



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

Just in Time

AS TOLD BY ISRAEL SHUDLER

I emigrated with my family from Russia to Israel in 1990 and fourteen years later, in 2004, I moved to Chicago.

About five years ago, in 2010, I decided to go into the food business, something I had already been involved in while living in Israel. I rented a storefront in the French Market in downtown Chicago, which was owned by a French Jew named Mr. Besidon, and opened a restaurant called Presto where my son and I sold Shwarma, Falafel and other Israeli cuisine. The business continued successfully.

One Friday two yeshiva students stopped by my store and I called out to them a hearty Shabbat Shalom. Surprised, they inquired whether I was Jewish and when I replied in the affirmative, they asked me if I would like to lay tefillin, to which I readily agreed. They explained that they were from the local Chabad yeshiva and visited many Jewish stores in the area every Friday to offer local Jewish men an opportunity to lay tefillin.

Yisroel Bressinger and Avraham Baron began to visit me each week and a warm friendship soon developed. They would stop by for a few minutes to chat, say a few words on the weeks' *parsha*, wrap tefillin and occasionally, even pull me in to dance to a joyful Jewish tune.

In the meantime the business began to take a toll on me. Two years had passed and although we weren't doing too badly, the work entailed in managing the restaurant proved to be too much for me so I decided to sell off the whole business. I posted ads in the local papers and I also relied on word of mouth, but there was no interest. Six months went by with not an ounce of progress and I grew very impatient.

I even began to consider closing shop without selling, even though this course of action would result in great financial loss.

At this point I planned an extended trip to visit my family in Israel. I booked a ticket for February and made the trip my deadline. If nobody would buy the restaurant before my trip I would close down the eatery and relinquish my renter's contract. The strain and frustration was taking a toll on me and although I would lose a lot of money, there was no way I could continue to manage the business like this.

One day, about two weeks before the cutoff date, my two yeshiva friends pleasantly surprised me and showed up to my store in middle of the week. When I asked them what the change in schedule was all about, they explained that they would be travelling to New York for the weekend together with their entire yeshiva [for Yud Shevat -ed.] and, not wanting to

skip their weekly visit, they decided to come around earlier.

After wrapping tefillin and chatting a little, they let me know that many of the people they visited weekly were sending with them letters to the Rebbe which they would bring to the Ohel. Of course I had heard of the Rebbe and even knew a story that had happened with a friend of mine with whom I worked together in the food business back in Israel. My friend had related that for years he and his wife had been childless until they went to the Rebbe to receive a dollar and a blessing, and they were blessed with children. I also knew of the Rebbe's legendary love and care toward every Jew, regardless of background and affiliation. I was overjoyed by the boy's suggestions and felt moved that one could still have the opportunity to write to the Rebbe today.

I sat down and wrote a letter describing in detail the struggles with my business venture and my attempts at selling it. I wrote how I wasn't able to handle the stress and strain the business

was having on me so I asked the Rebbe to please help me sell the business. The boys took my letter and went on their way.

Two days later a Mexican man entered my store and inquired as to whether I was selling the business. He must have seen the sign outside and he wanted to negotiate the price. I told him I was ready to give him a good deal as my deadline was two weeks away and I wanted the transaction to be quick and easy. He told me he would think about it.

The following day he returned and agreed to my terms and conditions. We drew up a contract and within two days, just days before my "cutoff" date, the transaction was complete with the full sum deposited in my account.

I couldn't believe my good fortune. For over six months I had tried in every way possible to sell off my business with zero success, and within a few days after writing to the Rebbe, I had made the sell from start to finish! **D**



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