

1678

SLICE OF LIFE

A Dollar, a Shul and a Minyan
by George Yosef Mordechai Gati



Ed.'s note: Mr. George Yosef Mordechai Gati periodically submits delightful anecdotes about his interactions with Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries around the world and his own encounters with his fellow Jews, using these opportunities to engage and inspire them to do another mitzva.

About nine years ago, my wife Adina and I went to Venice, Italy on vacation. We checked into our hotel in the center of the city. We had reservations at the Gam Gam restaurant for Shabbat run by Chabad of Venice.

Rabbi Rami and Rebbetzin Shachar Banin were very warm and friendly to us during our three-day stay. The Shul Friday night was filled to capacity with Jews from around the world.

During the dinner a young Lubavitcher student studying in Venice for the summer approached our table and asked us, "Would you like to learn together with me tomorrow after the morning services?" I looked at my wife and she nodded her head for me to accept his invitation to learn.

We studied together several times during our three days in Venice. Sunday after morning services I was studying again with this young Lubavitcher student he asked me if I ever met

the Rebbe. "Yes, I met him several times when he was giving out Dollars on Sundays," I shared

Then he asked me, "Do you have dollars from the Rebbe?"

"Yes I have dollars from the Rebbe."

I very much enjoyed learning with this young Lubavitcher student. We exchanged e-mails and I thanked him for his time that he took to study with me.

About four years later, I received an invitation to this young man's wedding that would be taking place in Crown Heights. How could I refuse his invitation? Of course I went to the wedding!

The groom and bride looked so happy together.

During the celebration after the Chuppa, I went over to the groom and said, "I'd like to speak to you privately."

As we spoke I reached into my pocket and gave him a dollar that I had received directly from the Rebbe. I wished him and his new wife long life and that they continue to study Torah and perform mitzvot until the arrival of Moshiach!

I worked for 20 years as a sales manager for a certain sweater company. Last June new management came in. Many people were let go and I was one of them. I went on interviews for a new job. One Sunday, during the time that I was looking for a new job, I went to the Rebbe's Ohel in Queens. I wrote a letter to the Rebbe. I didn't ask for a good salary, or even to find a new job. I asked the Rebbe that there should be a *shul* (synagogue) within two or three blocks from the place where I will eventually find work.

That Monday morning I got a call from one of the five companies that I had interviewed with and the owner asked me to come in again.

I went in and the owner showed me around the various offices and then said, "You're hired, please start tomorrow."

As I was leaving I noticed an office door half open. I asked the owner, "What room is this?"

He said, "This is our shul where we pray the afternoon and evening services every day."

My heart missed a beat! The Rebbe did indeed answer my letter, the very next day!

One Friday, I was in my office, sitting at my desk when I got a text message from the rabbi at the Chabad Torah Center Kollel in Manhattan near where I work. He needed me for the morning minyan as an elderly gentleman needed to say *Kaddish*.

I responded to the text that I would be there in six minutes. I rushed to get there and as I entered the shul I was number seven.

Hmm, what should I do now? I went outside looking for three more Jews to complete the Minyan. With hundreds of people walking and rushing to work I didn't think it would be too difficult.

"Excuse me, are you Jewish and if yes can you please come in and help us with the Minyan?" I stopped many passersby for the next three or four minutes but with no luck. Then I saw an older man with a white beard and bushy hair approaching.

I asked him, "Are you Jewish and can you help us out for the minyan?"

He says, "Yes, where do I have to go?"

I shlep him in and he is number eight. Out I go again. Next door to the Chabad Torah Center Kollel is the New York Yankee Company store which sells all N.Y. Yankee products. I see a young fellow opening the door to go in.

"Excuse me, are you Jewish?"

"Yes I am."

"Would you like to join us for the morning minyan?" Lo and behold he lets go of the door handle, reaches into his pocket and takes out his kippa.

In we go! Now we are nine.

Out I go again looking for number ten!

Strolling down Fifth Avenue, I see two Lubavitchers with Tefillin bags under their arms. I wave to them, "Come come."

They ask, "Where to?"

I say, "Follow me!" Into the shul we go. Now we are 11 and an elderly Jew can say *Kaddish* for his dearly departed relative.

The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

22nd of Adar II, 5733 [March 26, 1973]

Mr. Mordechai Shoel Landow

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter of March 1st reached me with some delay. I regret that my acknowledgment has been unavoidably delayed by the intervening days of Purim. Please accept my apology.

First of all, I want to express my gratification at your response to the suggestions which I proposed to you during your visit here. It was, of course, a pleasure to make your personal acquaintance.

