

Good Shabbos Everyone. In this week's Torah portion Beshalach the Torah tells us how Moshe Rabeinu (Moshe our teacher) instructs the Jewish Nation on the observance of Shabbos.

We distinguish Shabbos from the other days of the week by sitting down to festive meals with our family and enjoying the spiritual recharge of this special day. Anyone who keeps Shabbos can testify to the beauty of this special day. There are those who claim to "observe" Shabbos "in spirit." But in truth, only those who keep the Shabbos properly according to halacha, will reap the spiritual recharge which the special day has to offer every Jew.

This week, for the first time in the eleven year history of this publication, I will tell a story which happened about me, your beloved author of the "Good Shabbos Everyone."

A few years ago, I met a Jewish lawyer in court, let's call him Shraga Feivel. Shraga Feivel and I have a lot in common and we and our families became fast friends, Boruch Hashem. For the last couple of years, Shraga Feivel and I spoke about taking a trip together to Eretz Yisroel. The only time we could both realistically take off from work would be around December 25th, at which time business is generally slower.

Finally this year, our schedules worked out and we reserved plane tickets to fly out Thursday, December 24th at 4 pm from Newark International, planning with Hashem's help to arrive Friday morning in Eretz Yisroel at 9:30 am, with plenty 'o time to rent a car and get to Yerushalayim for Shabbos Kodesh.

For months we spoke and planned the trip. We had planned to stay in the Meah Shearim area for Shabbos and possibly daven at the Kosel Friday night and go see the Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok tish, etc. To say that we were looking forward to the trip, would be an understatement.

Our wives, the Aishes Chayels that they are, agreed to stay home with the kinderlach, so that Shraga Feivel and I could maximize our time in the Holy Land. Fast forward to Thursday, December 24th... as we sat down on the airplane, we discovered that our neighbor sitting next to us, was also a Jewish lawyer who worked in the criminal law field. This was the first of many interesting "coincidences" we experienced throughout our journey.

After davening Maariv on the plane, we all eventually dozed off. At about 4:30 am, I looked out of the window and saw the sun beginning to rise on the horizon. Soon after, I got up out of my seat, to begin my "preparations" for davening the morning prayers. As soon as I got up, a flight attendant called out over the "p.a. system" that everyone must take their seats because the airplane was going to make an "unexpected landing" in Rome. In order to keep everyone calm, they called it "unexpected" instead of "emergency."

"Oh boy, here we go..." I thought to myself. Here we were, erev Shabbos, being delayed in Rome, on December 25th! On the flight update screen the languages changed to Italian and English and the distance to destination changed dramatically.

Immediately, the plane made a swift descent. The pilot announced that we should not be alarmed if we saw fire engines and emergency personnel waiting on the runway. I had images of sliding down those yellow slides. Everyone uttered prayers in their own languages.

Soon after, Boruch Hashem, we made an uneventful landing at Fiumicino - Rome International Airport. But now what were we going to do? The pilot informed us that there was no Continental staff to greet us in Rome because it was December 25th and they would have to wake up the staff, (and it would take long for them to sober up and make their way to the airport!)

Once we were off the plane, the 25 or so religiously observant passengers formed a minyan and we davened Schacharis. Shraga Feivel and I began trying to desperately find another flight to Eretz Yisroel. We actually passed through security with El Al, but alas, the Italians told us it was too late to purchase a ticket. There was nobody there to guide us and we tried to speak to anyone who would help. Very few people spoke English, and nobody from our group spoke Italian, which of course complicated things. Our cell phones and internet did not work. I did not have any Euros to use the payphone. Everything was hectic and we were afraid to separate ourselves from the group as we did not want to miss any updates about our flight.

Our poor wives were already expecting to hear from us that we had landed safely in Eretz Yisroel. However, when they called Continental, they were told at first that there is no information about our flight, which was not very reassuring. Only later, they were told that we had landed in Rome.

Shraga Feivel and I began to consider the option of spending Shabbos in Rome, being that we had no

Mazal Tov to Avrohom Duvid Wolfberg on the occasion on his chasuna

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Parshas Beshalach ש"ת"ע"א

idea if or when our plane would continue on its way to Eretz Yisroel. It was about 9 am at that point and Shabbos was to begin in about 6 hours from then. The flight itself to Eretz Yisroel takes two and a half hours from Rome. There was still time, but with every advancing minute, the situation looked grim.

In any case, I approached a police officer who seemed kindly and I asked him in Spanish, the closest language I know to Italian, if he would let me use his cell phone. I had managed to get the number for Chabad from a fellow passenger, and I wanted to call them to get an idea about the possibility of staying in Rome for Shabbos. When I asked the officer to use his phone, he showed me the international symbol with his thumb and fingers for "it costs money." I had several hundred dollars in cash, but apparently the "almighty" dollar is not what it used to be, because when I showed a wad of singles to the officer, he still wouldn't let me use the phone!!!

At about 9:30 am, two Jewish musicians from the group "[Simply Tsfat](#)" who were on our plane, began to play in the airport. One played the guitar and one played the violin. We Jews had a unstoppable urge to dance to the music, and what do you know? In no time, we formed a ring around the musicians and were dancing up a storm. A large crowd of people including non-Jews from our flight and passengers in the



Airport gathered around to watch and take pictures.

It is told in the name of the holy Baal Shem Tov, that when one dances with Simcha – happiness, one can sometimes achieve more than with prayer! Sure enough, soon after the music stopped, they announced to our group that the plane was fixed and ready to continue on its way. Cheers erupted from the group, "Hurray, Boruch Hashem!"

They announced that the flight would take off at 11:00 a.m. (12:00 p.m. Eretz Yisroel time), it would be tight, but we were going to make it! Or so we thought at that time...

Shraga Feivel and I were relieved, but our simcha quickly eroded... There was one solitary airport employee who was checking the passports of 250 passengers one by one. Every time someone asked the airport employee a question, she stopped checking the passports and the line was delayed. Soon it was well past 11:00 a.m and the line was not moving.

Finally, with great exasperation, the airport employee flew up her hands and announced that everyone could go onto the plane, without checking the passports. Not knowing whether to be relieved that we were finally getting on the plane or worried about the compromised security, we quickly made our way onto the plane and took our seats.

By the time we were all settled into our seats it was probably about 11:40. The pilot explained what was the cause of the "unexpected" landing; namely, smoke was detected near the video system. The pilot told us further that they had disabled the video system (thankfully, in light of the trash they showed there) and we were to take off shortly. "Shortly" turned out to be another 20 minutes or so.

It was then about 1:00 p.m. in Eretz Yisroel, and Shabbos was to start just after 4:00 p.m. and the flight was supposed take about two and a half hours from Rome. The pilot announced that he could not guarantee exactly what time the plane would arrive in Eretz Yisroel, and therefore, anyone who was concerned about arriving on time for Shabbos should consider deplaning and remaining in Rome, although Continental would not take any responsibility for anyone who chooses to do so... *Next week we will continue this exciting true story...* **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

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