

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות  
לכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו  
לכבוד יום הבהיר י"א ניסן

ע"י ולזכות  
הרה"ת ר' מרדכי  
וזוגתו מרת ח' מושקא ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גראסבוים  
סטאני ברוק, ניו יארק

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# P I N P O I N T S

STORIES OF THE RABBEIM'S  
REACH AND IMPACT AROUND THE GLOBE

BALTIMORE, MD



## THE MOHEL OF BALTIMORE

Rabbi Avraham Nachman Abramowitz, originally from Rogatchov, Russia, later established himself in Baltimore where he served as the city's mohel. Throughout his lifetime, he performed over 8,000 *brissin*. As a graduate of Tomchei Temimim, Rabbi Abramowitz maintained a connection with the Frierdiker Rebbe. In 5682, the Frierdiker Rebbe addressed a letter to him with the warm salutation, "My friend, our precious and elevated student."

"*Boruch shehecheyanu v'higianu lizman hazeh*, that we can speak clearly, to reminisce about bygone days, when you and I were students in the house of Hashem, gathered at Har Sinai before the G-dly man [the Rebbe Rashab], to hear words of *kodesh hakodashim* ..."

"How is your community doing? Do they have Torah institutions, *chadorim*, *yeshivos*, *shiurim* ...?"

The Frierdiker Rebbe goes on to describe the painful situation of the *Temimim* in the Soviet Union who suffered cold and hunger just to study Torah. The Frierdiker Rebbe details the branches of Tomchei Temimim in locations across the Soviet Union including Roga-

tchov, Zhlobin, Homel, and Gruzia (Georgia), and includes a plea for support, "for help is very necessary for us."<sup>1</sup>

## THE LUBAVITCHER RAV IN BALTIMORE

Reb Avraham Elye Akselrod traveled to the United States—by direction of the Frierdiker Rebbe—at the start of 5684. His father, Reb Aharon Shlomo Akselrod, had traveled to the United States at an earlier time. Reb Aharon Shlomo was one of the first Chabad Chassidim in the United States with whom the Frierdiker Rebbe had much correspondence, from 5681 and onward, about the situation of *anash* in the U.S.

On 27 Marcheshvan, 5682, the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to Reb Aharon Shlomo, "Regarding your son, Reb Avraham Elye, I already responded to him that it is the right thing that they should travel with success to you, but that this requires preparation."<sup>2</sup> This journey took place two years later, in 5684.

The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to Reb Avraham Elye after the latter reported his arrival in the U.S.: "... Bless-



RABBI AVRAHAM NACHMAN ABRAMOWITZ IN THE 5660S, SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES.



ed is your successful arrival. May Hashem help you to have peace of mind and to fulfill the true *kavana* that our Rabbeim demanded: to make the Torah greater and more glorious ...”<sup>3</sup>

Reb Avraham Elye Akselrod was appointed to be a *rav* in Baltimore, serving in the Tzemach Tzedek Shul, where he had a very strong effect on the community, as the Frierdiker Rebbe wished.<sup>4</sup>

## THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S VISIT TO BALTIMORE<sup>5</sup>

During the Frierdiker Rebbe's visit to the United States in 5689-90, the Frierdiker Rebbe spent three weeks in Baltimore, from 12 Teves until 5 Shevat, 5690. In the weeks leading up to the visit, a delegation led by Rabbi Akselrod traveled to the Frierdiker Rebbe in Philadelphia. They returned with the news that the Frierdiker Rebbe would arrive on 5 Teves—his arrival was later postponed one week. Newspaper ads announced the Frierdiker Rebbe's imminent arrival to the city, and welcome posters were made available at the New York

Confectionery Store on Baltimore Street.

Thousands turned out at Mount Royal Station to welcome the Frierdiker Rebbe, and a parade of cars escorted him from the station to the home at 2343 Eutaw Place, where he would stay. The papers excitedly reported on the Frierdiker Rebbe's arrival; that he would be visiting City Hall, meeting with Mayor Broening, and receiving the Key to the City; and that he would be saying Chassidus at the Tzemach Tzedek Shul.

