

The Jewish Weekly

AFTER THE DRAFT

By Shmuel Butman

In 5665 (1905), when war broke out between Russia and Japan, all Russian males below the age of 50 were commanded to report to their local draft boards. Many Jews did whatever they could to escape the draft, for in those years it was impossible to serve in the anti-Semitic Russian Army and live as a mitzvah-observant Jew. Of course, a significant number were unable to avoid being drafted, despite their mighty efforts. One of these was Mendel Dovid Gurevich, a teacher in the city of Valitch and already the father of a large family.

Mendel Dovid was a chassid of the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch, so as soon as he received his draft notice, he hurried off to speak with the Rebbe. He told him of the disastrous event, the extreme difficulties it would cause his family, and how distressed they all were at the evil that had befallen them. The Rebbe blessed him and said, "G-d Al-mighty will redeem you from their hands."

But Mendel Dovid's agitated heart felt no relief from the Rebbe's words. "Rebbe, a blessing is not enough for me; I need a promise!" he pleaded.

The Rebbe looked at him intensely, and then replied, "A promise I don't have for you but a blessing I do," and he repeated his original words. Mendel Dovid refused to be discouraged and again requested an explicit promise, but the Rebbe merely repeated the same words for a third time.

Mendel Dovid respectfully took his leave of the Rebbe and returned home. He strengthened himself and his faith in the Rebbe's blessing, and tried to be optimistic about the future. Nevertheless, he felt he had no choice but to make his own plans for when he would have to appear at the draft board.

The dreaded day arrived. Mendel Dovid reported to his assigned draft center. Thousands of new soldiers converged there with him. They passed through a series of medical tests and other examinations, under the supervision of officers who would determine who would be shipped off to battle and who would be assigned non life-threatening duties at the home front.

All Mendel Dovid's attempts to gain an exemption were fruitless. Indeed, he was even found fit to be sent to a battle regiment. His only hope was the blessing of the Rebbe Rashab, even though it was impossible to imagine how it could possibly be fulfilled at this point. What would happen to his abandoned family? What would become of him? It seemed he needed a miracle.

At the conclusion of all the tests and classification procedures, all the draftees were assembled for their first military inspection. The officer in charge was a General Kazaroff. With a fiery speech, he attempted to enthrone his new

troops about the great merit that had fortunately come to them: to be privileged to defend with their lives their dear, beloved mother country.

When he finished speaking, the draftees turned to go to their respective ways. The general indicated to them that they should remain where they were for just a few more moments. He strode into his headquarters, and then quickly emerged. They could see that he was holding a piece of paper in his hand.

The general glanced at the note. "Who is Gurevich Mendel?" he called out.

Mendel Dovid began to tremble uncontrollably, from fright. He took a moment to try to figure out what could possibly be the reason that the general was singling him out in front of thousands of soldiers but couldn't think of anything. He doubted if it could be good. Hesitatingly, he stepped forward and presented himself. The general merely glanced in his direction and said, "You are discharged. You may go home." He turned on his heels and left, leaving a stunned but ecstatic Jew momentarily frozen in place.

After a few moments, Mendel Dovid was able to accept that it wasn't a wistful dream. It really was true! He was free to go! "I believed in the Rebbe's blessing," he said to himself as he joyfully set out for Valitch, "but I never imagined it could come true so quickly or in such extraordinary fashion."

The following Shabbat Menachem Dovid sponsored a large kiddush at the Chabad shul. He told them the whole story: how the Rebbe had repeated his blessing three times in identical wording, and the wondrous manner in which he had obtained his speedy release. Everyone listened in rapt attention and sincerely shared in the joy of his deliverance.

Then, one of the chassidim rose, and offered to shed light on how the Rebbe's blessing had become enclosed in this particular natural-seeming guise. "This General Kazaroff," he began, "used to live in our city. The rented apartment he dwelled in was owned by a Jew. A few months ago his landlord passed away. The heirs made clear their intention to raise the rent. Kazaroff very much wanted to continue living there, but not to pay any additional money. He approached the heirs and proposed that if they agreed to not increase his rent, he would repay them in a different way. In the upcoming large draft, he would exercise his powers as a general to obtain the release of a Valitch Jewish soldier."

"His new landlords accepted this unusual offer, and Kazaroff continued to live in the apartment for the same amount of money. About a month ago, however, he moved out. Since war had erupted, he was forced to leave Valitch and relocate nearer to the front. In the meantime he became appointed the general in charge of the draft, and it seems he didn't forget his promise. He must have perused through the draft list for a Jewish-sounding name from Valitch, and the first one he came across presumably was that of our friend, Menachem Dovid Gurevitch."

