

- Interview begins at 17 minutes.

What can I remember from my days as a chayder student? It was over 70 years ago. In 2 weeks I will God willing be 80 years old. On the 6th day of Teves I will be 80 God willing. So what can I remember from over 70 years ago?

The chayder at that time was illegal. It was the times after the revolution, the chayder was illegal. Only a few individuals went, I was raised by a father who felt this was important so he raised me and sent me to chayder, but in general most people did not go to chayder. With respect to Judaism, my father was a Hasid because he observed Judaism to the hair. Every item, eating kosher, praying, regarding such matters there was no discussion. My father was a man with understanding. He learned and knew how to learn and he knew how to read the Torah. The fact that I read the Torah is because he used to test me in reading every Friday night. I used to review the portion of the week and he used to test me and it bothered him if I didn't do it properly. I'm not sure he would have let me read the Torah today. That's why he sent me to Chayder.

I arrived at this synagogue only 30 years ago, after the war. (He describes how the synagogue looked then, but now they've added tables instead of just benches.) Maybe in America this is what synagogues look like also. I don't know.

20: 40 When I came here after the war, there were many Jews here. In general, the Hasidic community gathered here. Here at the Lubavitch community gathered. On a holiday that were so many people that you couldn't even enter the courtyard. Today, thank God for what you saw. On the Sabbath, another 10-12 people come and that's it. And the people who do come don't even know what an Aleph looks like. These are people who were raised under communism.

When I was 14 I had already finished chayder, I no longer needed chayder, there were a few scattered illegal yeshivas. I went to study in a town called Polusk??? in Belarus, Shlomo Chaim Kesselman was the supervisor and he was a Lubavitcher, I was 15 at the time. It didn't fully understand how he was trying to lead us. After year I was chased away and went to Neppatrusk ??? Today it's called Yekatarineslav, and that's where the Lubavitch rebbe lived, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's father was the rabbi there 1:30. He was one of the very distinguished rabbis, I was there one night by him. I was 15 or 16. I remember a story but it was almost 70 years ago... 1:58 He was a rabbi for whom people had respect, when he arrived in the synagogue everybody got up for him, he was respected.

The fact that I remained observant is because of the roots that I have, it's all because of my parents, because until the last day that the war started, they led a Jewish home with all the niceties, so this remained. When the war started I went away to the army for almost 5 years. I was in the army, from 1941 to October 1945.

I consider myself very far from being a true hasid, but something remained from interacting with Hasidim. Most of my life I was in a situation where we couldn't carry out what we wanted to do

with respect to Judaism. Today also you can't do what you want even non-Kosher items under communism are hard to find and kosher food is almost non-existent. To eat kosher you really need to have make great great sacrifices (implying he regretfully has to eat non-kosher food?)

438 Rabbi Lazar is an emissary of the Lubavitch Rebbe and he has accomplished a great deal here, until he came everything was temporary. Emissaries would come for a month or two and leave and he's here already full time,