

Ruth Kanner's Theatre Group

Discovering Elijah

A play about war

Based on a novel by S. Yizhar

Theatrical Version: Ruth Kanner

Translation: Edeet Ravel

Scene 1

narrator: Shortly after they crossed the canal on that bridge of rafts that was built behind schedule and in a hurry and seemed about to collapse listing on its side under every heavy vehicle crawling and passing with the utmost caution, from side to side, and after two actually toppled suddenly and turned over and fell into the water and their men were only barely saved and pulled out, and there was no time not for them **or** for anything and only make it, fast, before the Egyptians notice, when was it exactly, on Tuesday, no? Yes, on the 16th of October, yes, and since then we haven't heard a thing about Elijah

If you don't weave your way through...
you won't have a chance and you'll just be trampled underfoot or crushed between two. And everyone shouts quiet, go in order, and curses at you to move and it could have been quite a party
If only there were something to celebrate,
and only to get out fast and run away from Tassa if this is in fact Tassa and if this is you here yourself. And there is supposed to be a crucial turn right here, hey, you, there, yes, you, what is this here, can you tell me? No? So who does know?

Soldiers: Careful, careful, whoa! headlong collision, back back, where are your eyes you there you idiot- me? - not possible, not possible - move, you- me? No, you- get out of there, get moving- me? not possible. move move you over there and you too.
Yuval damn you where are you?
Soon we'll get it from the air or from the artillery on their ramps
It'll be all right, it'll be all right
and where is east here

narrator: And how will you find Elijah? Everyone looks like everyone else, pushing, and... shouting and suddenly laughing and then shouting again Yuval damn you where are you... or maybe suddenly some red paratrooper's beret will peek through above
or some red paratroopers' boot will burst forth from below.

Because Eliahu, our Elijah is after all one of the paratroopers- and he was from That unit that was there in Jerusalem.
And horrible rumours circulate all the time, no strength left to hear, and every phone call makes you jump and every no phone call brings you down. And nothing from Elijah and not from his friends and it's also not clear to whom... to whom...

To whom they in fact belong now and under whose command?

Soldier: Maybe there, over there... in the morning they were there to take equipment, maybe they are still in the area... maybe between those ramps... some place there, negative, negative, I repeat negative... I repeat negative...

ONCE

all (reciting/chanting): Once soldiers rose and mounted horses and rode all colourful with flags waving and trumpets blowing and lances and banners and the horses all beautiful and the horsemen and regiment after regiment all in order would go out galloping

And of all this nothing remains, not horses not camels not flags not banners not the sound of trumpets blowing. A bare desert, a hot wind, barbed wire fences with every godforsaken scrap of paper clinging to them, when suddenly

a giant eagle spreads its mighty wings and rises

actor: and is nothing but an evening newspaper, which the wind blew open until it caught on the fence which caught it and clutched it clinging and all its news torn to bits and scattered to the wind.

RUMOURS

- narrator: But below, between stacks of pots serving maybe as some sort of kitchen, there sits someone who is as if not from here, and with great efficiency he peels potatoes., and he can tell you the story of how those jeeps
- pot.peeler: crossed the canal, right at the first crossing
- narrator: He was there, right there on the water when the entire bridge shook and swayed from side to side, and at every moment on the verge of sinking or falling apart
- pot.peeler: or turning over and also it turned over two carriers or tanks, , such a pity, but the men were saved
- narrator: he thinks
- pot.peeler: and the paratroopers, in their jeeps, who were there like mosquitoes among elephants, spread out over there like little devils, and they were in fact the first to cross, hats off to them.
- narrator: and after they barely made it, all the heavy artillery came down like lame ducks, sixteen tanks, he thinks, yes,
and where are they now?
- pot.peeler: yes, it was really something, that day -- I no longer remember which day because I also don't remember what day it is today – Itzik, what day is it?
- narrator: evening keeps falling... and rumours all around
they know there's talk all the time
- soldier 5: about a prefabricated bridge that was supposed to be laid down across the canal, on which the paratroopers were supposed to cross with their tanks
- soldier 3: and destroy some AA missile bases
- soldier 5: and how the efforts to drag the bridge here went entirely awry during the night, God, what a night.
- narrator: all night the skies were torn by shards of fire and the earth itself was shaking and no one knew anything, who was shooting at whom and which side the firing was

coming from and it was all a balancing act on the tip of fate, the men, life, the weapons

soldier 1: so many wounded, God, no one knows exactly how many or who. Or they aren't saying. And only rumours. All the time...

