



Vayishlach / וַיִּשְׁלַח

Staying Focused

Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

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“Remember to be quiet, everyone,” Abba said as the Friedmans followed the tour guide into the control room. The Friedmans were visiting New York and Uncle Gili had arranged for them to take a tour of the New York Air Route Traffic Control Center, where he worked as an air traffic controller.

“Okay everyone,” the tour guide said. “This is where the controllers sit. They are talking to planes everywhere from the New York City area all the way to the middle of Pennsylvania.”

“Look, there’s Uncle Gili!” whispered Moishy excitedly.

The Friedmans edged closer to where their uncle was sitting, wearing a headset and staring closely at a digital map with little white blips representing planes moving around on it.

“United 904, roger. Climb and maintain flight level one niner zero,” Uncle Gili said into his microphone. “American 2431, contact New York approach on one two five decimal 7, good day.”

The Friedmans watched in fascination as Uncle Gili spoke to dozens of planes, instructing them where to turn and how high to fly, while making sure that no two planes came too close to each other. Meir waved excitedly at the sight of his uncle, but Uncle Gili’s face remained glued to his screen and he appeared not to notice him.

“Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,” came a voice over the plane’s loudspeaker. “This is your captain speaking. Welcome aboard United Airlines flight 904 direct to London Heathrow. Our flight time today is approximately seven hours and fifteen minutes. The weather in London is cool and rainy, but we are expecting a smooth flight. The cabin crew will be coming around shortly with the meal service...”



The pilot’s voice trailed off as a loud banging was heard from the front of the plane. It sounded like someone was pounding on the cockpit door! Several passengers screamed and a panic filled the air...

Back in the air traffic control room, one of the blips on Uncle Gili’s screen turned red as an alarm started blaring. The Friedmans looked at each other nervously.

“United 904, your squawk code changed to 7500. Was that intentional?” Uncle Gili asked, his voice trembling.

A supervisor rushed over to Uncle Gili’s station and hit a switch so everyone in the room could hear Uncle Gili’s radio.

“I read that when a plane’s transponder code changes to 7500, that means there’s a hijacking!” Moishy whispered nervously to Abba.

“United 904, how do you read?” Uncle Gili said.

Half a minute went by with no response. A supervisor picked up a phone to have the National Guard scramble fighter jets to intercept the hijacked plane.

“Southwest 2122 turn left heading one four zero,” Uncle Gili said, directing other planes while waiting for a response from the hijacked United Airlines jet. “November 421 Sierra Pappa, descend and maintain one zero thousand, contact Boston Center on one tree four decimal seven.”

“Uncle Gili, you look sad,” said Meir, trying to hand him a teddy bear. “Here, take Mister Fuzzles. He always makes me happy.”

“Boston Center, United 904,” came a voice over the loudspeaker.

Every ear in the room perked up.

“United 904, Boston Center,” Uncle Gili said nervously. “What’s your status?”

“False alarm, sorry about that,” the pilot responded. “Apparently a passenger mistook the cockpit for the bathroom and was trying to get in. We have the situation under control.”

Uncle Gili breathed a sigh of relief.

“Gili, why don’t you take a break. You can use it,” the supervisor told him, as another controller took over the frequency.

Uncle Gili stood up and looked surprised to see his brother and nephews standing there.

“When did you guys get here?” he asked.

“Wow Abba, that was so exciting!” Dovid said as the Friedmans got back into their car after the tour was over.

“It was,” agreed Moishy. “But what I found so fascinating was how focused Uncle Gili was during that whole ordeal. He didn’t notice we were there, even though Meir was trying to hand him a teddy bear!”

“Unlike me, who lost focus with all the excitement and I let go of Meir’s hand, allowing him to try to distract Uncle Gili during the hijacking scare,” laughed Abba.

“But you know, this reminds me about Yaakov Avinu’s fight with the malach in this week’s parsha. Yaakov Avinu lost focus for a second and the malach used that opportunity to injure him. And who was the malach? The sar shel eisav, the satan. That’s a lesson for us that in the lifelong fight against the yetzer hora we need to always remain focused and not get distracted even for a second. Let’s take a lesson from how focused Uncle Gili was and remember that when something is so important, we can’t lose focus for even a moment.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

let’s review:

- Why did the malach succeed in injuring Yaakov Avinu?
- What lesson can we learn from Yaakov’s fight with the malach?



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