



QUOTH THE MAVEN

BY BEVERLY KING POLLOCK

Last Year in Jerusalem

My neighbor just came home and started quelling about her trip to Israel. And I found myself thinking back to last year, before I met you and became an ISRAELITE maven and when my husband and I led a tour to Israel ourselves.

I dug out my diary on Israel -- I love that country! -- and the old excitement grabbed me again. I started re-reading...

It seemed like a dream. For so long a time my husband and I said "next year in Jerusalem." And now here we were at JFK Airport hugging and shaking hands with the people who were to be our tour "family."

I tried not to think about earlier and saying goodbye to our dog as she stood shivering at the kennel. Or about the load of rubbish I forgot to take out underneath the kitchen sink.

For everybody was happy and smiling and excited with El Al flight bags and well-wishers bearing corsages and kisses and champagne.

And who did we have from Atlanta? My mother and Tante Bloomeh who came to "shreb nacchas" and bring back souvenirs.

We checked in with a maximum if tumult (you feel like a spy when the airport people ask you questions). And luckily Tante Bloomeh had light weight ("I came to see, not to dress") so she could shlep the 18 1/2 pound suitcase my neighbor insisted I take to her son at Hebrew University.

After our tour group picture was taken (I noticed there was a removable slot for the photographer to change the name of each tour), we lined up to board not the plane but the bus to take us to the plane. Gals could take a pocketbook or flight bag aboard but not both. And fellows could take a camera or flight bag.

I had a suitcase that looks like a pocketbook (or maybe it's a pocketbook that looks like a suitcase) and it holds comfortable shoes, toothbrush, change of clothes, everything.

Have no fear, El Al has real security. They don't fool around. Women go to one side (and men the other) to be physically frisked. And we had to open our pocketbooks too. But nobody complained.

Then we boarded buses (under close surveillance) and were swooshed around until we reached the airplane. We left after midnight.

Our flight takes about 10 1/2 hours. And you get a special certificate saying you "have flown between the United States of America and the Holy Land - Israel. This being one of the longest non-stop scheduled flights in

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USC PHYSICIAN TO MEASURE BIRD METABOLISM THAT

FED MOSES' EXODUS

By JEAN VANDENBERG

A University of Southern California (USC) physician will fly to Israel late in August to measure the metabolism of birds sent by the Lord to feed the followers of Moses.

The visit of Dr. Samuel Bessman of Hollywood, chairman of the Department of Pharmacology at the USC School of Medicine, will coincide with the September migration of birds that have been identified by biblical scholars as descendants of those that became food for the Children of Israel.

"The Bible talks about the Israelites yearning after the fleshpots," comments the USC doctor. "This has been interpreted as lust, self-indulgence, and so forth, but apparently they were really desperate for something to eat."

Dr. Bessman, a biblical scholar himself, explains that after the Israelites left Egypt, they wandered in the desert for 40 years --

the history of civil aviation -- a distance of 5,800 miles.

There are three seats on both sides of the aisles (economy flight) and you get to know the people you're with. Particularly when you have to cross over them each time you want to get up and stretch or go to the bathroom or get a drink of water.

It's a strange (and warm) feeling to know you're on a plane and most everybody is Jewish. You kibbitz unhesitatingly with you neighbor in front or behind. And there's an air of calm and quiet acceptance. Even in the line (longer than the Exodus from Egypt) waiting to go to the "john."

(I personally think there should be numbers given out like at the bakery shop. Because you can't start standing in line the minute you have to "go": you must pre-plan 20 minutes ahead for when you think you'll want to go.)

When morning came a minyan quickly gathered to say prayers. There was no room in the economy aisles so they went to the more spacious first class section. But a stewardess said they weren't allowed in. The man with the lulav and etrog (it was the middle of Sukkot) balanced his yarmulke more firmly on the back of his head and shrugged. "Only first class prayers are allowed in there."

We ate and slept and ate and slept and ate and when it was 10 minutes after 11 a.m. Eastern time, the sun was going down. We found we lost a night and a day in less than 10 hours.

Eventually we landed at Lod where our tour liaison man met us. Plus our guide, a stocky Israeli with a big smile and handlebar mustache. And our driver, a sabra with big blue eyes.

As we were whisked by bus to Jerusalem, my husband said he never thought that "next year" would be today. I asked my mother how she felt.

With awe and humility she answered, "To think this could happen to Moishe Baum's 'tochter'."

Like I was saying. The plane ride to Israel is like having a baby. Uncomfortable while it's happening. But you forget it the minute it's over.

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two generations. Dietary laws forbade them to eat any of the usual beasts of the desert, such as lizards or snakes, a prohibition effectively limiting their diet to manna. Manna, according to Dr. Bessman, can be described as crystals of a honey-like material forming on the leaves of desert plants.

Manna, as an exclusive article of diet, began to pall, and Moses' followers wailed nostalgically: "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic."

(NUMBERS, 11:5).
Moses took this complaint to the Lord, who was greatly displeased at the ingratitude of the Israelites. He vowed to send flesh to feed the people for a month -- "until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome to you..." (NUMBERS, 11:20).

The Lord instructed Moses to lead his people to the seashore, "and there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea and let them fall by the camp...two cubits high upon the face of the earth," (NUMBERS, 11:31). This probably refers to the "middle cubit," about two feet long.

The legend took new life during the Six Day War, in Sept. 1967, when the Israeli forces captured the Gaza Strip. On this piece of land separating the Negev desert from the Mediterranean, they discovered vast numbers of birds flying in from the northwest and, in the last stages of exhaustion, drowning in the waters or falling in heaps, shoulder-high, on the shore. This phenomenon lasted for more than three weeks. To biblical scholars in the army, the "quails" of Moses were explained. The biblical miracle seems to be a biochemical miracle as well.

Dr. Bessman points out that these birds, about as large as doves, fly more than 1500 miles without rest, drawing on fantastic reserves of energy, and that their metabolic system is unique -- they can recover from utter exhaustion without eating or drinking.

This heroic migration is explained by the USC scientist as the result of aggression by larger birds -- a variety of ducks -- that leave northern Italy just before the small birds. The ducks break their journey at Crete and, when the small birds attempt to land, drive them off.

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