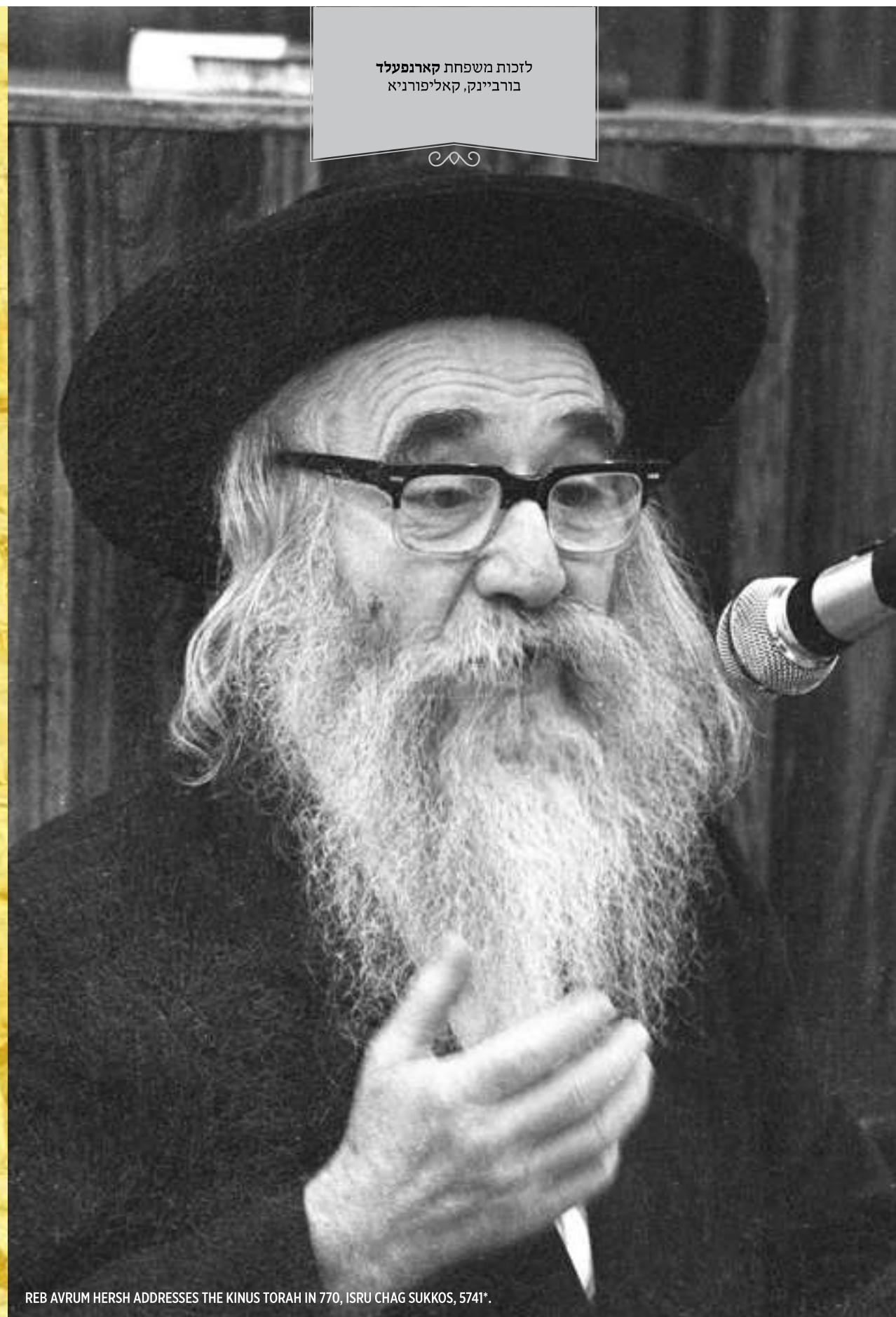


לזכות משפחת קארנפעלד  
בוריינק, קאליפורניא



REB AVRUM HERSH ADDRESSES THE KINUS TORAH IN 770, ISRU CHAG SUKKOS, 5741\*.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA LEV 19/5/7



REB AVRAHAM HERSH (RIGHT) SITTING BEHIND THE REBBE AT THE FARBRENGEN OF 12 TISHREI, 5744.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 209527

# A Soldier in Yerushalayim

## REB AVRUM HERSH COHEN



Harav Avrohom Tzvi HaKohen—known to all simply as Reb Avrum Hersh Cohen—was one of the most respected *talmidei chachamim* in Yerushalayim who mentored distinguished modern-day *rabbanim* and *poskim* in Eretz Yisroel. A passionate Lubavitcher Chossid with a tremendous love for and *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe, he merited to serve as the Rebbe's shliach in ways that no one else could replicate. Following are snippets of the life and times of this unique soldier in *dor hashvi'i*.<sup>1</sup>



## EARLY LIFE

Reb Avrum Hersh was born on 12 Nissan<sup>2</sup> 5676\* and hailed from a family of *kohanim meyuchasim* who were distinguished Alexander Chassidim from Lodz, Poland. In Poland, yeshivos were not very common at the time and most *chassidishe bochurim* learned in a local *shteibel* or *kloiz* on their own or in informal groups. Avrum Hersh learned with great *hasmadah* in the Alexander *shtiebel*.

As a young *bochur*, Avrum Hersh became known as a tremendous *lamdan*, whose learning was only surpassed by his great *yiras Shamayim*.