The Frierdiker Rebbe met with Maryland Governor Ritchie, U.S. Senator Goldsborough, and Baltimore Mayor Broening. On Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 18 Teves, the Frierdiker Rebbe said the *maamar* “*Ani Yesheinah.*”

On 24 Teves, the Frierdiker Rebbe said the *maamar* “*Yehi Hashem Elokeinu Imanu*” at the Tzemach Tzedek Shul. More than 1,000 people crowded into the Shul for this momentous occasion. The Frierdiker Rebbe later described the excitement of the event in a letter: “Some 800-900 men were present, and 400 women in the *ezras nashim* ... all of the city's *frumme rabbanim* were present, even ‘*frye rabbis*’ were there... This was an unusually festive sight: the *shul* was lit up festively, with



NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S ARRIVAL IN BALTIMORE AND HIS MEETING WITH THE MAYOR.

many people present, and most of them were dressed in their *yom tov* clothing.

“[The *maamar*] lasted an hour, and afterward there was special joy ... I descended from my place and sat on the side to rest for a few moments ... the *rabbanim* approached me, one after another, *bli ayin hara* there were 19 observant *rabbanim*, and they thanked me.”

Then, the Frierdiker Rebbe described, seven moderately observant *rabbanim* approached him, very grateful, saying how this opened wellsprings of good ideas to them (one was taking notes during the *maamar*), and they wished they could spend a few minutes with the Frierdiker Rebbe to hear various explanations. Then two reform rabbis approached, and said that they hadn’t imagined that Chassidus would so interest common folk—and more so, that Chassidim have such a representative who can show how Chassidus should be of interest to everyone.<sup>6</sup>

On Shabbos Parshas Shemos, the Frierdiker Rebbe said a third *maamar*, “*Al Yis’halel*.”

Two weeks after arriving in Baltimore, the Frierdiker Rebbe traveled to nearby Washington, D.C., where he met Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, later returning to Baltimore.

On 4 Shevat, a *tzeischem l’shalom* gathering took place, and the next day, the Frierdiker Rebbe traveled to New York, after having distributed his photo and a note of *brachos*.

## REB DOVID PATASHNIK

Another important figure in the Chabad community of Baltimore was Reb Dovid Patashnik, a Chabad chosid born in Lukoml, White Russia who served as the *rav* of the Agudas Achim—Nusach Ari shul in the city. For many years, he worked tirelessly to collect funds for the Frierdiker Rebbe’s household and institutions, as well as for Colel Chabad in Eretz Yisroel. Testament to his success is an invitation that the Frierdiker Rebbe sent inviting him to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin’s wedding in 5689. The invitation was originally addressed to Reb Dovid, but he, in turn, readdressed it to the members of the shul, impressing upon them to send a sizable donation to the Frierdiker Rebbe in honor of the wedding.<sup>7</sup>

In the Rebbe’s *Igros Kodesh*, there is a letter that the Rebbe wrote to Reb Yisroel Jacobson in his holy handwriting, where he mentions a check sent to the Frierdiker Rebbe by Reb Dovid and his congregation.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, there are several letters from the Rebbe to Reb Dovid in subsequent years, acknowledging his reports of activities in Baltimore and encouraging him in his holy work.<sup>9</sup>

## REB ITCHE SPRINGER

In the 5720s, Rabbi Yitzchok (known as Reb Itche) Springer was sent by the Rebbe as a *shliach* to Baltimore.





RABBI SHMUEL AND ROCHEL KAPLAN  
DURING THEIR EARLY YEARS ON  
SHLICHUS IN BALTIMORE.

There was an old Talmud Torah in Baltimore called She'eris Hapleita, which was affiliated with Hungarian Jews. Needing a teacher, they turned to Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch. Rabbi Hodakov called Reb Itche into his office, and when the latter agreed, he submitted a letter to the Rebbe, which was responded to with “go and make a contract.”<sup>10</sup>

The school ultimately didn't appreciate some of Reb Itche's *chassidische hanhagos*, including his insistence on going to the Rebbe for every *chassidisher yom tov* and not always attending the *tefillos* in the school on time, because he was busy teaching *shiurim* for the local community and the college students.

