

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** In this week's parsha Masei, the Torah details the journeys of the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Yisroel) as they traveled through the desert. Why is it so important for the Torah to describe in such great detail the wanderings of the Jewish people? The commentary Maor Eynayim explains that there is a reason for every place that we must go in life. Namely, we must go to that certain place to elevate the sparks of holiness, which lay there, waiting to be elevated. We elevate the sparks of holiness in that place, by serving Hashem in that place. This is especially true in places with little or no Jewish communities. The following inspiring true story illustrates one Jew's journeys in this world. Reb Yitzchok Flohr was a man who was privileged to learn under the tutelage of Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, referred to by many as the architect of Torah in America. Reb Yitzchok was a G-d fearing Jew, and his love for mitzvos was well known. He often went to great lengths to fulfill Hashem's commandments, even when it meant incurring an expense or inconveniencing himself to do so.

As an importer of esrogim from Italy, Reb Yitzchok often had to travel to Europe to supervise the cutting of the esrogim. Reb Yitzchok usually made sure that he had his tefillin with him on the flight so he could use them while davening shacharis (praying the morning prayers) on the plane.

On one return trip to the United States, Reb Yitzchok boarded the plane, made his way down the narrow aisle to his seat and started to arrange his belongings. As he looked through his carry-on bag, he suddenly realized that his tefillin were nowhere to be found. He must have forgotten to remove them from his luggage before boarding the flight. Reb Yitzchok was distressed at the thought of davening shacharis without tefillin. But since he would be arriving home in the afternoon, there would be ample time after claiming his luggage to put on his tefillin before nightfall. Feeling somewhat calmer, Reb Yitzchok sat back comfortably in his seat and began to relax.

After a short time, Reb Yitzchok was startled by an announcement over the plane's loudspeaker. "Ladies and gentlemen, we will be making an emergency landing in Portugal due to engine trouble. Everything is under control, and there is no need for concern. Please remain seated and stay calm. We will be landing shortly." The plane erupted into a din of hushed hysteria. The crew circulated the cabin, trying to reassure the nervous passengers. Reb Yitzchok's mind immediately turned to his tefillin. Perhaps, he thought, he would be able to retrieve his luggage in Portugal and bring the tefillin on board the plane when the flight resumed.

The plane landed in Portugal without further incident. The passengers exited the aircraft and were directed to another terminal, where they were told that there would be a delay of a few hours. Naturally, no one was pleased with this situation. For some, this meant missing an important meeting or appointment; others were simply frustrated that things weren't going smoothly.

And Reb Yitzchok? He, too, was concerned. For with this additional delay, he would not arrive in the United States in time to put on his tefillin. Yet how could he let an entire day pass without donning tefillin. Reb Yitzchok approached the nearest desk. "Excuse me," he said to the ticket clerk. "I left an important item in my checked luggage. Is there any way I can retrieve it while we're waiting?" "Just a minute, sir, I'll check that for you." The woman glanced at his ticket and pressed several keys on her keyboard, then looked up with an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry, Mr. Flohr, but I'm afraid your luggage is on the cargo plane, headed to New York. The delay didn't affect your baggage, since it goes separately." "Thank you," Reb Yitzchok said somberly, and then walked back to his seat in the waiting area. He needed a pair of tefillin. Where does one get tefillin in Portugal-particularly when he doesn't know anyone in that country? No easy solution came to mind.

Perhaps, Reb Yitzchok thought, he could find an earlier flight to the United States. Once in New York, he could easily call a friend and borrow a pair of tefillin. Reb Yitzchok began to walk from one terminal to the next, checking the departure times for every airline. It soon became clear that his own flight was the earliest one to the States. He already knew that it would be arriving too late. As he passed a departure screen, a new idea occurred to him. There was a flight leaving very soon to London. A friend of his lived there, and fortunately enough, he had the man's phone number on him.

Reb Yitzchok quickly exchanged a few dollars for the local currency, then headed for the nearest public phone. "Hello?" came the English voice at the other end. "Hello, this is Yitzchok Flohr calling." "Reb Yitzchok! Shalom aleichem! What brings you to call me?" His friend was surprised, though pleased, to hear from him. Reb Yitzchok explained his problem and made his request. His friend was happy to help. Soon, the arrangements were made. The friend would come to the arrival gate in London with a pair of tefillin. Reb Yitzchok would don the tefillin and then be on his way for the next leg of his journey, back to America. With the necessary arrangements in place, Reb Yitzchok went to the ticket desk. "I was on the flight that made an emergency landing here," he explained. "I would like to get on the next flight to London, and then travel from there to New York."

The agent tried not to show her puzzlement at the unusual request. "Okay, sir, I'll try to book that for you." She got busy with her keyboard. "Fine," she said finally. "There were still a few seats left on each flight. I'll just need to stamp your ticket with the change and you'll be all set. But are you sure you want to do this, sir? It's quite expensive." "How much is it?" Reb Yitzchok asked. "Eight hundred dollars." "I'll take it!" he said enthusiastically, handing her the ticket to be stamped. Reb Yitzchok walked to the gate joyfully.

The flight was uneventful, and he met his friend in London right before nightfall. Reb Yitzchok put on the tefillin with intense happiness, thankful to Hashem for giving him the resources to fulfill such a holy mitzvah, despite the odds against him. (From Reb Yosef Weiss, Visions of Greatness p.197) Sometimes in life, we find ourselves in far-flung places; we should know that it is no coincidence. Rather, we must go there to elevate spiritually the holiness which lays there. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**