The years between the two world wars were a time of great tension for Jews in Poland, and in the spring of 5694\* Avrum Hersh's family made plans to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel after receiving a *bracha* to do so from the Alexander Rebbe, the Akeidas Yitzchok. To their dismay Avrum Hersh was not able to join them since he had just turned 18 and was of military age, but he urged them to emigrate without him and he would follow them soon after. It took a full year of much hard work and miracles for Avrum Hersh to finally reach Eretz Yisroel and rejoin his family who had by then settled in Yerushalayim.

In Yerushalayim there was a wealth of yeshivos for him to choose from but after learning in several of them he settled on learning on his own in one of the shuls, as he had done in Lodz.

Simcha Bunim and Yisroel Tzvi Heber were two brothers from Lodz who had learned together with Avrum Hersh in the Alexander *shteibel* in Lodz and had emigrated to Yerushalayim around the same time. Their father Reb Chaim Eliezer was already connected to Chabad and sent his elder son Simcha Bunim to learn in Yeshivas Toras Emes. Yisroel Tzvi, who was too young to officially enroll in the yeshiva, would participate



REB AVRUM HERSH'S PASSPORT WITH WHICH HE LEFT POLAND FOR ERETZ YISROEL.

COHEN FAMILY

in the *shiurim* and farbrengens of the legendary mashpia Reb Alter Simchovitch.

At one point, the two brothers reunited with their old friend Avrum Hersh. They described to him the greatness of their *mashpia* Reb Alter and the special atmosphere of Yeshivas Toras Emes and encouraged him to see for himself.

During the month of Elul 5697\*, the Frieddiker Rebbe penned the famous *igeres* to all *talmidei hayeshivos* throughout the world describing the appropriate behavior of *yeshiva bochurim* throughout the 48 hours of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>3</sup>

When the *igeres* arrived in Toras Emes, Reb Alter held a farbrengen and explained the *igeres* at great length and the true meaning of *avodas hateshuva*. This *igeres* and Reb Alter's farbrengen had a deep impact on Avrum Hersh and transformed him into a full-fledged Lubavitcher Chossid.

"Reb Alter was permeated with the awareness that the yeshiva is the Rebbe's *mosad* and every moment needed to be utilized to the fullest," Reb Avrum Hersh later recounted. "He demanded that one should be able to

present the Rebbe a detailed report of how every moment was used. 'You think your time belongs to you!?' Reb Alter would say.

"I became a Chabad Chossid because of him."

Reb Alter passed away at the young age of 48, only two years after Avrum Hersh became a *Tomim* and he later said, "Had Reb Alter lived longer he would have conquered all of Yerushalayim."

**"GET ME MORE SUCH CHASSIDISHE CHASSANIM..."**

In the winter of 5700\* Reb Avrum Hersh became engaged to Rivka Mattel Vaisfisch, the daughter of Reb Avrohom Elchonon Vaisfisch and granddaughter of Rav Dovid Baharan, the eldest and one of the most distinguished *poskim* in Yerushalayim at the time. Rav Dovid hailed from a Litvisher family of *talmidei HaGr"a*, who were opposed to Chassidus for many generations. He was directly involved in the *shidduchim* of all his granddaughters and when he met with Avrum Hersh he was so impressed with him that he exclaimed to his son-in-law Reb Avrohom Elchonon

Vaisfisch, "Today I purchased a *sefer Torah* for your daughter!"

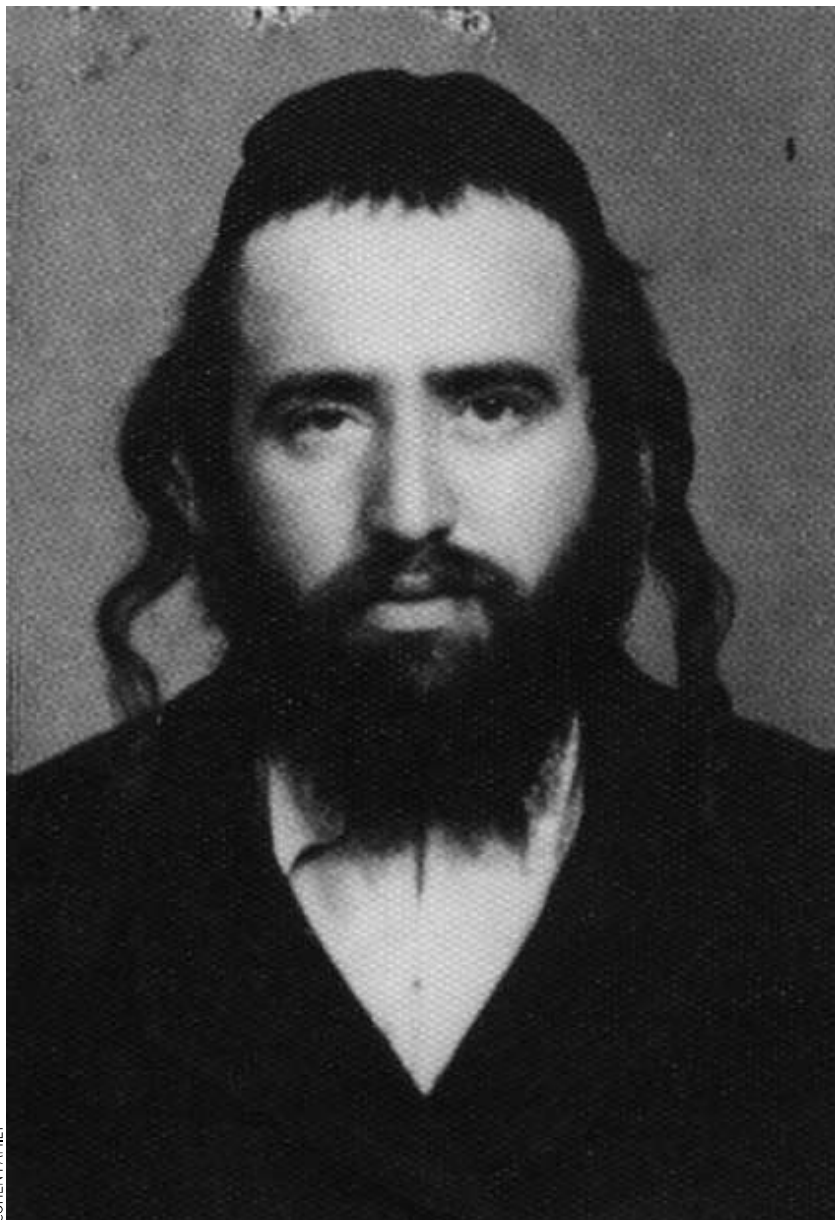
When his *talmidim* once asked him how he could choose Chassidim as *chassanim* for his granddaughters, Rav Dovid replied, "If you have more such Chassidim, bring them to me!"

