



CHOSSID AT THE FRONT

Reb Avraham Parshan

ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE, HE COULD JUMP ONTO A PLANE TO FULFILL ONE MISSION OR ANOTHER AFTER RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS FROM RABBI HODAKOV, DONATE HUGE FUNDS FOR UNPOPULAR CAUSES AT THE REBBE'S REQUEST, OR PUT IN COUNTLESS HOURS IN SOLVING THE ISSUES OF A MOSAD.

He was always ready to join the Rebbe's cause.

לע"נ
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' אברהם יעקב
ב"ר חיים מרדכי ע"ה
נלב"ע כ"ה תשרי ה'תשנ"ו
ולע"נ זוגתו האשה החשובה
מרת פריידא ראצא
בת הרב יחיאל אפרים פישל ע"ה
נלב"ע ט"ז אדר-שני ה'תשע"ו
תנ"צ'בה'

נדפס ע"י בנם
הרה"ת ר' משה מאיר שמואל
וזוגתו רבקה לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו
גלוצאווסקי

In preparation of this article we were greatly assisted by interviews with Reb Avraham's children, grandchildren and acquaintances. These include Reb Yosef Parshan, Reb Mayer Parshan, Rabbi Yaakov Biderman, Rabbi Yehuda Blesofsky, Rabbi Doron Eizenman, Rabbi Tuvia Blau, Rabbi Zalman Aharon Grossbaum, Rabbi Levi Garelik, Rabbi Dovid Sholom Pape and others. We thank them for their time.



CHAI ELUL 5739, LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 191665

Early Life

Reb Avraham Parshan (originally Parshanovsky) was born in 5670* (תר"ע) in Lodz, Poland. His parents were respectable Sochatchover Chassidim.

After his marriage, he traveled to Eretz Yisroel with his young wife, and settled in Tel Aviv. Tragically, his wife passed away following childbirth leaving him with two young children, Dov and Esther. Two years later, he remarried into a distinguished Yerushalmi family and moved to Yerushalayim.

In 5699* (תרצ"ט), the Pag"i movement ("Porshei Agudas Yisroel") was founded to cater to the needs of religious Jews in Eretz Yisroel. Shortly afterwards, Reb Avraham joined the leadership and took an active part in its activities.

He quickly developed a name for his tireless work and his shrewd approach to *askanus*. He spearheaded the first building project geared towards *frumme Yidden*, where suitable apartments were sold at low prices to religious families.

In Yerushalayim, Reb Avraham became acquainted with many of the prominent *rabbanim* and Rebbes. In the course of his communal work, he dealt with the Gerrer, Belzer

and Lelover Rebbes, the Rebbes of Ruzhin, the Tchebiner Rav and others. Although Pag"i was often at loggerheads with many of these *rabbanim* who supported the original Agudas Yisroel movement, he quickly gained their respect for his ingenuity and genuine *ahavas Yisroel*.

Reb Avraham's daughter Esther relates: "During the War of Independence in 5708* (תש"ח), we were stranded in Yerushalayim along with everyone else, but my father nevertheless took responsibility for his fellow Jews. He organized many caravans to smuggle food and vital supplies to the city, sneaking them in through hidden roads. On several occasions, his van was seen passing and was riddled with bullets by the Arab Legions. On one occasion, bullet holes were even found in the loaves of bread that he was carrying, but miraculously, he was not hurt."

Knowing about his good work, he was even appointed, for a short period of time, as the deputy Minister of Rationing and Supply of Israel's first government, responsible for administering the austerity program in Yerushalayim and its environs.

This is Different!

In 5707* (תש"ז), Reb Avraham was on a business trip from Eretz Yisroel

to Canada. While flying over Europe, the pilot noticed a malfunction on the aircraft, and was forced to make an emergency landing without the use of wheels. The result was disaster and tragedy; 72 passengers, the vast majority on the flight, were killed on impact. Only three passengers survived. One of them was Reb Avraham, who escaped the tragedy with a severe leg injury.