Soldier 3: And we only saw how they drag and drag them, to evacuate them from here. Awful, just awful.

narrator: But Eliyahu, didn't he send a sign of life two days after the crossing?

soldier 2: they say that the Egyptians have more than 2000 tanks and more than 2000 canons and more planes than you can count and we have how many? 200 tanks? And a few more artillery weapons scattered here and there? Not that we don't have, but not here.

solider 3: is there anyone here who has any idea what's going on?

narrator: and where is the king who will appear suddenly blowing his trumpet?

soldier 1: they say that they're being buried meanwhile in the desert "temporarily" they say. Yes. And there are already many. Many many.

soldier 2: and they say that also Haim'ke, is that right? Did you hear? Is it true that also Haim'ke? Unbelievable.

soldier 1: come on, stop it.

soldier 2: but really, that's what they're saying. In that last explosion...

narrator: And suddenly, no longer hiding, fear emerges. Reeking, like. Reeking and not going away, like the stench of sweat. And your stomach turns. And doesn't find a place to settle.

and where is Eliyahu? Where in all this mess is our Elijah? And where is he now?

soldier 1: we have to verify at Headquarters

narrator: someone else suggested, just to suggest something

well-known man: but...

narrator: says the man who knows

w.k.m.: You can count on them... he says... those paratroopers, they're the salt of the earth and they're the kings of the wars, ever since Jerusalem and that night when all the men of the company fell on that shitty street on the way to the Wall, when they were sent to purify it with their bodies instead of sending one or two armoured carriers yes, and by the end of the night,, of the 80 who began fighting at dusk, only four were still standing on their feet, still in one piece

narrator: and Eliyahu, luckily, was among them, may the Lord guard and protect him.

w.k.m.: but Since Jerusalem no one's touched a hair on their heads, though some have started to go bald. And there's no special reason to start worrying about them now. If that reassures you

narrator: and it doesn't.

WRITING LETTERS

narrator: Someone from the Association for the Welfare of Soldiers gave us all these packs of post cards and pencils to pass among the men .

- want to send a postcard home?

He breaks off from his work for a minute, almost saying who has time for this nonsense, and soon nearly everyone is reaching out his hand and leaning on the side of the car or the wheel or his knee and he writes – one of them in a single stroke and one hesitantly and another looking around to find a word, and another wavering

soldier 2 how long will it take to get there anyhow

narrator: or

soldier 4: what will you do with all the letters

narrator: or

soldier 5: do you mind if I keep the pencil

narrator: or

soldier 3: what's the date

narrator:

And there's also one who starts with the address, that's the easy part, until he figures out what to write next or how to end it, and they look at the tip of the pencil to see if it's sharp enough – and who is nearby, and who's looking at you, lost like this, almost wailing, and in the end wiping his hands on the back of his pants, maybe trying to make those guys over there laugh, and after that writes only:

soldier 3: from me, Baruch, that's it

narrator: and hands it over, everyone hands over the postcards one after the other asking

soldier 2: how long will it take to get there

narrator: and they tell him tomorrow

and he says tomorrow, and he doesn't finish because suddenly it's here and who knows and until now no one thought how close it is

soldier 2: tomorrow...

narrator: and next to the truck stood a man in filthy overalls covered with grease

man in filthy overalls: yes

m.i.f.o.: I want to write but maybe you could write for me, it's for my eldest, he's already thirteen, he had his bar-mitzvah, and he'll read it for the others. Listen, son

you're already a big boy – please write – but right now you'll have to be even bigger. And did you write in the corner “With the help of God”?

m.i.f.o.: “with the help of God”, because that's required. yes, and let's continue, and now my son it's all on your shoulders: the house, your mother, your sisters, the business, yes, there's no choice, it isn't easy, but right now you're the oldest in the house and may God keep you and keep us all. and if I don't return, be strong, yes, *be strong and let your heart take courage*. Your father. And if there is still room add, who loves you.

