

Opening Day For Evin Store



This picture was taken on the opening day of our store named Evin. In the picture I am on the left, my wife Fani is right behind me, my mother next to me and the second lady next to my mother is my older sister Sara.

In 1965, the traffic flow in Beyoglu changed, the tram and the buses were abolished. People stopped coming to the section between Galatasaray and Tunel for shopping. Therefore there was a serious drop in our business. The store could not maintain us, three brothers. I decided that we needed to move to a location between Galatasaray and Taksim. The business in the housewares department was going quite well, the warehouse, everything was complete. I said to my brother Davit: "My dear Davit, look, the three of us cannot make enough money here anymore. The famous "Japanese Toy Store" of the time (on the European side, on Beyoglu street, between Galatasaray and Taksim, where shopping is easier) is renting its location. I would like to apply. What do you think? Let's go and talk, if the conditions are suitable, we will leave this place to Kemal, and move there". We called it a deal with my older brother Kemal and made amends, we paid what we owed each other. After that day, Kemal managed the housewares department at the front of the store. Mr. Kemalettin sold furniture in the rest of the store.

Davit and I came to an agreement with our landlord. We got our contract with 10 years' exclusive lease. Bless him, our landlord behaved like a gentleman and did not take the first three month's rent. Our rent was 17 thousand liras a month, at the time one dollar was 9 Turkish liras, and one Republic gold coin was 94 liras and 80 pennies. The equivalent of the rent for today was 25,326 Turkish liras. As you can understand, we undertook a serious burden.

Well then, we took all the risks with Davit and we renovated our 4-story new store, built the showcases. We arranged two floors of the store for sales, and the other two as warehouse, accounting and other necessities. At ground level we placed everything you can think of for

housewares, and on the top floor clothing for everyone, men, women and children from the age of 7 to 77, and accessories. We had a grand opening for our store in September of 1965, with the slogan "Evin, the store that brings Europe to your doorstep" and with a lot of advertising. For exactly 10 years, 60-65 people worked with me. In addition to this, I supported my brother Davit who really had no real use to me, the deceased worked much less than I did but took out much more money.

When our contract was ending, our accountant warned me and said "Look, Mr. Lazar, with the increase in rent that you will get in your new agreement, and the large expenses you have from your cash registers, this store will go bankrupt in a very short period, if you want talk to your brother, you have to change the situation to your advantage, otherwise, this business will end up badly".

I told my older brother Davit "Look, my dear Davit, you know that I raised our partnership that was 20% and 80% when we first opened the store all the way to %30 after a while. Yet, with the expenses you had, your capital is down to zero, I am afraid that if we continue like this, you will pull me down to the bottom of the well as well and bring me to zero. We will not be able to both make a living out of this store. If we do, we will not progress. You know me, I work 24 hours a day, day and night, to prepare my future, I think about the future of my children. The ten years of our contract is about to expire, of course the new contract we will draw will be tougher than before, we will have to work harder and maintain the business stronger to be able to pay this. If you say I can manage this store, I will pull back. If you say, I cannot manage this place, I am tired already, only you can take care of this place, let me give you your compensation, and let's part our ways cordially. Whenever you want, come and give us your blessing, on days like New Year's Eve or Mother's Day when the store is exceptionally crowded, come and keep an eye to prevent theft" and we came to an agreement, I paid everything Davit wanted and terminated our partnership. My family and I became enemies because of my sister-in-law Luiza who, until that day, loved me and would do anything for me. We were not speaking to each other for years. I did not understand the reason because I had paid my older brother more than I owed him physically or spiritually. I even said "My dear Davit, why are you creating a situation that upsets each other? Please, let's not offend each other". But unfortunately my sister-in-law Luiza never saw the truth, she alienated both my brother and my nieces from us.

I have to confess to you, I always prioritized my business even before my family. I would be at the store at 7.30 in the morning, my leaving was never at a set time, usually I would leave the store around 8 p.m., and return to my home exhausted. I did not witness how my children grew up, bless her heart, my wife Fani bore that burden always. She would almost never reflect the problems of the house to me. There was no country in the world that Davit and his wife Luiza did not visit while I worked like a madman like this. People who saw me would ask "Isn't the boss of this store Davit?". And I would respond "There is only one boss in the world, and that is G-d". Three brothers, until that day, we never had any conflicts, we were always on good terms. So much that we would always tell each other "May G-d protect us from the evil eye".

Of course this does not mean that you have to share the soup you are eating too, commerce does not forgive some things. The wrong decision that my older brother Kemal took brought us to these days.

After this separation, I signed a new contract for the store for 5 years. 2 years before the end of my contract, I suffered a serious stroke in 1979. I recuperated with difficulty, bless him, Kemal took care of the business. When the contract of the store ended, we took a decision among the family and liquidated all the merchandise in the store and started living our life with my wife. Bless them, my children said to us: "My dear father, life is short, you worked very hard until you were worn out. Now live your life one day at a time with your wife. Go to places that you wish to see in the world. Enjoy your retirement while you are still young".

May G-d bless them, we traveled quite a bit. I worked actively as a volunteer in the Old People's Home, I still go as my health permits. I take out the seniors who are able to walk and who have their faculties intact once or twice a month to go out or to eat fish as long as I can find sponsors (I have always found one until now). In addition to that, I watch the repairs for the building closely, the most difficult part of my job is the last duty I offer to the seniors. That is to say, the procedure after their death (burial, the dirt, the tombstone etc.), I also am quite ill now and I am 80 years old, even though I tell my young volunteer friends, come and learn this job and take over, none of them want to.