

## **Infallible**

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I have always had an infallible sense of direction. And there has always been doubters of my G-d given abilities. I realize my gift is exceedingly rare, to the point of being unheard of, so I have never resented the fact that most individuals start out as doubters. However, when doubters are presented with enough evidence, they cannot remain doubters anymore. They are forced to choose between becoming believers or deniers of the truth. I have never known what it is like to be lost or the fear of getting lost and this probably prevents me from fully understanding why deniers prefer to denounce their own eyes rather than accept G-d's judgment when he gifted me with an infallible sense of direction.

Perhaps the most striking example of the strength with which some individuals cling to their denials, even in the face of overwhelming evidence, occurred in 1977 when I was taking an ocean cruise with my parents and siblings. Out of New York Harbor on a large ocean liner, we were about hundred miles off the Eastern Coast on a moonless night in a deep fog. Late that night a small fire on the bridge disabled all the ship's navigation gear. The captain had a sextant for precisely this type of emergency, but it too was useless due to the thick fog which hid all stars above. The captain tried phoning to shore for help, but he could not detect anyone on the air. Later we were to learn that the two day 1977 New York Blackout had just began. The captain was beside himself. There was no way to navigate back to New York City's Harbor. Even if we just drifted, he feared the we would end up torn apart on a reef or beached on the rocky shore. He even mentioned the sad fate of the Titanic's captain more than once.

I offered to navigate the ship back to its berth in New York Harbor, but the captain would not hear of it. He was, understandably, a doubter - not a denier, but a doubter. For hours we drifted. We ran out of water and some passengers were threatening a mutiny. Parents were desperate to calm their crying children. And believe it or not, there were five pregnant women on board whose water broke as we drifted in the North Atlantic. Such was the terror on board, a vacationing priest was called on to give last rites to several of the passengers and some of the crew (including the captain). Finally, several agonizing hours later, the captain relented and agreed to let me direct the ship back to shore. I remember him muttering something to the effect that hopefully history would remember my name and not his when the ship

broke itself in half on a reef and sank in deep water.

In the pitch dark of night, with an impregnable fog and no instruments I took the helm. Fortunately I knew how to drive a car with manual transmission, because it turned out the cruise ship was manual too. I could not “drive” the ship in a straight line to the City Harbor because of the reefs in between. Fortunately, all the reefs were identified on a map the captain had given me.

When I finally arrived at the berth off 54<sup>th</sup> Street, West Side of Manhattan, there were no tug boats there to meet us as no one was expecting us. I was forced to parallel park the giant ocean liner, (no one else had ever previously even attempted this). When I finally pulled on the parking brake and returned the keys to the captain, the crew had no idea what was happening. They thought we were still out to sea since there were no visual clues we were at the home berth. I had a great deal of difficulty convincing one of them to step off the starboard side and onto the pier. As I had planned it, we were exactly three inches from the pier.

I was so happy saving the lives of 1,786 souls aboard. I expected they would be very grateful and most were. The captain told me he had three daughters and a wife at home and I could marry whichever one I wanted, including his wife. The five women in labor gave birth to healthy babies on shore and two of the women named their babies after me (the other three had baby girls). However I thought it peculiar when my younger sister conjectured, “If you really do have an infallible sense of direction, why did you park the ship three inches from the pier – why not two inches? Wouldn’t that be better?” It was then that I remembered Mark Twain’s quote, “If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and man.” Later, as the passengers were departing, most thanked me, but there were more than just a few whom I caught muttering beneath their breath phrases like “arrogant bastard.”

It was then that I came to learn that with such a great gift comes a great burden. In the following days I wondered why G-d would be so cruel as to curse me with an infallible sense of direction. However, I decided not to be a victim. Nowadays, I let everyone I meet know of my infallible sense of direction because I now know that G-d gave me this gift to help me guide lost souls home.