He was hospitalised in a medical center in Munich, Germany, for three months. While there, he had his first encounter with Lubavitcher Chassidim; he needed kosher food, and it was provided for him by the Chassidim in Poking.

Then, several year later, in 5714*, Reb Avraham and his family emigrated to Toronto, Canada.

Finding himself in a new location, distant from his former home and acquaintances, Reb Avraham visited many Rebbes, *roshei yeshiva* and *rabbanim*, and searched for a place to call home. But he wasn't satisfied with his experiences.

He became close friends with a Lubavitcher Chossid named Reb Chaim Leima Minkowitz from Toronto, who, like him, was a learned and hartzige Yid. He introduced him to the world of Lubavitch and to Chassidus Chabad.



THE REBBE SPEAKS WITH REB AVRAHAM DURING KOS SHE'EL BRACHA, MOTZEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5744*.

In the end, Reb Chaim brought Reb Avraham along to spend a Shabbos in 770. He participated in the Rebbe's Shabbos Mevorchim farbrengen and went into *yechidus*. Expressing himself to his friends, he shared that he finally felt that he had found his place.

"My grandfather knew many Rebbes in Eretz Yisroel," says Reb Avraham's grandson, Rabbi Yaakov Biderman of Vienna. "He worked with the Gerrer Rebbes, Reb Aharon of Belz stayed in his home, and the Lelover Rebbe was his *mechutan*. He was also a Sochatchover Chossid from birth.

ON ONE OCCASION, BULLET HOLES WERE EVEN FOUND IN THE LOAVES OF BREAD THAT HE WAS CARRYING, BUT MIRACULOUSLY, HE WAS NOT HURT.

Nevertheless, after his *yechidus*, he told Reb Chaim Leima with tears in his eyes, "Chaim, this is the first time I felt that this was *my* Rebbe."

The experience by the Rebbe gave him the impression that this is a Rebbe of *klal Yisroel*, genuinely involved in caring for Yidden all over the world.

The Rebbe guided Reb Avraham closely on his "journey" to Lubavitch.

He would receive all *sefarim* of Chassidus immediately after being printed, and Rabbi Hodakov would telephone him on a weekly basis to speak about his studies in Chassidus. Reb Avraham had been well-versed in *sefarim* of Chagas Chassidus and he spent considerable amounts of time delving into his newly discovered world of Chassidus Chabad.

Very quickly, Reb Avraham became deeply attached to the Rebbe.

“He always looked for reasons to come to the Rebbe,” says Rabbi Biderman. “Every *yoma depagra*, every *farbrenge*, he was always there.”

Reb Avraham’s greatest pleasure, throughout his life, was to travel to New York to participate in the Rebbe’s *farbrenge*s. He would sit behind the Rebbe and listen intently to the Rebbe’s *sichos*. He was a proficient Torah scholar and had a deep appreciation for the Rebbe’s Torah, and after each *farbrenge*, his grandchildren relate that he would be on a high for several hours.

First Use

Reb Yosef Parshan, Reb Avraham’s son, relates:

“There was a certain individual who ran a small shul and afternoon Talmud Torah in Toronto. As he aged, he wanted his project to continue, so he decided to donate the building to Chabad. He reached out to my father, who coordinated with Rabbi Leibel Kramer of Montreal to come transfer the deed to the Rabbinical College of Montreal (there was no Chabad corporation in Toronto in those days).” At the time, the local Lubavitchers weren’t yet acquainted with Reb Avraham.

“Rabbi Kramer was instructed by Rabbi Hodakov that my father should serve as the middleman.

“During the legal proceedings, my father suggested, with the Rebbe’s advice and approval, that the building be sold to Chabad for a symbolic sum of two dollars.”

