with the Rebbe. I brought along a portable tape recorder, but — not knowing whether I'd be permitted to record the Rebbe or not, I kind of hid it in my hand. But when I went in and began to speak with the Rebbe, I brought it out in the open. He saw it, of course. And if he had any objection, he did not voice it. So the interview was taped.

The Rebbe spoke about many things — especially about Israel — and he gave me advice how *Kol Yisrael* could educate the public while also conveying the news.

"*Kol Yisrael* has an advantage over print media," he said. "The readers of a newspaper can flip pages and skip articles. But *Kol Yisrael* has a captive audience, and this can be used to great advantage. Let's say someone wants to hear the news — what is happening in Washington, for example — and before *Kol Yisrael* gets to that information, it tells this listener something about the Torah reading of the week — say, *Parshas Pinchas*. How Pinchas' passion brought G-d's blessing to all of Israel. The listener has no choice but to hear this while he waits for news from Washington. So while he learns the news,

he also gets educated about Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon Hakohen.

"Of course, the success of such a presentation would be dependent on the person writing and preparing the program. The main point is not 'to put this to a vote in the Knesset,' for then it will become a political debate over religious coercion, but to do it in a pleasant way — in which case it will surely succeed."

I wasn't convinced such a thing could work. After all, the business of *Kol Yisrael* is news. So I asked the Rebbe, "How can we make news from everything? Not everything is news! The Torah is not news."

He said, "Our sages teach us that every day we must approach Torah anew, as if it were just given today. So when you announce that *Parshas Pinchas* is news, you are stating the truth. You just need to find some kind of introduction to tie this in with the events that just happened in the world."

He was giving me a basic lesson in newscasting! He was trying to guide me and explain to me how people who were waiting for interesting news could hear Torah that was no less interesting.

Clearly, the Rebbe gave great importance to utilizing all kind of communication. Other rabbis wouldn't go near radio or television, but the Rebbe said, "Use it and make the most of it."

Later in the interview, I asked him about the Jewish children's rallies. I remembered that every time there was a tragic event — like, for example, before the Yom Kippur War — the Rebbe would call for a children's rally. I asked him why this was so important to him.

He said, "Children have the power to avert danger. The Book of Psalms declares, 'Out of the mouths of babies and infants, You have established Your might — to answer those who deny You, to silence the enemy and the avenger.' 'Babies and infants' refers to Jewish boys

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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 900 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

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and girls of four or five years old. Someone seventy years old, even though he is sitting in the Knesset, cannot avert danger the way innocent children can."

And then he spoke of the situation in Israel — remember this was July of 1980:

"According to the intelligence I have," he said, "the situation is extremely grave. There is a growing trend among the Arabs toward militancy. In the past — thirty or forty years ago — you could easily bribe the most senior Arab sheik, and the younger ones would follow his lead.

"Now, however, the situation has changed. The younger generation is more fanatical and more zealous for religion, and they can't be bribed — not with money, not with honor. For them there is nothing more glorious than self-sacrifice for G-d.

"Unfortunately — and painfully — the attitude of our Jewish youth is the opposite. Thirty years ago in Israel, no one needed convincing that self-sacrifice was needed. Everyone wanted to be a pioneer. Today's Jewish youth are saying 'Enough already! We've lived under pressure for thirty years. Now we deserve to live a peaceful life, a fun life.' With this kind of attitude, the situation is grave.

"There is simply no time for Israelis to come to a full cognition of the changing attitude of the Arabs," he stated.

He was so right. Within a few months of our meeting, the tensions began which would lead to the Lebanon War of 1982. In retrospect, seeing what happened, it should have been obvious. But no one saw it except the Rebbe.

He said, "I cannot even express how dangerous the present situation is for Israel. And the current government in Washington is not strong at all." He was speaking of the administration of President Jimmy Carter. "Politicians in Washington are just looking for an easy way out; they want to sleep soundly."

The Rebbe urged me to do what I could to effect a change.

"We must change the outlook of the Jewish youth about their personal connection to the Holy Land. We must get them to understand that they are in a single continuum of thirty generations of Jewish men and women who entered the Holy Land, which was given to them as an eternal inheritance. We did not steal anything. We've perpetrated no injustice here. The Arabs came a thousand years later...

"This is what the Jewish boy and girl has to understand.

But they have no patience for theoretical concepts. They need something concrete that they can actually participate in. And this is where you and *Kol Yisrael* come in. Because you can teach the Israeli youth that the verse in the Torah, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One' wasn't just addressed to someone named 'Israel' who stood at Mount Sinai three-thousand years ago. It was meant for every Avraham, Moshe and Shlomo who lives in Tel Aviv today!"

He said much more. I had a full cassette. When I returned to Israel, we immediately edited the most essential ten minutes of my recording, and we broadcast it during the Friday program, *Afternoon Journal*.

The response was something amazing. There was a tremendous uproar. The story followed me everywhere...

Two years later, when I covered the Lebanon War, reporting for Israeli television, the Rebbe's words guided me and encouraged me and gave me strength.

Motti Eden began his journalism career broadcasting news for the Israeli radio network, Kol Yisrael. Since 2003, he has been Director of Israel's Channel One television. He was interviewed in his office in Haifa, Israel in March of 2010.

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

This week in...

- > **5716 — 1956**, at a *Farbrenge*, the Rebbe called upon the assembled to wish "Mazal Tov" to the Chabad representatives in Melbourne, Australia for the recent groundbreaking ceremony of the newly-established Beis Rivka girls school. Now that there is proper women's education even in Australia, the Rebbe proclaimed, we can notify Moshiach to come and lead the Jewish nation to the Holy Land¹. 20 Av
- > **5736 — 1976**, the Rebbe called for a committee to be established to collect and publish the writings of the previous Chabad Rebbes on Halachic and Talmudic subjects². 20 Av

1. *Toras Menachem* 5716 Vol. 3, p. 152 2. *Sichos Kodesh* 5736 Vol. 2, p. 230

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