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The Eternal Light

Chapter Three Hundred Sixty-One

"REMINDER ON THE DOORPOST"

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Chapter Three Hundred Sixty-One

"REMINDER ON THE DOORPOST"

(Music: CHORD)

Cantor: SIGNATURE AND DOWN)

Voice: (ECHO) And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light to cause the lamps to burn continually in the tabernacle of your congregation, and it shall be a statute forever in your generations.

Cantor: UP WITH ORCHESTRA AND FINISH

Anncr: THE ETERNAL LIGHT!

(Music: THEME AND DOWN)

Anncr: The National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make free time available to present The Eternal Light, a program which comes to you under the auspices of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. . . . In observance of Armistice Day, we present "REMINDER ON THE DOORPOST," by Joseph Mindel.

(Music: THEME UP AND OUT)

(SOUND OF DISTANT ARTILLERY AND UNDER)

Chaplain: I had set up the altar in a regimental command post. The thick, sticky mud of Korea was on the floor of the tent, on the men's boots and clothing and faces, but the candles were lit, and it seemed to me that even the far-off artillery grew quiet in honor of the newly come Sabbath.

Cantor: SHALOM ALEICHEM, IN HEBREW, ESTABLISH AND UNDER

Chaplain: There is a tradition that on Friday evening, angels accompany the men on their way home. So, on the arrival, they sing a song of welcome to the angels. Shalom aleichem, malachei hashalom. Peace to you, angels of peace. . . . We sang, and for a little while, we sat in peace.

Cantor: UP AND FINISH

(ARTILLERY, UNDER, AND OUT ON CUE)

Chaplain: Near the end of the service, I asked the question I always asked. . . . (PROJECTING SLIGHTLY) Are there any mourners in the congregation?

BRIEF PAUSE

MacPherson: (OFF) Sir. . . . I am in mourning.

Chaplain: Let us say the Kaddish.

MacPherson: (COMING ON) I—I'm sorry, Sir. You'll have to help me with the prayer.

Chaplain: Of course . . . Yisgadal v'yiskadash . . .

MacPherson: (HESITANTLY) Yisgadal v'yiskadash . . .

Chaplain: . . . shmay rabba . . .

MacPherson: . . . shmay rabba . . .

Cantor: SNEAK KADDISH

Chaplain: (TOGETHER) A FEW MORE LINES, AND TAKE OUT

MacPherson: WITH

Cantor: UP AND OUT)

Chaplain: At the end of the service, I stood at the door of the tent, to shake hands and meet the men for the first time.

One: Private Levin, Sir.

Chaplain: Gut Shabbos.

Two: Corporal Adler, Sir.

Chaplain: Gut Shabbos. Come again next week.

MacPherson: Thank you, Sir. . . . For the prayer.

Chaplain: Would you like me to teach you the kaddish, Private. . . . (WAITS FOR THE NAME)

MacPherson: Private MacPherson, Sir. . . (PAUSE) Aren't you going to say something?

Chaplain: I'm trying to find words to comfort you.

MacPherson: No, I mean. . . Let it go, Chaplain—

Chaplain: Was it a member of your family?

MacPherson: No. My buddy. . . . He didn't have to die!

Chaplain: No one can say to Death—Wait. First I wish to arrange my affairs.

MacPherson: He was only a kid! Nineteen—maybe twenty. . . . and he didn't have to die!
His name was Davey Gordon . . . That's why—that's why I came to your service. . .

Chaplain: Davey Gordon . . .

MacPherson: Yes, did you know him, Chaplain?

Chaplain: Yes. Yes, I knew him. I knew him. I knew Davey Gordon.

(Music: NARRATIVE THEME AND UNDER)

Chaplain: I conducted weekly services, special and holiday services in five thousand square miles of Korean mud and mountains. I saw and spoke with many men—but I remembered Davey Gordon. . . . It was my first day in Korea, when I worked late into the night in my office at Corps Headquarters, I went out for a few minutes to rest and look at the unfamiliar stars. . . .