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

The Israeli Air Force Officer's Desire to Learn in a Yeshiva

By Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Rav Friedman relates that he met a Yid by the name of Rav Menachem Arava from Israel, and heard this story from him.

"I am a Ba'al Teshuvah (returnee to Judaism), and I served in the Israeli air force. After a few years in the army, I reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. In the 1970's, I underwent a spiritual journey and discovered the beauty of Judaism, Torah, and Mitzvot. I longed to live a life of Torah and true Judaism, but due to my role and the environment in which I was surrounded, I did not have the means and circumstances to remove myself from the secular society that I was involved in, and to start a new life.

"I was waiting for the right opportunity, which was not long in coming. In the IDF, it is customary for senior officers to receive a long vacation with reimbursement, in order to study at well-known universities. When my turn came and I was offered to go and study at a university, I requested that instead of studying science at the university, I preferred to go and study Torah in a Yeshivah.

"My commander replied that from his point of view there was no problem, but I had to get permission from the Defense Ministry. The Defense Ministry told me that they do not recognize a Yeshivah as a place for higher education, and therefore, they refused to pay me a salary for the year if I chose to go there.

"At that time, I grew thirsty for Torah and Judaism, and I began to ask questions about how to get close to Hashem. In those days, there were no famous Ba'al Teshuvah movements, and there was no one to guide me as to where to go. I made my way to Judaism on my own, and so I came to an ultra-Orthodox family in Bnei Brak, to stay with them for a Shabbat.

"After Shabbat, I asked my hosts who the most revered Torah personality in Bnei Brak was, and without hesitation, they directed me to the home of Rav Elazar Shach, zt"l. I told him that I wanted to change my leave from the army to attend Yeshivah instead of going to a university, as I was entitled to on behalf of the Ministry of Defense, but the Defense Ministry had refused my request. I asked him what I should do.

"Rav Shach listened to my words, and while I was in his office, he asked a Gabai, Rav Yechezkel Ishaik, to call the minister, Rav Shlomo Lorentz, and ask him to come over. Rav Lorentz immediately arrived at the house of Rav Shach, while I was there.

"To my surprise, I heard Rav Shach ask Rav Lorentz to negotiate with the government a clause that would guarantee that the courses studied by IDF officers in Yeshivah would be considered equivalent to a university course.

"Indeed, this clause was included in the negotiations, and as a result of this, I was able to study Torah in Yeshivah for two and a half years!"

Reprinted from an email of Torah U'Tefilah.



Shabbat Times – Parshat Shemini

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:18	7:31	8:12
Tel Aviv	6:33	7:33	
Haifa	6:25	7:33	
Be'er Sheva	6:36	7:33	



Payback for a Car Loan on Erev Shabbat

By Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon

The Shlesinger family from Alon Shvut was vacationing in Northern Israel. On Friday afternoon, their 28-year-old son, Elisha, was driving up to be with his family for Shabbat. He needed to refuel, but inexplicably, he kept missing the turn offs as he sped toward his destination.

After passing five gas stations in a row, he finally pulled off into the next one. He looked at his watch. It was 3 hours before Shabbat, and he was an hour from his destination. All in all, his timing was good.

As he filled his car, he noticed a woman with children standing next to their car, noticeably upset. He approached her and asked if he could help. "I accidentally filled my car with diesel fuel instead of regular fuel," she said, frowning, "and now it won't start! I am not an expert in cars but I do know that I must get home before Shabbat."

Elisha listened to her predicament, and furrowed his brow. There was no way to remove the fuel. It needed professional attention and there were no mechanics on duty at the station. And besides, they were all off work now anyway.

"Where are you headed?" he asked the woman.

"To Alei Zahav in the Shomron," she said, anxiety filling her voice.

Elisha happened to know precisely where that was and he made a mental calculation ... Alei Zahav was far, almost three hours away, and there were only three hours left till Shabbat begins! She clearly needed to get there, with her family, but how? No wonder she was frantic. It seemed impossible. But not to Elisha. He didn't think twice, he held out his car keys to the astounded woman.

She looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"Here," he said, with an urgency in his voice, "take my car and start driving right this minute to Alei Zahav! I just filled up so you have plenty of gas. Hopefully, if you leave now, you'll make it in time! Here's my cell phone number. Let's be in touch after Shabbat and we can figure out how to get the car back to me."