PERFORMING ARTISTS BOMBARDMENT

soldier: great, here, the performing artists have arrived, whoever's finished, go and sit down

artist: hi there soldiers. Soon you'll be returning to battle and what can I say to you? (He spread his hands to both sides.)
So what plays should I put on for you and what speeches should I recite, when soon you'll die and be gone, so what? So I'll tell you jokes. Jokes for men. Men who are going to war like men. And you'll laugh a little at the rude parts , is that OK with you?

narrator: and no one laughed and no one applauded

artist: not funny? OK, here's one that will really get to you

narrator: and no one laughed

artist: alright, here is one last joke, this one will blow you away

soldier: look, there, there, it's a MIG!

narrator: And it's not very pleasant to sit under the falling bombs which appear like two black bottles diving sharply with a horrible diabolical howl, and right on you, and you have no way to hide, only your contracting shoulders and the thin iron bowl on your head against this tremendous boom which will be the last boom you will ever hear until the Day of Judgement.

soldiers: we hit him, damn him, we hit him, and he's taking off now, look at him take off, look, look at him fall... we gave it to him, we, we gave it to a plane.

And by the way, this wasn't a MIG, you don't know what you're talking about, this is only a pathetic Sukhoi 17, nothing but a lousy shitty Sukhoi.

narrator: exactly at that moment an armoured carrier stops and there are two stretchers attached to its sides, with two who are covered by a blanket

soldier: yes, we also had a few casualties

narrator: All you can see is a pair of army boots, heels touching, toes too far apart, feet too heavy, falling lifelessly to the sides, and the head of one and also the other pulled back much too far, with the same finality of death.

soldier: no, I don't recognize them. Not from our unit.

narrator:

There is no war, no what-will-be, nothing...also not two young boys who were covered with a blanket... only their boots exposed, heavy spiked army boots, falling too far to the sides, falling without resistance. And also only the tips of their hair dusted with dust, blond, curly and stiffened with dust, it was more fitting that they first go home on vacation and before anything else shampoo their hair, give their glorious blonde curls a good shampoo, wash and soap and scrub their hair with scalding water and clean off all the filth and dust and the roads they rolled through and also this death which suddenly swept over them, after one short and successful battle, although not for them in particular, and they should have been given another chance to live, to come back and get up, young and cheerful, the way they used to be, in light young clothes and go out in the evening with their girls to dance. But this terrible dropping of the head too far backwards, with no muscles to hold it back, is that Danny? Is this Gadi? Does anyone know?

And only to think about something else to distract yourself or to sleep or to do something. Suddenly you find great interest in that tire, the tire on the big truck. How it's solid, how it's not in fact made of iron but as strong as iron. And how interesting the way it's all grey and inflated so strong, rolling around the wheel with all those big bolts, standing there so strong and inflated like grey iron, complete in itself, with all sorts of numbers and initials on it. It actually has a face, an expression, this tire. Full of air, hard, compressed, standing there with nothing to say until suddenly, quietly, it says (without really saying), enough, my friends (it says) calm down (it says and it says that)it doesn't matter, (that) it's not so bad (and that) there's no reason why it has to end badly (and that) look, (and) that yes, (says the big strong tire, partly sunk in sand), you'll see that yes.

who were these, wait, wait, no, aren't those the paratroopers?

THE BLUE VOLKSWAGEN

narrator: They gave us a Volkswagen station wagon to use, blue and quite worn out, which they confiscated for emergency use from some speechless civilian, and now we'll go for a ride...

narrator: and already we're sitting and bouncing in this very station wagon. A road code-named "curiosity", a stronghold code-named "caress", a barbed wire fence with every godforsaken scrap of paper clinging to it.
And at the slope of the hill, we fall upon a sight that draws our eyes

narrator: as if there in that open field several bodies lay sprawled on the ground, and some time passes before you understand and make the connection that these are really (and you still don't believe it) that these are really the dead from this battle, that yes here this is where they fell in the middle of running
and there comes an urgent need also to turn your head away from them and not to see anything more and not to let anything enter your mind, not to let this image enter your mind, and so it won't escape suddenly every night and stare at you relentlessly but at the same time you also had to look and see everything, and get a good look and not turn your head, not, to look and see and see and know, how .

lying on their sides and on their faces and on their backs
body after body sprawled over there. these are their bodies.

Enemy losses. Their losses.

And who will gather the dead from the field?

Us, them, the crows and the dogs? And our two were already taken away. To think in the end this is all it is, that this is death. Oh, to run away from here quickly and never remember

narrator: Now we're already approaching the bridge in the blue station wagon. Stuck in the convoy that's rushing to finish the crossing before another bombardment begins...
But these are the very sounds, these horrifying whistles... really here, not far from here, and it's upon us, and we're the target.

