

A Prayer For Rain

Location: Eagle Pass, Texas
Population: 28,130
Weather: 99°F

Ever since I can remember, I've had a desire to see the world. When I first started traveling ten years ago, I thought I might eventually grow out of it, but my desire to travel has only intensified. In this column I share my adventures. Join me as I discover new people and places.



Captain

ince moving to Texas exactly two years ago, I've gotten quite a few requests for help from Jewish people passing through Texas. Houston, is very much an out of town community, and many people in the Tri-State area don't know local Texas Jews, so somehow many end up reaching out to me. The requests I've gotten can range from someone looking for Kosher food recommendations while on their vacation, to arranging for packages to be sent to people who are in Houston for medical treatments, and of course, trying to help the occasional business person who gets stuck in town because of a Hurricane, or a couple who's connecting flight was canceled on a Friday, and would therefore be stranded in Houston for Shabbos. But one request, which I received at the beginning of the summer, was different.

A new camp for Yeshiva boys from the tri-state area, called "Retzufos," which would be based in San Antonio, Texas for a few weeks this summer, reached out and asked if I could give them a guided tour of the U.S. Mexico Border in Texas. Although I'd never given a tour of the border before, I do have a lot of knowledge on the subject and decided to accept the challenge. And so, at 5:00 AM on a morning in late August, I pulled out of my driveway and



Caption

got onto the highway for the five plus hour drive to the border. I met up with camp "Retzufos," in the city of Eagle Pass and we drove to a section of the border wall which I had chosen because the wall ends there. The advantage of this was that we'd be able to see the fence, and go beyond it as well. Upon arrival at this section of the border, we parked our vehicles and walked toward the wall. Within a minute or two, we noticed a woman and two men walking towards our group of over fifty people. As the guide of the group, I talked to the woman who told me she was the land owner, and the two men behind her were her workers. She was curious about why we had come. I explained that this was a camp made up of boys from New Jersey and New York, who were visiting Eagle Pass to learn about the Border. She was very receptive, and allowed us to explore her property. As we walked towards the Rio Grande River, which is the border between the United States and Mexico. She told us a little bit about the crisis which has been unfolding ever since President Biden came into office. She then asked me for a favor. Being that we were religious Jews, she requested that I ask the group to pray for her. "We have a pecan farm." She said, pointing to an or-

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chard of large trees in the adjacent field. Texas is famous for its pecans which have been growing in the state for over five hundred years. “We’re in a bad drought right now. Unfortunately, it hasn’t rained here in almost six months, and we haven’t been able to produce anything,” she explained. “The pecans were blossoming, but because we haven’t been able to water the trees, they are starting to abort. It’s a really serious situation.”

I sincerely felt bad for this woman and her predicament, and I assured her that we would pray for her and her Pecan orchard. We gathered the boys in a circle,

**Uditat. Ibeationet
animolorita
nonsequi dendipi
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esenducilis es
res adis modia
es eum endaecu
lluptatque sundio
quibusa ndebis
audigent, quibus**

and I told them about the drought. Together we locked arms and started singing “*Esah Einai*”, a slow and moving song by Joey Newcomb. I told the woman that we were singing a song from the Psalms, and she immediately closed her eyes, and tilted her head down with emotion. We then sang a more lively tune to the same words by Shlomo Carlebach, and then another slow one by Shalshes Junior. After singing the three songs, the head counselor, a Bachur by the name of Yisroel Moshe Rokowsky gave a spontaneous speech. He told the story of Eliyahu on Har Karmel and asked Hashem to show

us his presence by making it rain. Yisroel Moshe’s talk was very eloquent, and the landowner was clearly moved. Next, I made a impromptu Mi Shebeirach (in English) for the woman and her farm, asking Hashem to open the heavens and make it rain. The woman then told me that she felt our prayers would work, because we had mentioned the heavens a few times during our blessings, and the name of her orchard is, you guessed it... Heavenly Farms. I hadn’t had a clue what the name of her farm was until she told me, but she felt very strongly that this was a sign from heaven. Pun intended.

Once we were done praying and singing, she escorted us to the edge of her property. As the boys were getting back into the vehicles, I asked her a technical question about crossing the border by foot into Mexico. We had thought of doing this as part of our tour, but some of the boys didn’t have any ID with them. I asked her if she knew whether it would be possible for those boys without IDs to cross. She whipped out her phone and called someone who she knows at the Border Control, and they assured her that it would be doable.

She then offered to lead our convoy of vehicles to the border, where we’d park in the parking lot of a large supermarket owned by her parents in downtown Eagle Pass. “Parking near the border will cost you some money, but you can park for free in my parent’s parking lot.” We thanked her for her kind offer, and the convoy headed out for the five minute drive to the parking lot. Once there, we entered the supermarket for a minute to buy some cold drinks, and the woman introduced us to her parents and brother who run the supermarket. Built over a hundred years ago, the store still has its original hardwood floors, and the walls are adorned with taxidermied buffalo and deer, which were hunted by the owner and his family.

The woman once again approached me inside the store, and asked if we could do one prayer in the store too. Since it

was time to daven Mincha, we were given a space at the back of the store and we made a minyan there. We then sang another song while dancing joyously. Some of the workers even joined in.

After thanking them for their kindness and hospitality, we headed for the border. The woman asked me for my contact information and we then crossed successfully into Las Piedras Negras, Mexico, spending less than twenty minutes on the Mexican side before heading back to the USA. Even those without any ID were allowed back into the United States, although it was a bit of a hassle. Lesson for life, carry ID with you wherever you go.

At approximately 4:00 PM, I bid the group farewell, and got back into my car for the long drive back home. As I walked into my house just under six hours later, a text message popped onto my phone screen. It was from the Farmer woman we had met earlier in the day. “*It rained for about an hour.*” she wrote. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I quickly searched the weather in Eagle Pass, and sure enough there had been a thunderstorm there.

“*This hasn’t happened in four or five months.*” She continued. “*I feel so loved by G-D, I want to cry. Thank you and Thank G-D. I’m grateful for meeting you all today.*”

A great Kiddush Hashem was made in that dusty field in Eagle Pass, this story leaves me with a stark reminder, never to underestimate the power of a sincere prayer. ●

*Until next week...
Shloime*

Shloime Zionce is Ami Magazine’s foreign correspondent. His travels have taken him to over 40 countries on five continents. In his spare time, Shloime leads private guided tours to exotic locations across the globe and is available for speaking engagements.



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