

The Real War

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Shimmy and Yitzy huffed and puffed as they shlepped the grocery bags up the steps to the house next-door. Their neighbor, Irving Blumenbaum, had just undergone surgery and the Greenbaums had offered to do his shopping for him until he recovered.

Shimmy rang the doorbell.

"Come in!" came a voice and they pushed the door open to see their neighbor coming towards them in his wheelchair.

"Hi boys!" said the always-cheerful Mr. Blumenbaum. "Thank you so much for helping me."

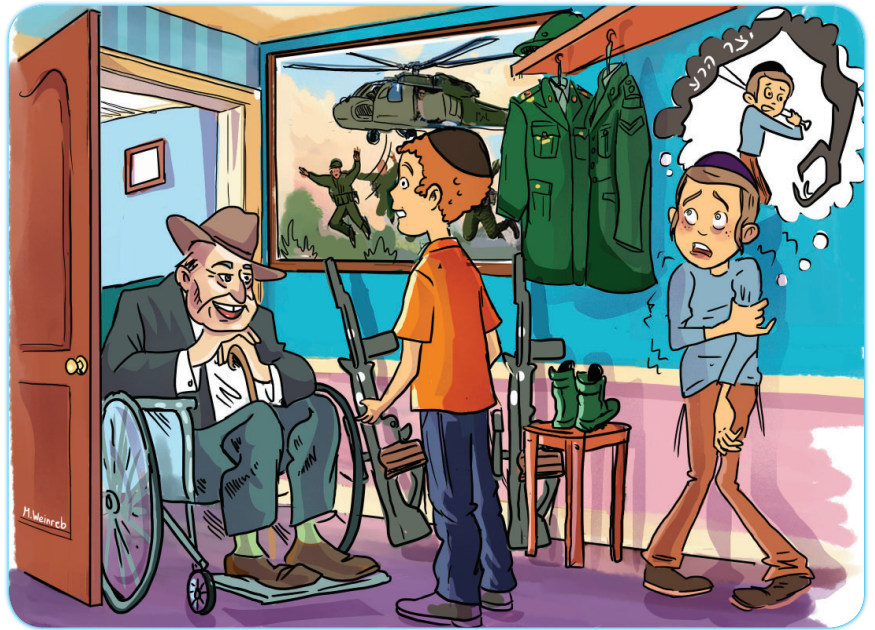
"You're welcome, Mr. Blumenbaum," said Shimmy. "Would you like us to help you put the groceries away?"

"Oh wow!" said Mr. Blumenbaum. "You boys really do have unbelievable middos. Why yes, that would be a great help."

So the two boys quickly unloaded the groceries and put everything away.

"Boys," said Mr. Blumenbaum as they were finishing. "Would you mind putting one of those tissue boxes in the back room?"

"Sure!" they exclaimed and ran down the hall. When they got to the back room, however, they stopped. There on the wall, was a picture of a bunch of soldiers jumping out of a helicopter in a field! And on the table next to the window was an old US Army uniform with the name "I. Blumenbaum". They looked around and saw that the entire room was filled with army and war-related things. There was even what looked like a real grenade on the shelf!



A voice made them jump. “Do you boys find my military keepsakes interesting?” Mr. Blumenbaum was sitting his wheelchair in the doorway, still smiling.

“Oh we’re so sorry!” Yitzzy said and he quickly put the box of tissues on the table next to the army uniform. “But this room looks **so** interesting! Were you in the army?”

“I was,” Mr. Blumenbaum answered. “I actually fought in Vietnam.” He pointed at the picture on the wall. “That’s me right there, jumping out of the helicopter.”

“Wow,” breathed Shimmy. “But why did you jump out of the helicopter instead of waiting for it to finish landing? It seems so dangerous!”

“It definitely is dangerous to jump out of a helicopter while it is still in the air,” agreed Mr. Blumenbaum. “But waiting until it landed in this case would have been even more dangerous! You see, this was right in the middle of North Vietnam during a time of intense fighting. We were constantly under attack from gunfire and rockets. Why, just a few minutes after this picture was taken, another helicopter full of soldiers was actually hit by a rocket!”

The boys listened in awe as Mr. Blumenbaum went on to tell them harrowing stories of the war, how he used to wade out into the middle of a big river in order to see whether there were enemy soldiers downstream, and how he was even hit in the left arm with shrapnel from an exploding bomb!

“That’s incredible, Mr. Blumenbaum,” said Shimmy. “Being at war in Vietnam must have been the most intense period of your entire life!”

Mr. Blumenbaum’s smile faded slightly. “Oh no, Shimmy,” he said seriously. “Not at all. I have been in battles that were much tougher than in Vietnam.”

“You fought in Iraq?” Shimmy asked.

“Nah, not Iraq,” Mr. Blumenbaum said. “This is a war that I’m still fighting in right now.”

“Oh was that why you just had surgery?” asked Shimmy. “Were you hit by another rocket?”

“No, no, no,” said Mr. Blumenbaum. “This isn’t a war with rockets. It’s much more dangerous and intense than that.”

“Like what?” asked Shimmy again. “Nuclear bombs???”

“Even worse than nuclear bombs!” exclaimed Mr. Blumenbaum as the boys got fearful looks on their faces. “I’m talking about the war against the *Yetzer Hora!* **כִּי תֵצֵא לְמִלְחָמָה עַל אִיבֵיךָ** — the war that lasts our entire life! And while rockets and bombs are scary and dangerous, they still can only hurt us in *Olam Haze*. But the *Yetzer Hora*? He tries to destroy our *Olam Habah* as well!

“You know, when I was out in the bush in Vietnam, we had to constantly be careful. Every noise, every movement we made, we never knew where the Viet Cong might be hiding, waiting to attack us. Even going out to go to the bathroom was risky! **But with the Yetzer Hora it’s a million times more dangerous!** In the *milchemes hayetzer*, we have to be careful not only about how we talk and act, but even how we think!”

“Boys,” finished Mr. Blumenbaum. “It’s late and you should be getting home before your mother worries. But take one more good look around at the army paraphernalia, the pictures of guns, bombs and helicopters, and this old deactivated grenade. And remember, **the fight against the Yetzer Hora is the real fight.** Every second, the enemy is waiting to jump and you must be ready for him so you can win the war!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

let’s Review

- Why did the boys visit Mr. Blumenbaum?
- What war is Mr. Blumenbaum still fighting?



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