Reb Itche later related:

“It reached a point where in the annual contract they wrote, ‘שם תהא תפילה - ובמקום רינה—where there is singing, one should pray,’ referencing the Gemara<sup>11</sup> that a person should always daven in shul. The hint was obvious. When I showed this to the Rebbe, the Rebbe told me to add one word, ‘try,’ that I would *try* and make the minyan. Well, they did not grasp the subtlety of that particular qualification, and so they didn't say anything, but I continued coming late, because it was very important for me to continue the Torah classes that I taught. The following year, they did not agree to my ‘trying.’ This time, the Rebbe did not tell me to renew the contract.”<sup>12</sup>

Reb Itche opened a Beis Lubavitch, distributing

Merkos publications and books from Kehot, and influencing many college students, many of whom are *frum* today. He once asked the Rebbe about opening a yeshiva in Baltimore, and the Rebbe said not to, for the time being (*le'eis ata*). He later said that he realized already then that one day there would be a Lubavitcher yeshiva in Baltimore.<sup>13</sup>

In 5732, the Rebbe directed him to return to Crown Heights.

## RABBI SHMUEL KAPLAN

In 5734, Rabbi Shmuel ו"ר and Mrs. Rochel ע"ה Kaplan were sent by the Rebbe on *shlichus* to Baltimore. Rabbi Hodakov presented Rabbi Kaplan with a choice of various locations, and, when he sent them to the Rebbe, the Rebbe chose this one. The Rebbe also made it clear that Rabbi Kaplan should be based in Baltimore, and not live in another area (although the Rebbe did allow him to bring *shluchim* to other places).

Before they left, they received a number of *hora'os* through Rabbi Hodakov. Among these directives was that they should sell *seforim* and promote the monthly *Talks and Tales* publication. Rabbi Kaplan didn't stop at just that, he immediately began looking into what projects he could start, and became very active.

There were plenty of *shuls*, schools, and *mikvaos* in Baltimore, so in 5744, Rabbi Kaplan wrote to the Rebbe



A RECENT GROUP PHOTO OF THE SHLUCHIM IN MARYLAND

that he wanted to open a summer camp for the state's Jewish children. He had met someone who was willing to help find a suitable location and fundraise, and this was a *mossad* the city didn't already have.

The Rebbe wrote not to do so, saying: "All this requires great personal unease, and very large sums of money. The need for this (and all the more so, whether this is a requirement)—is questionable—and why should you enter into all of this?"<sup>14</sup>

But when *rabbanim* in the city offered to help support a new *shliach* to serve the Yidden who hailed from the Soviet Union, and Rabbi Kaplan wrote about that to the Rebbe, the Rebbe replied, circling the word "*rabbanim*," and writing, "If they are serious, [then you should do so,] for this is literally *pikuach nefesh* [saving lives]."<sup>15</sup>

At one point in the late 5730s, he was considering whether to open a Chabad House in Washington, D.C. for students or whether to open a Chabad house 10 miles outside the city, where most D.C. commuters lived. The Rebbe left the first option unanswered, circled the words "10 miles outside the city," and wrote, "This is not something [to do], of course."

When Rabbi Kaplan later wrote (in the summer of 5745) that he was interested in opening a Jewish center in the heart of Washington, the Rebbe wrote that he could do so "if there will be a proper administration."<sup>16</sup>

Rabbi Kaplan once thought that if he could just open three Chabad houses, they'd be able to cover all of the area. Today there are many times more that number, continuing the more than century-long involvement of our Rabbeim with the city and its Yidden. **1**

1. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 1, p. 219-21.
2. Ibid vol. 11, p. 17.
3. Ibid p. 49.
4. For more about Reb Avraham Elye, see "The First Shliach to America" - Derher Shevat 5785.
5. This section is based primarily on Toldois Chabad B'artzois Ha'bris, and the forward to Sefer Hasichos 5688–5691.
6. The maamar and letter were printed on their own in 5773.
7. Teshura Kastel-Jacobs 5783.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 1, p. 15.
9. See ibid vol. 8, p. 83. Teshura Webb 5761.
10. A Tribute to Horav Yitzchok Springer On the Occasion of his Shloshim, 26 Iyar, 5773.
11. Brachos 6a.
12. Tribute, ibid.
13. As told to Derher by Rabbi Moshe Slavaticki.
14. Teshura Shuchat 5777, p. 27.
15. Kfar Chabad issue 1308, p. 17.
16. Teshura ibid, pp. 26–7.