

HERE'S my STORY

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DEFENDING ISRAEL IS DEFENDING THE WORLD

MR. OVADIA ELI

Throughout the years that I served as the mayor of Afula, I became very close to the Chabad emissaries in the city — Rabbi Chaim Sholom Segal and Rabbi Shlomo Segal — and I came to consider them not only as my good friends but as my brothers. There came a time when I, and the Afula city council, decided to present the Rebbe with a key to the city — a symbolic golden key in an elegant box — as a token of appreciation for the important contribution that his emissaries were making to our city.

Before we actually presented the key to the Rebbe, I began serving as a member of the Knesset, and I was appointed as the Deputy Minister of Defense, becoming responsible for protection of Israel's home-front.

Two months later — during Sukkot of 1991 — I came to visit the Rebbe in New York with my wife Ruti. We were there for a few days, and we were hosted by Chabad *chasidim* in Crown Heights. In the afternoon of Hoshanah Rabbah — which coincided with Sunday that year — the Rebbe was distributing dollars, and I stood in line in order to hand him the ceremonial key to the city of Afula. The exchange I had with the Rebbe on this occasion made a deep impression on me.

Before I even managed to introduce myself, the Rebbe began to speak to me in great detail about the types of missiles which the enemy had and which might endanger the home-front. I was astonished by the vast knowledge he showed regarding the types of munition stockpiles that our enemies had and the dangers that may come from them.

I was even more surprised by what the Rebbe said to me later on in the conversation: "You are responsible



not just for the well-being of the citizens living in Israel, but also for the well-being of all Jews wherever they dwell in the world."

I was impressed by what he was telling me — that the defense system in Israel is, in fact, responsible for the safety of all Jews. This was a very broad, systemic view and it fascinated me. I became convinced that he was right — that it is Israel's responsibility and duty to ensure the security of Jews everywhere.

A few months after this meeting — on March 17, 1992 — the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires was bombed, with twenty-nine killed and more than 240 injured. As the Deputy Minister of Defense, I worked to arrange a rescue team to fly from Israel to Argentina, but it took more than a day to get it off the ground. I then recalled the Rebbe's words, and I decided to establish a permanent crew of emergency rescue forces which would stand at the ready, able to fly out on short notice

continued on reverse



**EVENTS. IDEAS.
PERSONALITIES.**

Marking 70 years from the anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership, each week, JEM will be focusing on one event, idea or personality in the Rebbe's life.



continued from reverse

to rescue Jews wherever they may be, if a disaster like this should happen again.

When this emergency rescue force was organized, I called it "The Rebbe's Patrol for Rescuing Jews around the World."

Indeed, two years later — on July 18, 1994 — there was another bombing attack against the Jewish community in Buenos Aires, Argentina's deadliest terrorist attack to date, resulting in 85 killed and hundreds more injured.

Within a few hours a plane with the rescue force was dispatched and went to work extracting people from the building which the bomb had collapsed. They were able to save several Jewish lives and did an incredible job, for which they received praise and international recognition.

Going back to my visit to the Rebbe during Simchat Torah of 1991, I have to say it was an extraordinary experience. I cannot describe what it feels like to walk into the huge synagogue and see thousands of people streaming in, hanging onto the walls, the poles and the windows, as special trucks bring cool air into the hall that is filled to maximum capacity. To see the Rebbe encouraging the singing with his hand motions, and the silence that falls when he is ready to speak. To feel the electrifying atmosphere, and the tremendous indescribable joy. All I can say is that the one who was not at this Simchat Torah with the Rebbe has never experienced true joy in his life!

At the end of the holiday, I was present at the *kos shel brachah* ceremony, where the Rebbe distributed wine from his cup to the thousands that passed before him. I was the last in line, making me the last person in the world who received wine from the Rebbe's cup, as this was the last time this event took place. A few months later — on the 27th of the Hebrew month of Adar, 1992 — the Rebbe suffered a stroke from which he never recovered.

Mazel tov

Sruli Wertheimer

on becoming Bar Mitzvah — 9 Sivan 5781

May you be a Chassid, Yirei Shomayim & Lamdan!

In loving memory of
Reb **Moshe Baruch Fishman**.

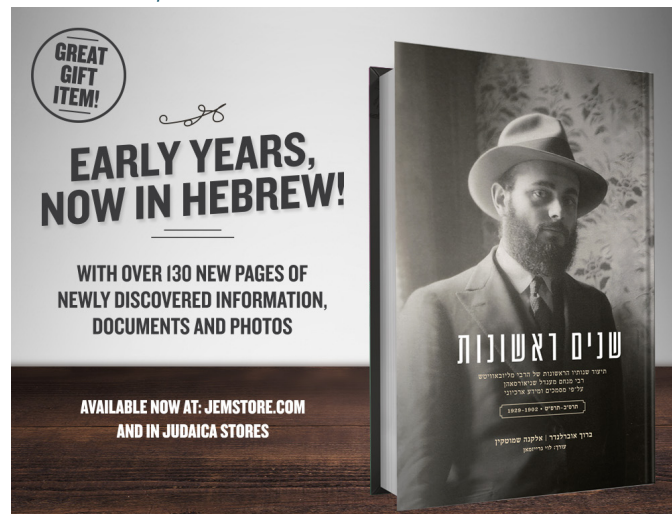
In honor of his 4th *yarhzeit*.

By his family.

You can help us record more testimonies by dedicating future editions of *Here's My Story*

Beyond being a great Torah genius, the Rebbe was first and foremost a Jewish leader. He concerned himself with the preservation of the Jewish people, even in the most remote places in the world. Few are those who did as much as he did, even in the past one thousand years of Jewish history. The Rebbe's contribution was obvious and important, and for that he was admired and loved.

Mr. Ovadia Eli served as mayor of Afula, member of Knesset, Deputy Minister of Defense, and as the chairman of the Airports Authority. He was interviewed in his office at Ben Gurion Airport in December of 2010.



This week in....

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשינ

> **5735 - 1975**, while seeing off a group of guests, the Rebbe distributed a new bilingual edition of the Tanya which — for the first time — had the English translation beside the original Hebrew text. The Rebbe handed an inscribed Tanya to each member of the committee which was responsible for publishing the book and gave Tanyas and dollar bills to the other guests who were present. When this was finished, the Rebbe continued to stand in front of 770 where he encouraged the *chasidim* who were singing, watching as the guests entered their cars and headed to the airport. ¹ 16 Sivan

MY ENCOUNTER
with the **REBBE**

While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words.

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ואתה תצוה... להעלות נר תמיד

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