

InPresence 0007: My Great Uncle Harry with Jeffrey Mishlove

Video Transcript - *New Thinking Allowed* with Jeffrey Mishlove
www.newthinkingallowed.org



Recorded on March 4, 2018

Published to YouTube on March 8, 2018

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(00:39) Hello. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today I'd like to tell you about my Great Uncle Harry and how I had a dream about him that changed my life. Uncle Harry lived in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, so often when I was a young child my parents would drive 40 miles from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, where we lived, to visit Uncle Harry. It was a very special occasion and always a very happy occasion.

(01:08) We loved Uncle Harry. One of the reasons why I, as a young child loved him, was because it seemed he was the richest man in the world. Not that he had wealth in terms of money, in fact he lived behind a tiny little corner grocery store that he ran with my Aunt Sally. Whenever I visited we would walk into the store and he would open up the cooler where he had a huge supply of Eskimo Pies and he would hand an Eskimo Pie to each of the children.

(01:45) Now, I knew that Uncle Harry was a religious man. In fact, he was the president of the Orthodox Jewish Congregation in Sheboygan. It was a tiny congregation there. But I knew very little else about him growing up. By the time I got to college I hadn't seen Uncle Harry probably in over 10 years.

(02:10) One evening, in 1970, when I was living in Berkeley, before I had even enrolled as a graduate student in Berkeley - I was volunteering in the Psychology Department at the time - I had a very powerful dream at the time. In fact, I confess it was the most powerful dream that I ever had in my life. Uncle Harry came in that dream and spoke to me in such a deep way about my life. It involved the yin-yang symbol, which was somewhat puzzling for an orthodox Jewish great uncle.

(02:49) He was also, I'll admit, very critical about my attitude towards women, because I have been a feminist for most of my adult life. I believe that men and women are equal. But Uncle Harry seemed, in this dream, to have a different point of view, with regard to my girlfriend at the time. But it was so powerful. It was one of those experiences, you might say, that was realer than real. I awoke from that dream crying. I was in tears and at the same time I was singing.

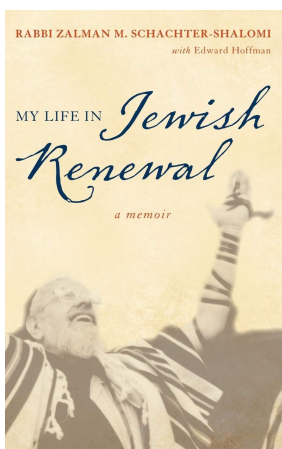
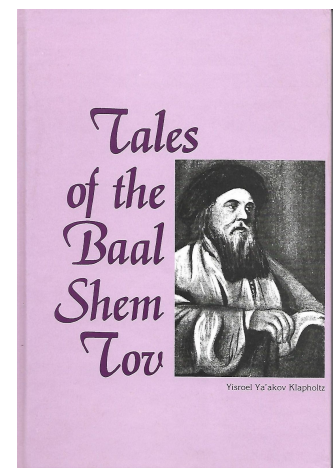
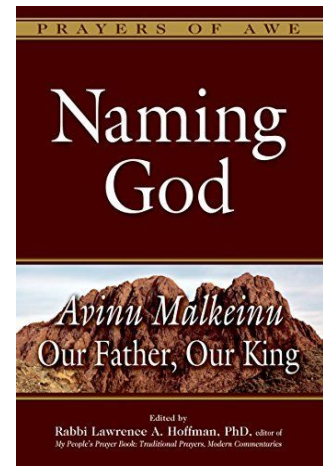
(03:25) I was singing a song that will be familiar to those viewers who are Jewish. It was a song that is sung at the height of the religious ceremony for the high holy holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom

Kippur, especially Yom Kippur. It's called *Avinu Malkeinu*. The words mean, "Our father, our god in heaven, please forgive us for we have sinned. We don't deserve your forgiveness, But we ask you for it." It's a very profound song. [Sings song starting at 04:06]

(04:52) I wrote home after I had that dream and asked my parents in Wisconsin, "How's Uncle Harry? I had a dream about him." As soon as my mother got that letter, she phoned me and said, "How did you know? Uncle Harry has just died." I was shocked. I was really shaken by that news.

(05:15) In a previous episode, in fact in the previous episode, I talked about crisis as apparitions being the most common form of spontaneous psychic experience that people report. One could say that this was a crisis apparition. It fits that definition. I began asking around my professors. I began describing what had happened. They weren't my professors at the time, because I was really a volunteer in the psychology department, but I discovered quickly that the professors of psychology had nothing intelligent to say about that kind of experience.

(06:00) And really, that's when I developed my resolve to become an expert in these things. Because I saw that there were no other experts I could go to, certainly not at the university. And then I asked my parents if I could have an object that belonged to Uncle Harry, something I could have to remember him by. My aunt Jeanette sent me this book. It's a Yiddish book. She said this in Uncle Harry's favorite book. Really, it took me a while to figure out what it was. It says Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, *The Tales of the Baal Shem Tov*. The founder of the Hasidic movement in Judaism, the mystical movement. You see, my Uncle Harry was actually from the area around Lubavitch and was part of that mystical community as a child.



(06:58) But when he came to America, for the most part all of that was put aside. As I grew up in Wisconsin, in a conservative Jewish household, we were taught that Judaism is the most rational of all religions. The mystical side of Judaism was downplayed. I'm pretty sure, in that era in the 1950s, 1960s, most Americans growing up Jewish had that experience of what a rational religion Judaism is. Very little, if any, discussion of the mystical side of things.

(07:43) Once I told a rabbi I'd become close to, Rabbi Zalman Schachter, a great mystical rabbi, about my experiences with Uncle Harry. He said to me, "Well, it seems to me Uncle Harry came to give you one last Eskimo Pie." I'll leave you with that. Thank you so much for being with me. (08:07)

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