



In Exchange for a Soldier

Blood, death and suffering once again made its appearance in Asia.

It was the Russo-Japan war and all able-bodied reserves—those wielding the red cards—were now being summoned to come and support the war effort. Fathers, sons and brothers were being sent to the front in the thousands; each went with the knowledge that he may never live to see his family again.

With the harsh reality of battle clear to him, the Chossid Mendel Dovid made his way desperately to Lubavitch to secure a *bracha* from the Rebbe Rashab that he would be freed from this terrible situation. He was after all a husband and father with little children waiting for him at home.

The Rebbe Rashab heard his request and replied, “Hashem should free you from their hands.”

In those dangerous times, a *bracha* wasn’t enough for Mendel Dovid and he asked the Rebbe to give him a promise.

“I can’t make a promise,” replied the Rebbe, but the Chossid pressed further and said, “There is a story that your father, the Rebbe Maharash, made such a promise and it was fulfilled.”

The Rebbe Rashab’s face became red and he answered, “My father was able to do such a thing but I can’t.”

“Please Rebbe,” begged the Chossid, “For me even your ‘possibility’ is good enough.”

The Rebbe Rashab became serious once again and he repeated his *bracha* but this time he added a word of assurance, “Hashem will save you from their hands.”

Reb Mendel Dovid went home with joy as he

prepared for the day his draft notice would arrive.

All the men who were called up for duty would report to a central location, each with his pack in hand holding a few possessions. From there they would go to headquarters and then off to the battlefield. They did not need much training because all of them already had prior military experience.

There was an officer in charge who had a list of all the draftees that were supposed to be reporting that day. It just so happened that on the day that Mendel Dovid reported to duty, the head officer in charge of all the drafts was supposed to visit that very base.

However, moments before he made his grand appearance the officer in charge entered the mess hall and called out:

“Is there a Gurvitz, Mendel here?”

Mendel Dovid nervously stepped forward.

“You are free to go home,” declared the officer.

And with those few words he saw the Rebbe’s words fulfilled much faster than he ever expected. In fact, he had all the documents proving his release a mere few days later. Though he was confident he would experience a miracle, he thought it would be a lengthier ordeal; perhaps faking the medical examination or something like that.

Curious to what had been the reason for his salvation, he probed for an answer. He soon found out the most amazing story:

This officer had lived in the city of Viliz for many years in a rented apartment. The apartment belonged to a Yid in Riga and once every three years he would travel to Viliz and make the

לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'
יהושע תנחום שיחי'
לרגל יום הולדתו העשירי
כ"ט מנחם אב ה'תשע"ז

נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' לוי יצחק
וזוגתו מרת יהודית חנה
גייסינסקי



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necessary improvements to the apartment.

After the owner passed away, he left the property for his children as an inheritance. It so happened that this apartment was in high demand and there were some people so interested in it that they were willing to put up the price and outbid the current tenant.

When the owner arrived, he was presented with their offer and he was inclined to accept the added revenue.

Before he agreed, however, he approached the officer who was still the tenant and told him that he could either accept to pay more or to vacate the property.

The officer really liked his residence, which he had been in for many years, and he didn't want to leave but at the same time didn't want to pay more rent.

So he came with a different type of offer.

"If you let me stay in the apartment, for the same amount of rent," he proposed, "then I will promise that I will save one Yid from the draft." The Jewish owners accepted his promise and he stayed on in the house.

When the same officer, who was presiding over the drafts that day, saw on the list "Mendel Dovid from Viliz," he decided that here was his opportunity to save the one Yid he had promised years before. ①

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