Reb Avraham’s advice turned out to be very foresightful. Some years later, the donor had a change of heart and wanted to renege on the deal and give the building to another community. Due to the peculiarities of Canadian law, the transaction was only considered final due to the sale



AT A SIYUM SEFER TORAH ARRANGED BY THE SHLUCHIM IN MILANO, ITALY. L-R: RABBIS AVRAHAM PARSHAN, SIMCHA ELBERG, PINCHUS HIRSCHPRUNG, AND YOSEF WINEBERG.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDET CHABAD

price of two dollars, and the building remained in the hands of *anash*.

At the Forefront

As the years passed, the Rebbe constantly involved Reb Avraham in Chabad activities. He didn’t just contribute towards the costs; he was actively involved in the planning and execution of the activities, never too tired or too busy to roll up his sleeves and get involved.

Often, the Rebbe would direct shluchim or *askanim* his way, so they could benefit from his intelligence and generosity. His shrewdness and ingenuity were valuable assets for any *mosad* trying to engage in a project larger than itself.

Whenever the Rebbe announced a new initiative, Reb Avraham would be a primary supporter. For example, when Chabad of Paris sought to buy its first Chabad House, Reb Avraham was the one who provided the funding to clinch the deal. The first mitzvah tank was purchased by Reb Avraham who also replicated the Rebbe’s chair to put in to the tank, symbolizing that the Rebbe travels along with the *bochurim* doing *mitvzoim*.

“When the Rebbe spoke about saving the Jewish community in Crown Heights in 5729*,” Rabbi Biderman relates, “my grandfather took a big role in the campaign, going ahead and buying eight buildings (which he later sold).”

The Rebbe once told Rabbi Zalman Gurary in *yechidus* that *anash* could learn from Reb Avraham how to give *tzedakah*.

“Certain projects were especially precious to my grandfather,” says Rabbi Biderman, “especially institutions that were named in memory of the Rebbe’s parents. He always looked for ways to give the Rebbe *nachas*, so he would take on any project that would be in their memory.

“The Levi Yitzchak Library in Crown Heights, for example, was renovated and refurbished by my grandfather.”

Reb Avraham also bought the building for the Machon Chana Institute for *baalos teshuvah*, and he asked the Rebbe if they could name it in memory of Rebbetzin Chana. The Rebbe called him into *yechidus* and handed him 100 ten-dollar bills as a personal contribution to the project.

Milah Biselah

Reb Yosef Parshan relates:

Following Simchas Torah one year, a group of *askanim* who were visiting from Toronto entered the Rebbe's room for a *yechidus* along with my father.

Beforehand, the *askanim* decided that they needed to bring up a complaint about a certain issue in Toronto; they felt it needed the Rebbe's attention.

As they were in the Rebbe's room, the individual who planned to bring up the issue got cold feet, and decided to push the issue onto my father. He told the Rebbe, "Reb Avraham would like to tell the Rebbe something."

My father was no fool, and he wasn't about to become their conduit to tell the Rebbe something that would bring the Rebbe *agmas nefesh*, so he remained silent.

Looking at him, the Rebbe said, "*Reb Avraham, emes takeh es shteit, 'Milah biselah ushtikusa bitrei,' uber az ir vet reden asach, vet ir hoben asach selaim.* Indeed, the Gemara says, 'A word is worth a *selah*, but silence is worth two.' But if you speak, you will have many *selaim*."

Commanded by the Rebbe to speak, he decided to say what was really on his heart.

He told the Rebbe how uplifting Sukkos and Simchas Torah had been in the Rebbe's presence, and how *hakafos* brought a real inspiration to the Chassidim, and how they all wish the Rebbe continued health and *nachas* from the Chassidim...

forthcoming for any cause related to the Rebbe. Although the Rebbe rarely asked individuals to donate to any cause, Reb Avraham's dedication brought him the merit that he was called on by the Rebbe to donate on numerous occasions, and the Rebbe personally relied on him.

