

# ADVENT



# A Journey to Antarctica, the End of the World

BY C.S. TEITELBAUM

*Photography: Moshe Hersko*



# NATURE

*of a Lifetime*



# R

Reb Binyomin and Esther Feldman of London, whose names *Ami* readers may be familiar with from previous adventures, have done it again. A few weeks ago, Mrs. Feldman let me in on a secret: she and her husband would be taking their most fantastic trip yet, but she wouldn't divulge the destination until a week before.

I knew that they'd already visited five continents and boasted entry stamps from almost 50 countries in their dog-eared passports, so anything was possible. But my wild guesses ranging from Honolulu to Peru were laughingly dismissed. Why? Because the Feldmans only go where few others dare to go.

When she called me a few weeks later and said, "We're going to Antarctica!" my breath came out in a whoosh. I didn't know it was possible. I thought that only polar



bears lived there. I was halfway right; humans do *not* live in Antarctica, but neither do polar bears! Polar bears are found in the Arctic, the region at the northernmost part of the Earth. And who do you think enlightened me if not the Feldmans themselves, who have long crossed the Arctic off their bucket list?

The Feldmans had joined an historic ten-day cruise to Antarctica—Kosher Antarctica 2018—arranged by Moshe Hersko of Monsey, a wildlife and adventure

photographer, and Dan Eleff of Dan's Deals fame. The cruise had a separate kosher section for the 51 *frum* passengers on board, who ranged across the Jewish spectrum, from chasidic to Modern Orthodox, and ranging in age from 27 to 75.

The Feldmans were the only couple coming all the way from Europe. As such, they had some preparatory work to figure out on their own. First they had to purchase evacuation insurance for their trip, as the only way out of remote Antarctica in an

smartdesign

ITSA **FAVOR**  
PERSONALIZED PARTY FAVORS

**WEDDINGS**  
CELEBRATE WITH US!

NEW BABY ■ WEDDINGS ■ BAR MITZVAH ■ BIRTHDAY PARTIES ■ CORPORATE EVENTS ■ [orders@itsafavor.com](mailto:orders@itsafavor.com) • 718 234 3951 • [www.itsafavor.com](http://www.itsafavor.com) • [@itsafavor](https://www.instagram.com/itsafavor)





tina, the southernmost tip of South America that is often branded “the end of the world.” The e, they would board the cruise liner for the two-day voyage to the “white continent” where they would stay for six days.

Touching down in the airport required a daredevil stunt on the pilot’s part, as it is surrounded by oceans on three coasts: the Pacific to the west, the Atlantic to the east, and the Southern Ocean to the south. “The pilot had only a thin strip of land to land on,” says Esther, who kept a handwritten journal through her trip, “so he flew very low. The plane was virtually skimming the sea. It was terrifying for me, as I can’t swim. Then he suddenly made a sharp U-turn on the tarmac. It was a marvel!”

Patagonia, the sparsely populated region at the southern end of South America, shared by Ar-

gentina and Chile, is a protected area, as it is one of the last wild places on Earth. Accordingly, it has many customs restrictions, including the foods that one is allowed to bring in. Billboards proclaim, “Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints.” But perhaps that is the secret to Ushuaia’s pristine landscape. Sprawling modern chalets perched on verdant green cliffs, snow-topped peaks in the background, beautiful tree-lined parks and a slight summer breeze made the night of Zos Chanukah a most tranquil experience. Add to that 25 gold menorahs reflecting their twinkling flames in the ship’s panoramic window and a lavish *seudah* where the guests were able to *chap arein* a final “*Al Hanisim*,” quite possibly the first in Ushuaia’s history, and it was truly a night to remember.

## Heading South

With that sorted out, the couple bade farewell to their family, with whom they didn’t know if they would have contact over the next two weeks, and set off for a wonderful Shabbos Chanukah with the Buenos Aires Jewish community. On Sunday, they left for the next leg of their journey: a three-and-a-half-hour flight to Ushuaia, Argen-

tina, the southernmost tip of South America that is often branded “the end of the world.” The e, they would board the cruise liner for the two-day voyage to the “white continent” where they would stay for six days.

