



“We Will Think of You”

The following story was told by Reb Lipa Brennan to a member of the Derher editorial team.

In 5736*, Nechemya Kessler and I traveled to Alberta, Canada, as well as to Alaska, on Merkos Shlichus. The way it worked back then was that a pair of *bochurim* would choose a state or region to travel to, submit a proposal to Rabbi Hodakov, and he would agree—or not agree¹—and based upon that, we would go.

We didn’t know too much about world geography, but Nechemya knew that there was a need for Merkos Shluchim in Alberta, so we looked for a US state that began with an “A,” and Alaska came up. We had no idea where it was, really, but we put the two together and received a *bracha* to go.

Before we left, as we were learning about the regions we were going to visit, we realized that there were halachic questions as far as *zmanim*, Shabbos and so on.² We went to Rabbi Zalman Shimon Dvorkin and asked him, as far as Shabbos

was concerned—if there is no nightfall, but rather a long period of dusk, after which the sun rises again, when does Shabbos begin and end? He answered that we should follow the times of the nearest Jewish community, which was in Seattle, Washington. We then asked him what to do about davening in a place where daytime lasts longer than 24 hours in the summer, and he told us to ask Rabbi Hendel who was in 770 at the time. Rabbi Hendel had been to Alaska recently with Rabbi Gershon Grossbaum, where they were *machshir* a *mikveh* at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

We went to see Rabbi Hendel and he told us to ask Rabbi Hodakov. Rabbi Hodakov told us to come back in the evening.

When we returned in the evening, Rabbi Hodakov told us “We daven Shacharis here at 9:30 a.m., Mincha at 3:15 p.m. and Maariv at 9:30 p.m. and you should daven at these times. You will think of us, and we will think of you.” The way Rabbi Hodakov told us this, it was quite clear that this was an answer from

לזכות הורינו
 ר' אברהם שמואל
 וזוגתו מרת רבקה מירל שיחיו
 שפאלטר
 ר' משה חיים
 וזוגתו מרת שרה שיחיו
 גיפערן
 נדפס ע"י
 הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו מרת לאה
 ומשפחתם שיחיו
 שפאלטר



PICTURES FROM RABBI BRENNAN'S REPORT ON AN "EVENING WITH CHABAD" ARRANGED IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA

the Rebbe, which was very exciting to us—the Rebbe had said, “We will think of you.”

As our shlichus progressed, we traveled further and further north. We were hoping to reach a point north of the Arctic Circle, so that we would have at least one *tefilah* during which we would think of the Rebbe, and the Rebbe would think of us, but *hashgacha pratis* determined that that was not to be. The closest we got was to a place where there was no clear night, but a two-hour dusk, and then the sun came up.

Balancing Risk and Reward

When we arrived in Alaska we heard about the Trans-Alaska Pipeline which was then under construction, and would allow oil to be transported south from Prudhoe Bay in Northern Alaska. There were camps every 20 miles or so for the workers who were building the pipeline. Many of the workers were students from the West Coast who had come

for a summer job. The only way to get to parts of the pipeline was by air—a small plane or helicopter.

We wanted to visit these workers—some of whom were Jewish—but we knew that the Rebbe had reservations about traveling by plane in some cases. We asked Rabbi Hodakov, and he told us that on the one hand, we needed to try and reach as many Yidden as we could but on the other hand flying on a single-engine plane was not allowed. As a result, we couldn't get to the more remote parts of the pipeline. We did, however, reach a number of Jewish workers in the camps closer to cities, and were able to put tefillin on with them. **T**

1. Of course, Rabbi Hodakov would be conveying the Rebbe's decision.
2. In the northern extremes of Alaska, north of the Arctic Circle, the sun does not set for days or weeks during the summer, and does not rise for days or weeks during the winter, posing complicated halachic questions as to the times Shabbos begins and ends, when to daven and so on.