One of Reb Avraham's most lasting legacies was in Eretz Yisroel, where he was deeply involved in the development of *mosdos Chabad*. He sponsored a number of buildings, was heavily involved in the construction of Kfar Chabad Beis, was a key supporter of Colel Chabad, and contributed generously to many other institutions.

The Shikun Chabad in Lod was a primary example.

Reb Avraham once wrote a routine letter to the Rebbe asking about buying shares in a certain business in America which many were investing in, when the Rebbe suggested a different investment:

The government had given Chabad a large lot in the city of Lod upon which to build apartments. Investors were needed. The Rebbe said that he would personally cover one third of the cost of construction, the government will cover another third, and, the Rebbe suggested, Reb Avraham would cover the last third.

It didn't seem like it would be a profitable deal. The Rebbe wanted them to build a massive apartment block, but Chabad officials in Eretz Yisroel felt there wouldn't be customers. The Rebbe informed them that Russian immigrants would soon be arriving, but at that time they were nowhere in sight.

Nonetheless, Reb Avraham took the deal and became heavily involved in the project. He would be in Eretz Yisroel twice a year to mark the *yahrzeits* of his parents, and he would visit Lod each time. He would deal with the contractors, the mayor and



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

REB AVRAHAM (CENTER) POSES WITH REB DOVID RASKIN (RIGHT) AND REB HESHKE GANSBURG (LEFT) IN A NEW MITZVAH TANK WHICH HE SPONSORED.

"He loved doing things that would bring the Rebbe *nachas* on a personal level."

A Special Love

What probably singled out Reb Avraham from many other *baalei tzedakah* was that he was extremely

the builders, and always did his utmost to make sure it would be a success.

Several months passed, and no buyers were on the horizon. Then, suddenly, the gates of the Soviet Union opened for a brief few years following the Six Day War, and floods of immigrants poured into Eretz Yisroel. The government was in dire need of apartments, and they bought a number of blocks for a good price. Reb Avraham was able to provide these people with a proper home, and to make a sizable profit as well; he then gave the proceeds to build the dormitory for the yeshiva, and the *mikveh* and shul as well.

Meanwhile, the original contractor that Reb Avraham had asked the

Rebbe about investing in, went bankrupt.

Another special donation made at the Rebbe's behest, was the Chabad shul in Sanhedria in Yerushalayim. While in New York for Simchas Torah 5728*, Reb Shlomo Maidanchik from Kfar Chabad solicited Reb Avraham to donate a property he owned in Petach Tikvah for the benefit of Kfar Chabad. When they approached the Rebbe at the farbrengen, the Rebbe asked: "What does Petach Tikvah have to do with Kfar Chabad?!"

Turning to Reb Avraham, the Rebbe suggested something else: "You also own land in Sanhedria in Yerushalayim, and there are *yungeleit* there looking around for a place to build a shul and they are struggling."

SEVERAL MONTHS PASSED, AND NO BUYERS WERE ON THE HORIZON. THEN, SUDDENLY, THE GATES OF THE SOVIET UNION OPENED... FLOODS OF IMMIGRANTS Poured INTO ERETZ YISROEL.

A Million

At the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5735*, Reb Avraham brought a philanthropist named Joe Tenenbaum to the Rebbe, and informed the Rebbe that he pledged half a million dollars to build in Kfar Chabad.

Mr. Tenenbaum immediately protested, "A quarter-million!"

The Rebbe turned to Mr. Tenenbaum,

"Why are you afraid to commit to half-a-million? The *Aibershter* could make you wealthier, and you'll be able to give more! A Yid says that you'll be able to give half-a-million..."

Mr. Tenenbaum repeated himself, "I say a quarter, he says a half," so the Rebbe continued:

"If you'll be able to give half a million, that's even better. Now you have a certain amount of capital which you calculate allows you to give a quarter-million, comes along Parshan and says that you will have enough capital to give twice as much, so you can indeed have twice as much capital!"

