

Amtrak to Washington

Posted by Pintele Yid - 31 Aug 2009 08:00

Reb Zundel had to go to Washington D.C. on business. Although he didn't like leaving the friendly confines of Boro Park, he realized that ultimately, Hashem wanted him to pick up some Nitziotzios in the capitol. Reb Zundel preferred to take Amtrak over the plane. It was much more reliable. Delays on the shuttle were prevalent, especially during the summer months when any thunderstorm activity between NY and Washington caused the shuttle to stop flying.

The morning of his trip, he arrived at Penn Station and got in line to pick up his ticket. A well dressed gentleman in front of him turned around and asked "are you a Rabbi"? Reb Zundel, who sported a beard, was used to that question. During his travels around the country, he was a magnet for Religious Christians. He used to wonder why all those amazing kiruv stories by Henschel Teller never happened to him. ??? He thought, maybe this guy will be Jewish. He politely answered the man that he wasn't, but he has some knowledge of Jewish customs and teachings. The man gave him his hand and told him his name was Simon. Reb Zundel thought that Simon is a Jewish name, who knows...

It seemed that Simon was not even interested in Reb Zundel's answer. It was just an excuse to start a conversation. Simon told him that he was going to Washington on such an important trip.... Then Simon was called to pick up his ticket and Reb Zundel's turn to pick up his ticket immediately followed. After he got his ticket, Simon came over again to Reb Zundel. Reb Zundel hoped that Simon was Jewish because he realized that he was going to be with him for the next

They then looked up on the screen and they saw that they had to proceed to Track 13. Simon complained that he *hated* the number 13 since it is bad luck. It always reminded him of Friday the 13th! They then went down to the train and Simon looked over at Track 18. There was a luxury train parked on the track. As Simon continued to look, Reb Zundel told him that they had to enter the train or they might not get two seats together. Right before they entered the train, Simon saw one of the ticket collectors. He started to bitterly complain about riding a train that was on track 13. He pointed to the train on track 18 and said that it looked much better and the track was newer and gave other reasons why he should be on that train. The ticket collector was very pleasant and tried to explain to Simon why that train was not for him. It didn't even go to Washington, so there was no point in discussing it further.

Simon, who was now totally miserable, thought of an idea to make himself happy. He was going to upgrade to "first class". He asked Reb Zundel to come with him and told him that he will buy him an upgraded ticket as well. Reb Zundel thought of Henschel Teller and agreed to join him. By

the time they entered the first class car, all the seats were taken except for the 2 seats in the front row, right behind the conductor.

As the train left, Reb Zundel saw that Simon was nervous. He didn't like the bumps and sudden jolts of the train. After the train pulled out of the station, it passed an old dusty train. Simon started staring at the old train. Just then, the ticket collector was passing them and Simon asked him why they are not using that older train. It looked like a more "peaceful" train. The ticket collector raised his eyebrows and exclaimed that he was working for Amtrak for 15 years, and since he can recall, that old train was there in the same place. He didn't even think it was on a track! Simon muttered something and the collector continued toward the back of the train.

Simon started complaining to Reb Zundel that he preferred that old train and again complained why they didn't use the train on track 18. Reb Zundel, tried to calm Simon down, but he was not succeeding.

Simon then focused on the Conductor's compartment, and after 30 seconds, remarked to Reb Zundel that the Conductor had never yet left his compartment to look at the back of the train. Reb Zundel was about to respond him but the ticket collector approached and asked them for their tickets. Simon started ranting at the ticket collector that it is irresponsible for the Conductor not to look behind him, in case there was a train approaching from behind. The ticket collector patiently explained to Simon that the Conductor would not be able to operate the train forward, if he would be looking backwards. When Simon didn't seem to care, the Ticket Collector promised to rectify the situation as soon as they reached the next stop. Sure enough, he did. As soon as the train arrived at the next stop, 2 policemen entered the car and removed Simon from the train!

Heiliga Chevra, can we see ourselves in Simon? We are all on a train to some destination. The train and track are "custom made" for us by Hashem, so we can arrive at our destination - our Tachlis. But many times **we are not focused on our train and our track**; we are looking at the train and track of others and thinking that we should be on their track. :(Who cares if we have to go to Washington and that track and that train never go to Washington! ??? But this ludicrous behavior doesn't seem ludicrous to us and as a result, we get jealous, angry etc... To make ourselves "happy", we sometimes spring for the "first class" ticket, spending money we don't have, or Chas Vesholom doing other destructive behaviors which makes no sense at all - **but we think it will make us feel better.**

We might also get nervous about the many "bumps" and "jolts" on the journey, and we can even get depressed, Chas Vesholom, and sometimes jump onto the old dusty, rusted out train

that is not even on a track. **We forget that Hashem is the "Conductor" and everything he does is for our benefit - even the jolts and bumps.**

We also keep looking behind us **and constantly blame ourselves for our past misdeeds.** We don't realize that **if we keep on dwelling on the past, we can never move forward.** The train doesn't move unless we look ahead!

Let's make a Chodesh Elul resolution to strengthen our Emunah and realize **that Hashem is running every part of our life B'Hashgacha Pratis.** Maybe we will stop looking around us, stop making ourselves depressed, stop the destructive behaviors, and stop blaming ourselves for our failures. **Just focus on moving forward and be Besimcha - no matter where we are holding, since Hashem is the one that is guiding us.** Although we might play the game of "Simon Says", we don't have to listen to him. He is not interested in what we have to say, he just wants to dictate and drag us down.

So when Simon starts overreacting, just call in your 2 policeman, Torah and Tefilo, and together with you Emunah, get Simon off your train!

This essay was adapted from what I learned in the sefer B'gan Hachochma from Rav Shalom Arush – primarily from pages 373 – 381.

Wishing all of my Heiliga brothers and sisters a successful Elul!

Pintele Yid

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Re: Amtrak to Washington
Posted by the.guard - 31 Aug 2009 10:26

Pintele Yid sure is on track with this one! :D

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Re: Amtrak to Washington
Posted by habib613 - 31 Aug 2009 12:43

to quote R' Bardichev

GEVALDIG!

thanks so much for that mashal!

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Re: Amtrak to Washington
Posted by SoHard,YetSoRewarding - 31 Aug 2009 17:04

Wow, this is some really powerful food for thought!

Thanks, Pintele.

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Re: Amtrak to Washington
Posted by bardichev - 31 Aug 2009 17:12

to quote R' Bardichev

GEVALDIG!

thanks so much for that mashal!

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