Maybe one of ours will come now and hit them back. Where are ours, our planes, or our artillery,
Who will shell these bombers and let them know once and for all

Or God in heaven ...trying to become hollow and emptied of everything and be nothing, no one hits nothing and nothing is not a target
Big deal to drop so many bombs on two or three jeeps and a station wagon

And it's already so close.. those dreadful whistles again, and you don't know if this is the one. Don't know, and don't know, and all you know is that it's enough, in the name of God, enough, you can't take it any more, humans weren't made to bear this.

And in the name of God maybe it's enough already? Maybe enough?

Someone screams. Got hit, probably. Got hit. Him, of all people. Him, . And the One No One Sees is already waiting here ...waiting to come and gather him peacefully in his arms.

Volkswagen: Who knew him? Who was his friend? And his mother, did she feel at that moment...did her heart miss a bit? They don't know yet that 've lost a son.

Narattor: But listen, because suddenly there isn't another one. Really? It's over?

And so quiet, such quiet, pure and simple quiet, quiet quiet.

Volkswagen: Quiet... quiet...

Narrator: And suddenly there's time. Lots of time and no one knows what to do with it. No one needs it. The war went away somewhere. The war only wanted to finish with this poor wretch who just like that got it and died

Narrator: And already there's a tank unit here, five or six are getting filled up...and it seems they just now arrived from some battle and in another minute they'll go back, their captain is wandering around

DIVINE INTERVENTION

narrator: ... his name is Yoni and he's in tankers' overalls.

Yoni: It was an unexpected clash

narrator: he explains

Yoni: and suddenly we were in the middle of their ambush... and two of our tanks were already hit and finished, and then began the cat and mouse games, who will get into a firing position first and it didn't take us long to burn one of their tanks, and it started exploding... and it was all so fast, as if we had just realized and already it's heavy battle

narrator: he can't stop, Yoni, he's burning to say more, and to say it right and not leave out anything

Yoni: but by the most amazing luck, they kept missing, again and again they missed, and by the most amazing luck we didn't, and we were faster and more precise

narrator he said

Yoni: less than five minutes and it was all over, three of theirs were burning and the rest retreated until they vanished, such luck

narrator Yoni was all excited

Yoni: we could have all been corpses right now, burnt to death... such luck that I noticed them, such luck
another half-second and we would have been the ones burnt to death, half a second

narrator: and he can't rest, Yoni, ... and now he's being called to the intercom, there's a message for him. And he returns to us

Yoni: luck, you say? Just plain luck? The lottery is luck. Just blind luck?

narrator: he says

Yoni: but here luck wasn't blind...
It's as if someone knew that we'd walked into a trap, and yelled to us suddenly, be careful, because I sensed it. And I yelled out to everyone and we'd already

spread out to attack. And that was exactly what saved us. I mean, how should I put it? That's what protected us. Something that knew where we were and warned us. And maybe that's what it is, some sort of divine intervention, maybe

narrator: Yoni said, like someone hearing something for the first time

Yoni: divine intervention

narrator: he said and listened to the new sound of those syllables, because he's from a kibbutz, a socialist kibbutz, where they guarded them from derelict words, and suddenly he's discovered one, as perfect as a pearl. he doesn't have words like Divine Intervention in his vocabulary. at this moment these words were revealed to him and maybe he heard, as from inside a shell, ancient echoes that were always there, beyond all the undoing of ancient ties. because what use are they?, what do they have to do with the proletarian revolt and suddenly, these words come to him and they are his, entirely his, and this is truth, pure truth.

Yoni: divine intervention

narrator: Yoni repeated... the demon of restlessness still seizing him, but his eyes are smiling now, like the eyes of someone who has discovered the thing, the thing that never crossed the minds of the nannies at the kibbutz, and which his teachers did not want to cross his mind. and suddenly, Yoni, Captain Yoni, commander of the company that at any moment will be heading into battle-- suddenly he has found the thing.

