



GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT TOLDOT

Slippers in the Airport

R' Ari Neuwirth shared an incredible story, recounted by R' Yissachar Frand.

Harold Wilner, a man from the Jewish community of Baltimore, was once traveling from Boston to Vermont. As he got to TSA in Boston's airport, he put his hand-luggage on the conveyor belt and put his shoes into one of the bins, as required by protocol. He crossed the screening area, and proceeded to remove his hand-luggage from the conveyor belt. To his chagrin, however, he discovered that his shoes were missing. Apparently, someone had accidentally taken his shoes. While Harold was a size 9, these shoes that the mystery fellow had left behind were size 7. There was no way he could fit into those shoes. This was a nightmare; he had to get to the other side of the airport, catch a flight to Vermont, and go through the whole airport in Vermont – now, all without shoes.

Turning to the TSA agent, Harold explained the situation. "Don't worry about it," came the reply. "We'll give you a voucher – go to any store in the airport and purchase a new pair of shoes." Mr. Wilner explained that he didn't have time for that, as he had a flight to catch. The woman behind him, seeing this all unfold before her, felt bad and kindly offered, "I have a pair of slippers in my hand-luggage, which I use on the plane to get comfortable. I have another pair of slippers in my luggage for when I arrive at my destination. I'll tell you what – here are my slippers." She opened her bag and removed a pink pair of slippers. And, conveniently enough, the slippers were designed with tongs to separate the big toe from the smaller toes – the last thing Harold imagined wearing in the airport.

As much as Harold didn't want to, he had no other choice. 'How else am I going to get through the airports,' he thought, and he thankfully accepted the pink slippers. There he was, a Jewish man wearing a kippah, suit, tie, and pink slippers, running through the Boston airport. He finally arrived at his gate, and to his dismay, he had to go on a commuter plane, which entailed exiting the airport, going on the tarmac, and walking up a portable staircase to the plane – all in his brand new pink slippers. As he climbed the stairs to the airplane, his new footwear slipped off. He had to go back down, retrieve the slippers, and ascend again. Finally, exasperated, he took his seat on the plane. Just like that, what Harold had expected to be an uneventful airport experience had turned into an annoying, uncomfortable, and embarrassing experience.

As Harold tried to get comfortable in his seat, thinking he had enough surprises for the day, the man sitting next to him turned to him and remarked: "Sir, I want to tell you something. I observed the whole episode unfold, from beginning to end, and I must tell you: You are a credit to your nation." Mr. Wilner was stunned. "What are you talking about?" he wondered. The man explained, "Not once did you yell, not once did you scream, and not once did you even curse. You kept your cool the entire time – who can do that?? I must say, you are a credit to your nation..."

Many times, we assume that it takes a colossal, majestic, and perfect situation to leave an impact or create a *kiddush Hashem*, with an act of courageous heroism carried out in front of a sizeable audience. Perhaps, some people perceive synagogues or "religious events" as the places where Jewish identity and values should be most emphasized and celebrated. However, we ought not to overlook the small moments such as these, in our daily encounters with the "real world," where something so simple can have such a genuine and inspiring effect. In the mundane parts of life. Where circumstances can become frustrating and difficult. When you're about to react with a meltdown. Where nothing seems to matter anyhow. Where you think no one is watching.

In such moments, pause. Take a breath. Have faith. Hashem is setting the stage for you to pull off an unbelievable *kiddush Hashem*...

A Healthy Heart

I saw a phenomenal idea shared by R' YY Jacobson.¹

The great Lubavitcher Rebbe once asked someone: "Why is the heart of the human being on the left side? Everything important in Judaism is on the right side. We put on *tefillin* with the right hand; we put the *mezuzah* on the right side of the door; we shake hands with the right hand; we hold the Torah scroll on our right side; Yosef wanted the blessing of the right arm of his father for his oldest son; in the Temple they always walked to the right. Why is the heart – the organ responsible for giving us vitality – on the left?"

The Rebbe shared his insight, typical of his unique vision. "Your heart is indeed on your right side! What is the true function of a heart? To feel and experience the heart of the person standing in front of you; in the perspective and direction of someone who faces you, your heart is on the right side! When your heart is linked with others, then, indeed, your heart is on the 'right' side."

1. <https://theyeshiva.net/jewish/item/9048/essay-maasei-the-first-marriage-therapist-in-history>

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Nina
Bat Fenya Frida Bat Yaffa Miriam Bat Bakol
Yosef Haim Ben Elana Avigayil Bat Tehillah
Chana Bat Malka Menachem Ben Miriam
Ariella Bat Hila Yitzhak Ben Naama

"Struggle is real. But so is Hashem."
(Meaningful Minute)