Over time Reb Avrum Hersh learned *halacha* together with his wife's

distinguished grandfather, and after several months they started learning Chassidus together which transformed Rav Dovid's approach to Chassidus in general.

Reb Avrum Hersh's family was very poor and he needed to arrange the finances for his upcoming wedding. He had collected a significant sum of

*Rav Dovid replied, "If you have more such Chassidim, bring them to me!"*



COHEN FAMILY

REB AVRUM HERSH AS A YUNGERMAN.

## EVERYONE HAS A UNIQUE MISSION

Reb Arum Hersh's father-in-law, Reb Avrohom Elchonon Vaisfisch, was an *ehrlliche Yid* who made a living from owning a grocery in Yerushalayim. After marrying off all his children in 5725\* he wished to sell the grocery and dedicate his life to learning Torah all day, but was hesitant to make such a decision without proper guidance. Although he was not a Lubavitcher chossid he asked his grandson Shmuel Yechezkel Cohen, who was in 770 that year for "*Kvutza*," to present this question to the Rebbe when he would be in *yechidus*. The Rebbe responded that he should not sell the grocery and continue working there.

Reb Avrohom Elchonon was troubled by the Rebbe's answer and approached Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, who was his neighbor, and asked him what to do. He very much wanted to learn Torah full time but the Rebbe had advised him to keep the grocery...

Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach explained to him that every *neshama* has a unique mission in this world. There are those who are meant to learn Torah all day and there are those who are meant to serve as an example of a proper and honest *baal eisek*. "Apparently the Rebbe is telling you that this is the mission of your *neshama* in this world."

Reb Avrohom Elchonon continued working in the grocery for many years until he had a stroke while standing in the store and passed away two weeks later.



money, but decided to use the money to purchase the best pairs of Rashi and Rabbeinu Tam tefillin he could find.

He had heard that in 5690\*, during the famous visit to Eretz Yisroel, the Frierdiker Rebbe purchased tefillin *parshiyos* for the Rebbe by Reb Nachman Papirna, a *sofer* in Yerushalayim, so he invested his small fortune in purchasing beautiful *parshiyos* from the same *sofer* as well as top quality *batim*.

Reb Avrum Hersh continued learning in the *kollel* of Toras Emes for approximately ten years after his wedding. During this time he frequently wrote letters to the Frierdiker Rebbe. In 5701\* he and his friend Reb Moshe Veber arranged for the alumni of Toras Emes to daven together on Shabbosim and organized *melave malka* farbrengens in each other's homes. The Frierdiker Rebbe was pleased by this arrangement and

emphasized the importance of the *melave malka* farbrengens<sup>4</sup>, a tradition that continued for many decades.

## BRANCHING OUT

In 5711\* Reb Avrum Hersh started learning in the *kollel* of "Yeshivas Meah Shearim." The members of this *kollel* came from a mix of backgrounds and he started bringing the influence of Lubavitch to these various circles in many different ways.

Despite his relative youth, Reb Avrum Hersh was well known for his *lomdus*, especially for his brilliant clarity in *halacha*. He would converse with one and all in matters of learning and he impressed the greatest minds of Yerushalayim.

Every Friday a group of *poskim* gathered in the office of Israel's chief rabbi Harav Yitzchok Herzog to discuss many of the complicated halachic questions of the time and Reb

Avrum Hersh regularly participated in these discussions.

He would constantly recite words of Torah or was deep in thought, but at the same time he was a shining example of *ahavas Yisroel* to all. He had an open home with many guests throughout the year and knew how to listen to people and help them in their time of need. He paid special attention to those *bochurim* in the neighborhood who he noticed were gradually drifting away from Yiddishkeit and patiently and lovingly inspired them. The heads of what later became many distinguished families in Yerushalayim are from today due to his influence.

In 5714\*, Reb Avrum Hersh was appointed *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva L'Tzeirim of the "Toldos Aharon" community, a post he held for close to ten years. During this time he taught and mentored many *talmidim* who later became noted rabbanim, *poskim* and *roshei yeshiva*. Most famous among them was Harav Meir Bransdorfer, a member of the Badatz Eidah Hachareidis and a most distinguished *posek* of recent times.

## SHLIACH TO NETUREI KARTA

From the earliest days of the Rebbe's *nesius*, the Rebbe instructed the Chassidim in Yerushalayim to invest their efforts in arranging *shiurim* in Chassidus wherever possible. Reb Avrum Hersh was intensely involved in this project and personally delivered multiple *shiurei Chassidus* and had set *chavrusos* with many individuals. But there was one specific *shiur Tanya* that Reb Avrum Hersh delivered three times a week for decades that the Rebbe personally initiated and had a unique interest in its development and growth.