SHOWER

narrator: Suddenly your eyes are drawn to something over there by the side, there's someone here who has arranged for himself a private nighttime shower. He's hung a pail of water on some pole and when he pulls at a rope the pail turns and splashes water on the head of this man of many deeds. Right now he's at the soaping stage, he stands there and soaps his naked body, his face and ears and underarms which are black with thick hair, and he's lathering the soap, more soap, more lathering, and with sounds of pleasure that can be heard everywhere. And reaches down to his stomach and its curves and to his private parts which are covered with hair and he lathers them so that everything will be absolutely clean from the filth of so many days,

And now he pulls the rope and the pail provides him with a good stream and he prepares in the palms of his hands little channels for the water so it can run down his chest and backside and his private parts which he cups in the large palms of his hands so that he can bring them forward for a pleasurable wash

and he likes it, and the people who are watching him like it and finally he takes the large towel he's prepared and spreads it around his shoulders and dries himself with the motions of summer vacation and the beach...

FOXTROT

narrator: We're back in the blue Volkswagen station wagon

And someone else joins us. A well-known man... and he always knows what's really going on

And another person has also joined us in the back of the station wagon, a tall young man, full of seething rage, and he doesn't stop attacking someone who isn't here

tall young man (attacking): why, tell me why, why did they have to go into that Chinese Farm and how many were killed, how many wounded? Almighty God

narrator: no one answers, they look out through the open windows... they want to bypass all of this sort of talk... not now... enough

tall young man: What's left of that paratrooper unit?

well-known man: They were last seen working on some ramps above the canal

narrator: the ramps? (I wake up) where are they? Because maybe that's where Eliyahu's paratroopers are? There's been no word from them, not a word, it's been two weeks now

we pass the big bridge lying across the canal... in no time at all we reach a dusty dirt road, ... and we see in front of us one of the ramps... we're looking for someone to ask... and just now we see approaching us a

Volkswagen: jeep!!!
emerging from the fields

narrator: and someone's already nodding hello at us, wanting to know who we are and...

adjutant: what's up?... this? This is the Foxtrot Ramp, we seized it only yesterday, the paratroopers... with only two jeeps that's it... they simply swept in using all the fire in their machine-guns, they got in all at once to the top like a storm... and Foxtrot was ours all at once, without losses, without anything pleased to meet you

narrator: he's the adjutant of the paratroopers' regiment, and this is his helper and these kids are such ignoramuses that they don't know that

adjutant: the foxtrot is a type of dance from my grandfather's time - a dance they used to dance to a two-beat rhythm, first slow steps then running steps then two sort of taps

Are you looking for someone special?

narrator: yes, for Elijah, from the original paratroopers

adjutant: ah... hold on
we'll check it out in a minute, in a minute we'll clear up everything
Hello, dove One, hello dove One.
The dovecot is empty (he tried to joke)

narrator: Like a shepherd with his herd you go over and count and account for every living soul. At times like this a man's hair goes white. You can't shorten it, you can't measure it, and your heart hovers between exploding and secretly praying, All-merciful God

But in the end he said, no.

adjutant: No, also not wounded, nothing.

narrator: and no one knows what to do or what now.
And what's left now? To crumple up and climb one after the other into this Volkswagen, and squeeze uncomfortably in ...

Adjutant's helper: look at these territories, this Goshen, this is Goshen, isn't it? From the Bible?

Tall young man: No. No Goshen. This is Geneifa, jabel Geneifa, Egypt, there's no Goshen here. First they go back to a biblical name and then they come and build settlements
No, we have nothing to look for here. Too bad we came here in the first place.

Adjutant's helper: Why too bad? We came on a neighbourly visit, no?

well-known man: Some neighbours. One killing the other. That's the way it is with neighbours, always. First they kill then they talk then they're neighbours. That's the order, always. Isn't that right? Isn't that the way it is in history?

tall young man: Right now they're retreating from both sides of the canal

narrator: said the one who knows

well-known man: We only took one small step on the eastern side, and immediately they were repelled

narrator: said the man who knows more

tall young man: what the Egyptians wanted wasn't land but their honour... to show that they're worthy of respect and that we aren't immune to defeat and what they accomplished was a big thing, that we'd be able to sit and talk with them like two equals

adjutant's helper: on the other hand, all they accomplished....

tall young man: all they accomplished was that now we can see very well how all this was not necessary... no, it was not necessary... this whole war was not necessary.

well-known man: what's wrong with you? who started this anyhow?

