

Land of Miracles

Sometimes miracles happen. In this land of miracles, what else can you expect?

The day started out like any other. Here we are in Israel, visiting Kaila, now a law student at the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan, outside of Tel Aviv.

One of our favorite places to visit in Israel is Safed. Aside from the fact that it is one of the holy cities in this land, it is also the home of Kabbalah. The mystics settled in this community many hundreds of years ago and helped to revive what some call Jewish spiritualism. Today, Kabbalah is embraced by freaky people like Madonna and many other stars. However, there is no spiritualism without a sound foundation in serious learning. For a Jew, spiritual life follows the path of Torah. We visited old friends who typify the positive spiritual energy that people feel in this city.

Aside from the environment that Safed provides, we enjoy knowing that my mother's uncle is buried in that city, where he lived until old age with his wife. His tombstone, among other things, notes that he lived his life as a simple, pure Chasid.

When we arrived in Safed, parking was scarce. A food vendor at an outdoor stand suggested that we could use his parking space. There, we left Kaila's little Nissan Micra. After an afternoon of walking around the city and shopping, we arrived back at the car at nightfall. Kaila suggested that I drive, and I promptly drove the car over the edge of the curb which was probably 18" off the ground. The right front wheel hung in the air, and since the Nissan is front wheel drive there was no going anywhere.

I was extremely aggravated and embarrassed. There seemed to be nothing to do. Safed is not a place where there are a lot of garages or tow shops. Kabbalah? Yes. Automobile towing companies? No.

I noticed that there was only one store down the road where the lights were still on. We decided to walk down there and see if we could get some help. It turned out that the woman who worked there was extremely helpful in talking with Kaila and trying to find a towing company. She noted that in Israel, insurance usually covers towing. While the two women worked on finding a way out of the dilemma which I created, an Arab gentleman behind the desk, who spoke no English, motioned that we should go look at the car together. At the car, he figured out that we could jack up the side of it and put rocks under the front wheel. I gathered the rocks, and Kaila was able to drive the car off the curb thanks to the ingenuity and intelligence of our newly found friend.

We went back to the store, after suitable hugs and kisses on the cheek.

The business partners told us about themselves. The man is an Israeli-Arab Muslim, who owns a store that sells granite countertops. The woman was an observant Orthodox

Jew from Los Angeles, who has lived in Israel for a long time. Her husband served in the Israeli Army, and her son is currently in a Yeshiva. So this pair works together, the Israel-Arab Muslim and the Orthodox Jewish woman from America. They obviously were friends and colleagues.

When I tried to give Hamudi money for his help, he was insulted and refused to take it. The American lady, known as “The Decorator,” who worked for him, explained that it would be an affront for him to take money from us. I asked him to give the money to charity, and he told me that I should give the money to charity on his behalf, if I wished.

We hugged each other, thanked the couple profusely, and went on our way to Had Nes, where we were staying for a few days in an African grass hut. This, incidentally, is not your father’s grass hut, but rather equipped in a luxurious fashion. Nevertheless, a grass hut it is.

I got to thinking about the afternoon events over a glass of wine. Aside from salvaging the car with absolutely no damage, I thought about a comment that Kaila made when we left Safed. “We need to look at people more as individuals and less as races, groups and religions. There are good people in every culture.” These obviously were good people, who managed to bridge whatever differences there are. Perhaps what was unique was that the Muslim-Israeli-Arab is one of those who appreciate that there is no other place in the world where a Muslim could be as comfortable, free and prosperous as in the land of Israel. The United States maybe, but Israel definitely. The reason for that is that well over 20%, perhaps 24% of the population in Israel is Arab and Muslim. 24% of the Israeli Knesset, the parliament, is Arab. Educational advancement and economic success redounds to all of the people in this tiny land surrounded by enemies who thirst for their blood, whether those people are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Druze, or some other grouping.

It did indeed seem like a great miracle for what could have been a very unpleasant and expensive situation to turn out so well. But the most important part of the day was meeting the business owner and The Decorator. After all, where else should miracles happen but in the land of miracles?

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