(Music: OUT)

. . . . Then I came back to work again.
(DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES. FOOTSTEPS ON WOOD FLOOR, MOVING PERSPECTIVE)

Davey: (COMING ON) SOBBING AND CONTINUE UNDER
(FOOTSTEPS OUT) Chaplain—

Chaplain: What is it, son? Can I help you? . . . Did you want to see me? I'm the new chaplain. . . (PAUSE) Maybe if you talk about it. . . No? All right. . . I was trying to find the North Star

just now. The sky seems different here. . . (PAUSE) I talk too much. Go on. Get it out of your system.

Davey: SOBBING DECREASES, THEN STOPS. (PAUSE)
(ABOUT TWENTY) I—I feel much better now, Sir. Thank you very much.

Chaplain: Can I help you in any way?

Davey: You already have, Sir. . . . Good night.
(FOOTSTEPS GOING OFF)

Chaplain: No, wait. . .
(OFF) (DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS)

(Music: BRIDGE)
(SOUND OF HAMMERING ON WOOD AND OUT)

Davey: Excuse me, Sir. I. . . .

Chaplain: Oh. Hello. How are you this morning?

Davey: Fine, Sir. I came to. . . . What I mean is. . . (QUICKLY) Do you need any help, Sir?

Chaplain: It's practically done. . . (A FEW MORE HAMMER BLOWS)
There.

Davey: That's a mezuzah. I haven't seen one in a long time.

Chaplain: As it is written in Deuteronomy. . . And thou shalt write these words upon the doorposts of thy house.

Davey: At home, we have one on the door. When I was a kid, my father used to pick me up so I could reach it.

Chaplain: You haven't told me your name.

Davey: Private Gordon, Sir. . . Chaplain, I'd like to talk to you about—about something.

Chaplain: Of course.

Sergeant: (OFF) Gordon!

Davey: Could we—could we go inside?

Sergeant: (COMING ON) What's the matter with you Gordon? Ya deaf?

Davey: You calling me, Sergeant?

Sergeant: Who do you think?. . . Come on. I got a job for you.

Davey: Give me a couple of minutes, I—I want to talk to the chaplain.

Sergeant: Listen, Gordon. This army don't wait till you arrange your private affairs. Orders are to get every man loading the trucks. We move up in the morning.

Davey: No!

Sergeant: Yea. Why do you think they gave you a free ride from the USA?. . . . Come on, Gordon.

Chaplain: Sergeant, surely a few minutes won't make much difference.

Sergeant: I'm sorry, chaplain.—It's the principle of the thing.

Chaplain: I don't understand.

Sergeant: You're new, Sir. You don't know what a soldier'll do to get out of a job.

Chaplain: I think this is important.

Sergeant: The Major gave me the orders himself. . . . (EMPHASIS)

Chaplain: You question my authority, Gordon. I'll be in my office tonight.

(*Music:* BRIDGE)

Chaplain: Sit down, Gordon. You must be tired.

Davey: Tired, Sir?

Chaplain: After what the Sergeant said, I thought. . .

Davey: Oh, that. We sat around all morning, waiting.

Chaplain: Waiting? For what?

Davey: I don't know, Sir. As a matter of fact, most of the men didn't show up until later.

Chaplain: But the Sergeant. . . (STOPS) He doesn't like you, does he?

Davey: I never thought about it. . . It's nothing personal. I mean—he's a sergeant.

Chaplain: LAUGHS

Davey: About last night, Sir. . . I wanted to thank you again.

Chaplain: I didn't do anything, Davey.

Davey: I get to thinking there's something wrong with me.

Chaplain: Almost everybody has something wrong with him.

Davey: (IMPATIENTLY) No, it's different. . . Every night I hear the big guns up front . . . just as if I was there where the shells explode. I can hear the noise and smell the powder and see the flash. . .

Chaplain: Davey. . .

Davey: And in the split second when it's light, I see Them . . . the enemy . . . running at me, yelling, the light shining on the bayonets. I want to scream. I want to run. But I can't move . . . I can't move! (pause) Rabbi, I'm afraid.