The Feldmans got lucky in Ushuaia. As a British citizen, before the trip Esther had expressed an interest in stopping by the



A STROKE OF  
*glamour*



**EXQUISITE GOWNS**

BKLYN · 4512 13TH AVE · 718.972.GOWN

LKWD · 1328 RIVER AVE · 732.605.GOWN

FOLLOW US  





**Bedroom Sets  
Dining Room Sets  
Bookcases  
Tables and Chairs**

BROOKLYN: 75 TAFFEE PLACE 718.624.3366  
MONROE: 1 TEVERYA WAY #101 845.343.3366

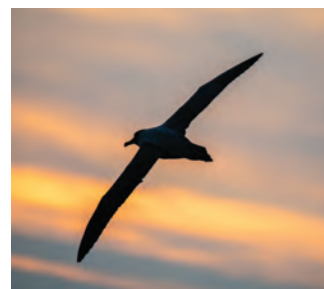
Falkland Islands, a British colony with a long, contentious history. As they would already be “in the neighborhood,” so to speak, it would be her only opportunity. But the organizers decided against it, as it wouldn’t have interested the other passengers and would have come at the expense of their six days in Antarctica.

“But as luck would have it,” she relates, “there was a fuel shortage in Ushuaia and the captain had no choice but to make a detour to the Falkland Islands to refuel. And all because there wasn’t enough oil! My husband called it our *neis* Chanukah.”

Dan relates that some guests were disappointed with this full 24-hour detour at the onset of the cruise, but he told them the story of how the Baal Shem Tov’s son-in-law wound up on a remote island one Rosh Hashanah; the Baal Shem Tov later told his *chasidim* that his fleeting presence had left sparks of *kedushah* so that when 300 *Yidden* were later destined to be exiled there they would be spared. In the same way, Dan told the passengers, they would never know what *hashgachah* might have led them to the Falkland Islands. “Ushuaia might never have seen a religious Jew before,” he aptly reminded his guests. “So let’s make it a point to make *brachos* with *kavanah*, as every mitzvah you do here will elevate this place.”

But any disappointment they might have had quickly dissipated as soon as they arrived and saw the wondrous welcoming committee that was waiting for them: a colony of penguins. “There were hundreds of them,” says Esther, “standing at the ready, heads held high like aloof little gentlemen, their perfect black and white tuxedos reminding me of *chasidishe kinderlach* in Shabbos attire awaiting the arrival of the Rebbe!”

After a coach trip into the capital city of Stanley, the Feldmans could not have been gladder to be greeted by familiar London icons, like a pair of red telephone booths and a Royal Mail letter box in this British outpost some 14,000 miles away from



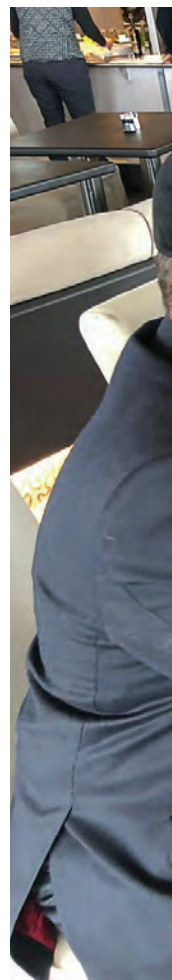
**Fine kosher dining, albatross at sunset, and Daf Yomi on board.**

home. But their excitement peaked when they came across a “retired” red double-decker bus that bore the destination plate—this one’s for you, fellow Stamford Hill resident—our very own Clapton Pond. “Th y could have easily gone with Buckingham Palace Road or Bond Street! Why they chose our humble bus route from all the others had me baffle. It was almost as if they knew we were coming!”

Souvenirs and postcards purchased—in pounds sterling—having made friendly talk with the natives in perfect English and earning yet another exotic stamp in their passport, the group headed to the port to board the cruise for the final but longest stretch.

## Ready, Set, Sail

The ship, RCGS *Resolute*, operated by One Ocean Expeditions, is a purpose-built polar expedition vessel. Fascinatingly, during summertime in the Northern Hemisphere it operates in the Arctic, after which it makes its way down to the opposite end of the world to collect tourists going to







Antarctica for its summer. This may sound like a smooth sail, yet it is anything but.

"Short of going to the moon," Dan Eleff quips, "Antarctica is probably the hardest destination for the kosher traveler. Even the Arctic, which I did two years ago, is easier as there is no problem with importing food and there's an airport in the northern island of Svalbard, whereas here we had to work around the few boat schedules and then find one that agreed to accommodate kosher food."

