

**Once the axe falls there is
no turning back**

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Today we return to the complex realities facing the Jewish nation here and in the galut. This week's message is directed to the Jews in the US, essentially to parents of teenagers.

The present law in the US requires all males from the age of 18 to register in the advent that the military draft might be reinstated.

The following is a story which appears in the first volume of my book "With All Your Might". It could become reality in many families.

The phone rang in the nearly empty, topsy-turvy home of the Levines as they prepared for their aliya to Eretz Yisrael.

Mrs. Beth Levine nervously let the wrapping cord fall from her hand as she ran to answer the phone. Too late. The light on the phone's base signaled that there was a recorded message.

She pushed the "play" button, and a familiar voice spoke: "Hello, this is Miri from Nefesh b'Nefesh. I have two messages for you: a happy one and another, a bit disappointing. The movers will be coming to your home tomorrow morning, Monday, at exactly 7:00 AM, so please be ready. And the not so happy news.

I know how much you wanted the three ABC seats by the window, because of your names Al, Beth and Carol, plus the adjoining D seat of the middle section for David, on this Thursday's flight. But because you are a family of four you were assigned the four DEFG seats in the middle section. In any event, the thrill of going on aliya will certainly overshadow such minor irritations. Aliya tova!"

Miri was so right, Mrs. Levine thought to herself. The thrill

of a dream-come-true leaves no room for such mundane issues as seating on a plane; although it would have been nice to see the coastline of Israel drawing closer as the “wings of eagles” brought them home.

Al and Beth Levine had decided to come on aliya five years ago, when Carol was ten and David had his bar-mitzva. However, it took five years for Al to find a suitable replacement in his law firm; in addition, selling the house for the right price was a protracted process. But thank God, the local shul bought it to serve as the community home for whichever rabbi would be serving at the time.

In the interim, the Levines kept up with current events in Israel, as well as developments in the Middle East, and kept their dream alive.

Tensions were high. Iran, patron of the murderous Hezbollah and Hamas gangs, continued to develop a nuclear capacity. The United Nations Security Council passed a limited economic boycott resolution against Iran, and in an angry knee-jerk response, the Iranians decreased their sale of oil, causing the world price to jump to \$100 a barrel! As if this was not bad enough, Venezuela’s leftist president signed a ten-year agreement to sell its oil exclusively to China, which brought the price of gas at the pump to \$7 a gallon, with no sign that this would be the final price.

But none of this could detract from their decision to come on aliya.

David is to begin Bar Ilan University right after the holidays and Carol is registered in the Ulpan in Kiryat Arba. David was the crisis person in the decision. Youngsters of his age in Israel are drafted into the IDF, but David was promised that he would be permitted to finish his BA uninterrupted by army service.

With this issue behind them, there was really nothing to prevent the Levines from taking the step of a lifetime.

The one annoying factor in their aliya was the attitude of some relatives and friends, who, perhaps for reasons of jealousy or personal weakness, were very critical of their plans. "What's the rush? Wait until the children finish school. You're now at your peak earning power. Is this the time to leave?"

On the other hand, the Rabbi was wonderful. On Shabbat, he spoke from the pulpit on the mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael. He praised the Levines, saying how they would be missed in the many areas of their community involvement. Al for giving up his Sundays in order to coach the shul's little league team; Beth for being the Shabbat kiddish coordinator; Carol for helping her mother with the kiddishes and David for managing the shul's teen activities.

But, of course, the Rabbi was careful to point out that the mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael was in the category of a four-cornered garment, which although not mandatory to wear, if one should do so he would be required to attach to it tzitzit and merit a mitzva. So too, one is not required to

“go up to the land” until the Mashiach comes, but if one should do so he merits a great mitzva.

To their skeptical friends and relatives, Al would respond that there have been so many warnings of late that the time has come to go home. So, if not now, – when?

The tensions in various areas of the world forced Congress to upgrade the military.

The following day, on Monday, true to Miri’s message, the movers arrived at 7:00 AM sharp to take all the worldly possessions of the Levine family to the packing company, and from there to Israel.

Packing was an unforgettable experience.

Beth Levine stood wondering how they “succeeded” in 20 years of marriage to accumulate so much “stuff”. They began in the attic, which served as a nostalgic trip into the past. Many memories were evoked as they rummaged through their possessions. The less-than-modest wedding gown which Mrs. Levine did not want her Carol to see. A 78 RPM record player, Al’s catcher’s mitt, which he could not part with. Old photographs from the Pineview and Pioneer Hotels and summer camps. How these experiences have sweetened with time.

But life goes on. And with mental scissors, they will be severed in the light of the new life in the Promised Land.

Eventually, much was given away, more was thrown out, and the necessary articles were now packed in cartons to be shipped off.

In the packing process, the Levines concluded that Moshe Rabbeinu was so right in ordering the Jews to leave with only a few matzot, because if they would have been permitted to bring their possessions we would still be in Mitzrayim.

Ten in the morning and the movers had finished about half the work. A Western Union messenger suddenly arrived with a telegram for Mr. David Levine.

Al signed for it, opened the envelope and read aloud.

“Greetings. You are hereby informed that The President of the United States of America and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and Congress in emergency session, have passed the Selective Service Act of 2013, to be enforced immediately. You are hereby ordered to report on May 14, 2013, to the Induction Center at 1948 Independence Ave. for induction into the armed services for a period of not less than three years. You will be sent to Paris Island, Georgia, to commence basic training as a proud United States Marine. Your passport will be on hold until the completion of your military service. Good luck and God’s speed to you in the service of your country.”

Al handed the telegram to Beth as the phone suddenly rang. He got there too late to answer, but the light on the phone's base signaled that there was a recorded message.

Al pushed the "play" button, and a familiar voice sounded.

"Hello, this is Miri again from Nefesh b'Nefesh. Good news. Due to several unexpected last-minute cancellations, we have been able to get for you the three ABC seats near the window and the D in the middle. Derech Tze'lei'cha."

HaShem works with a stopwatch! Unfortunately for the Jews of America, if this occurs the reply of their rabbinic Halachic experts will be that as citizens of the United States, which has given so much to the Jewish people, it is a Torah obligation to answer the call of the flag.

Good Luck!

President Trump has two interesting qualities which are not necessarily good nor bad; depending on how he balances them. The President is ambitious and impatient; and has only 3.5 years to make America great again.

As it has been since time immemorial "great" in terms of a nation, is not the number of Nobel winners in Chemistry it produced but by the millions of soldiers arming planes, tanks, missiles and atomic war heads. For now, the US military is superior to China, however, they are rapidly advancing and will by sheer numbers achieve superiority in most areas. What is more 1.6 billion or 330 million?

It could happen overnight, as Al and Beth Levine in our story

found out after years of planning and postponing, which was dissipated in one moment by a short and unexpected telegram.

When the draft is in effect, aliya for that family will be close to impossible.

There will be no exemptions for divinity students, and no more one-or two-year learning stints in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. When the law is re-enacted, young men and women in the age group will be prohibited from leaving the country.

Once the axe falls there is no turning back.

As I have repeatedly urged over the years, send your teenagers here. But one can rightly say that Israel too has an army (probably man for man the best in the world) so what will we gain? To state it simply our army is "heimish", if you know what I mean!

Shabbat Shalom chag Sh'vuot Sam'ai'ach

Nachman Kahana

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