

A Visit to the Mall

No stay in Be'er Ya'akov is complete without many visits to the local mall. Now this not the Mall of America, the King of Prussia Mall, or anything like a mall in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. This is the Be'er Ya'akov Mall!

My first project was to drop off two pairs of pants to be shortened. The best place to buy cargo workpants is the hardware store. After making my purchase at the hardware store the other day, under my wife's close supervision, it was time to bring the pants into the tailor at the mall.

My daughter, Kaila, warned me that, "they don't speak English there." Not the slightest bit deterred, I brought along an extra pair of pants so that I could demonstrate the proper length of my new purchase.

I did not count on the fact that there would be a young man in front of me having his pants measured for fitting. But he did not just want his pants shortened. He wanted his pants tightened, lowered, raised in the seat; essentially, remade. It took all the patience that a trial lawyer could muster for me to wait and wait and wait. The tailor, also a young fellow, in his black kippa, must have taken his patience pills when he got up in the morning.

Finally, I was able to get the attention of one of the other clerks in the store, that also sells sewing supplies, and he sent me to Olga. Olga sent me back to the fitting man. The fitting man's supervisor sent me back to Olga. When it was all said and done, I was able to explain that I simply wanted the new pants at the length of the old pair of pants, and that I did not need to try anything on.

Pointing at the new pants, the clerk said "lo seder." He then pointed at the old pants, properly length, and said with a smile "seder?" In other words, the new pair were not yet "in order," but the pair I brought in to show him the desired length were "in order."

By this time, it was time to rest up with a nice lunch; Lunch outside, in the beautiful low 70s weather, at the Bleaker Street Café. Even a regular old tuna fish sandwich tastes pretty good in these environmental conditions.

It was then on to the pharmacy, so I could get something for my laryngitis and sinus infection. I have been self-treating, since naturally I know more than anybody with a medical degree. Thus far, my treatment has been a complete failure and I should sue myself for medical malpractice.

In Israel, very little is sold over the counter. There must be some reason why these people live on average 5-10 years longer than Americans, and given the dangerous part of the world that they live in, they must be doing something right. Even purchasing

something like Robitussin, or a medication with the same ingredients as Robitussin, means getting a ticket and waiting in line for the pharmacist. The lines tend to be long.

At this particular Super Pharm, there was an elderly gentleman in front of me who wanted to talk with the pharmacist about every medication he ever took; how much it would cost the government; what his copay would be; how long it would take to get it and, of course, the weather. They have got the weather here, that's for sure! After waiting 45 minutes, I looked around at the other patrons amazed that nobody had a meltdown, tantrum, or simply took out a gun and started shooting. I did notice that a man in front of me wore a pistol on his visibly external holster.

When it came my turn, I was prepared. All I wanted was some saline nasal spray. I practiced how to say this, spit it out quickly, but there apparently was some choice and the clerk was not about to hand it over to me without checking with the other clerk. At that point, I simply raised my voice slightly, "slicha," and I pointed to the nasal saline spray that I wanted. She took it off the shelf, declined to check with anyone else, gave it to me, and rang me up with my purchase. So shocked and amazed were the other patrons who were waiting at this incredible American efficiency, that when I turned around to leave after about 2 minutes, several people said to me "ya'shoakoach," "mazel tov," or "tov m'ode." I was an instant celebrity.

One thing about Americans: we know how to order nasal sprays when we have a sinus infection. We may mess up a lot of other things in our culture, our politics, and our socioeconomic disasters, but we know how to ask for nasal spray.

On the way back to the apartment in Be'er Ya'akov from this most excellent trip to the so-called mall, I flattered myself by sitting in the sun on a park bench on the boulevard that leads to the apartment in this locale that was only declared a city in 2021. I think I will spend the rest of the afternoon going to an Islamic underground pool from the 7th Century. I understand from Google that one can row a boat in the underground springs, only 15 minutes from the newly sprung metropolis of Be'er Ya'akov, and probably a half hour from Tel Aviv. I think that as a result of my incredible morning experience at the mall, I owe myself a little bit of touristy kind of stuff.

Well, that is Israel today. No discussion of Hezbollah or Hebas assassinations, Russian interference in Syria, debate over change in jurisdiction of the Israeli Supreme Court, or any other matter of consequence. No, just a beautiful day out in the sun, a not so quick trip to the mall, and back to the family flat.

My experience of how little patient people have in the United States when they are waiting made me realize that we have a lot to learn. I heard no cursing, virtually no grumbling, Zen-like calm no middle or other fingers waived in the air. That is not to say that Israelis are not capable of honking unnecessarily and trying to force their way to the front of a line. However, as a society, we Americans have a lot to learn about how to treat other people and probably ourselves as well.

Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire

*Rieders, Travis, Dohrmann, Mowrey
Humphrey & Waters
161 West Third Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

Cliff Rieders is a Board-Certified Trial Advocate in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a past member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.