The Neturei Karta community of Meah Shearim, known for its radical anti-Zionist position, did not appreciate the Rebbe's strong support for the development of Eretz Yisroel,



REB AVRUM HERSH (FAR LEFT) WELCOMES RAV EFRAIM YOLLES TO HIS KOLLEL, LAG B'OMER 5728\*.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 283757

*"I suggest that you should set up a shiur Tanya... in one of the shuls of the Neturei Karta, in whose newspaper was recently published an article discouraging people from learning Chassidus."*

and misunderstood it as support of the Zionist ideology. In 5716\* they published a sharply worded protest against Lubavitch in their newspaper "Hachoma" because Mr. Zalman Shazar, a member of the Israeli government at the time, was honored at a Yud-Beis Tammuz farbrengen.

Later that summer the Rebbe sent a group of *bochurim* as shlichim to Eretz Yisroel to inspire the Chassidim after the terrorist attack in Kfar Chabad.<sup>5</sup> They spent a full week in Yerushalayim and their visit made waves in the Yerushalmi community. In response, the "Hachoma" published a scathing article against the Baal Shem Tov and Chassidim in general and called for people to refrain from learning Chassidus.

On 24 Elul 5716\* the Rebbe penned an *igeres* to Reb Avrum Hersh:<sup>6</sup>

"Based on the reports from the shlichim about their visit to Yerushalayim and specifically in Meah Shearim: I suggest that you should set up a *shiur Tanya*... in one of the shuls of the Neturei Karta, in whose newspaper was recently published an article discouraging people from learning Chassidus.

"... I hear that there are one or two who were practically affected by this discouragement. It is self understood that those who 'drink the waters' of the Baal Shem Tov must not only protest against such declarations... they must intensify the dissemination of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings specifically in the strongholds of opposition.

"I am sending this letter as express mail so that you should be able to

start working on this *shiur* before the new year begins. It would be best if the first *shiur* would happen on Erev Rosh Hashanah—to 'purify' the entire previous year."

When Reb Avrum Hersh received this express letter from the Rebbe on Erev Rosh Hashanah he immediately set about fulfilling the Rebbe's request. He decided that the Kehal Yerei'im shul was the right place to have the *shiur*, and in order to secure the necessary permissions to do so he sought out the support of Rav Amram Bloi, one of the foremost leaders of the Neturei Karta. They shared a family connection, and despite their strong ideological differences they maintained a special friendship and mutual respect for each other.

When Reb Avrum Hersh showed up at Rav Amram Bloi's home with a request to start a *shiur Tanya* that very day, he asked, "Did the Rebbe instruct you to approach me for my support on this matter?"

"No. The Rebbe only instructed me to start the *shiur* today in a Neturei Karta shul," Reb Avrum Hersh replied. "I decided on my own that you were the right person to consult with."

"If so, I and my sons will come with you now to hear a *shiur* in Tanya at the Kehal Yerei'im shul!" Rav Amram declared, and thus began the *shiur Tanya* at the Neturei Karta Shul on Erev Rosh Hashanah, exactly as the Rebbe had requested!

Reb Avrum Hersh was surprised at how easily Rav Amram agreed to the *shiur* and was willing to personally

participate in it on such a busy day like Erev Rosh Hashanah. Rav Amram confided to him that he had also received an *igeres* from the Rebbe that morning,<sup>7</sup> written on 24 Elul, requesting that despite the ideological differences between Lubavitch and Neturei Karta, he should arrange a *shiur* in Chassidus in a shul under his influence, and that the *shiur* should happen at least once during the year 5716\*.

"I just witnessed such clear *ruach hakodesh* from the Rebbe! The Rebbe did not specifically instruct you whom to consult with about starting the *shiur* and yet you decided on your own to approach me about it."

Before the start of the *shiur* Rav Amram made one condition with Reb Avrum Hersh. The members of the Neturei Karta would only agree to listen to a *shiur* from him if he would commit to never participate in Israeli elections ever again. Otherwise, he explained, there was no chance for the *shiur* to succeed.

Since time was of essence and he had no option of asking the Rebbe about this,<sup>8</sup> Reb Avrum Hersh agreed to the condition and the *shiur* took off. When he reported this to the Rebbe later on, the Rebbe agreed that a *shiur Tanya* with Neturei Karta was by far more important than participating in the elections.

Immediately after Rosh Hashanah, Reb Avrum Hersh reported the establishment of the *shiur* to the Rebbe. He merited to receive the Rebbe's response dated 8 Tishrei,<sup>9</sup> acknowledging the good news of the establishment of the *shiur* with the instruction that the *shiur* should happen at least three times a week in a way that three days should not pass without a *shiur Chassidus* there.

A month later the Rebbe sent another *igeres* inquiring about the development of the *shiur* and encouraged him to utilize the month







COHEN FAMILY

REB AVRUM HERSH JOINS FELLOW LUBAVITCHER CHASSIDIM IN JOYOUS DANCING BEFORE TRAVELING TO THE REBBE FOR TISHREI 5721\*.

of Kislev in the best possible way to disseminate Chassidus “in the place that you merited to be the shliach,” and concluded with a special regards to all the participants in the “שיעור הכי” שיעור הכי—most esteemed *shiur*.”

On 3 Teves 5717\* the Rebbe defined this *shiur* as a מצוה שאי אפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים—a mitzvah that cannot be accomplished by others.

The Rebbe continued following the progress of the *shiur* with special interest and it succeeded in creating a great shift by many of the members of the Neturei Karta in their overall attitude to Chassidus.