Frankly, I had wondered what your reactions might be to my "un-American" manner of welcoming you. For, the accepted American way, if I am not mistaken, is to greet one with a shower of compliments and praise, even if not always fully merited. In your case, of course, it would have been very well deserved credit, for I was fully aware of your accomplishments and generosity in behalf of the Lubavitch work in your community, given in the best tradition of inspiration and dedication, even to the extent of getting your friends involved in it. Yet, instead of verbalizing my appreciation at length, I glossed over it briefly, and immediately challenged you with new and formidable projects.

However, the fact is that I felt impelled to use the precious time at our disposal to discuss with you those matters which, in my estimation, are of vital importance, namely the expansion of our program in Miami and also the project in our Holy Land, knowing that however much we could extend the late hour, the time would still be too short to discuss the vital need of these matters in all their ramifications.

My guiding principle in this case, as when meeting with people in general, is the *bon mot* I heard from my father-in-law of Saintly memory: "When two Jews meet, they should

not be content with the benefit that the meeting brings to each of them, but they should immediately be concerned with the prospect of bringing a benefit to a third Jew, a fourth, and to as many Jews as possible." Moreover, I was hopeful that you would accept my suggestions in the right spirit, precisely because you have already made a magnificent start. And as I wrote to you in my previous letter, quoting our Sages of blessed memory, "He who has 100 desires 200," etc., or, in other words, since achievement is the greatest incentive to further and more ambitious achievement, I had reason to believe that your achievement in the past will widen your horizons and intensify your desire for even greater things. Hence, without losing time, I embarked upon the practical aspects of our meeting for the benefit of so many of our fellow Jews. This, I felt, would ensure also our share of the benefit, yours and mine, and yours even more than mine, since the actual implementation of these projects is something which Divine Providence has entrusted in your hands.

"When two Jews meet, they should not be content with the benefit that the meeting brings to each of them, but they should immediately be concerned with the prospect of bringing a benefit to a third Jew, a fourth, and to as many Jews as possible."

As for the projects themselves, I can hardly overemphasize their importance. The development of the educational facilities in Miami on all levels up to and including the highest, goes beyond the thing itself, for, as the point was mentioned, Miami is a showcase for American Jewry from all parts of the U.S.A., so that every accomplishment there, in the area of Torah education and revival of Yiddishkeit, has the significance of a "pilot" project for others to emulate. Similarly, giving new direction to the networks and other media, would trigger off beneficial repercussions on a global scale.

Thus even a small accomplishment in these areas could be multiplied on an unforeseen scale; how much more so a substantial accomplishment.

continued in next issue

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

This coming Sunday, June 27, coincides with the Hebrew date the 17th of Tammuz. Until Moshiach comes and the Third Holy Temple will be rebuilt, the 17th of Tammuz is a fast day (unless it falls on Shabbat in which case the fast is pushed off until Sunday). The act of fasting recalls tragic events and brings us to repent for the misdeeds that caused those events as well as our own repetition of those misdeeds.

The first tragic event to take place on the 17th of Tammuz was when Moses descended from Mount Sinai and witnessed the Children of Israel sinning with the Golden Calf, which led him to destroy the Tablets. Later on there were tragedies involving the destruction of both the first and second Holy Temples.

In the time of the first Holy Temple, on the 17th of Tammuz the priests were no longer able to bring the daily sheep-offering, as enemy soldiers had surrounded the city of Jerusalem. When there were no more sheep left in the city, their enemies prevented them from getting more.

During the second Holy Temple, on the 17th of Tammuz the walls around the city of Jerusalem fell and the enemy soldiers broke into the city. Both Temples were destroyed on the 9th of Av, exactly three weeks after the 17th of Tammuz. Therefore, the 17th of Tammuz begins the period on the Jewish calendar known as "The Three Weeks." It is a time of mourning, when we schedule no weddings and refrain from listening to music.

Within this sad time also lies hope. A central belief of the Jewish people that has withstood the test of time is the belief in the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. As we read about the destruction of our glorious Holy Temple and we mourn its loss, we should be inspired to improve in the areas of learning the Torah and doing its mitzvot, knowing that in doing so, we are bringing the world closer to its purpose, the arrival of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

Shmuel Beilman

L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA
לזכרון חיה' י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



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Today Is...

16 Tammuz

The Baal Shem Tov's ahavat yisrael (love of fellow Jew) was beyond imagination. The Maggid said: If only we could kiss a sefer-Torah with the same love that my Master kissed the children when he took them to cheder as a teacher's assistant!

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The site of the Holy Temple was designated as holy from the beginning of creation. However, it wasn't until the Temple was built that the uniqueness of this site became manifest to the extent that offering

sacrifices in other places was forbidden. Although the Temple was destroyed, the Divine Presence has not departed from Mount Moriah. Thus, when Moshiach comes, he will "build the Temple on its place" for "this is My resting place forever." May our study of the uniqueness of the site of the Holy Temple cause that uniqueness to become apparent with the rebuilding of the Temple. And may this take place in the immediate future. (From *Seek Out the Welfare of Jerusalem* published by Sichos in English)