RCGS *Resolute* has a relatively small capacity of 146 passengers (of whom 51 were Jewish), so it is small enough to access "nooks and crannies" in the ocean that larger ships cannot, but it doesn't compromise on comfort and luxury. Facilities include lounge areas and dining rooms with 270° views and large outer decks with 360° viewing platforms that are ideal for photography, wildlife watching and bird watching. Other facilities include a theater-style presentation room, a library, gym, wellness center, hot tub, sauna and steam room, and a saltwater pool. A 24-hour open bridge

policy allows passengers to stop in any time to watch the crew navigate the ice. The vessel carries the highest ice rating of any passenger vessel, Lloyds 1ASuper, which allows it to operate in ice conditions over three feet thick.

"It was sublime!" recalls Esther of the moment she strode onto the boat. "No planes to catch, no overweight luggage nerves, no hand baggage restrictions. We just strolled onto this floating hotel, leaving all our daily pressures behind!"

With two days of travel ahead, the guests could walk about the upper decks to watch the wildlife in its native environment. Depending on how alert you were you could spot penguins frolicking about, a family of dolphins—usually too quick for a picture—and even the odd whale puffin steam out of its blowhole.

## Rock the Boat

But soon, all passengers had to return indoors. To get to Antarctica, one has to sail through Drake Passage, a notorious stretch where three bodies of water con-

021

# ARTZEINU

## TOURS HOTELS

**Dreaming about  
Winter / Pesach  
in Israel?**





### Terrific Tours:

Galil & Tsfat • Golan Heights  
Negev with Susia  
Masada, Ein Gedi & Dead Sea  
Kosel Tunnels • Old City  
Ir Dovid • Bar Kochva Hideout  
Chevron & Kever Rochel  
Rosh Hanikrah & More...

**AMAZING JEEP EXCURSIONS**

## 50% Student Deal

**Private Tours  
Customized  
Itinerary Planning**

## DISCOUNTED HOTEL RATES

Throughout Israel

Leonardo Plaza / Waldorf / Inbal

## FREE STUDENT

Dec. 18 - Feb. 28

**We can BEAT Direct and  
Online Hotel Prices!**

ISRAEL 02.587.1718  
USA 718.701.3690 | UK 0207.101.4718  
www.artzeinu.co.il | office@artzeinu.co.il



verge without any land to slow the flow. The difficulty navigating it is one of the reasons why Antarctica remained undiscovered until 200 years ago.

"The Drake is known as either the Drake Lake or the Drake Shake," relates Mr. Ozer Alport, a passenger from New York. He travels extensively with his wife, Adina, who now has visited all seven continents. "They are the wildest waters in the world and very unpredictable too, so you either get the 'lake' or the 'shake.' On our way to Antarctica we got the 'lake,' but on the return trip our boat was rocked by 20-foot waves. Dishes were flying off the table."

On a recent voyage through the Drake, he tells me, a passenger required stitches from being thrown about by the turbulence.

To ward off boredom over those two days of sailing, there were a variety of lectures and workshops including an "Antarctic 101" briefing reminding the guests to help protect an environment that has been threatened by too many polluting ships, tourists and litter. Apparently, despite the warnings, more than just pictures were taken and more than just footprints were left!

The tourists were shown how to get into their weatherproof gear and disinfect their hefty boots each they disembarked and then re-boarded the ship, so as not to introduce foreign elements like pits or seeds that might have gotten stuck in their soles. Rumor has it that rats were introduced to the white continent via incoming ships, so this is no joke.

They were also taught how to enter Zodiacs, the rubber dinghies used several times a day to explore the icebergs up close. The Zodiacs are lowered from the upper decks by cranes, with skilled crew inside



them as the boats swing like puppets on their perilous descent.

"Boarding the boats through a little door on the ship's lowest deck freaked me out at first," admits Esther, "because as I told you, I can't swim. But after a few attempts I got used to it."

During these excursions the ship would wait farther out, against a backdrop of icebergs, creating an image hauntingly reminiscent of the *Titanic*. If that wasn't spooky enough, on one trip they came

across an enormous half-sunken shipwreck interrupting the pristine white surroundings. "We wondered if its passengers had survived, or was it their ghostly watery grave? But the captain, who was Russian, did not have any information. In the meantime the penguins, which are curious by nature, were using it as a jumbo jungle gym."

Included in the group of travelers were scientists, historians and guides, all intimately familiar with the Antarctic landscape and its history. So the ornithologists talked about the native bird and penguin species, the historians elaborated on the importance of particular landing sites, the geologists lectured about the natural history of Antarctica and the marine biologists talked about whales, seals and more. Organizers Moshe and Dan also addressed their crowd, with Moshe giving a workshop on how to take photos of scenery and wildlife, and Dan about—you guessed it—points, credit cards...and more points!



cently wander into their dining room. Credit is due to chefs Shua Lurie and Armond Kadoch of L'Orchidée Traiteur, who brought the food on board all the way from Canada, a story in itself. (See Dan's Q&A.)