### **SHEHECHEYANU!**

Reb Avrum Hersh’s most fervent wish was to merit to be in the Rebbe’s

presence, but traveling to New York from Eretz Yisroel in those days was prohibitive on multiple levels. In honor of Tishrei 5721\*, a special chartered flight was arranged for Chassidim to travel to the Rebbe<sup>10</sup> and Reb Avrum Hersh decided he would take advantage of the opportunity at all costs. The discounted price of the charter far exceeded his financial means at the time and his wife was distraught that his trip to the Rebbe would sink them deeper in debt.

She expressed her concerns in a letter to the Rebbe and merited to receive the Rebbe’s response:<sup>11</sup>

“Even when only one family member undertakes such a trip and has the opportunity to be at the Ohel... to request all that is necessary,

this is on behalf of the entire family, especially his wife and children. In other words, this will benefit the family materially and spiritually.”

The historic charter flight landed in New York on Monday, 27 Elul, and Reb Avrum Hersh merited to see the Rebbe for the first time during *krias haTorah* that morning. At Mincha the Rebbe skipped *tachanun* and afterwards entered the main shul and said a *maamar* ד"ה לך אמר לבי בקשו פני.

At the *simchas beis hashoeva* farbrengen in the sukkah, the Rebbe requested before the seventh *sicha* that the organizers of the annual Tzach convention (which occurred earlier that day) deliver a report of the event. Rabbi Yosef Wineberg briefly described the speeches given



## THE SPECIAL DOLLARS

During the month of Tishrei Reb Avrum Hersh merited to have *yechidus* 3 times. Among the many topics discussed, the Rebbe instructed him to purchase a gift for his wife. In what was apparently a response to his wife's concern about the financial strain of the trip, the Rebbe said to him that since he delivers many Tanya shiurim with *mesiras nefesh*, he would like to participate in the costs of his trip. The Rebbe handed him a \$100 bill and said, "I don't want you to keep it as a *segulah*. I want you to use it to cover the costs of the trip."

The next day, the Rebbe's secretary Reb Moshe Leib Rodshtein asked him about his *yechidus*. He shared with him the story of the \$100 bill and confided that he was unsure of how to proceed.

After a few moments of thought Reb Moshe Leib said, "I suggest you go to the bank and change the \$100 bill for one hundred single dollar bills and sell each dollar for \$10."

Together they went across the street to the bank and procured the 100 single dollar bills and when they returned to 770, Reb Moshe Leib pulled out a stamp he had prepared with the words: דולר לברכה מ"ק: אדמו"ר שליט"א - מרחשון תשכ"א (A dollar of blessing from the Rebbe Shlita - Marcheshvan 5721).

Reb Avrum Hersh asked Reb Moshe Leib how he has the audacity to do such a thing and he responded, "If the Rebbe wants this \$100 bill to cover the costs of your trip, surely this is what the Rebbe had in mind."

He kept a dollar for each of his immediate family members and sold the rest. Needless to say, the sale of the special dollars covered the costs of the trip to the Rebbe. Reb Avrum Hersh kept this special dollar very dearly and requested from his family to insert it in his hand before his burial.

## THE REBBE'S ONLY CHILD

In one *yechidus* the Rebbe said to Reb Avrum Hersh, "One of your relatives is currently unwell." Reb Avrum Hersh thought for a moment and asked if the Rebbe was referring to his wife's cousin Reb Yitzchok Weinstock who was having an issue with his leg. "I am referring to him, but he has a different medical issue at the moment," the Rebbe said.

Suddenly Reb Avrum Hersh recalled that Reb Yitzchok had given him a *pan* for the Rebbe which he had forgotten to bring with him to *yechidus* and he told the Rebbe he would give it to Mazkirus as soon as possible.

"He has a second name," the Rebbe continued. Reb Avrum Hersh could not recall the name and the Rebbe continued "Yitzchok Shmuel."

Reb Avrum Hersh would repeat this story with much excitement and conclude: "Reb Yitzchok is a dear relative and neighbor of mine whom I see often and yet I did not know his full name, was unaware of his most recent medical issue and even forgot to bring his *pan* to *yechidus*. Yet the Rebbe knew his full name, was fully up to date and concerned about his medical condition! The only explanation I have for this is that for the Rebbe, the Nossi Hador, every Yid is like an only child!"

by the various Tzach representatives throughout the world and towards the end said: "Reb Avrum Hersh from Yerushalayim greeted the crowd and emphasized that the first thing he heard from the Rebbe was about the *inyan* of <sup>12</sup>בקשו פני."

After that first glorious Tishrei he merited to be in the Rebbe's presence, he did his utmost to come back to 770 at every possible opportunity. After he married off all his children, he traveled to New York every Tishrei until 5750\*, when he was unable to travel any longer due to his age and illness.



REB AVRUM HERSH AT A YECHIDUS KLOLIS FOR THE GUESTS JOINING THE REBBE FOR TISHREI, 26 TISHREI 5745\*.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 215780

Rabbi Yisroel Glitzenstein relates: "I once observed as Reb Avrum Hersh arrived in 770 in the month of Adar 5733\* and he stood in the front foyer waiting to see the Rebbe. As the Rebbe left his room, Reb Avrum Hersh started reciting *Shehechyanu* out loud, slowly and with great emotion. The Rebbe stopped and gazed at Reb Avrum Hersh until he finished the *bracha* and answered 'amen.'"

This scene happened each time he came to 770. In 5736\*, after the Rebbe answered Amen to Reb Avrum Hersh's *Shehechyanu*, the Rebbe wished him "Mazel Tov" for his child's recent wedding.

