



# דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

## The Jew From the 23rd Floor

AS TOLD BY RABBI SIMCHA BIRNHACK (ERETZ YISROEL)

In 5775\* I merited to spend a full year learning by the Rebbe as part of *kvutzah*. For *mitvzoim* on Fridays, I started a new route in a huge office building on Broadway in Manhattan and slowly but surely built up a group of Yidden working in various offices there.

There was a large firm on the entire 23rd floor that clearly had many Jewish people working there but try as I might I could not get past the secretary. Each week I requested permission, was denied, and left some pamphlets with her to distribute. I imagine they never made it past her desk.

During the year 5776\*, I continued visiting the building

each time I came to New York, and in 5777\* I returned to New York for the year and continued visiting the same *mitvzoim* route every Friday. Again each week I was turned away from the firm on the 23rd floor.

One Friday before Chanukah, as I entered the elevator on the ground floor a fellow walked in behind me and pressed the button for the 23rd floor. As the ride commenced, we started chatting and it turns out that he's Jewish and works in the firm on the 23rd floor. I gave my "*mitvzoim* elevator pitch" to my new friend Shlomo, and as the elevator door opened on the 23rd floor I followed him out and we continued speaking for 10 minutes about



Yiddishkeit. Shlomo was very excited and friendly during that short conversation and gave me his number so he can allow me into the firm to continue visiting him every week.

For the first time, I passed the secretary with a gracious smile and it turned out that there were at least another 20 Jews working there! From then on I created several other connections there, some who started putting on tefillin, receiving pamphlets and hearing *divrei Torah* each week. Over time Shlomo also arranged for everyone working in the office to receive Menorahs for Chanukah, Mishloach Manos for Purim and Shmurah Matzah for Pesach.

Several weeks later Shlomo shared with me that the first Friday we met was not just a simple chance meeting in the elevator. For some time already he had heard about the Rebbe and had been to the Ohel several times. That week he felt a tremendous urge to start learning more about Yiddishkeit but was unsure whom to approach and how to go about it.

He went to the Ohel and wrote a letter to the Rebbe of his desire to learn more about and feel more connected to Yiddishkeit and asked the Rebbe to direct him to the right person. Lo and behold, that

Friday he met me in the elevator (mind you there are another seven elevators in the building) and was astonished that my whole purpose of being in the building was to reach people like him and make Torah and *mitzvos* more available to them at the workplace.

Shlomo eventually purchased his own pair of tefillin and a pair for a friend of his as well and started keeping kashrus. We have remained in touch ever since.

This story had a tremendous impact on me personally as well. I realized that when a Yid asked the Rebbe for direction on how to grow in Yiddishkeit the Rebbe designated me—Simcha Birnhack—to be his personal shliach to bring this Yid closer to Yiddishkeit! From then on I started feeling a stronger personal connection to the Rebbe and this helped me grow in many ways. ❶

## YOUR STORY

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