Dan and Moshe gave out adorable welcome packs that featured, to everyone's delight, a furry penguin wearing personalized little *tzitzis*. The e was also a fun "meet and greet" that served as an instant ice-breaker. Many guests said it was one of their most memorable parts of the trip.

"People shared how going to Antarctica had been their lifelong dream," Dan says, "but that as a kosher traveler the logistics had always made it impossible. While some people are happy to go to Miami for a vacation, others have

a desire to see the world. Some people were literally moved to tears expressing their joy and disbelief at actualizing their dream."

Thatnight a sliver of moon was spotted, a rarity considering that during Antarctica's three months of summer the night doesn't get dark; it barely looks like twilight for

two hours. *Kiddush levanah* was recited on the deck, amidst much celebration, once again possibly a first in this part of the hemisphere. The *farbrengen* that ensued was certainly a first

## Hello, Iceberg

Whenever there were whale sightings the captain would make an announcement over the microphone, sending everyone dashing to the deck. After about a day in Drake Passage, there was a sudden drop in temperature and the passengers knew that they had crossed the Antarctic Convergence, an area where the cold Antarctic surface water meets the warmer Sub-Antarctic water, the accepted boundary of Antarctica.

Antarctica, here we come!

Soon enough, the captain announced the first iceberg. It was a fine Friday morning, slightly before *Shacharis*. The e on the horizon was a huge tabular ice shelf over a mile long.

"What excitement!" Esther recalls. "It looked like a huge building in the middle of the ocean. All we could do was gasp and say, '*Mah rabu maasecha Hashem.*' And because it was so early, everyone could view it from their bedroom window, without even getting out of bed!"

One dining room was assigned to the Kosher Antarctica group, where they could *daven*, meet and eat separately from the rest of the group. The catering was on such a high level that other guests, unaware of the group's exclusivity, would sometimes follow the heavenly aromas and inno-



# YOUR VACATION IS IN THE BAG

MODEST SWIMWEAR FOR LADIES AND GIRLS

2380 CONEY ISLAND AVE. (BTWN T+U) BROOKLYN, NY  
WWW.UNDERCOVERWATERWEAR.COM | 877-613-8299





The Alports' cabin was next door to the Feldmans' cabin. I ask Mr. Alport for his thoughts upon seeing that very first iceberg. "Sometimes," he says contemplatively, "when you see something so majestic, you literally can't think. It's like nothing you've ever seen before. I was speechless!"

Like many of the guests, the Alports are well-traveled and have seen many incredible sights, including the Arctic North. So if the sight of the icebergs rendered him speechless, you can imagine their beauty. The Feldmans also agreed that the Antarctic beat the Arctic when it came to magnificence. Indeed, the pictures they came back with are phenomenal. The sun throws shadows on the icebergs' sharp edges, at angles that make their shapes look like an optical illusion. You think they end where they don't, and vice versa.

As you approach the continent, the icebergs increase in quantity and volume. Mammoth white formations jut out of the sea, standing like statues of every shape and size. Some look like their peaks have been axed off, while others are topped with a Trump-like hairdo. Much to everyone's amazement, one iceberg resembles a giant lion in a fierce pose, while another looks like the head of a cauliflower, still another like a jumbo cupcake and another like a frozen plume of smoke.

The guests sat in their little cabins glued to the window, officially whale-watching but equally hypnotized as the ship sailed past these icebergs on its way south.

Those on one side of the ship were lucky to witness the phenomenon of ice calving, the process of iceberg chunks breaking off. Seeing pictures of the dozens of ice floes drifting on the water and hearing Mr. Alport describe the immense roar of a glacier avalanche is incredible.

## A Kiddush Hashem Down Under

Alas, on arrival, it was too windy for the travelers to "get their feet wet" in the



**Dan Eleff, former Canadian PM Stephen Harper and Moshe Hersko (top); sleeping seal**

Zodiacs. The waves were practically waving at their audience, spraying their windows, and there was snow, too. As the following day was Shabbos, the Zodiac activity was postponed until Sunday for the kosher group.

Shabbos was a surreal experience—a Shabbos-on-wheels, if you will. All of the *Yidden* remained indoors, as one is not allowed to embark or disembark from a ship on Shabbos, thus having the boat to themselves much of the day. Aside from the fact that they were floating, the extreme *zmanim* made it feel as if they were on an entirely different planet. For example, *Maariv* on Motzaei Shabbos was at 1:01 a.m., *Havdalah* at 1:10 a.m., *Shacharis* at 1:15 a.m. and, get this: *melaveh malkah* after *Shacharis*. Why? Because you aren't allowed to eat before *Shacharis*!