Chaplain: Of course you are, Davey. How can any one not be afraid?

Davey: No! Don't do that! Don't soothe me as if I was a little boy afraid of the dark!

Chaplain: Maybe a rabbi should know all the answers, I don't . . . but I want to help you.

Davey: I'm sorry Chaplain. . . Once, back in training camp, the machine gun course, it happened just like I told you. They were using live ammunition . . . the noise . . . the smoke . . . Rabbi, I'm not afraid to die.

Chaplain: You mustn't say that!

Davey: You stop a bullet . . . finished . . . that's all. But what if, when it happens, I can move, What if I can run? . . . Rabbi, I'm afraid that I'll run away!

(*Music:* NARRATIVE THEME AND UNDER)

Chaplain: In the morning, the regiment moved up to the front. The story I tell you now I learned later from Private MacPherson. . . .

They were in a quiet sector.
(FADE IN MORTAR SHELLS (WHISTLING), RECEIVING END)

They dug in and for a time it remained quiet . . . except for the sudden, violent exchanges of mortar fire.

(*Music:* OUT)
(SOUND UP, UNDER INTERMITTENTLY, OUT ON CUE)

MacPherson: Get your head down, Davey! Do you want it blown off?

Davey: I'm all right, Mac.

Sergeant: He's fine, MacPherson. . . Just bored. He wants some action . . . Isn't that right, Gordon?

Davey: I can wait, Sergeant.

Sergeant: What kind of talk is that for a soldier. You're not afraid, are you? . . . Well, are you?

MacPherson: Sure, I'm afraid.

Sergeant: I didn't ask you, MacPherson.

MacPherson: And any man who says he's not afraid is a liar!

Sergeant: (SOFTLY) Meaning?

MacPherson: Meaning just what I said.

Sergeant: (AFTER A PAUSE) I guess the next time I want to talk to Gordon, I'll wait till his nursemaid isn't around.

MacPherson: Why don't you leave the kid alone, Sergeant?

Sergeant: You trying to teach me my duty? MacPherson?

MacPherson: It has nothing to do with duty.

Sergeant: That's where you're wrong. I'm his platoon sergeant, see? I got to teach him what he has to know. . . . And I have to find work to keep his idle hands out of trouble. . . Come on, Gordon.

MacPherson: Don't go, Davey!

Sergeant: You heard me, Gordon!

Davey: All right, Sergeant.

Sergeant: I got a job for you . . . keep you busy till we get some real action.

(*Music:* BRIDGE)

Sergeant: You got a real job now, Gordon! And the rest of you too. We're going out on a patrol!

Cast: AD LIB REACTION

MacPherson: I'd just as soon stay here, Sarge. I'm just getting used to the rocks I've been sleeping on.

Sergeant: Nobody asked us what we want to do, MacPherson. We're going. . . . And Gordon. . . .

Davey: Yeah, Sergeant. . .

Sergeant: Don't pull any boners.

Davey: You have no right to say that. I do my job, same as everybody else.

Sergeant: Maybe I don't like the way you do it.
Davey: You been riding me from the beginning.
Sergeant: Save it, Gordon. We got work to do. . . (PROJECTING SLIGHTLY) We'll carry carbines and grenades. . . Anderson, check your radio.

One: (OFF) Okay, Sarge.

Davey: What've you got against me, Sergeant? I got a right to know.

Sergeant: I'll give it to you short and sweet, Gordon. . . Maybe you don't like loud noises. That's your headache. Maybe you're afraid. Maybe we're all afraid, like MacPherson says. I don't care.

MacPherson: Then why don't you leave him alone?

Sergeant: Stay out of it, MacPherson. . . I don't care if you're shivering in your boots . . . so long as you can still shoot your rifle and cover me when you're supposed to. . . But Gordon, nothing in the Articles of War says I have to like you.

(*Music:* BRIDGE)

(DISTANT ARTILLERY AND UNDER)

(MANY FOOTSTEPS ON TWIGS, AND UNDER)

Davey: (QUIET) Mac . . . Mac, maybe they sent out a patrol too.

