

Zelig's parents were part of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement and his father, Rabbi Avraham Zev Sharfstein, was a Chossid of the 5th, 6th and 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dov-Ber, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

The catastrophic collapse of the New York stock exchange in October 1929, was what triggered the Great Depression. People lost their jobs, homes and savings and many depended on charity to survive. At the worst point in the Depression, more than 15 million Americans, one-quarter of the nation's workforce, were unemployed.

Zelig was an infant when the effects of the Great Depression swept throughout the world. Thankfully, his family was spared the tragedy that so many individuals faced with the increasing unemployment, as his father's income solely relied on the constant need for kosher meat. Even though Zelig was an infant when the Great Depression initially began, he had vivid memories as a young child of people standing on street corners attempting to sell things such as apples in order to buy food for their families.

Zelig grew up on the Lower East side of New York and he often recalled his childhood life as "...A very rich