Adjutant's helper: and who needs to learn a lesson, not even to think of daring to attack again,? Right now our hand is strong and they have to know the force of its blow for now and for generations to come.

narrator: but we're not the ones who started, we didn't do anything to them

adjutant's helper: it fell on us all at once

well-known man: wars don't fall from the sky, wars are decisions

tall young man: war only brings more war and no one gains anything. Because no war in the world ever brought anything except maybe the war that came after it.

well-known man: ...everything that was planned didn't work, only the crazy last-minute inventions ... the mess...and that's exactly what destroyed the Egyptians...
apart from the men who fought with all their might, risking their lives without any consideration for caution or feasibility

tall young man: But why must a man risk his life? Why bring men here to play with death? Why throw them into these killing fields in order to prove that they can get out of them, if they get out? Don't you see, and

wasn't someone responsible for this whole thing?.. how could they have let this war break out? Where were they?

well-known man: what's wrong with you, what kind of talk is this? You're a regiment commander, how can you talk this way?

tall young man: And how is she prime minister? And how is he Minister of Defence? And how is he a division commander who doesn't give a damn about anyone?

well-known man: stop, stop, you hear, stop

THE CHINESE FARM

soldier 1: what went on... what went on....

narrator: what went on... he is starting to grope, groping to find his words

soldier 1: at first it seemed as if it would go fast with a row of our tanks leading, six? Or eight? But there was no “at first”, because before we even started already we got it, already three of ours were burning, and we didn’t even catch yet who and what,

... they were inside their trenches, dug in... they flashed their lights at us... and they had all those bazookas and machine guns, and at close range, at no range at all.

There wasn’t time to think, and only to run and reload and press the trigger all the time never stopping ... and all the time from all sides falling right next to you - you just spoke to him and already he’s turning over with his head bent forward.

His helmet was full of some sort of white liquid...

soldier 3: Haggai tells me, *yallah*, it’s your turn now, jump, and I said to him, after you, Haggai, and he says OK, you cover for me, and I said, here, I’m covering, jump, and Haggai just got up, just almost got up, and already... crumpled up, all at once... and that was it, I guess -- *yallah*, Haggai, Haggai, I yelled at him, *yallah*, get up, and I touched his shoulder, but he was already gone, he was completely finished, it’s not him, everything’s in him as if he were and he already isn’t... and there’s also no time, fire everywhere, and we have to hurry up and go on... and he stayed behind me, as if he were a piece of rock or sand, and we have to go back to evacuate him...

And it’s no longer him, he isn’t here, it’s not him... and there’s nothing you can do. Dead, totally dead. Poor guy. What do you know

narrator: No, he hasn’t finished telling yet, ... and you see that he still has more... it’s not the story itself, but something else that you have to understand from the story.. For example, “dead”. They say “dead”, they say killed, they say casualty, but it’s just some sort of word that people know how to say, and it means that he got it, that he’s out of commission, that he’s finished, and that dead is worse than wounded and also that dead is final and still it’s a word and the truth of it is that nothing about the word is understood, only there wasn’t time to think about it.... (and especially

when you're so young, hardly more than a boy, what can you know about the depths of the word dead or about its heights) - what is it really, he's dead. What happens to him when he dies... and by the way, is a dead Egyptian the same thing? Also in their dead there's some secret, something not understood, or else for them it's different and they just become carcasses and that's it. Who knows.

Soldier 4: ...I took Oded and the two of us returned to Haggai to pick him up and put him inside the carrier, and Oded was suddenly very mixed up and very dizzy, I let go of Haggai, what used to be Haggai, my friend, on the ground, and I pushed Oded inside to get him to go through the opening of the carrier, but the fool got away from me, slipped right from my hands, fell to the sand, and stood up suddenly like a lame madman and started running in the sand outside across the sand dunes, and we had to go down and run after him and catch him the madman, and bring back, and just then the tank commander announces from above that he's been hit by bullets and he can't go on, and someone jumped over to him and the tank turned around itself and someone screamed then into the intercom, get out, leave the area, leave everything, come back fast, come back to us, they yelled and then we saw a whole flock of Egyptian tanks....

