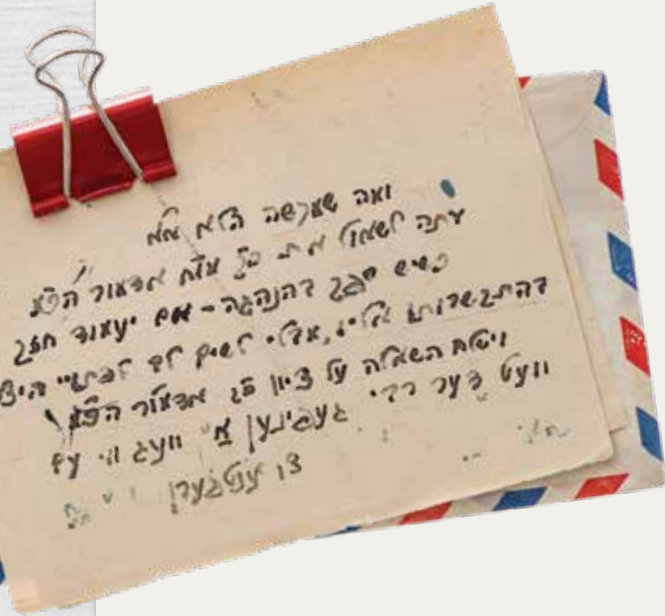




Story

מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות  
לכ"ק אדמו"ר  
נשיא דורנו

נדפס ע"י ולזכות  
דוד בן שיינא זוגתו מרת  
פערל גאלדא בת לאה  
ומשפחתם שיחיו



# דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

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## The Expedited Passport



AS TOLD BY  
**RABBI MENACHEM COHEN**  
*(Elad, Eretz Yisroel)*

Every year I travel to the Rebbe for Gimmel Tammuz. This has been my commitment for twenty years, since Gimmel Tammuz 5764. On Wednesday, 27 Sivan 5784 I took a taxi to Ben Gurion Airport to catch my midnight flight to New York for Gimmel Tammuz. But to my chagrin, the flight agent at the El Al counter informed me that my visa to the United States had expired a few days earlier!

“You are not going to board this flight to New York, Mr. Cohen,” she said. “If you contact your travel agent quickly you can probably get a refund for this flight. They should

have never sold you this ticket without confirming you have a proper visa.”

I was sorely disappointed at the turn of events and tried to find a quick fix. A few months earlier the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) became available for Israeli citizens. I inquired whether I could quickly apply and enter the US without a regular visa. However, ESTA is only available for those with biometrically enabled passport books, and I had an ordinary passport.

Clearly, I would not be traveling that Wednesday night,

and I had less than a week to work things out. Applying for a biometrically enabled passport would take six weeks, so getting into the US through the ESTA program seemed impossible.

Back home, with a heavy heart, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe. I shared the entire story and requested a *bracha* that I should merit to be by the Rebbe this Gimmel Tammuz, and sent the letter to the Ohel. I opened a sefer of Igros Kodesh and this is the first letter I read from 5 Tammuz 5711:

*"I received your letter from 24 Sivan with the notification that you received the exit visa and affidavit you need. May it all work out in its proper time. May Hashem bring you to your true destination, as Hashem wants, in a good and auspicious hour."*

I felt the Rebbe had given me his *bracha* that it would all work out, and my apprehension was replaced by hope and anticipation for what would come next.

On Thursday morning, I contacted some well-connected friends who advised me to apply for a biometrically enabled passport. Although the standard processing time was six weeks, it was possible to expedite the process to a minimum of four working days. Gimmel Tammuz was Monday night and Tuesday and the timeframe did not look promising, but I made an appointment at the Interior Ministry for the new passport anyway.

On my way to the office, I received a call from a journalist friend who is a Litvisher Yid. I shared with him my predicament and he said, "Menachem, if you truly believe you will travel, the passport will certainly be ready for you on time."

Then, to my surprise, he shared with me a personal experience he had at the Ohel. "Many years ago, my daughter was diagnosed with Juvenile Diabetes, and she faced many health challenges as a result. Five years after her marriage, she did not yet have any children. After trying many *segulos*, I finally suggested to my son-in-law that we travel to the Lubavitcher Rebbe to ask for a *bracha*. At first, he was reluctant, but I convinced him it was the right thing to do, and we both flew to New York to daven at the Ohel. Nine months after that trip, my daughter gave

birth to a healthy boy."

I never imagined that a Litvisher Yid would be the one to inspire me to have perfect faith that the Rebbe would find a way for me to be at the Ohel for Gimmel Tammuz even this year...

Although the process for my new passport was in motion, I still needed to book a flight that would get me to New York in time, but for three days there were no availabilities on any airlines. On Monday evening, Leil Gimmel Tammuz, my travel agent found availability on a flight leaving Tuesday at 1:00pm, which would get me to New York in the late afternoon. Although my passport was still not confirmed, I decided to make a "vessel" for the *bracha*. I purchased the ticket.

On Tuesday morning, I was notified that my passport was ready, and by 10:30 am I had it in my hands. I immediately applied for ESTA but was told that it could take between one and 72 hours to be approved.

With mixed emotions and much faith, I headed out to the airport. I'm not sure what reality I was experiencing as I took my place in line at the El Al counter without having ESTA approval to travel to the US. As the line grew smaller, I sent a letter to the Ohel asking for a *bracha*, and three minutes later, at 11:33 am, I received an email with the header "ESTA Approval." Exactly one hour after I had submitted my application!

I have traveled to the Rebbe dozens of times, but this trip was beyond everything I had ever experienced, filled with many instances of clear *hashgacha protis* and open miracles. Throughout the flight, I felt I was traveling on miraculous "*ananei shmaya*," thrilled to have the *zechus* to travel to the Rebbe - as if it was the first time in my life. As the sun started setting in New York, I merited to be at the Ohel with the Rebbe on Gimmel Tammuz. **T**

## YOUR STORY

Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing [stories@derher.org](mailto:stories@derher.org).