MacPherson: (DITTO) Take it easy, Davey.

Davey: It's so dark I can't see a yard away.

MacPherson: You'll hear them.

Davey: Maybe they're waiting for us someplace, here in the woods.

Sergeant: (FIERCE WHISPER) (OFF)

(FOOTSTEPS UP BRIEFLY. SHELL EXPLODES ON MIKE. DAVEY THROWS HIMSELF TO THE GROUND. THEN ALL SOUND OUT)

Sergeant: (ON) Get up off the ground, Gordon! That shell was half a mile away.

Davey: I—I'm sorry, Sergeant.

Sergeant: Yeah, I know. . . . Can you all hear me?

Cast: A FEW QUIET YEAH, OKAY, ETC.

Sergeant: We're practically at the top of the ridge. . . . MacPherson, Adler . . . go on up and have a look.

(A FEW FOOTSTEPS ON TWIGS. THEN, OFF, BURSTS OF MACHINE GUN FIRE)

Sergeant: Back the way we came!

(CRASHING FOOTSTEPS ON TWIGS AND OUT ON)

(MACHINE GUN FIRE, ON)

PAUSE

Sergeant: (QUIETLY) We're cut off. They got us pinned down.

(*Music:* BRIDGE)

(THROUGHOUT THIS SCENE, DISTANT ARTILLERY, AND OCCASIONAL BURSTS OF MACHINE GUN FIRE AT VARYING PERSPECTIVES)

One: I can't get an answer, Sarge. The receiver's dead.

Sergeant: But you sent out the message. They'll get that, won't they?

One: Sure—if the transmitter is working.

Sergeant: They know where we are anyhow. The relief patrol will find us.

Two: The way I see it, there won't be any relief patrol.

Sergeant: Shut up! What do you know about it?

Two: If I was the colonel, I'd figure maybe this patrol was wiped out.

Sergeant: Well, we're not, see?

Two: Then I'd figure—if I send reinforcements, so can they too. And I'd think—do I want to start a big scale fight?

Sergeant: Shut up, I tell you! They'll send relief!

Two: Sure, Sarge.

Sergeant: (AFTER A PAUSE) Maybe—maybe somebody ought to try to get through to the regiment.

MacPherson: What do you mean—somebody?

Sergeant: Maybe you, MacPherson. Or maybe Gordon. . . Sure, that's it. Gordon.

Davey: (SLOWLY) There ~~must~~ be almost a full company of them . . . on both sides of the ridges.

MacPherson: Don't listen to him, Davey. He can't order anybody to do it.

Sergeant: I'm not giving any orders.

MacPherson: You hear that, Davey?

Sergeant: But he can go . . . if he's not afraid.

MacPherson: Stop it!

Davey: Don't worry, Mac, . . . I guess it's no secret by now, Sergeant. I want to hide every time a shell lands within a half a mile. . . . I'm scared.

Sergeant: Then there's no use saying any more, Gordon.

Davey: Keep talking.

Sergeant: Why not? . . . It's pretty dark. With any luck, there's a chance of getting through.

Davey: With any luck. . .

Sergeant: And if not . . . if not, it's an easy way to go. . . But nothing's easy, when you're afraid.

MacPherson: Don't listen to him, Davey. If one man can get through, we all can, one at a time.

Davey: It's got nothing to do with him.

MacPherson: Don't do it! I won't let you!

Davey: Take my grenades. They might bang on the rocks.

MacPherson: I'll keep you here if I have to knock you out to do it.

Two: (COMING ON) It's no use, MacPherson. You can't stop him, if he wants to go.

Davey: I want to go, Mac.

MacPherson: You crazy fool!

Davey: Mac . . . wish me luck.
(FOOTSTEPS WALKING CAREFULLY ON TWIGS, AND GOING OFF, COMPLETELY)

MacPherson: Feel better, Sergeant?

Sergeant: What're you talking about?

MacPherson: Now he won't always be reminding you of how frightened you really are.

Sergeant: Leave philosophy for the professors, MacPherson. Stick to your rifle.