"This didn't happen every day," notes Mr. Alport, "only after Shabbos, when we were furthest south. I knew we would have out-of-whack *zmanim*, but I didn't expect anything like that."

With the combination of nights that were as bright as day, extreme halachic



*zmanim* and jetlag, the travelers' circadian rhythms must have been a total mess.

Still, *Shacharis* each day was early, as there were day trips to embark on, and the daily *daf* went on without fail. In a truly record-breaking move, the group even merited to participate in a *siyum*. Rabbi Moishe Paskesz from Yerushalayim, the *mashgiach* on board, completed *Maseches Taanis*.

I tell Dan that they should apply to Guinness World Records. He's amused by the suggestion, but having once interviewed one of their judges, I remember being dismayed by some of their categories such as "furthest eyeball protrusion" or "most jelly eaten blindfolded in one minute." Surely, the first *siyum* in Antarctica is worthy. Maybe I'll drop them a line.

Mr. Alport related how the *minyans*—plus of men sailed ashore with their Zodiacs and climbed onto the land. They wanted to make the *siyum* on the actual continent, but they had to search for a place that didn't reek of penguins. After hunting around the corners and crevices they found a fresh clearing and the *siyum* was made. They had one visitor: a curious little penguin that





Dancing on deck during Kabbalas Shabbos (photo by crewmember)

waddled over just in time to answer “Amen.” Or did it want a *tikkun*?

It seems that Moshe and Dan did a great job on their first cruise experience. “The trip was a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*,” enthused Mr. Alport. “We had all sorts of *Yidden davening*, eating and spending time together in a very united way, and the organizers made a great effort to ensure

that everything was done meticulously according to *halachah*. It was an amazing experience *b’ruchniyus* and *b’gashmiyus*!”

## Nature at Its Peak

The tourists could have stood for days just watching the playful penguins tumbling, diving, nesting and waddling in their natural habitat. Some visitors were content just lying down on the vast snowy expanse and gazing up at the Southern Hemisphere’s sky, but for those who wanted action there was a lot to pack in on those three out of the six days when the sea was calm. Every morning, after *davening* and breakfast, they set out in the Zodiacs and visited different icebergs. “Each one has a name and looks very different,” Esther informs me. “We couldn’t get enough of exploring them.”

It is prohibited to feed the wildlife, and if anyone approached the animals too closely the ship’s crew would intervene. Because of that rule, the native birds and wildlife don’t feel threatened by the tourists and remain tame despite the human invasions. The proof is in the picture Moshe Hersko caught of a skua, a native bird,

having stuck his intimidating telephoto lens in the bird’s face without so much as a blink.

To enforce the no-feeding rule and to prevent contamination, visitors aren’t allowed to bring any food ashore, only water bottles. Hearing that, I am struck by the thought that Dan, as a Chabadnik, also made history on the trip aside from co-organizing the first- ver kosher expedition to Antarctica. “Th y say wherever there’s Coke there’s Chabad,” I tell him. “So if only water is permitted there, Chabad beat Coke to it!”

For avid birdwatchers, the Antarctic is a treasure trove, with dozens of species. “It was amazing to watch the different seabirds flying over us,” says Esther. “They don’t stop for a moment. The air is their home. But even more fascinating was that they looked like flimsy napkins flapping in the sky yet managed to withstand even the fiercest blasts of the ocean wind.”

The tour also catered to the adrenalin-fueled activity lovers. They could hike up a steep, snowy hill and be rewarded with panoramic views, or else they could visit the Chilean research base, one of the smaller international centers there and chat with the researchers.

“The scientists come during the summer months,” Mr. Alport tells me. “Naturally, they were thrilled to greet us, as it’s their only human interaction aside from the 15

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

## THEZONE GIRLS DIVISION SUMMER 2019

DATES SUMMER 2019:  
SESSION A:  
JUNE 21-JULY 28  
SESSION B:  
JULY 29-AUGUST 28

## INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE

**BROOKLYN:** February 9th, 8-10 PM,  
E. Midwood Hebrew Day School  
1256 E 21st St, Bklyn NY 11210  
Music room, 1st floor