We opened hard fire. And suddenly the tank on the side caught fire

I stare into the light of the flame of the burning tank and I already see THEM CLEARLY AND THEY ARE ALREADY COMING CLOSER, COMING AND SHOOTING AND SHOUTING IN ARABIC shooting and getting CLOSER AND THE TRAP IS CLOSING and I had nothing left on me except for a personal AT missile which I always carried with me. Carefully I aimed the launcher at those soldiers and very, very slowly I squeezed the trigger as they rose. There was a huge explosion my pants caught fire from the sparks. Very funny, but they were stunned and they started spreading out in every direction and

soldier 2: Also I also I was on that side and I saw how two of our tanks entered, and how they rolled downward... and we had to rescue them. Captain Yiftach sent us another two tanks to drag them out, and all the time under heavy fire.... I saw that two men were killed and also that Yiftach himself got it. We went down, we all crawled on four to hide behind the tanks that were hit. Yiftach's blood was spouting as if from a spout..., and just then the tank of the commander arrived and he called us then and showed us down below two tanks that were standing there and burning, and he told us that we had to get to them right away, as fast as possible, and to see what's going on there, but by foot, not by carrier, so as not to be seen (God I was scared) there was no choice, I crouched and started to run bent down in a zig zag,... I crawled and I got close to the second tank and I saw

under it a soldier lying unconscious on the sand without a leg... wait, I told him, I 'll take you, but he was so heavy... hold me, hug me tight, I told him, and I started walking, struggling, bent over like a dog, he was so heavy, and I dragged him and I dragged him like a sack of flour, and the whistling of the bullets coming faster and faster, and we were completely exposed

a clear target for all their weapons, , and the blood was streaming, he didn't yell and he didn't say anything, and I don't know whether he's still alive.... and that way, a bit more, a bit more, and hard fire constantly right over our heads, and it's going on and on, I don't believe it's ever going to end, I no longer have the strength for anything and I'm just waiting for it to be me

soldier 2: your head is exploding and your stomach is exploding everything's exploding, you're afraid to raise your head, afraid to think about raising your head,... you're not going to come out of this, you're going to come out crazy, you're going to come out torn to pieces. You're not going to come out of this alive.

soldier 3: have you noticed... that no one here has cursed, no one said what do we need this for -- that this is war and there's no choice and we, since we're already here, have to do what we have to do, hard as it is.

soldier 2: maybe from high up it looks great, IN THE WAR ROOM MAYBE IT'S CONSIDERED holding our ground, or exterminating the ambush,

soldier 3: and that you're inside an event that's bigger than one person, you're part of something that will go down in history

soldier 2: and really it's only you yourself one person in the middle of all this IMPOSSIBLE and no human was made for this, It's unbearable, to take a human being and put him there... crawling on the sand like a worm,

soldier 3: and that this is a war and we're at war and that's the way it is in war. And that's the way it is in war and we're at war.

narrator (yelling): no, no, no, it's not like that, and that's not... it didn't have to be... there's a terrible mistake here... you can't, you can't, you can't, great God, you can't... it wasn't inevitable.

HOW A MAN GATHERS HIMSELF AND STARTS TO RUN

narrator: how does a man gather himself and get up and **stand** on his feet, how does he get up from the sand crater he's in and climb out and start to run, how does he get up and run when they're firing hard at him, did he shut himself off to all the warnings his body gave him and start running, is he trembling with fear and running anyhow, running a step and already lying down flat, telling himself, I have to go on, or getting up because that's the way it is here, and this is what everyone does here and him too! or does he seduce himself with the thought that it's precisely the quick running and the persistent shooting from the hip that CANCEL THE FIRE THAT'S COMING AT YOU, that's what they taught us, always be daring and attack, always go on attacking, and the enemy will break, because daring is like armour, and your soft body, your too soft body, this ever so permeable body of yours, when it runs exposed it deters the crazy shrapnel

Because what makes a man run into open fire? What **can be** stronger than his natural fear, his reluctance, the refusal of his body, the voice of his mother... or is it that there is just no time for all sorts of questions like that and you get up on your own, and get swept into the momentum of things, you yourself don't exist, you are nothing, you are only the thing that is shooting, you get up and shoot to all sides, and even try to calculate what the best thing is and to which side and already you're lying down flat, and suddenly you scream, scream, scream.

soldier 3: and you run, and shoot and run and shoot, straight into the smoke of the shots around you and that way, stripped of everything you are, stripped of everything you were, stripped and nothing but a shooter of fire, I am nothing, only a thing that runs and shoots fire, God what's left of me

COVER UNDER FIRE

soldier 1: your head is exploding, your stomach is exploding, your ears are exploding, everything's exploding, you're afraid to raise your head, afraid to think about raising your head