After Mr. Tenenbaum said *l'chaim*, the Rebbe turned to him again and said, "If Parshan will come along in a few weeks, saying you can give a million, don't get scared."

Pointing at Reb Avraham, the Rebbe concluded with a smile "Then see to it that he, too, gives a million..."¹

The Rebbe was referring to Reb Tuvia Blau. Immediately after Yom Tov, Reb Avraham traveled to Eretz Yisroel to donate the land, and together with Reb Tuvia, they erected a shul in Sanhedria which became the center of Chabad in Yerushalayim, and is active until today. Reb Avraham chose the name "Beis Chana" after the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, and from that point on, the Rebbe followed every step of the construction with great interest.

The Rebbe's Shliach

Due to his connections with different *gedolei Yisroel* from his days living in Eretz Yisroel and through his *hachnasas orchim*, Reb Avraham was often the go-between for the Rebbe to their courts. On a number of occasions the Rebbe sent him to the Gerer Rebbe, the Beis Yisroel, and he also facilitated the *yechidus* of Reb Yaakov, the current Gerrer Rebbe (the son of the then-Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simcha) with the Rebbe.

There was even one time, during the height of the *misnagdim's* dispute with Chabad, when the Rebbe sent him to visit one of the *roshei yeshiva* who was fanning the flames of hate.

On other occasions, Reb Avraham was sent by the Rebbe to visit *mosdos* and to facilitate the building of new *mosdos*.

Reb Yosef Parshan relates: "Once in 5732*, my father called Rabbi Hodakov to tell him that he was traveling to Eretz Yisroel. He asked if there's anything he should do as the Rebbe's shliach during his visit. Rabbi Hodakov answered in the affirmative. The Rebbe asked that he make a stop in Milan on the way. Shortly afterwards, my father was on his way to Milan."

Rabbi Levi Garelik continues: "Reb Avraham made his way to the office of my father, Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik. Sitting in the office, my father

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 20679



REB AVRAHAM (SECOND FROM LEFT) AT THE REBBE'S MINYAN FOR SELICHOS, 20 ELUL 5737*.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 299234



REB AVRAHAM (RIGHT) GREET'S ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER MENACHEM BEGIN AT THE BAR MITZVAH FOR THE ORPHANED CHILDREN OF IDF SOLDIERS, AN ANNUAL EVENT COORDINATED BY TZACH IN ISRAEL, 19 AV 5737. SECOND FROM THE LEFT IS REB YISROEL LEIBOV, THE CHAIRMAN OF TZACH IN ISRAEL.

and Reb Avraham were discussing the issue of *Mihu Yehudi* and brainstorming about different ways to abolish this devastating *gezeirah*.

“As they were talking, my father received a call from the women’s *chevra kaddisha*. They wanted to know which *pesukim* should be said during a *tahara*, because, they explained, Mr. Astorre Mayer’s mother had just passed away.

“Mr. Astorre Mayer was a world-class philanthropist who donated heavily to Jewish causes, particularly in Eretz Yisroel. My father, who had a very warm relationship with him, had been thinking for some time about

getting him involved in the battle of *Mihu Yehudi*, which the Rebbe had been speaking about for two years.

“This was their opportunity. Being that Mr. Astorre Mayer was a major supporter of the State of Israel and many Israeli dignitaries were present, Reb Avraham used out the opportunity and delivered a eulogy, tying it in with a powerful message about the campaign of *Mihu Yehudi*, which inspired many.

“From then on, Mr. Astorre Mayer became very involved in the campaign, making much effort to change the policy, some that are still unknown until today.”

On another occasion, Reb Avraham went in for a *yechidus* with the Rebbe before one of his trips to Eretz Yisroel. He told the Rebbe that he planned to speak with prominent individuals about *Mihu Yehudi*, not as the Rebbe’s shliach, but independently. The Rebbe became very serious and responded “Reb Avraham, *ir veist duch as ven ir redt, veist men duch as ir zaint mainer a shliach*—You know that when you speak, people understand that you are my shliach. It is not possible for you to speak independently; they will assume that it’s coming from me.”