**LAKEWOOD:** February 6th, 8-10 pm,  
Oorah Office, 1805 Swarthmore  
Ave Lakewood NJ, 08701

**FLORIDA:** February 4th, 8-10 pm,  
Stern home, 816 W 40th St, Apt 2  
Miami Beach, Florida 33140

**FIVE TOWNS:** February 2, 8-10 pm,  
Mandelbaum Residence  
342 Church Ave,  
Woodmere, NY 11598

**MONSEY:** February 7th, 8-10 pm,  
Szanzer residence  
6 Weiss Terrace  
Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977

**BALTIMORE:** January 5th,  
7-8:30 PM, 6000 Stuart Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21209 side door

APPLY NOW! [THEZONE.ORG](http://THEZONE.ORG)

To schedule an interview, email  
[INFO@THEZONE.ORG](mailto:INFO@THEZONE.ORG)

\*Applicants must be currently in 10th grade or higher. Your  
application must be submitted before, or at time of, your interview.

**THE ZONE**  
Girls Division



members of their team. They also have a tiny gift shop, which they open only when ships come in, selling postcards with Antarctica postage stamps, which we were told would take two months to arrive.”

To their delight, the visitors also earned Antarctica’s passport stamp at the Chilean base. Passport stamp collecting seems to be something of an obsession among the well-traveled. I’m not even sure what comes first: Do they travel for the stamp, or vice versa? In any event, from Ushuaia to Antarctica they’d already gotten their money’s worth.

I wonder if the incoming cruises replenish the researchers’ food. I ask Mr. Alport, who had a schmooze with them. “No. They told me that they don’t get a single delivery of any kind throughout their four-month stay. Whatever they need is brought with them on arrival.”



Seeing the size of their spartan shed-like accommodations, it’s a wonder where they store all that food...unless they’re roughing it and enjoying freshly caught fish

## Whale of a Time

Speaking of roughing it, another activity offered to visitors, if you could call it that, is camping out on the ice for the night. Add roaring seals, skittering penguins, cracking icebergs and puffin whales and you literally become one with Antarctica. If you get cold feet, literally or figuratively, you can always sail back to the ship in your Zodiac. To my relief, Dan reports that no one jumped at the opportunity on this occasion, as the weather wasn’t suitable, but some enthusiasts schlepped their sleeping bags onto the ship’s deck instead.

Nine members of the group went kayaking, an activity that had to be paid for separately and pre-booked, as sea kayaking requires advance training. After all, it is kayaking in Antarctica (say *that* ten times fast).

Kayaks, which are stored on the ship, are lowered alongside the Zodiacs. Participants don a dry suit, which is so waterproof that

 	
Kosher Group Times for Shabbos Parshas Vayigash	
<b>Friday:</b>	
Tronemah light meal:	6:00-7:00p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Mitzvah:	9:00p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Candle lighting:	9:20p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Rakotz Shabbos and Maavir:	9:25p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Friday night meal:	9:45p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Repeat Shema:	12:50a
Shachris: Approx.	1:00a, after the meal – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
<b>Shabbos day:</b>	
Latent Shema:	7:30a/7:45a
Light breakfast:	8:30-9:30a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Second Shachris minyan:	9:30a brachos, 9:45a Hoda – Shul
Kiddush:	11:30a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Shur on Hittos Bein Hashmashos:	12:00p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Shabbos day meal:	12:30p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Mitzvah:	9:30p – Shul
Shabbos Seudah:	6:00-7:00p – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Dan/David “Travel Lessons Learned” talk:	7:25p – Shul
Moshe:	8:01a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Hardele:	1:10a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Shachris:	1:15a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6
Melava Malka:	1:45a – Bistro Lounge Deck 6

**Shabbos schedule of davening, learning and meals (above); whale-watching from a Zodiac (right)**

it takes half an hour to put it on. The wrists and neck are skin-tight, unlike wetsuits, which allow water to penetrate. This gear is crucial, says Dan, because if the kayak flips over, the water’s sub-zero temperatures could *chalilah* cause death. The kayakers paddle solo behind a guide, weaving through the Antarctic waterways, between magnificent icebergs, fjords and glaciers. They must also keep an eye out for orcas and humpback whales lurking about, as they wouldn’t want to be mistaken for dinner.

Dan chose this experience as his favorite.

“It was so serene rowing just inches away from penguins and whales,” he recounts. “The whales can actually see us but they don’t view humans as either predators or prey, so it’s not as scary as it sounds.”

Seriously, it *is* even scarier than it sounds. I find it hard to fathom that people would knowingly put themselves at such risk, but Dan insists that whales are gentle and mind their own business if you mind yours.