Falling around you and shattering any which way first closer then a bit farther, then very very close and the pieces flying wailing looking for you, you can already feel the place on your back where it's going to hit this time, and the injustice of it all, why you, you're stretched out glued to the ground and all the demons of hell are wailing around you and falling on you and exploding on top of you ...just the wailing, that wailing that can drive you out of your mind, coming at you, right at you, and your own wailing, praying for it to end already, oh God, let it end, you can't bear this even one more second, but it keeps coming, more and more, this exploding, all the time

soldier 2: just not my head, such a pity if my head, and just not my spine, horrible, horrible and also not my shoulders your entire body fills with ants. How much longer can it go on? Which part am I ready to give up so they don't get everything and finish all of me? One leg, one hand one eye?

you are placed here in the middle of the impossible, it's the impossible that you're inside in the middle of, it's the unbearable that no one can stand that you're in the middle of, lying here, alone in the world, and everything, everything on top of you,

soldier 3: But I'm not alone. There are others lying even on this side. We're all lying in the sand. Hiding the body that holds our soul, concealing the softness of our bodies, so their head won't be hit, and not their neck, please, and not their chest and not your stomach and not your intestines and not their manhood which they already forgot all about and also not their legs and please not your hands. No, for God's sake, no...

soldier 4: and that enough already, let it be enough, stop you over there, stop you there, bastards... there's nowhere left to squeeze yourself. It's not soft, this ground of sand, it has no softness and no opening to hold you, or just a part of you, and the fragments of white-hot iron flying at you don't care who they hit on the way, and who will be torn to pieces, he'll be torn, his flesh will be torn, his neck will be torn, his stomach will be torn, all of you so soft, so entirely unable to withstand all this, all of you scrunched up, your neck, stomach, backside, privates, yes, the soles of your feet,... here you are. Hello! Where were you? This is Gidi. Gidi's here. Where is Gidi? Peek-a-boo, Gidi? Here I am! Peek a boo!

get up and run, man, run and escape with your life, run and take off- “get up”?, “run”? Just be a non-existent worm a soft worm burrowing through the ground to squeeze a drop further into itself.... no longer thinking, no longer feeling, or knowing or planning, also no longer God please do something God maybe only

mother

mummy

my mom

mama

narrator:

The skies above are silent. But their perfect pounding, grey, solid - as if scattered now into a million wriggling vapours, pearls rising high, high above. Thus the skies of Austerlitz were revealed to Prince Andrei, it seems, Bolkonsky? When you are wounded and death comes. Death. a word.

And up above there is nothing of this and all this does not exist... and all of you, is nothing but a small meaningless enterprise in this huge and mighty glowing splendour among these celebrating stars... and even if other souls passed through them just now, rising from the earth one after the other, and there is no message in the sky and no understanding and no mercy and also no desire to know. They are not there for this, the skies and all their hosts. The deaths of human beings and their lives are not the business of the sky. They are there without touching us, without knowing about us.

So beautiful that all shall sing **hallelujah.**

ELIJAH DISCOVERED

narrator: Setting off, on the road that has now become so familiar, avoiding the Talisman axis and holding onto drill and then onto spider, from whence they turned and went to that Chinese Farm from which not all who went returned and not all who walked in came back walking... and there is no sign of the souls that soared away from here, more than a thousand maybe close to two thousand, not ours and not theirs... no sign,. And maybe there are altogether no souls, and it's all nothing but bodies, the many bodies of the living who died.

Speeding now towards the Bright junction

Did it have to be, now this sentence plays again and again, not letting go of you

The lone trees passing by now say, did it have to be this way? The strip of shimmering water from the canal says, Did it have to be this way? The group of soldiers waiting for a lift wave and say, Did all this really have to be? this way? Really?... until it's playing everywhere now, God, did all this have to be? Really?

Entering Suez City now. An empty ghost town... as if they fled from an earthquake or a flood... and suddenly there's a big house with big balconies covered in red bougainvillea... and underneath, below the balconies... luxurious sofas stand scattered... and in one of them there's someone sitting feasting on white grapes

Hey, visitors, he says without moving

And then something happens, because someone raises his head and sees something, and then like fire flashing forth he jumps up from his place, jumps up and stands, stands and jumps, jumps and runs, ahh he shrieks, ahhh,

and comes and takes his large arms and spreads them... and throws himself hugging, and hugging and hugging

how wonderful, he shouts,

And maybe he'd also start dancing now and he shouts to everyone, look, come and look, he shouts...

And now he's entirely unidentifiable and not resembling any... but in fact it's him, it's really him, look at him, it's him, it's Eliyahu, here he is, and it's him, our Elijah smiling at us

Shalom Eliyahu