



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

Dedicated by and In honor of
Rabbi Dovid and Henya Laine's
51st Wedding anniversary
14 Sivan 5776

The Elusive Property

AS TOLD BY RABBI YOSHI BISTON, NORTH BROWARD (SOUTH PALM BEACH) FLORIDA

I was appointed by Rabbi Avraham Korf in 5738 to direct the Gan Yisrael overnight camp of Florida. I ran the camp successfully for four years, but come 5742 I had difficulty finding a campsite to host our program. After much effort I managed to come up with a couple of options, one of which was an empty piece of land a donor was willing to grant Chabad of Florida upon which to build an entirely new campsite.

I wrote to the Rebbe about our difficulty and included the details of the options we faced. Regarding the empty piece of land, the Rebbe instructed us to only purchase a ready built campsite.

Over the years we rented various grounds and all along I kept up my search for a ready built site for sale as per the Rebbe's directive, but I was never able to find anything reasonably priced.

Three years ago the camp was on the verge of closing. We had been renting a particular campsite for seven years

and each year I could only afford to pay 60-70% of what was required for rent and soon I had accumulated a debt of approximately \$150,000. I knew we could not sustain this loss for another year renting at this location but I hadn't yet managed to find another site.

Six months before the summer, I was contacted by a fellow shliach who had come across a campsite that was up for auction on a real estate list. The grounds were located only 30 minutes from our Chabad House, which is unusual because most sites of this nature are generally situated in central Florida, some three hours away.

We looked at the property and sure enough it was fully built and it suited our needs perfectly. Incredibly, the starting bid was at \$930,000 which was remarkably less than any other camp site I had seen before!

I hired a broker who advised us to raise our offer to about one million dollars and not long afterwards we were notified that our bid was accepted. The campsite was co-



owned by seven non-Jewish religious organizations but I assured them I would keep present employees at the site - as well as the tenants who had been renting the camp site for some weekends throughout the year - and they seemed quite satisfied with the deal.

I borrowed the first ten percent for the down-payment and set out to raise the remaining funds. Unfortunately not one donor who had pledged significant sums in the event that we found a site was able to follow through, as there was another mosad at that particular time facing foreclosure and they had all stepped in to bail it out.

Fortunately a fellow shliach, Rabbi Shalom Ber Lipskar, secured a donor who donated \$500,000 and I managed to fundraise an additional \$100,000. Days before the anticipated closing date, set for a Friday April 19, 2013, I was still short about \$400,000 dollars. In middle of the week I received a call from a friend and supporter who offered to loan us the rest of the money but I wouldn't have it until the middle of the following week.

I thought that it wouldn't be a problem and immediately called my broker to let them know that we have most of the money and would be receiving the remaining sum a few days late. Surprisingly the sellers refused and warned us that if we wouldn't have the entire sum by Friday at noon we would lose the deal entirely. We cajoled and begged but they wouldn't budge.

At this point there was nothing I could do. Sure enough, Friday came and went and we had lost the deal. We were back to square one.

They sent back my down-payment which I held onto and flew to New York to visit the Ohel. I wrote to the Rebbe how we had found the most perfect site for our camp as per the Rebbe's directive, and now it seemed we would lose the opportunity and the future of the camp looked bleak. I asked the Rebbe for a bracha that the owners should have a

change of heart and agree to the sale.

I returned to Florida with a hopeful heart, but still, they refused to reconsider the deal. The entire episode seemed quite odd, so I decided to find out what had happened. After some investigation I found out from the caretaker of the property that only one organization had agreed to sell, and when the other partner organizations heard that the site was on the verge of being sold to a Jewish camp they were very upset and pressured to nix the deal (but couldn't do it until I was in default).

With a heavy heart I officially closed the camp for the upcoming summer and moved on.

Two months passed and unbelievably, they called back to inform me the grounds were up for auction again! At this point, I was sure they were just using me to get more money from another bidder.

This time, I was advised, we would need to put down a larger offer. 1.2 million dollars was still quite a bargain and once again our bid was accepted. Now, amazingly the original donor who had pledged half a million the first time around, agreed to donate one million dollars so that we wouldn't lose it again! I still had the down-payment from last time and collecting the remaining \$100,000 was easily accomplished. The Rebbe's bracha had materialized.

After I received the keys and full ownership of the camp site I drove straight up to the site and asked the manager what had transpired.

Full of wonderment, he related how the organization who had hired him was desperate to make a sale, but it was the other six who had originally insisted against selling it to us. Believe it or not, the second time around there were other potential buyers who had offered higher bids than me and still, all seven organizations stunningly voted unanimously to accept my offer!

It was then that I realized the full impact of the Rebbe's bracha and the camp remained open with no issue. **T**



YOUR STORY

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