



“The Rebbe Got Rid of My Termites”

Reb Chaim Drizin shared the following story about his father, Reb Mendel Drizin a”h.

My father bought his house around 5733*. Before that, my parents lived in East Flatbush because my mother’s parents lived nearby. It was a nice compromise—it was walking distance from Crown Heights so my father was able to come in for *farbrengens* and the like, but it was a little distant.

A house came up for sale right near my uncle’s home in Crown Heights. It was a large house and my father really wanted to move to Crown Heights. He pitched the idea to my mother, and she told him, “If you’re buying that house—a nice big house—I’m happy to move to Crown Heights.”

The problem was that the homeowner, who was a very wealthy Yid, wanted a lot of money for the house, about a third more than the market rate for such a house. Additionally, the house was infested with termites.

My father went to the Rebbe and asked what he should do. The Rebbe told him to buy the house, even for the higher price, and with regards to the termites, the Rebbe said he shouldn’t worry about it, and he can use them as an excuse to take some money off the price.

My father went back to the seller and indeed negotiated a lower price on account of the infestation. He then called in a company to remove the termites, and there were no termites in the house. My father would always tell us this story and say, “The Rebbe got rid of my termites.”

This was the story I grew up hearing.

But a number of years ago, I was at a wedding in Rose Castle, a hall in Williamsburg, and I was sitting near a fellow. We introduced ourselves, and it turned out that this was the previous owner of the house. We spoke about how we each grew up in the same house (he was much older than me), and he told me, “You know, we really loved that house, and we didn’t want to sell it, but the neighborhood was changing.”

Then he told me that he had to ask me *mechilah*. “What for?” I asked. “You know, your father was a really nice guy, but he was a little bit naive.” Now for those who knew my father, naive was the last thing he was. He was friendly, yes, but naive he wasn’t. “How was he naive,” I asked.

“Well, we took advantage of him,” he replied. “We had such problems with termites in that house. We brought company after company to try to remove these termites, and no one could get rid of them. We didn’t really make clear to your father how extensive the problem was, so I’m sure he had major headaches after that.

I replied, “You didn’t hear the story?” “Which story?” he asked. I told him the story of how the Rebbe told us we had nothing to worry about, and I told him that there have never been termites in the house since then. The man’s face turned white, he couldn’t talk to me anymore, and he got up and walked away...¹ ①

1. As told by Reb Chaim Drizin to a member of the *Derher* staff.