

# The Life of a Chossid

## Reb Avrohom Chaim Rosenbaum

Born: Circa 5600\*

Passed away: 25 Kislev 5675\*

Chossid of: The Tzemach  
Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash,  
and Rebbe Rashab

Born in the town of Pleshznitz, in the Minsk region, around 5600\*, Reb Avrohom Chaim Rosenbaum was a Chossid of three Rebbeim: The Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbe Rashab. A *lamdan* in *nigleh*, *maskil* in Chassidus, and *mehader b'mitzvos* to the tee, Reb Avrohom Chaim was beloved and respected by his fellow townspeople, due to his wisdom and many talents. When sitting with *anash*, they would drink in his every word. He was also fluent in several languages including Russian and German, gaining him access to government officials, for the benefit of the Yidden. After the *mashpia* Reb Hendel Kugel moved from Pleshznitz to Lubavitch, Reb Avrohom Chaim assumed a leading role in guiding the local Chassidim.

### Tehillim B'dveikus

Once, as the Tzemach Tzedek was davening Shacharis in a locked room, Reb Avrohom Chaim noticed the chimney sweeper's ladder leaning against the outside wall. After climbing the ladder and leaning near the opening of the chimney, he could hear the Rebbe chanting in a sweet tune: הודיעני ה' קצי ומידת ימי מה היא, אדעה מה חדל אני<sup>1</sup>. His bliss was abruptly cut short, as he heard Rebbetzin Rivkah shouting: "Have you no shame? Where are you climbing? You've never witnessed a Yid davening?" Needing no further prompts, Reb Avrohom Chaim quickly took off. The *tenuah*, however, stayed with him for the rest of his life, and he would always recite the *possuk* with that tune.<sup>2</sup>

### The Rebbe's Tallis

When one of the *shadarim* received a tallis from the Tzemach Tzedek that the Rebbe himself had worn, Reb Avrohom Chaim resolved to acquire it. Once he bought it, however, he wore it only once, for Kol Nidrei. After that, the

mere thought of wearing it would cause him to tremble. He decided that he would only wear it after 120... Yet several years later he wrote in his will that he fears being buried in a tallis that's not really his, in the world of truth. Instead, he sent the tallis to the Rebbe Rashab.

### Hiskashrus

Immediately following the Tzemach Tzedek's *histalkus*, the Chassidim of Pleshznitz accepted the Rebbe Maharash's *nesius*. Reb Avrohom Chaim was very much *mekushar* to the new Rebbe and would often travel to Lubavitch.

### Clever Wit

Following a Pesach that Reb Avrohom Chaim spent in Lubavitch, the Rebbe Maharash embarked on a trip to Petersburg to deal with pressing government matters. The Chassidim accompanied the Rebbe for the first leg of his trip. When they reached a frozen river, the Rebbe asked that the Chassidim check whether the ice could support a wagon. Reb Avrohom Chaim was the first to rush across the ice, and upon returning, wittingly told the Rebbe: "Don't rely on the fact that we were able to safely cross the river; after all, *chazal* say that where *ba'alei teshuva* stand, *tzadikim gemurim* cannot..."

Amused by his words, the Rebbe Maharash took the cake the Rebbetzin had baked for the way, ate some, and handed the rest to Reb Avrohom Chaim.

### Town Commissioner

In the town of Pleshznitz lived both Chassidim and *misnagdim*, and they did not always get along. Initially, the Chassidim did not have a shul of their own, despite many attempts to open one. Their opponents would not hear of it, to the point that they weren't even able to rent a house in which to daven, thus forcing the Chassidim to attend the *misnagdim's* shul, which was quite unpleasant.

Now, in the town there was a Jewish commissioner of sorts who had government authority to issue passports, permits, and other legal documents. After much effort, the Chassidim succeeded in having Reb Avrohom Chaim appointed to that position. At long last, the Chassidim were finally able to build their own shul.



REB AVROHOM CHAIM ROSENBAUM.

## Imprisonment

Not wanting to waste his time in the government office, Reb Avrohom Chaim delegated most of his responsibilities to his Jewish assistant. Included in that was the authority to sign documents in his name. In an effort to exempt local Jewish boys from the military draft, the assistant signed false papers. When one of his adversaries caught wind of this, he promptly informed on Reb Avrohom Chaim, leading to his, as well as his assistant's, arrest.

After awaiting trial for a year, Reb Avrohom Chaim was sentenced to two years' labor in a prison camp in Smolensk. Initially he faced trying labor conditions. It was only after the Rebbe Rashab dispatched his brother, Raza, to intercede with local officials, that Reb Avrohom Chaim's predicament changed for the better. Ultimately, he gained their respect to the point that the jailer would release him on furlough at every *yoma d'pagra*, to farbreng with the local Chassidim. On their part, Smolensk's Chassidim greatly enjoyed these Chassidishe farbrengens.

So great was his *hiskashrus* that as his sentence was nearing its end, Reb Avrohom Chaim requested his family's permission to travel straight to Lubavitch upon his release. His troubles were far from over, however. Soon after returning home, the *misnagdim* informed on him once again, and a new case against him was in the works. Luckily, the investigator, who was his friend, secretly informed Reb Avrohom Chaim that he was set to be arrested the day after Simchas Torah. Reb Avrohom Chaim dared not share this information with anyone else, instead, he held a grand

לע"נ  
 שד"ר רבותינו נשיאנו  
 הרה"ח הרה"ת  
 ר' מנחם שמואל דוד הלוי ע"ה  
 רייטישק  
 נלב"ע ח' שבט ה'תשנ"ח  
 תנ"צ'ב'ה'  
 נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



farbrengen on Simchas Torah for all the Chassidim. When night fell, Reb Avrohom Chaim vanished from the town, as if the earth had swallowed him. After leaving Russia, Reb Avrohom Chaim sojourned in several European cities. Ultimately, he was forced to settle in New York with his wife and two children.

## Continued Hiskashrus

Once there, he received a letter from the Rebbe Rashab encouraging him to arrange set times to study Chassidus with his fellow *anash*. When his brother, a *shadar* for Tomchei Tmimim, visited him in America, Reb Avrohom Chaim assisted in raising funds and sent letters to the Chassidim extolling the yeshiva's greatness, encouraging all to give generously. Reb Avrohom Chaim would also gift the Rebbe Rashab with *seforim* and *kisvei yad*. Before his passing, Reb Avrohom Chaim instructed his children to send \$1,500 to the Rebbe Rashab.

Reb Avrohom Chaim left behind many Torah manuscripts spanning from *halacha* and *dikduk*, to *hashkafa*, Kabbalah, and Chassidus.

*This article is based on the sefer Toldos Avrohom Chaim, published by Kehos, which, together with his biography, includes his chidushei Torah.* ①

1. Tehillim 39:5
2. Niggun 13 in Sefer Haniggunim

## Quick Facts

- During his imprisonment, Reb Avrohom Chaim wrote a letter almost entirely in Aramaic, due to fear of censorship!
- In Pleshznitz, Reb Avrohom Chaim owned a store that sold manufactured goods. In America, he dealt in diamonds and jewelry.
- After winning a lottery in the United States, Reb Avrohom Chaim sent a fifth to the Rebbe Rashab. He then received two letters from the Rebbe, thanking him, and advising him how to invest the money.