

The Jewish Weekly

The Psalm-Sayer and the Medal of Courage

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Moshe Levy was one of the few soldiers that received the 'Ot Gevura' ['Medal of Courage'] - the highest Israeli combat award for bravery. In his case it was for his service in the Yom Kippur war (in October 1973).

The Yom Kippur war was won solely by Divine intervention. As is already well known, the Israeli Government at that time made a deadly mistake. They knew that the Arabs were planning to attack Israel, but thought that if we let them attack first the world would see who the real aggressor is and come to our help.

The result was disastrous. No one came to our aid. Our troops were totally unprepared, undermanned and under-armed, thousands of young Israelis needlessly lost their lives and, if it weren't for a series of clear miracles proving that G-D Al-mighty is protecting us, the Arabs would (Heaven forbid) have easily overrun the country!

Moshe Levy tells his story.

He was in a battalion of seventy-five soldiers guarding the southern Israeli border when suddenly they received orders from head command that a full battalion of Egyptian tanks backed up by foot soldiers were heading toward their position, and they were the only thing standing between the Arabs and Tel Aviv!

They requested reinforcements and ammunition but there were none. War had been declared and Israel was being attacked from all sides! The Syrians were attacking from the north and the Egyptians from the south, and all our forces were in confusion!

The desert night was silent. Only in the far distance could be heard a faint rumbling through the wind that became louder and louder. Was it the Egyptians?

Suddenly they appeared - over a hundred tanks. They couldn't possibly destroy so many tanks; they didn't even have that many anti-tank missiles! And who knows how many hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of enemy soldiers were behind the tanks?

The horrible truth was too obvious; They didn't stand a chance. None of them would get out alive. One of the soldiers mumbled dejectedly, "We're all dead! How can we possibly defeat 120 tanks?"

Suddenly one of the soldiers, a Yemenite Jew by the name of Zandani, jumped to his feet, took out a small book of Tehilim (Psalms)

from his pocket, held it up and declared, "I'll tell you how we'll defeat them. With this! Because the G-d of Israel is with us."

Most of the other soldiers were Israeli-style total atheists and almost totally ignorant about Judaism. Nevertheless, after the first few words the Yemenite read they all yelled out a hearty 'Amen!' ('Amen' is said only after blessings).

He began to read aloud, each holy word ringing out in the desert night. Moshe Levy stood, put his hand on his heart, and swore to G-d that if he got out alive he would put on tefillin every weekday for the rest of his life.

The battle began. The Egyptian tanks all opened fire with everything they had. The Israelis spread out and fired their bazookas and mortars, while Zandani stood and yelled the holy words of Psalms through the smoke and explosions.

Moshe Levy related: "We fired and fired while the Yemenite read aloud and it was miraculous. Every shot we fired was a direct hit! Their tanks were exploding all over the place. Perhaps the biggest miracle was that just as we were running out of ammunition and it looked like we were done for, suddenly, amazingly, the Egyptians retreated! They just turned around and left.

"The greatest miracle of all was that although a lot of us were wounded none of us got killed! That is, all except for one soldier...Zandani, the Yemenite that yelled out the Psalms, the only religious one in the group. The one that saved us. He was the only one killed.

"Something else too. My left arm got blown off!

"It took me nine months in the hospital to recover and during that period I had a lot of time to think. It really bothered me what happened. If anyone should have been protected by Hashem, it was Zandani. Why? And since my arm that I vowed to put Tefillin on got blown off, how was I supposed to keep my oath?

"The two questions began to drive me crazy. During the time I was in the hospital I was visited by a lot of rabbis, and I asked each one both questions but none of them had an explanation for me.

"Three or four years later," Moshe continued, "I went to the United States to have an artificial arm constructed and fitted. While I was there a good friend called me and told me that he spoke to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and that the Rebbe told him he was interested in seeing me.

"At first I couldn't figure what he was talking about. I was a totally non-religious person and had no connection with this rabbi or any rabbis, so why would he want to see me? How did he even know about me? So I refused.