MacPherson: That's why you hated him. He made you see what you didn't want to see.

Sergeant: That's enough talk!

MacPherson: Yeah. There's only one more thing I want to say. You better pray that Davey gets through—or else that we don't.
(BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE. SLIGHT ECHO FADING AWAY)

Davey . . .

(*Music:* BRIDGE)

MacPherson: (FLAT) I'm going to kill you.

Sergeant: We're not up on the ridge any more, MacPherson. Watch what you say.

MacPherson: I didn't do it up there because . . . I don't know . . . maybe I was waiting to see what God would do.

Sergeant: You can't get away with this kind of talk! I—I'll have you. . . .

MacPherson: Maybe you'll have me transferred out of the company, or out of this blasted country. It won't make any difference.

Sergeant: (UNEASY) You're talking crazy.

MacPherson: I'll find you. And in the meantime, you'll always be afraid. . . . Yeah. I'll take Davey's place. I'll remind you to be afraid.

Sergeant: Look, Mac. I didn't do anything. I—I didn't order him to try to get through.

MacPherson: I didn't say you did.

Sergeant: You see? You admit it yourself. . . . You cool off and then we'll talk it over.

MacPherson: I'll cool off and then . . . I'm going to kill you.

(*Music:* NARRATIVE THEME AND UNDER)

Chaplain: I conducted services in every camp in the area and on half the ridges that were held by our soldiers . . . maybe even the one from which Davey Gordon walked so carefully down in the dark, noisy night. But I never saw Davey Gordon again, and I knew his story only as Private MacPherson told it to me.

(*Music:* OUT)

MacPherson: He didn't have to die. He was sent to his death.

Chaplain: No, MacPherson. He went by himself—as each of us eventually goes by himself, in his own way.

MacPherson: How do you know? I was there. I saw it.

Chaplain: I know that he was afraid—greatly afraid.

MacPherson: But he died a brave man!

Chaplain: I think that he was afraid and that he was brave. I think that he died because it was easier than living with his fear.

MacPherson: He was driven to it, I tell you—by one man.

Chaplain: You weren't driven.

MacPherson: No, because I. . . . (STOPS)

Chaplain: Because you weren't afraid?

MacPherson: I shouldn't have come here to talk to you.

Chaplain: You're free to go.

MacPherson: I know what I have to do.

Chaplain: MacPherson, even if the sergeant is guilty, who are you to punish him?

MacPherson: You don't have to ask me that . . . I was Davey Gordon's friend.

Chaplain: Thou shalt not murder.

MacPherson: You say that now? Do you know how many men I have seen die? Do you know how many I have killed? There's a war on. The Ten Commandments are suspended for the duration.

Chaplain: Even in war, you must remember the morality of peace.

MacPherson: I'm willing. . . . Convince the rest of the world.

Chaplain: Convince yourself. Or else, there will always be war and never peace.

MacPherson: You're a rabbi. You don't understand what war is.

Chaplain: I hope I didn't stop being a man, when I became a rabbi.

MacPherson: Then tell me something. I'm here to kill. What are you here for? (PAUSE) You see, you can't answer. You don't even belong here.

Chaplain: There was a time when I thought so too. I asked myself—what am I doing here—and could find no answer. . . . But now I know.

MacPherson: All right. So you know. . . . It doesn't matter. We've talked enough.

Chaplain: Wait! Look, here on my door.

MacPherson: What is it?

Chaplain: It's called a mezuzah. . . . Davey Gordon watched me nail it to the door. There's a scroll inside inscribed with verses from the Book of Deuteronomy.

MacPherson: Some other time, Rabbi.

Chaplain: Another time is too late. . . . Listen. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou

risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house, and upon thy gates."

MacPherson: What are you trying to tell me?

Chaplain: I have placed the words on my doorpost to be a reminder of the ways of God, the ways of peace.

MacPherson: You said you knew why you were here.

Chaplain: Yes. To remind you, to remind men with guns in their hands, of the ways of peace. I too am a reminder on the doorpost. . . . (PAUSE) I detained you. Now you may go. (PAUSE)

MacPherson: Rabbi, he was so young!

