



# The Night of Incompetent Airport Employees



**GOLDIE GROSSBAUM**

missed my daughter's graduation.

I had it all planned out just right; I wouldn't miss it for the world.

High school had been a ride full of surprises, but we had made it; both my daughter and I had survived high school—she for the first time, me for the second.

And of course I had to be at her high school graduation.

Even more so because she was graduating from the same school I did; there was something incredibly special about that.

The 11:30 p.m. flight from California departing right after Shabbos would get me to New York with a few hours to spare before the 1:00 p.m. graduation, or so I thought. I grabbed my bags right after *havdalah* and rushed to the car to get to the airport on time.

Sailing through security with TSA Pre, I arrived at the gate with time to make myself comfortable and finish some things on my to-do list.

Slowly the boarding line formed and with boarding pass in hand, I waited to get on the plane. With midnight approaching, I clutched my neck pillow and hoped that this time I would actually sleep on the red-eye.

And then came the announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this flight has been rescheduled for tomorrow 4 p.m. Please go home and come back tomorrow at 2 p.m. to check in. Your baggage is available downstairs."

What?

No one moved. That didn't really make sense.

The flight was rescheduled from 11:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.?

Realizing we were having trouble comprehending, the agent repeated his message.

I didn't have to do much math to know that if the flight was rescheduled to 4 p.m. the next day, there was no way I would make it to my daughter's graduation.

The agent just stood there casually, as if it was normal to reschedule a flight for 16 hours later, as you're about to board.

Regardless of whether it made sense or not, I was in trouble.

I headed to the desk and waited until it was my turn, when I was told to go downstairs to the other desk.

The Night of Incompetent Airport Employees was just beginning.

As I stood on line, my mind was racing. I have to be at the graduation. How can I get there? Suddenly California was feeling very, very far from New York.

I thought of every possible route and did time-difference-math on fast forward and kept getting back to the same conclusion: There was no way I would make it in time.

Should I just go home? My cozy bed was just 30 minutes away... and considering the line wasn't budging because they still couldn't locate an employee who knew how to operate the airport computer, it was really tempting.

But I had to get to New York. Was it more for me or for my

daughter? I didn't know. But I had to get there, even if I'd miss the ceremony.

Slowly, inexorably, 1 a.m. turned to 2 a.m. and then 3 a.m. They found her! The one person in the airport who knew how to operate the computer! This definitely begged a lot of questions on incompetence, airports, and JetBlue. Standing there absolutely exhausted, I didn't bother asking; I just needed to get another flight. The only option was 6 a.m. from San Francisco. The line finally moved, and I got the very last seat available on the one flight that could get me to my destination. I'd miss the celebration, but I'd at least be there the same day. My new besties, Veronica and Abbey, and I hopped into an Uber. If there's one positive outcome of experiencing airline incompetence, it's making new best friends.

We asked the driver to speed just a teeny tiny bit. The flight was boarding in two hours, and we had a two-hour ride ahead of us. I drifted off to sleep hearing the driver tell us story after story of airport failures and missed flights.

We raced through security and to the gate.

"We have one middle seat left," the attendant informed me. No, this was not a time for a middle seat.

"What about your MINT seats?" I asked, testing my luck, referring to the better class seats that lie flat and come with a complimentary blanket and socks.

I got the seat! I laid it flat and had the most comfortable flight ever.



Goldie and her daughter Zeesy on her graduation day in Sivan 5784/ June 2024.

Sometimes we can stand in the crowd and still miss everything that matters. And sometimes we can miss an event entirely... and still show up completely.

I landed in New York after the graduation was over.

I made it for the after-party.

My daughter obliged and put on her cap and gown again so we could take the necessary photos. I mean, this is big! My little girl isn't so little, apparently, and she graduated high school!

She made it through many long years of school, which included online learning for elementary school and flying cross-country many, many times in her teens to get to this milestone.

I found a bunch of graduation-themed balloons that another niece had gotten for her celebration, and we added it to the photo setup. We went out for ice cream. We celebrated, even though it wasn't the exact plan I had envisioned.

I have the picture on my refrigerator.

It captures the joy of graduating—the pride of the mother who watched this little girl turn into a beautiful adult and the sheer joy of a teen who is finished with high school.

Sitting shmoozing with friends and family later in the day I was reminded that sitting through a graduation isn't as much fun as it sounds. It can be hot, speeches can be long, and you may not even be able to spot your child!

Sometimes we can stand in the crowd and still miss everything that matters. And sometimes we can miss an event entirely... and still show up completely.

I didn't miss her milestone. ❧

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**GOLDIE** and her husband, Rabbi Yossi Grossbaum, direct Chabad of Folsom & El Dorado Hills in Northern California, with the able help of their 11 children ka"h. Goldie is a mikvah.org Certified Kallah Teacher as well as a Certified Life Coach. In her spare time, Goldie blogs ([littleyellownotepad.com](http://littleyellownotepad.com)) about being the mom of nine boys and two girls and finding the humor in the ups and downs of raising kids and life in general.