

My friends, this Shabbat is the fifth anniversary of the kidnapping by Hamas of IDF Staff Sgt. Gilad Shalit. Kidnapped as a corporal, he was promoted to Staff Sgt. during his captivity. His picture is on the reader's table tonight, and will be on a chair on the bima tomorrow morning. We continue to pray for his safe return to his homeland and his family.

It is proper, I believe, that despite tonight being Shabbat, we take a moment to remember Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, who were abducted by Hezbollah five years ago this July. As we remember all too well, they were returned to Israel as part of a prisoner swap—live terrorists in exchange for the bodies of Goldwasser and Regev, both of whom were murdered by their terrorist captors.

How ironic, how bitterly ironic it is that on the anniversary of Sgt. Shalit's kidnapping, American Jews were rocked by

a news story telling us that Jews, Israelis, and any passengers carrying non-Islamic religious articles will not be permitted to board flights to Saudi Arabia under the name of Delta Airlines. This is a result of Delta's upcoming partnership with Saudi Arabian Airlines as part of Delta's Sky Team network. Delta itself does not fly to Saudi Arabia, but SAA flights will carry Delta flight codes and tickets will be sold through Delta in America.

Delta, of course, has its explanation: They neither discriminate nor condone discrimination against "any protected class of passenger in regards to age, race, nationality, religion, or gender." (sic) They point out that they must comply with all applicable laws in all countries served by the airline, that passengers are responsible for obtaining all necessary documents for travel to a given country, and that Delta has no control over who flies to Saudi Arabia.

Let's unpack this helpful statement.

Saudi Arabia is governed by shari'ah law. It does not allow Jews, Israelis, nor anyone whose passport has an Israeli stamp into the country, not even in transit. Delta does not condone this, but they have no choice but to comply. And if Jews and Israelis would simply not go there, then Delta would not have to discriminate against them. That's a great argument. By the same logic, if blacks had only stayed out of white-only establishments during the segregation era, America would have had no problem with racial segregation.

It makes your head spin trying to process this.

Everything Delta said could be true. Perhaps they do not condone discrimination. They do have to follow the laws of the countries to which they fly. They cannot control who buys a ticket to any given destination.

What they ignore, however, is the heart of the issue: Delta does not have to bring Saudi Arabian Airlines into their Sky Team Network. It is their choice to do so. And while they may not condone the discrimination they must practice in order to make this alliance with the Saudi airline, they are clearly willing to ignore their self-professed values and do something they claim not to condone to increase profits. It's like being opposed to adultery but having an affair anyway. Actions speak more loudly than words.

I am extremely disturbed over this issue, and not only because it is discriminatory against Jews. In fact, I actually believe that is secondary to a bigger problem: the willingness to comply with Islamists—not all Muslims, but all Islamists—and have an American company abandon the values they claim to hold in order to comply with shari'ah law.

I am not an alarmist by nature. The sky is not falling. I do not claim tonight that this step will be followed by America becoming an Islamic theocracy in the future. But it is a step that erodes American values and allows shari'ah law to get a foot in the American door. Even the smallest step in that direction is unacceptable and must be resisted.

What can we do? For some of us, one simple answer is to choose airlines other than Delta for air travel, and I do in fact support that idea. However, for many Americans it is not that simple. As my colleague in Detroit, Rabbi Jason Miller points out, where he lives Delta is frequently the only option for air travel to certain destinations.

On his blog, Rabbi Miller summarizes this situation succinctly and with a touch of ironic humor. I would like to share a paragraph from his blog with you tonight. He wrote:

*The issue here is one of principle. Delta isn't being forced to include Saudi Arabian Airlines into its Sky Team Alliance. In fact, Delta could stand on principle and refuse to include Saudi Arabian Airlines based on its discriminatory policy. No, it's not Delta's fault that the Saudi government is anti-Semitic, but it doesn't have to go along with it. It's as if the Saudis are telling Delta that when it comes to Jewish passengers it's name should become an acronym: "Don't Even Let Them Aboard."*

To Rabbi Miller, *tov dibarta*—well said. To you, my friends, I conclude by sharing my belief that although the sky is not falling, neither is this an issue to ignore. When you have choices other than Delta, consider not choosing Delta and send them an email telling them what you decided and why. Even those of us who are not frequent fliers can express to Delta Airlines the belief that their decision to ally themselves with Saudi Arabian Airlines is a bad decision. Politics does make strange bedfellows—we are

allies with this anti-Jewish kingdom. Business sometimes does the same. But there are times when it is worth standing on principle. I believe this is one of those times. Let us remind the airline that delta is the scientific symbol for change. They can change their plans to ally with the Saudis, or we can change our plans whenever possible to fly on airlines with no ties to anti-Semites. In all likelihood, Delta's plans are made and will not change. That puts the ball in our court. Let us not stand by quietly until the day comes when we have waited too long and must ask ourselves why we did not speak out from the beginning.