

They Bought Their Driver a Watch

When I was a little girl, I used to admire my father's watch. It had a gold stretch band that left little red marks on his wrist. He would flip it off when he had to get his hands wet, or when he would patiently try to teach me to tell time.

Every time the watch broke, he would spend the money to repair it. He wanted that watch, not a new one. When I grew older, I found out why.

After Yud Shvat 1950, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was nistalek, his wife, Rebbetzin Nechama Dina, was devastated. In an effort to help her, it was arranged that my father, Reb Yisroel Gordon, then a bochur of 20 but with a driver's license (unusual in 1950), would take the Rebbetzin for drives. She would see Manhattan... the new sky-scrapers...or go to a park... and have an outing.

My father and Rebbetzin Nechama Dina would be accompanied on these outings by another bochur, Reb Sholom Haskind, and by one of Rebbetzin Nechama Dina's daughters, either the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka or her sister Rebbetzin Chana Gurary.

My father and Reb Sholom Haskind would sit in front, and Rebbetzin Nechama Dina and one of her daughters would sit in back.

One day, my father was given a surprise gift: that watch. It took me a few decades to realize something.

My father, age 20, was given the honor and privilege of driving these women.

They did not have to give him any gift!

The gift was that he was allowed to do this for them.

But they didn't see it that way.

They didn't see others doing them favors as no big deal, since after all they are important people.

And so my father, at age 20, was given a watch as a token of appreciation for his driving.

In this issue, Esther Etiquette addresses the concept of treating hosts properly. She asks us not to assume that it is the host's honor and privilege to cook, serve, set and clean for us. We should express our humble appreciation in some tangible manner, whether through a small gift or by helping out.

Our beloved Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, who passed away 25 years ago this Chof Bais Shvat, was known to be the soul of civility, kindness, humility and elegance. Many people who did small things for her have gifts or letters from her or from the Rebbe, beautiful and wholly unnecessary gestures of appreciation.

If the Rebbetzin could do it, surely we can.

— Rische Deitsch

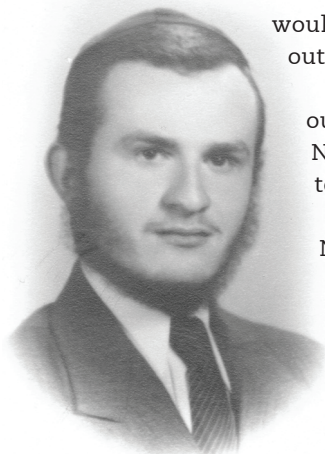


Photo Lubavitch Archives

ABOVE LEFT: Reb Yisroel Gordon in early 1950s. ABOVE: Reb Sholom Haskind in early 1950s.