He always merited to have a lengthy *yechidus* and often the Rebbe spoke with him in learning. Once, when the *mazkir* opened the door many times due to the overflowing crowd waiting for *yechidus*, the Rebbe

told Reb Avrum Hersh that the continuation of the *yechidus* will be at the upcoming Shabbos farbrengen.

During his visits to 770, Reb Avrum Hersh was treated with utmost respect. In the 5740s\* his place at farbrengens was on the dais behind the Rebbe and at davening he had a spot in the front row behind the Rebbe's *bima*. On Erev Rosh Hashanah he was one of the ten *rabbanim* who served as the *beis din* for the Rebbe's *hataras nedarim*.

During *Birchas Kohanim* on Yom Tov he made a point to stand in the front row of *Kohanim* facing the Rebbe and it was obvious to the observers that the Rebbe gazed upon him as he reached his place and even afterwards.

At the *kinus Torah* of Tishrei 5734\*, Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik introduced Reb Avrum Hersh and said, "We all saw how the Rebbe waited for Reb Avrum Hersh at *Birchas Kohanim* and

escorted him with his gaze until he reached his place."

He was also from the first *Kohanim* to invite his grandchildren who were not yet Bar Mitzvah to join him on the *Bima* for *Birchas Kohanim*. Once when he was on the *bima* without his grandchildren the Rebbe motioned to him with his hands as if to say, "Where are the *einiklach*?"

Well known for his *lomdus* in non-Chabad circles, many Yidden from surrounding neighborhoods came to 770 for the *kinus Torah* just to hear Reb Avrum Hersh speak. During Tishrei 5721\*, the Rebbe sent him together with Reb Sholom Morozov to give a *shiur* in Chassidus in Williamsburg and he continued giving *shiurim* in various communities in New York whenever he visited. Even when there was serious tension between Satmar and Lubavitch, the Rebbe instructed



REB AVRUM HERSH (SITTING, LEFT) PARTICIPATING IN THE BEIS DIN FOR THE REBBE'S HATORAS NEDARIM, EREV ROSH HASHANAH, 5744\*.



him to visit them as usual, and indeed everything went well.

He was offered good accommodations by well meaning hosts, but he insisted on sleeping in the accommodations offered by the Eshel Hachnosas Orchim by Reb Moshe Yeruslavsky so that he would be able to spend every available moment in 770 and not feel obligated to spend time with his hosts.

When he returned to Eretz Yisroel from 770 he would share his experience in such a passionate and exciting way that swept everyone up in the inspiration of Beis Chayeinu.

On Simchas Torah 5721\*, the Rebbe taught the *niggun* “*Ata Vechartanu*,” and Reb Avrum Hersh made a point of teaching the *niggun* to groups of *bochurim* in many yeshivos in Yerushalayim, even those who were ideologically opposed to Lubavitch.

He once described how amazing it is that traveling to the Rebbe is so miraculous that as he prepares to leave a taxi pulls up, carries his suitcases for him until the plane and everything happens in such a comfortable and easy manner. He was asked, “What’s the big deal? You pay for the service!” to which he responded, “The money I

have is sent to me by Hashem. I spend all my time teaching His Torah and He ensures that I have sufficient money that I should have the ability to travel to Beis Chayeinu, hear Chassidus and through this remain *mekushar* to the Rebbe.”

## ROSH KOLLEL

In the summer of 5722\*, Reb Avrum Hersh was appointed *mashgiach ruchni* of the Central Yeshiva of Tomchei Temimim in Eretz Yisroel, located at the time in the *pardes* in Lod. He loved the *bochurim* very much and was dedicated to their spiritual and material welfare. Each month he would write a *duch* to the Rebbe reporting on every *bochur*’s progress in learning and *avodas Hashem*.

During the month of Tishrei 5723\*, the older classes of the yeshiva moved to the newly built building in Kfar Chabad. Reb Avrum Hersh would sleep in the Yeshiva dormitory throughout the week instead of traveling back and forth to Yerushalayim.

Within a year, the *hanhala* decided to appoint Reb Avrum Hersh as *maggid shiur* for the older *bochurim* to focus on learning *halacha l’maaseh*.

Several months later, in the summer of 5724\* the Rebbe established a *kollel* in Kfar Chabad for newly married men, and Reb Avrum Hersh was eventually appointed to be the *rosh kollel*. Thus began a new chapter in his life as he mentored and guided dozens of young Chassidim who eventually became rabbanim and *poskim* themselves under his tutelage.

In 5729\*,<sup>13</sup> the Rebbe established the Nachalas Har Chabad neighborhood in Kiryat Malachi by sending some of the members of the *kollel* to establish a *kollel* there, and Reb Avrum Hersh was appointed *rosh kollel* there as well. He would travel

## THE ALTER REBBE’S SHULCHAN ARUCH

Reb Avrum Hersh had a tremendous passion for learning the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch. With his wealth of knowledge in learning he was able to focus on every word and nuance of the *halacha* and derive fascinating *chiddushim* in *halacha l’maaseh*.

During his *yechidus* in Tishrei 5721\*, the Rebbe spoke with him about the importance of inspiring people to “*koch*” in the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, especially in non-Chabad circles.

“With whom else can I speak about this? Who else understands the importance of this more than you?” the Rebbe said to him.

Reb Avrum Hersh would constantly share the tremendous clarity of the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch to rapt audiences and to each he would conclude in a different way. To Lubavitcher Chassidim he would say, “The *neshama chadasha*, the Alter Rebbe who gifted us the holy Tanya, also wrote the Shulchan Aruch. We ought to learn it with the proper focus and attention.”

To non-Lubavitch crowds he would say, “The one who wrote this tremendous Shulchan Aruch wrote the Tanya as well...”

