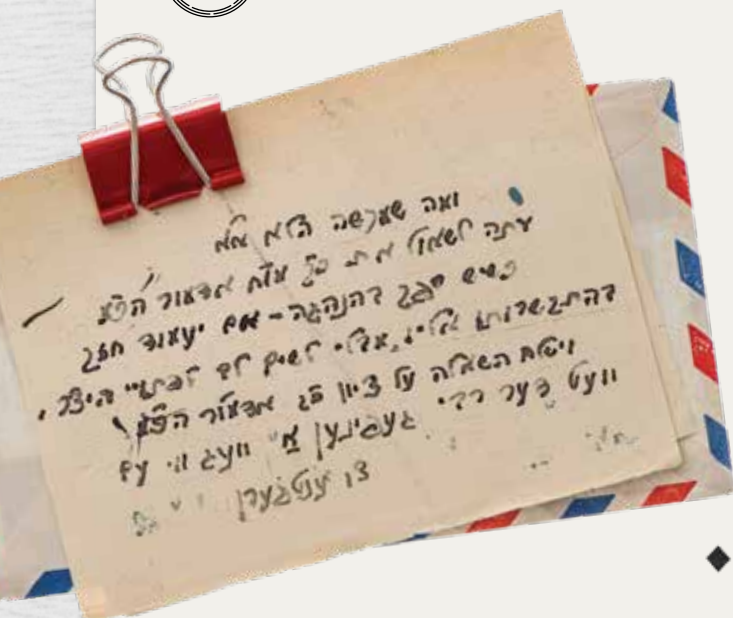




Story



לזכות
השלוחה מרת פערל גאלדא שתחי'
לרגל יום הולדתה א' אייר,
הבחור הת' השליח לוי שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו י"ב אייר,
הבחור הת' השליח מאיר שיחי',
לרגל יום הולדתו כ"ט אייר
נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' דוד ומשפחתם שיחיו
טייכטל

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG

Wiping Out My Debt



AS TOLD BY
HATOMIM SHMUEL LABKOWSKI
(S. PAULO BRAZIL)

In the Southern Hemisphere, Chanukah is in the summer and Shavuot is in the winter, so as a *talmid* in the Lubavitch Yeshiva of S. Paulo, Brazil, in Shevat of 5781* I was working as a camp counselor in Gan Yisroel. I wanted to be by the Rebbe for Yud Shevat which was fast approaching, and as an American citizen I was able to travel to the United States despite the Covid regulations in place at the time.

My passport expired and I needed to apply for an emergency replacement. I was told that arranging an appointment at the American embassy on such short notice would be a significant challenge but I decided to give it a try.

Amazingly they had an opening for that Friday and I made arrangements to leave camp for several hours to make it to my appointment. I caught a ride to the city at 6:00 a.m. after two sleepless nights of color war. My father met me at the embassy with all my necessary documents and I made the three-hour ride back to camp before Shabbos, confident in the Rebbe's *brachos* to help me come for Yud Shevat.

With my passport arranged, I started working on booking a flight departing Thursday, 8 Shevat, and returning on Monday, 12 Shevat. A good friend loaned me the \$471 necessary to purchase the flight, and a Brazilian fellow

offered to reimburse the cost on condition that I made the round trip.

At the time, every traveler from Brazil to the US needed to provide a negative Covid test taken within 72 hours of boarding the flight. When I went to the pharmacy on Wednesday afternoon to take a Covid test, I tested positive and was horrified to realize that I would not be able to travel to New York the next day. I was disappointed at losing this chance to travel to the Rebbe after not being there in over a year but I understood that everything is *b'hashgacha protis* and it was certainly for the best.

The Latam Airlines policy at the time dictated that if one could not travel due to Covid, their ticket would be fully reimbursed as credits to be used for a different flight later on. When I called the airline to cancel my flight I was assured that my credits were in place.

In honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan, I decided to travel to the Rebbe with my Yud Shevat credits. Much to my chagrin, the airline agents were inexplicably unable to book a new flight for me. After spending hours on the phone, it became clear to me that my flight credits were gone and I was now close to \$500 in debt. A big bother for a *yeshiva bochur*.

Four months later I was preparing to travel to the US during the month of Elul to begin the new *zman* in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim Nyack. The night before my flight I encountered a Jew who lives in my

apartment building with whom I've always exchanged greetings but had no meaningful relationship. I shared with him that I was studying in the United States for the coming year and bid him farewell.

The next day, Friday 15 Elul, I was at the Ohel. Among the various things I wrote about in my *tzetel* to the Rebbe, I mentioned that I had a debt to deal with, due to the airline not honoring my flight credits from my aborted Yud Shevat trip. I was in touch with a lawyer who specializes in airline-related lawsuits and asked for a *bracha* to be able to resolve the debt issue either through the efforts of the lawyer or באופן אחר—in some other fashion.

A few hours later I called my mother to wish her a good Shabbos and she told me that the neighbor I had spoken with the night before came over to our apartment a few hours earlier to give me a gift in honor of my trip to the US. She told him I already left so he left an envelope with her for me. She opened the envelope and enclosed in it was \$500 USD—almost the exact amount I needed to pay off my debt! **T**

YOUR STORY

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