Another popular activity for the more placid was cruising around in the Zodiacs.



The route was similar to the kayaks but the occupants were in the company of ten people rather than solo in a whale-infested ocean. In the Zodiacs, the different species of birds, penguins and seals were pointed out, and whenever an orca or whale came terrifyingly close to the small rubber vessel, those brave enough to peer over could learn which creature they were facing.

Ingeniously, Moshe sent up a drone to capture the Zodiac experience and took a jaw-dropping shot of a whale mid-blow right next to his dinghy, looking much like David and Goliath. It is no doubt his winning picture.

It was interesting to note the “*achdus*” of the different wildlife, like the blubbery, not-so-beautiful seals lying alongside the utterly adorable penguins and sharing the same territory. There was even one fair penguin that observers noted was leucistic, meaning that only some of its pigmentation was missing rather than all of it, as occurs with albinism, yet they all flapped together happily.





The only apparent animosity was between the penguins and the skuas, which nastily pinch the penguins' eggs for food. Moshe caught a full civil war on camera, replete with a fantastic victory shot of a skua fling off with an egg in its beak.

"It's fascinating to watch the penguins at work," says Esther. "I would change the expression 'as busy as bees' or ants to penguins. They go back and forth bringing their mother pebbles for her nest without let-up. If mama doesn't approve, she tosses it back at them."

Finally, and this is the craziest activity by far, the tourists could finish their expedition with the traditional Polar Plunge, which puts the ice-bucket challenge to shame. Daredevils had to jump into the literally freezing -1°C (30°F) water. Dan admits that he didn't want to do it, but he simply couldn't go back home without crossing it off his list. "My body went into shock for a few seconds," he admits, "which is expected. But nothing happened to anyone. Besides, the ship's doctor was on hand to collect any

finers or toes anyone would have left behind!"

Researchers claim that some penguins cannot withstand the cold, so you can imagine the kind of temperatures we're talking about.

## Back to Real Life

After a thrilling four days in Antarctica, it was time to return to civilization and get back to the real world...starting with the ominous Drake Passage. It was the 10th of Teves, and the extreme *zmanim* meant that the fast, which would normally last 12 hours, was a whopping 25 hours long. Passengers asked their respective *rabbanim* in advance what was required of them, but the water was so turbulent that no one had any appetite. "I was so nauseated," recalls Esther, "that I couldn't *daven* or say *Tehillim* from the *siddur*, only by heart."

Mr. Alport observed that it was a *chesed* from Hashem that they got the "*shake*" only on the return trip; otherwise, many would have been too sick to enjoy the expensive destination.

Most people endured the turbulence in bed, unable to even think about food, while those who had received a *heter* to break their fast threw up every last morsel they'd ingested and resumed fasting. So everyone ended up in the same boat!

As an aside, all of the passengers came equipped with different anti-nausea medications to ward off seasickness, with the most popular being a special patch worn behind the ear.

Upon their return to Ushuaia, the still slightly queasy but euphoric travelers were awarded certificates for having completed their expedition, but make no mistake: this was not the South Pole. That says Dan, is a further 800 miles inland and is significantly more challenging, as it can only be reached on foot.

"But it remains on my bucket list," he declares quite confidently, "right up there with the moon!" ●

# You know what to expect

**BUY ONE  
GET ONE  
FREE**



• CAREER • SPORTSWEAR • ROBES •  
• NURSING LINGERIE •

We stock the largest  
selection of  
**Formal Evening Wear,  
Custom and  
Ready-To-Wear  
Gowns.**

## Hindy's

THE MATERNITY SOURCE

4902 New Utrecht Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11219

Tel. 718.438.3840

[www.maternityapparel.com](http://www.maternityapparel.com)

@hindysmaternity.

Store Hours: Sun-Thurs 11am-6pm, closed Fridays



# Q&A with Dan Eleff of DAN'S DEALS

Co-organizer of this historic expedition who was responsible for arranging its complex halachic logistics.

## What challenges did putting something like this together entail?

There were a lot of halachic issues, most of which pertained to Shabbos. For a number of reasons, we had to find a ship that would leave on a Monday. You aren't allowed to board a ship less than three days before Shabbos, so Wednesday through Friday were out. A few *poskim* give a *heter* for modern-day sea voyages, as they are more comfortable and smooth, meaning that it doesn't take that long to regain your bearings, but this wouldn't apply to the route to the Southern Hemisphere, which boasts the world's wildest waters.