Once the Brisker Rov (HaGRI”Z) answered a “*tzorich iyun*” of Reb Akiva Eiger in Hilchos Matzah based on a *vort* from his father Reb Chaim Brisker. Reb Avrum Hersh opened up the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch and pointed out to a friend of his, who was a *talmid* of the Brisker Rov, that this idea is already articulated in the Alter Rebbe’s precise language in Shulchan Aruch.

Afterwards the Brisker Rov commented, “Any ‘good *vort*’ one can say in Orach Chayim - it’s already in the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch! His language is precise like the Rambam!”<sup>14</sup>

In 5727\* the Rebbe instructed the members of the *kollel* in Kfar Chabad to prepare *mareh mekomos*, *tziyunim* and *hearos* to the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch. This groundbreaking project was done under the guidance of Reb Avrum Hersh.

there once a week to give a *shiur* and to keep track of their progress.

The Rebbe's approach to the *kollel* was that *yungerleit* should learn there for two years and then get involved in *hafatzas hamaayanos* in various ways. In 5731\* there was a group of *yungerleit* who especially excelled in their learning and they strongly wished to remain in the *kollel*, even if they would not continue receiving the *kollel* stipend. When Reb Avrum Hersh was in *yechidus* during Tishrei 5732\* he asked the Rebbe about the possibility of allowing these *yungerleit* to remain in the *kollel* for some more time.

The Rebbe said that the *horaah* for *yungerleit* to learn in *kollel* for two years was specific. The whole purpose of learning in *kollel* is in order to eventually go out into the world to be involved in *hafatza*. If a *yungerman* does not fulfill the purpose of *kollel*, it calls into question the years he spent learning in *kollel*.

Although his official responsibilities in Kfar Chabad were in the *kollel*, Reb Avrum Hersh gave *shiurim* to *balebatim* in Gemara and Shulchan Aruch as well. The Rebbe also instructed him to test *bochurim* and *yungerleit* for *semicha*, which he did for many decades.

After close to 20 years of his dedication to the *kollel* in Kfar Chabad and Nachalas Har Chabad, the constant traveling became difficult for him and in 5744\* Reb Avrum Hersh became the *rosh kollel* of "Kollet Shamir" and "Kollet Kol Yaakov-Chabad" in Yerushalayim. Rabbi Yisroel Halperin relates: "When Reb Avrum Hersh left the post of *rosh kollel* in Kfar Chabad I met Reb Mendel Futerfas in the hallway and he said to me, 'You must find a way to keep Reb Avrum Hersh here in Kfar Chabad. We all need his *chayus*, even I need it!'"



### "LISTENING TO MOSHE RABBEINU!"

As a dedicated Chossid, Reb Avrum Hersh's greatest pleasure in life was to hear the Rebbe's voice. In the early years when it was very difficult to find recordings of the Rebbe's farbrengens he made every effort to acquire them and spent hours listening to them. His dedicated time for listening to farbrengens was at 3:30 a.m. Many recall walking in the dark alleyways of the Batei Varsha neighborhood of Yerushalayim in those early morning hours and hearing the Rebbe's voice emanating from Reb Avrum Hersh's apartment.

Once a Chossid visiting Eretz Yisroel brought him a recording of a *Yechidus Kholis* which had not been broadcast through WLCC. Reb Avrum Hersh was so pleased that he put it into the playing device right away and they listened to the *sicha* together. Suddenly a Litvishe *rosh yeshiva* knocked on his door to discuss a difficult question in *halacha* with him and asked who they were listening to. "Moshe Rabbeinu!" Reb Avrum Hersh exclaimed with great emotion.

In the 5730s\*, when the live hookups of the Rebbe's farbrengens became routine, Reb Avrum Hersh



was among the first to arrive in Yeshivas Toras Emes ready to listen to the farbrengen like a soldier, even if there was a surprise *sicha* when it was already in middle of the night in Eretz Yisroel.

Reb Avrum Hersh had a tremendous *koch* in the Rebbe's *sichos* and when Likkutei Sichos started to be published on a weekly basis, he

always had the *likkut* with him and would learn every word with great depth. He would discuss the content of the *sichos* with one and all and would often comment on the greatness of the *chiddushim* in every line and footnote. "Since the days of Moshe Rabbeinu there has not been such a revelation of Torah!" he would say with great excitement.

"One who has never learned Likkutei Sichos never saw *geonus* in his life. One who has not toiled tirelessly to understand the footnotes of Likkutei Sichos, has never seen *amkus* in his life."

On one of the walls of his home he had a photo of the Alter Rebbe and a photo of the Rebbe and a clock in between the two photos. He would often tell his visitors: "The Alter Rebbe and the Rebbe are the same. The only separation between them is time..."

## MIVTZOIM

When the Rebbe initiated Mivtza Tefillin in 5727\*, Reb Avrum Hersh immediately dedicated himself to it. A special tefillin booth was established at the plaza of the Kosel and *anash* of Yerushalayim had a set rotation of shifts manning the booth at all hours of the day, every day of the week. Due to his responsibilities outside of Yerushalayim, the only free time Reb Avrum Hersh had was on Erev Shabbos, and each week he stood at the Kosel dressed in his Shabbos clothing and aided the thousands of Yidden there in wrapping tefillin until minutes before Shabbos began. He would then daven Kabbalas Shabbos and walk back home. This continued until he was no longer able to walk.

Once a Yid at the Kosel refused to wrap tefillin, so Reb Hersh handed him a coin and a *tzedakah pushka* and encouraged him to at least do the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, to which he agreed. Several minutes later the man returned and asked to wrap tefillin.

He would accompany the *kollel yungerleit* who would travel to nearby towns and villages to *kasher* kitchens, guiding them in the *halachos* and getting involved in the work himself.