When Reb Yosef Parshan got married in Manhattan in 5725*, the Rebbe said to Reb Avraham that if he was not an *avel* then (after Rebbetzin Chana’s passing 10 months earlier) he would have come to the wedding, but since he can’t come himself, the Rebbe said “I’m sending my representative.” Rabbi Hodakov came as the Rebbe’s shliach to the wedding and he brought along a letter from the Rebbe as well.

A Complicated Wedding

During *kos shel bracha* of Motzei Shavuos 5735*, as Reb Avraham received wine from the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked him if he was planning on going to Eretz Yisroel. He spontaneously answered, “Yes,” so the Rebbe gave him a bottle of *mashke* and said, “You’re probably going to the wedding.”

Reb Avraham was unsure who the Rebbe was referring to, but he soon realized that Rabbi Dovid Shalom Pape, a former professor who had become a *baal teshuvah*, was scheduled to get married a few days later in Eretz Yisroel.

“Reb Avraham happened to be on the same flight as my parents,” Reb Dovid Shalom relates. “I was in Kfar Chabad and there was no way for my parents to reach me or know where I was. I had no idea when they were arriving. Reb Avraham sent a taxi driver to pick me up and bring me to Tel Aviv where my parents were staying.

“My father was a businessman from Toronto while the *kallah* came from the Sephardic community in Dimona. Understandably, there were differences between the family backgrounds and no one was running the wedding. Reb Avraham took on the mission of ensuring that everything would proceed calmly and joyfully. With his charm and *ahavas Yisroel*, he made sure everyone felt comfortable and that nobody was left out or hurt.

“He even went around Kfar Chabad, telling people that the Rebbe sent *mashke* for the wedding and brought along a number of prominent Chassidim.

“That same night, another *baal teshuvah* was getting married in Chaifa and when Reb Avraham heard about this, he right away ordered a bus and arranged for a big group of *bochurim* to travel to the wedding.

“It didn’t end there. Later, when we came to America, Reb Avraham introduced us to his family, and we are close friends until this day.

“He fulfilled the Rebbe’s shlichus with utmost devotion!”

Presents for the Rebbe

Reb Avraham’s grandson, Reb Mayer Parshan, relates: “Each Yud-Aleph Nissan, my grandfather would bring the Rebbe a check for the sum of the Rebbe’s age, multiplied by a thousand. I know this, because one year he was not in New York and he asked me to give it on his behalf.

“He would also think of original gifts to bring the Rebbe each year.

“In 5737*, in honor of the Rebbe’s 75th birthday, he brought the Rebbe a bound set of all the *sichos bilti mugah*, the predecessor of the *Sichos Kodesh* set. This was the first time all the Rebbe’s *sichos* were bound and presented to the Rebbe as a set. He also did this to see if the Rebbe would agree to the publishing of *sichos* which weren’t *mugah*.”

Reb Avraham even built a private mikvah for the Rebbe across the street from the Rebbe’s home, but to reasons



REB AVRAHAM PRESENTS THE REBBE WITH THE BOUND HANOCHOS OF THE SICHOS IN HONOR OF THE REBBE'S 75TH BIRTHDAY, YUD ALEPH NISSAN 5737.

unbeknown to us, the Rebbe never made use of it.

“At one point my father looked in to purchasing life insurance,” Reb Yosef relates, “but due to his age and condition of health, he couldn’t find a suitable policy. He was disappointed and told this to the Rebbe. The Rebbe blessed him that he will be well and have *arichus yomim*.”

