

# HERE'S my STORY

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## BEHIND THE MIRACLE

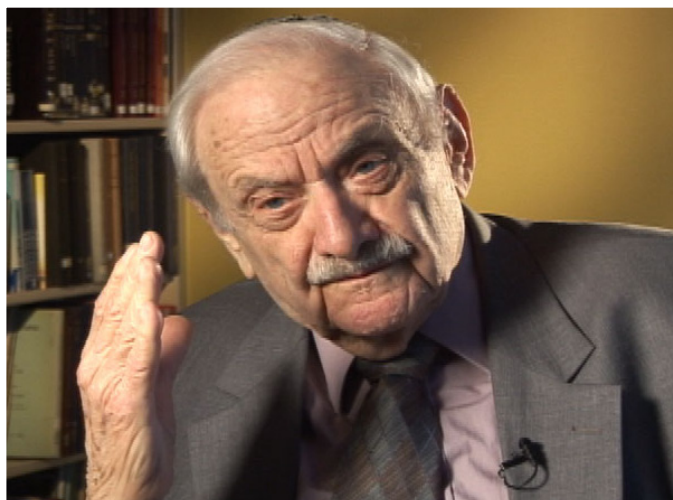
**RABBI ZEV SEGAL**

I first met the Rebbe in the early 1950s, shortly after he had assumed leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch and shortly after I was appointed chairman of the Israel Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America. In this capacity I was involved with issues affecting religious life in the State of Israel, which were of great interest to the Rebbe. And so, we frequently met to discuss the highly controversial issues of the day, such as religious women serving in the IDF, the place of non-Jews in the Jewish state, how the state should define who is a Jew, and so on.

Many a time, I came to see him at about midnight and left at four in the morning. During those meetings, it became apparent to me that the Rebbe had a tremendous amount of knowledge of what was going on in Israel, including many minute details. He knew who was who in the Knesset and in every one of its subcommittees. He knew of every government meeting on every subject, and who was against or for a particular position. It was quite an experience to listen to him speak about government meetings as though he was there.

As well, he knew what was going on with Jews everywhere, whether in Arab countries, Eastern European countries, South Africa, or North and South America. He had to know in order to send his emissaries to shore up Jewish communities all over the globe. As far as I'm concerned, he is the individual most responsible for the re-construction of Jewish life after the Holocaust.

His efforts earned him admiration from the most unexpected quarters. For one, I can testify that David Ben Gurion admired the Rebbe. In my conversations with Ben Gurion, he expressed the greatest admiration for the Rebbe's knowledge, for the fact



that the Rebbe had studied at the Sorbonne and was as well versed in the sciences as in Torah. This was unheard of in a *chasidic* Rebbe, and it impressed Ben Gurion to no end.

As my work with the Rabbinical Council of America broadened — and I had to travel not just to Israel, but elsewhere in the Diaspora — I learned more about the Rebbe's activities worldwide. One of the places I visited was the Soviet Union where the Rebbe's underground network, which he was able to maintain against all odds, kept the flame of Judaism from being extinguished under Communism.

My travels brought me into even greater contact with the Rebbe because, after my visits to, say, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and other places in North Africa where Chabad emissaries lived, the Rebbe wanted to hear my evaluation of their work. From time to time he would also ask me to fulfill a mission for him. I recall that once he asked me to risk my

*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 1200 videotaped interviews conducted to date. These stories are based on the recollection of the individuals recounting them. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. [mystory@jemedi.org](mailto:mystory@jemedi.org)

personal safety and do something extremely difficult — exactly what, I am not at liberty to disclose. I succeeded and, upon return, I reported back to him. I said, “The Rebbe should know that it was not an easy task,” to which he responded, “*HaRav Segal, zint ven hot ir gemacht ah contract mit’n Ribbono shel Olam far ah gring’n lebben* — Rabbi Segal, since when did you make a contract with Creator of the Universe for an easy life?”

That statement had a lasting impact on me. Later, when certain situations came up in my life — such as illness in my family and other troubles — I would be reminded of what the Rebbe said and that helped me greatly.

When the Rebbe passed away, I happened to be in Riga, Latvia, on behalf on the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, together with another foundation board member, Professor Herman Branover. We were unable to make it back in time for the funeral, but we could not help but reminisce about the Rebbe. Professor Branover shared an amazing story with me. He recalled that long before the fall of the Soviet Union, when Mikhail Gorbachev first came to power, the Rebbe declared that this man would set Russian Jewry free, which is exactly what he did.

However, later, when Branover had occasion to ask Gorbachev himself if he knew when he came to power that he would let the Jews go, he answered, “No.” He explained that he had no such intentions initially; he only made the decision much later. So, Branover observed, the Rebbe knew what Gorbachev would do before Gorbachev himself knew.

I am no authority on mysticism, but I have to say that the Rebbe seemed to know many things in advance, and for this I can find no rational explanation.

The most amazing story I know of his foresight was related to me by various sources concerning the late Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon.

In 1968, Sharon was visiting the United States, and before he returned to Israel on an El Al flight, he went to see the Rebbe. While he was there the Rebbe

convinced him to postpone his trip. His original flight ended up being hijacked to Algiers by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, but he was not there because the Rebbe had kept him from going.

The story was so astounding that I decided to confirm it with the Rebbe himself. When I saw him next, I asked him, “Is it true that you stopped Sharon from going on the plane that was hijacked?” He said, “Yes.”

So, of course I had to ask him the next obvious question, “Why didn’t you stop the plane from flying?”

He answered me, “Do you really think I knew that they would hijack the plane? I didn’t know. But when Sharon came to see me, I had the sense he should not go. So I told him to stay.”

This for me was a great revelation into the meaning of *moftim* — “wonders.” The Rebbe apparently was able to have tremendous foresight based on an extraordinary intuition.

*Rabbi Zev Segal (1917–2008) served for 33 years as the rabbi of the Young Israel of Newark. He held various leadership positions with the Rabbinical Council of America, including that of president from 1968 to 1971. After his retirement from the rabbinate, he devoted most of his time to working for Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. He was interviewed in May of 2007.*

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

## This week in....

> **5736 - 1975**, the chief rabbi of Romania, Rabbi Moses Rosen sent a letter of thanks to the Rebbe for sending free *mezuzot* for the Romanian Jewish community. In response, the Rebbe assured him that due to the great demand, he would send additional *mezuzos*.<sup>1</sup> 25 Teves

1. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 31, p. 95

In honor of the wedding of  
**Tzi Hersh and Masha Rimler**

By their Bubby  
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