Leaving on a Sunday meant being in Ushuaia on Shabbos, but without fresh kosher food allowed in it would present a difficulty. Tuesday was no good because it would mean spending the next Shabbos in Ushuaia. So we had to find a cruise leaving Ushuaia on a Monday.

## I would imagine that you were ecstatic.

Actually, it wasn't ideal because it coincided with Chanukah, when people like to be home, and it also included a fast day. The cruise would also be taking place over the Shabbos that immediately preceded the Southern Hemisphere's summer solstice. That meant that we would run into

additional halachic issues about Shabbos and *zmanim*. But if we wanted to go, this was our only tenable option.

## Was the company happy to take on a Jewish group with its religious requirements?

That was the next hurdle. We had to see if they were willing to accommodate a self-catered group. When they heard the number 50—a quota we were totally unsure if we would fill—they were game. As it turned out, there was such a high demand that we had to turn people down, partly because *halachah* required us to be a minority among the non-Jewish passengers in order to be allowed to be aboard a moving ship on Shabbos.

## How did the food work out?

We needed to load the kosher food onto the ship before it reached Ushuaia, so as to avoid bringing it on land there. We had to research its route and figure out where to load it and then find a caterer in that country. The polar cruise ships only operate in the summertime, so they were finishing their summer in the Northern Hemisphere, after which they head south to the other end of the world to catch the Southern Hemisphere's summer, stopping at ports to refuel along the way. We worked out that our ship would be passing Canada around Sukkos. We found a wonderful Canadian chef who was up to the challenge. The vessel stopped; he loaded it up with pallets of frozen food and sent it on its way.

## How did you deal with the difficult *zmanim*?

There were many *sh'eilos* about the extreme *zmanim* that arise during the three



months of constant daylight. The further south one travels, the more problematic this becomes. As it turned out we ended up *davening Shacharis* at 1:00 a.m. on Motzaei Shabbos, only ten minutes after *Maariv*. And the *Havdalah* that followed was made with only grape juice, as it was already after sunrise, when *besamim* and *licht* are no longer necessary.

## Is there even a *zmanim* resource for Antarctica when people don't live there, and in fact *poskim* theoretically advise against *Yidden* living there?

Yes, one can calculate the *zmanim* for anywhere in the world using a *zmanim* calculator. There is one on Chabad.org.

## Who answered your *zmanim sh'eilos*?

I spent many hours working with Rabbi Shmuel Lesches, *maggid shiur* in the Yeshiva Gedola of Melbourne, Australia, and *rav* of Melbourne's Young Yeshiva, working through the extremely complex *halachos* regarding *zmanim* in polar regions. His research was indispensable. We didn't expect the ship to have WiFi, which would have created additional challenges in calculating *zmanim* based on a fixed location,





**RCGS Resolute (left);  
Plotting the zmanim with  
the ship's navigation  
office (below)**

but then we learned that a new satellite-based WiFi system had been added just before our cruise. What made it extra difficult was that I didn't know exactly where the cruise might wind up each day, as its pace and route were highly dependent on the weather, and as it turned out, fuel.

Rabbi Dovid Heber of the Star-K was also very generous with his time and knowledge.

#### **So you had to take every day as it came?**

Exactly. Every day Moshe Hersko and I would sit with the navigation office and consult a map, plotting locations for *zmanim*.

#### **Did the detour for the fuel mess you up in terms of *zmanim*?**

In a good way, actually. The cruise was anyway not planning to go too far south, such as crossing over the imaginary Antarctic Circle, but we did originally have plans to go a little further than we did. That was aborted after our fuel shortage delayed us in the Falkland Islands. But that was *hashgachah pratis*, because otherwise I would have had to deal with the very complex matter of figuring out the *zmanim* in those remote all-daylight time zones. I'd already spent many days doing the brunt of that research in advance, but I was still very relieved not to have to apply that knowledge in the end.

#### **Did you ever consider taking your family along?**

The thought of a ten-day cruise didn't appeal to my wife, and children under ten weren't allowed to join, so she stayed at home with our three children. At two weeks, it was the longest I'd ever left them. ●



*just* **RUN.**

**REGISTRATION  
OPEN**

2019 **MAY 19**

Lincroft, NEW JERSEY  
5K & 10K OPTIONS!



RUN WITH BATYA GIVES YOU  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO DIRECTLY  
SUPPORT GIRLS IN THEIR  
GROWTH IN YIDDISHKEIT.



**JOIN TODAY!**

**runwithbatya.org**

Ph 732.835.BATYA (2289) | E [info@runwithbatya.org](mailto:info@runwithbatya.org)