The woman was flabbergasted. A young man, a total stranger, was giving her his car? Why? How? Elisha was insistent and told her again and again that if she didn't leave right now, she might not make it. She thanked him profusely and took off for Alei Zahav with her kids.

Meanwhile, Elisha called his father and explained the situation. His father promptly came to pick him up, and everyone made it to their respective destinations in time for Shabbat.

On Sunday morning, the woman returned with the car. She met Elisha's mother and told her how amazed she was by her son's kindness and generosity. Elisha's mother beamed with pride at her son's gracious nature. "How can I thank him? What present can I give him?" asked the woman. She really felt sincere gratitude and she could afford to buy him something. She just needed to know what that was.

"Trust me, Elisha doesn't need presents," Elisha's mother exclaimed. "What he needs is a wife!"

The woman made arrangements to get home and left the car. But she never stopped thinking about what Elisha's mother said. "What he needs is a wife!" As soon as she arrived back in Alei Zahav, she wrote up the encounter and posted it on her online account, adding that the wonderful man in the story who went out of his way to help her, was in fact, seeking a wife.

Suddenly, ideas came pouring forth. One of the first suggestions was a woman named Naomi. Amazingly, with Hashem's help, just a few months later, Naomi and Elisha were happily married!

It is hard to miss the tremendous Hashgacha here. Two people taking a trip on an ordinary Friday afternoon happen to meet each other at a random gas station in the north of Israel. Both display great acts of kindness - Elisha's selflessness to help a woman in distress results in the woman's tremendous act of kindness in helping to find him a life partner.

This was truly not an ordinary Friday afternoon! Hashem above is watching, helping, and moving the pieces on the chessboard...

Editors note: Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon, (Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council and Rosh Kollel of Yeshivat Har Etzion) was the rabbi who officiated at Naomi and Elisha's wedding.

Reprinted from an email of Rabbi Dovid Hoffman's Torah Tavlin parsha sheet.



Moshe had already told Aharon not to leave the Ohel Moed for seven days. The Midrash Tanchuma, in the very first Midrash on the Parsha explains that Moshe was telling Aharon and his children that these seven days will be for a week of mourning for the deaths of Nadav & Avihu, Aharon's two sons, which happened on the 8th day.

This is hard to understand, for two reasons, the passuk tells us that Aharon spent these seven days in the Mishkan as part of his inauguration process, if anything, these seven days were a happy time for Aharon, not days of mourning! Secondly, mourning usually happens after a person dies, not before. Aharon did not lose his children or even know about their death that was about to happen, so why did Moshe tell him to mourn?

R' Mordechai Gifter zt"l explains that the purpose of the seven day mourning period is more than just a time to express one's grief and sorrow. It is a time for reflection and see how everything, including the death of a beloved one comes from Hashgacha Pratit.

These seven days that Aharon spent in the Ohel Moed brought him to such a high level of recognition of the Hashgacha, that he was able to be quiet and accept Hashem's verdict upon his children, so in essence these seven days of joy accomplished the same as the seven days of mourning.

Friends, we need to look at our lives, at the happy times and even not so happy times, and recognize how Hashem is there literally every step of the way, and we must thank Him for that always.

So while thanking Hashem let's ask him and pray for those suffering from the current situation in Eastern Europe, as well as for the recovery of all the sick, our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 17

MITZVOT ASEH: 6

MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 11

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 91

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1238

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4670

This year, (5782 / 2022) Parshat Shmini is a special Shabbat.

The Shabbat immediately following Purim (or the week after in some years such as this year) is called Shabbat Parshat Parah. We take out two Sifrei Torah, in the first, we have seven Aliyot in the weekly Parsha, followed by Half-Kaddish.

In the second Sefer Torah, the Maftir reads from Bamidbar, Parshat Chukat, (19:1-22), which describes the preparation of the Parah Adumah, whose ashes were used in the spiritual purification process during the time of the Beit Hamikdash. This purification was carried out at this time of the year to ensure that everyone would be able to partake in the Korban Pesach to be offered on the 14th day of Nissan.

HAFTORA:

Ashkenazim: Yechezkel Ezekiel 36:16-38

Chabad & Sephardim: Yechezkel Ezekiel 36:16-38

Rosh Chodesh Nissan falls out next Shabbat, Parshat Tazria, April 2nd of this year.

שמיני - פרה

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