It Once Happened...

"But my friend told me I was crazy. He said that people come from all over the world and wait months to see this Rebbe, and now I'm refusing?"

"So I figured, what do I have to lose? The meeting was set for twelve midnight the next night. As soon as I entered the Rebbe's room and looked at him I knew he was someone special. In fact, the entire time I was there I tried several times to look him in the eyes but I wasn't able to. He was just too holy. It's difficult to explain.

"He asked me to sit down and tell him about my experiences. We talked about the war and he was simply amazing. He knew each and every detail of each and every battle! He also had very strong opinions. For example, he was very disappointed with the Israeli government that they didn't allow the army to take Damascus and Cairo, even if for just one day, just to show them who is boss.

"He also said that although we should have been better prepared, it was a big miracle that the enemy decided to attack on Yom Kippur. The holiness of the day protected us, and also because the streets were empty and most of the reserve soldiers were in synagogues, so it was easy to mobilize the troops.

"We spoke for an hour and forty-five minutes, yet to me it seemed like five minutes. This was a novel experience that had never happened to me in my life and never happened again..


At some point in the middle of our meeting I asked him my question about Zandani and my arm. The Rebbe said that the answer was simple.

"Simple! I had asked this question to dozens of Rabbis who couldn't answer and he says it is simple?"

"He explained that in fact our entire company should have died, but Zandani made himself close to Hashem, so Hashem took only him instead. And the same with my arm: I was supposed to die even after Zandani's sacrifice, but because I devoted my arm to Hashem, Hashem only took my arm instead of my life.

"So you see, what had been bothering me for years the Rebbe answered in one minute."

Reprinted from an email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim, www.ohrtmimim.org.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Bereishit

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	5:25	6:37	7:17
Tel Aviv	5:40	6:38	
Haifa	5:30	6:37	
Be'er Sheva	5:43	6:39	

Great Tongues of Roaring Fire By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

There was a brilliant young man in Romania who appeared to be headed for greatness in Torah scholarship, but his curiosity drew him to read many books on the philosophy and theology of other religions.

Before long, he became exceedingly confused. He had always accepted his Jewish heritage as a matter of course. That was how he had been brought up, that was how he lived, and therefore, that was what he believed. His exposure to other ideas and views, however, disrupted his equanimity.

He floundered and wandered, and eventually, he decided to abandon Judaism and convert. He decided to pay a visit to the local priest to discuss his plans for conversion.

The next morning, as he walked toward the church, his heart was pounding violently. Should he go through with it? Was this the right thing to do? Was he really sure?

Lost in his tormenting thoughts, he hardly noticed his surroundings. Suddenly, he found himself in the midst of a large crowd, being jostled from all sides. "What is going on?" he asked a red-faced man pushing his way through the crowd.

The man paused in his pushing and looked at him in dismay. "Where have you been, my friend? Have you been hiding in a hole under the ground? The holy Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev is here, and he is going to lead the Morning Prayers in the synagogue.

"Hearing him pray is the experience of a lifetime. His holy words are like great tongues of roaring fire reaching out to the gates of Heaven. It is impossible to hear him and not be inspired. Don't you know that?"

"So I've heard," said the young man.

Despite his resolve to meet with the priest, he was overcome with a desire to hear the prayers of a holy Tzadik one last time before he converted.

The crowd was very dense, almost impenetrable, but he fought and clawed his way forward and reached close enough to the entrance of the shul to hear the sweet passion of R. Levi Yitzchak's voice.

The words, although faint and distant, tugged at his heart and soul, and he yearned to hear them better. With a sudden surge of strength that he did not know he possessed, he forced his way through the crowd and plunged into the shul, exhausted but exhilarated.

The Berditchever was standing at the prayer leader's stand, tightly wrapped in his tallit, trembling violently with fiery devotion, his hands outstretched toward the heavens.