Once, when he joined another *yungerman* visiting homes in a nearby town to offer them new mezuzos or to check their old ones, they came upon the home of an elderly woman who



COHEN FAMILY

REB AVRAHAM HERSH STANDING AT THE TEFILLIN BOOTH AT THE KOSEL EREV SHABBOS, DRESSED IN THE TRADITIONAL YERUSHALMI SHABBOS GARB.

*Reb Hersh handed him a coin and a tzedakah pushka and encouraged him to at least do the mitzvah of tzedakah...*

told them that she is very not religious and had only one mezuzah in her home. Reb Avrum Hersh exclaimed, "You have one mezuzah? You are very religious!" She was so moved by his genuine comment that she purchased new mezuzos for all the doors of her home.

A group of Chassidim once came to Yeshivas Chevron to sell letters in the Sefer Torah Hakloli to the *bochurim*. Reb Avrum Hersh approached the *mashgiach* and after a lengthy conversation received permission for the Chassidim to do so after the *seder*.

In 5732\* a delegation of Chassidim met with Harav Yechezkel Abramski, the *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivas Slobodka in Bnei Brak, asking him to sign on to an important initiative of the Rebbe. When Reb Avrum Hersh saw that Rav Abramski was very friendly and respectful but hesitant to sign on to the initiative, he asked him what *sugya* he was learning at the time and then started discussing the *sugya* in great depth with brilliant clarity. Rav Abramski was so impressed by this and immediately signed on to the initiative.

## AWAITING MOSHIACH

As a *Kohen*, Reb Avrum Hersh anticipated the imminent arrival of Moshiach with an extra level of practicality. He was proficient in the *halachos* of the *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* and would learn those *masechtos* regularly.

When he was once told by his doctors that he would need to undergo surgery to treat a certain illness in his legs, he started trembling. The doctors tried to calm him that it was a routine surgery, but he explained to them that he was worried that the surgery would render him a בעל מום and he would not be able to serve as a *Kohen* in the third *Beis Hamikdash* when Moshiach comes.

He wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking for a *bracha* that he would not need to undergo the surgery and the Rebbe instructed him to take certain medicines instead. When he recovered from the illness without needing surgery he arranged a big *seudas hodaah* for the fact that he was still worthy of serving in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

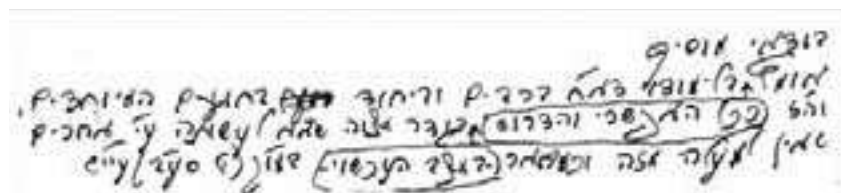
Later in life he once contracted an infection for which the doctors

insisted he needed to amputate a finger. He was adamantly opposed to the idea for the same reason, and instead elected to take a strong medicine that caused him to become very ill. One of his *talmidim* was in 770 for Simchas Torah and at *kos shel bracha* he asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for Reb Avrum Hersh, who went on to recover from the illness without requiring an amputation.

After a lengthy illness, Reb Avrum Hersh passed away on 24 Av 5755\*. His grandson who was tending to him at the time offered him some food, and Reb Avrum Hersh ate a bit, made a *bracha acharona*, ending loudly and clearly with the words "*Boruch chei ha'olamim...*"

Those were his final words in this world; a befitting conclusion to the life of a passionate Chossid, who left children and grandchildren and generations of *talmidim*, Chassidim and *mekusharim* to the Rebbe. **1**

1. All the information in this article is gleaned from the *sefer* "Reb Avrum Hersh," by Shneur Zalman Rabinovich, Nachalas Har Chabad, 5775.
2. The day after Yud-Alef Nissan. Once in *yechidus* the Rebbe said to him as an affectionate side point: "Your *yom huledes* is the day after..."
3. Kovetz Michtavim in the end of Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchok.
4. Igros Kodesh Rayatz vol. 5 page 333.
5. See Derher Magazine #20 page 32.
6. Igros Kodesh vol. 13 page 459.
7. Ibid. page 471.
8. The Rebbe generally strongly encouraged all from Yidden to participate in the elections to ensure that Israeli law would be more in line with *halacha*.
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 page 12.
10. See Derher Magazine #23 page 14.
11. Igros Kodesh vol. 19 page 396.
12. Hear the audio at Ashreinu.app 18 Tishrei Sicha 7 15:55.
13. See Derher Magazine #86 page 18.
14. Kovetz Kinus Torah (New York) vol. 20 page 56.



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN POSTSCRIPT TO REB AVRUM HERSH:

בדאי מוסיף אומץ ככל האפשרי והדרוש בלימוד דא"ח רבים וביחוד בחוגים המיוחדים, וה"ז - במצב העכשווי - בגדר מצוה שא"א לעשותה ע"י אחרים שאין למעלה מזה וכמבואר במו"ק (ט סע"ב) עיי"ש

YOU WILL CERTAINLY INTENSIFY YOUR EFFORTS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY WITH REGARDS TO TEACHING CHASSIDUS IN PUBLIC, ESPECIALLY IN THE "UNIQUE COMMUNITIES." IN OUR CURRENT SITUATION, THIS IS A "MITZVAH WHICH CANNOT BE DONE THROUGH ANY OTHERS"; THE HIGHEST FORM OF A MITZVAH, AS EXPLAINED IN THE GEMARA, MOED KATAN 9B. SEE THERE.