Chaplain: Come. Let us mourn for Davey Gordon. . . . *Yisgadal v'yiskadash shmay rabba.* (A FEW MORE LINES FADING UNDER)

Cantor: KADDISH TO END

(*Music:* NARRATIVE THEME AND UNDER)

Chaplain: These are the words of the mourner's Kaddish. . . . He who maketh peace in His high places, may he make peace for us, and say ye, Amen.

(*Music:* UP TO CLOSE)

Anncr: If you would like a copy of today's script, please send your name and address with ten cents, to cover the cost of postage and handling, to The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 3080 Broadway, New York 27, N.Y. And now we take great pleasure in presenting Rabbi Isaac Klein.

Speaker: (TALK)

In observance of Armistice Day it is fitting and proper to remember the organization which even in the turmoil of war and the heat of battle has not forgotten to minister to the spiritual needs of the soldier. At a recent meeting of the division of Religious Activities of the Jewish Welfare Board a distinguished military leader said: The American soldier is supplied with the best food, the best clothing, and the best arms of any soldier in the world. We may add another best. The American soldier is also the best supplied with moral guidance and spiritual counsel. Through the Chaplain's Corps the American soldier is provided with a friend and advisor who is with him, close to him, in his hour of greatest need. Whether it is the new recruit far away from home for the first time, or the battle hardened soldier at the front line he finds the chaplain at his side ready to help. The army authorities, formerly dubious, have now recognized the great service rendered by the chaplains to the morale of the soldier and to his well being and have therefore accorded the chaplain a place of honor.

The record of the Jewish chaplain is illustrious. His task, similar in every respect to that of his Christian colleague, is made more complicated by the fact that the members of his military congregation are usually scattered in large areas and

he must often travel great distances to find them, and also by the special needs that the Jewish soldier may have. Today again the Jewish chaplain as his Christian colleague is at the soldier's side wherever there are American forces. It is to the credit of the Division of Religious Activities of the Jewish Welfare Board that it has supplied an adequate number of Jewish Chaplains to the armed forces and that it has supplied these chaplains with the implements necessary for the performance of their ministry.

We may add with pride that this organization consisting of rabbis representing the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform groups has been the first one to completely fill its quota of chaplains. Now that it is celebrating its tenth anniversary we are all indebted to it for the performance of a patriotic service to America and to its soldiers all over the globe.

Anncr: Thank you, Rabbi Isaac Klein.

(*Music:* UP AND DOWN)

Anncr: Our Eternal Light drama today, "Reminder on the Doorpost" was written by Joseph Mindel. Cantor David Putterman sang the liturgical introduction. Featured in the cast were Roger de Kove the Chaplain, Donald Buka as Davey. The music was written by Morris Mamorsky and conducted by Milton Katims. The production was under the direction of Edward King. Dr. Ben Zion Bokser, rabbi of the Forest Hills Jewish Center is program editor.

(*Music:* UP AND DOWN)

Anncr: Free time to present The Eternal Light is made available by the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. This weekly program is presented under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. THIS IS NBC, THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY.

The Eternal Light

The musical score is written for a Cantor and an Accompaniment. It consists of three systems of music. The first system shows the Cantor's vocal line and the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Sho - mer Yis - ra - el eh' -". The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "mor sh' - e - rit Yis - ra - el val yo - vad Yis - ra - el ha - om - rim shi na Yis - ra -". The third system includes a section where the Cantor hums behind the accompaniment, marked with 'A' and 'B', and then resumes singing with lyrics "el val yo - vad Yis - ra - el ha - om - rim shi na Yis - ra - el." The piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs.

CANTOR

Sho - mer Yis - ra - el eh' -

Accompaniment

mor sh' - e - rit Yis - ra - el val yo - vad Yis - ra - el ha - om - rim shi na Yis - ra -

el val yo - vad Yis - ra - el ha - om - rim shi na Yis - ra - el.

A Cantor hums behind Accompaniment B

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