He was saying the second of the two blessings that precede the Shema prayer, the one that beseeches the Creator to give us the wisdom to understand the Torah and properly fulfill its commandments. All of a sudden he interjected in Yiddish, saying, "Master of the Universe, You have so many angels," and then went on to describe the many different kinds of angels that inhabit the upper worlds.

"They all serve You, and I, Levi Yitzchak ben Sara Sasha, want to serve You as well."

He paused for a moment, and his whole body quaked and shook with intense concentration. "והאר עינינו בתורתך - Enlighten our eyes with Your Torah!"

The Rebbe's words penetrated to the very depths of the young man's heart, and the floodgates of his tears burst open. He wept and wept until he could weep no more, and right then and there, he abandoned his misguided notions of conversion and resolved to remain a faithful Jew.

Right after the conclusion of the prayers, as soon as R. Levi Yitzchak stepped away from the stand, he came over to the astonished young man and took him by the hand. "Come sit by my side, young man," he said in a gentle tone. "Stay next to me the entire day, and you will be fine."

From that day on, the young man lived an inspired life. He learned Torah and served the Al-mighty diligently. Eventually, he became an important rabbi, and a known Tzadik in his own right.

Over the years he told his story to a few individuals, but it is generally retold without mention of his name, in deference to the greatness that he achieved after his encounter with Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

Editor's Note: Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev ז"ל's 212th Yahrzeit was Thursday, 25th Tishrei – October 20th of this year

המולד יהיה ביום שלישי, 44 דקות ו 7 חלקים אחרי 9 בבוקר

ראש חדש מרחשון יהיה ביום שלישי ובוים רביעי Rosh Cheshvan will be Tuesday and Wednesday

Misrepresenting the word of Hashem can lead to tragedy, we learn this from Parshat Bereishit. Everyone is familiar with the instruction given by Hashem, to Adam and Eve, not to eat from the forbidden fruit.

When the serpent approached Eve and tried to convince her to eat of the fruit, she said to the serpent, "אמר לא תאכלו ממנו ולא תגעו בו - Hashem said, "You shall not eat of it, and you shall not touch it"

Rashi points out for us that actually Eve was wrong, Hashem had instructed them not to eat of the fruit, on no occasion did Hashem mention touching. It was Eve who said to the serpent, "Hashem said we aren't even allowed to touch it".

So the Midrash explains what then happened, the serpent knowing this, purposefully pushed Eve onto the tree and nothing happened to her. Then the serpent said, "you see, Hashem told you not to touch it, and now you've touched it and nothing has happened to you, and in this way the serpent was able to convince Eve that she should eat the fruit as well.

Now there is a question, did Eve really do something which was wrong? Don't we have a concept of "סייג לתורה - a fence around the Torah"? So for example, it is Torah law that one is not allowed to purchase something on Shabbat, so we introduced Muktzah, where we don't even touch a coin on Shabbat, to prevent us from going on to do that which is wrong. So Eve therefore said, we shouldn't even touch the tree, in order that we won't eat the fruit.

However, there is a difference, because Eve said to the serpent "אמר אלקים - Hashem has said, you can't eat of this fruit, nor can you even touch it," she misrepresented the word of Hashem.

The Torah has been give to us, to enrich our lives, and it is our responsibility to safeguard the word of the Torah and in particular, the word of Hashem. There is great value in "חומרות - stringencies which we add." It is important for us to have a "סייג לתורה - a fence around the Torah." However, unlike Eve, who purposefully misrepresented the word of G-d, let us always be true and responsible ambassadors of what it is Hashem Himself said.

In this spirit, let us pray together for our soldiers and emergency service personnel who risk their lives to defend and help us, as well as those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual Shabbat and Chodesh Tov.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 1
MITZVOT ASEH: 1
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 0

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 146
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1931
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 7235

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim & Chabad: Yeshayahu 42:5 - 43:10
Sephardim & Community of Frankfurt am Main: Yeshayahu 42:5 - 21

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh MarCheshvan
Rosh Chodesh – Tuesday & Wednesday - October 25 - 26

בראשית

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