“It was then that he began the tradition of buying *maftir* for the Rebbe in 770. Previously, *maftir* had never been auctioned, because it was reserved for the Rebbe. He initiated a custom where someone could acquire the merit of the Rebbe’s *maftir*, and thus bring revenue to 770 as well. He would buy the *maftir* for the Rebbe, spending the money that would have gone to the insurance on a more worthy cause.”

On Shemini Atzeres 5734*, Reb Avraham’s son Reb Dov had a heart

For Eternity

In the 5720s*, Reb Avraham brought two girls closer to Yiddishkeit. One girl’s parents were very antagonistic to their daughter’s new path and constantly looked for ways to bother Reb Avraham.

He mentioned the issue in *yechidus*, and the Rebbe told him to ignore the problems. “You didn’t just bring two girls to Yiddishkeit; you brought all their future generations as well...”

attack during *hakafof*. He was brought out of 770 and placed near one of the houses on Eastern Parkway where Hatzalah worked on stabilizing his condition. As the Rebbe was walking home after *hakafof*, he stood in front of the house where Reb Dov was lying and inquired about his situation. The Rebbe remained there for some 45 minutes until they were finally able to stabilize Reb Dov’s condition and bring him to the hospital. The Rebbe only went home for *seudas Yom Tov* after the ambulance left.

“The following morning,” Reb Mayer says, “my grandfather stood near the Rebbe’s house. When the Rebbe saw my grandfather, he said to him ‘*The agmas nefesh* of yesterday should be enough for your entire life.’”

“After Yom Tov,” continues Reb Yosef, “at *kos shel bracha*, my father approached the Rebbe. Handing the Rebbe a big check, he asked for a *bracha* that my brother should be well. The Rebbe tightened his *gartel* and lifted his hands to his shoulders and said, ‘*Af der zun hot ir nit vos tzu*

daigenen—you don't need to worry about your son; *alai v'al tzavari*—I guarantee that he will be well.”

A Switch

After the Six Day War, Chabad retook control of the Tzemach Tzedek Shul in the Old City of Yerushalayim, but an individual had settled in on the top floor of the shul, and his behavior was unbecoming of the holy site.

A battle began to evict him from the premises. However, that proved to be very difficult on a legal basis and the story began to drag out in courts and in the newspapers. Needless to say, the Rebbe was very unhappy with the state of affairs.

“When my grandfather saw the situation,” says Reb Mayer, “he brought the man to his own personal house that he had acquired in the Old City.² It was in a better location, worth more money, and in general, had superior living conditions. Today, that home would be worth many millions.

“My grandfather offered him a trade off; he could have the house, if he relinquished control over Tzemach Tzedek. The individual agreed, and they went right away to a lawyer to make the exchange. As soon as he arrived back in America, he went to the Rebbe, showed the papers and informed the Rebbe about the trade...”

That was Reb Avraham; whenever the Rebbe had *agmas nefesh*, he jumped into the fray.

Business Advice

Reb Avraham had vast real estate dealings in the outskirts of Toronto, and at one point decided to expand his business by buying large tracts of land in Houston, Texas. When he informed the Rebbe about the sale, the Rebbe wrote, “מי שהניח לו אביו מעות הרבה ורוצה... לאבדן... יכור פועלים ואל ישב עמהן—if you want to waste your inheritance... hire workers and leave them on their own,”³ implying that it was not a good

“...YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR SON; ALAI V'AL TZAVARI—I GUARANTEE THAT HE WILL BE WELL.”



LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 2/187

REB AVRAHAM LEARNS WITH REB SIMCHA GORODETZKY, WHILE WAITING FOR THE REBBE'S FARBRENGEN TO BEGIN, VOV TISHREI 5738*.

Chasan Torah

Reb Mayer Parshan relates: “In 5734*, after Reb Shmuel Levitin passed away, the *gabbaim* weren't sure who should get *chasan Torah*, which had customarily been his *aliyah*. The Rebbe instructed that my grandfather should get the *aliyah*.”

enterprise to be invested in. He sold the properties, and shortly afterwards the Houston market crashed...

