

Opening Day Of Our Store Bakara



This picture was taken on the opening day of our store Bakara that we opened with my older brother Kemal.

In the years 1958-59, right across from my store, between Galatasary and Tunel, two stores down from where Pashabahce store is located today, Kemalettin Sherbetchi who rented the store "Bakara" that was very large in area, and my brother Kemal who was partners with Mr. Kemalettin by renting a department of that store, said to me one day "My dear Lazar, do you know? Mr. Kemalettin is going to liquidate this store". "What is Mr. Kemalettin going to do with this store? What are his thoughts?" "He will rent it to someone, come on, let us take this place. When we are together we can manage business well. What do you think?" "You probably lost your mind, what kind of money can provide the goodwill money for this store? What money will we use to fill it up? My capital in the Yildiz store was only 35 thousand liras". "Look, my dear Lazar, if you have 35 thousand liras, we are well known in the market, they will give us credit, we will fill the store. We will renovate the store, make a new showcase. I think we can pull this off", he said.

These discussions lasted a few months. Kemal refrained from talking to Mr. Sherbetchi before we were sure of our intentions. Finally I warm up to the idea after 5 months and we negotiated with Mr. Kemalettin under hard terms. In this way we became renters of Bakara store. I transferred Yildiz store to my brother-in-law (my older sister Fortune's husband) Sabetay Farsi in exchange for my capital of 5 thousand liras. Sabetay unfortunately could not manage Yildiz store for a long time, transferred it to another merchant and came to work with us at Bakara store. Starting that day, my brother-in-law Sabetay always worked with me.

We focused on the new store only from then on. We redecorated the store and the showcase, and reopened the store Bakara with a brand new appearance on September 20th, 1958. Because our store was very large and deep, we put whatever merchandise you can think of. Nothing was missing. Our store consisted of 4 departments. In one department, women's apparel, accessories, shoes, in the second, men's pants, underwear, accessories. (Because I was very familiar with the

business of handbags, I personally went to Kazlicheshme [on the European side where leather industry has proliferated] and chose various colored leathers according to my taste, and take them to the workshop, I even designed the models). We reserved the third department to electronics. In 1960, we attended Izmir [third largest city in Turkey, on the Aegean sea coast] Fair to buy various appliances (these were imported merchandise when we first started). The first ones we sold were "Amkor" brand, made in Israel. Later on we started selling Archelik[Turkish brand]), we ordered electronics and started selling those too. Among the electronics were "Webcor" brand record players. We started selling records naturally, where you find record players. The fourth department of the store we rented to Samuel Saman who sold ready-to-wear children's and men's apparel. We created such an enterprise, I did the accounting and the tracking of merchandise, Kemal looked for goods in the market, searched the new items. Approximately 20 people worked with us.

I always keep on to the money, keep my expenses limited, I think of tomorrow, my deceased older brother Kemal on the other hand, wasted the money, he never thought of tomorrow.

Meanwhile our older brother Davit was still in the glove business. Kemal said to me: "Lazariko (little Lazar), couldn't our older brother join us so we manage this place all together?". May G-d grant a long life, I have a conscience too, but in certain conditions, I am objective. " Look, my dear Kemal, of course, I have the utmost respect for my older brother, he is always welcome with me, there is no limit to the sacrifices I would do for my older brother. But he knows nothing about the business we are in, he is only an expert about gloves. He is happy where he is. If he joins us, we will have problems. He doesn't even have a capital. Under what conditions can he become partners with us?", I said. I said but I could not deal with stubborn Kemal. We took in my older brother Davit too. I would finish up my usual work and go out to sales immediately, Kemal usually was on the lookout for new merchandises in the market anyways, Davit on the other hand, just watched, regretfully that was all he was capable of, he could not manage anything else. When Kemal understood the situation it was too late. The deceased went through depressions himself but excuse me, I do not want to talk about this affliction, this is something that upsets me tremendously. I supported my older brother Davit all my life.

In 1961, Kemal went to Israel for therapy for 15-20 days. As I said before, our store was very large in area, the very corner part was on the street. A store that was at this corner went bankrupt. I took advantage of the absence of Kemal, put Kemalettin Sherbetchi as a go-between immediately and rented that place in the name of Yomtov [real name of Kemal] Lazar Abuaf Partnership. I renovated this corner until Kemal returned, and filled it with housewares so Kemal could sell them. On Kemal's return we did the opening of this new section of the store.

In 1963, I do not like counting revenues on Saturdays due to the values I received from my family, in principle. Kemal put pressure on me about this subject, I did it because I could not offend him, but I was very upset. This subject created a conflict between me and Kemal and I left the housewares department as a whole to Kemal, to protect him. I managed the sundries and notions department until 1965. Our older brother continued being the watchdog. When I separated from my older brother he was a good and successful merchant, yet he tripped himself with the wrong decisions he took and the merchandise he bought. He filled his whole store with the French brand jars "Le Parfait" that were very famous then. When I told him "my dear Kemal, what are you doing? How can you liquidate so many jars", he said "mind your business, I know what I am doing". Of

course it was very difficult to sell so many jars.

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.