On a different occasion, Reb Avraham's partner offered to buy his

share of a property they owned in the outskirts of Toronto. Although he generally didn't want to bother the Rebbe regarding business advice, he

did ask the Rebbe in this instance and the Rebbe said to refuse the offer.

A month later, the partner offered a larger sum, and this time, the Rebbe told him to counter-offer with a very high price. The Rebbe also told him to stipulate that the offer stood only until Rosh Hashanah.

That Erev Rosh Hashanah, the partner came to his home ready to pay the full price. As it turned out, a company was planning a massive project in the area, and this plot of land was crucial for their plans. They were willing to pay any sum to obtain it.

A third story:

The Rebbe had once advised Reb Avraham that as a general rule, he should never sell a property without improving it somewhat, so that it would always sell at a profit. Despite this piece of advice, during one *yechidus* Reb Avraham asked the Rebbe if he should sell a specific property even though he hadn't improved it and the Rebbe rejected the idea.

After the *yechidus*, Rabbi Hodakov called him to his office and informed him that the Rebbe had instructed that he receive a loan of \$50,000 for a period of six months, obviously without interest.

"If you are asking about selling a property," Rabbi Hodakov explained, "you're obviously in need of liquid assets."

Final Endeavors

Reb Avraham was known for his exemplary *ahavas Yisroel*. His home had an entire floor dedicated to *hachnasas orchim*, where he hosted countless guests, ranging from the most prominent *rabbanim* and Polisher Rebbes from Eretz Yisroel, to destitute vagabonds. Some individuals simply showed up and stayed in his home for years at a time.

His home was also a center for *hafatzas hamaayanos*. Each morning, he hosted *shiurim* in Gemara and *halacha*, often geared towards academics and intellectuals who weren't yet fully dedicated to Torah and *mitzvos*. Many of his attendees made significant strides in their *Yiddishkeit*, and some became full *baalei teshuvah*.

In 5746*, the Rebbe encouraged the opening of many new *Batei Chabad*. One of Reb Avraham's last donations was towards the establishment of 18 new *Batei Chabad* in Eretz Yisroel.

The *sefarim* trial also took place at the same time period. Seeing the Rebbe's *agmas nefesh*, Reb Avraham got involved in a certain factor of the case. He wrote to the Rebbe about it, and said that this was his "etzba ketana, little finger," his little part.

The Rebbe responded:

"באצבע קטנה!?"

הרי עושה הנ"ל בכל לבבך וגונד [וגורם נחת רוח] באין ערוך מאצבע קטנה.
אזכיר עה"צ

"A small finger?

"You have done this 'with all your heart,' and have caused infinitely more *nachas* than a little finger.

"I will mention it at the Tziyon."

The Rebbe's love and appreciation for Reb Avraham is expressed profoundly in a letter the Rebbe wrote to his doctor, who treated him in his final years.



THE LETTER THE REBBE SENT TO REB AVRAHAM'S DOCTOR.

Reb Avraham had been *mekarev* the doctor, and in the course of coming closer to *Yiddishkeit*, the doctor wrote the Rebbe a letter and mentioned him in it. The Rebbe responded in a very special way:

"I am most gratified to note the personal attention and concern you have shown towards your patient," the Rebbe wrote. "Our mutual friend is truly an outstanding person who lives by the Torah, and particularly, by the great principal of the Torah, *v'ahavta l'reacha kamocho*."

Reb Avraham passed away on 11 Iyar 5746*- , leaving a beautiful family of Chassidim and shluchim. ①

1. Taken from the video recording. A full video of the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5735* was released by JEM. See an article about the farbrengen in Derher Shevat, Leben Mitten Rebbe'n 5776.
2. This property was granted to Reb Avraham at a very low price by the Israeli government as appreciation for projects that he had generously funded.
3. A quote from Bava Metzia 29b.