

My Life's Story

By Eliyahu Yekutiel Shwartz

1915-2000

Biography of
Lieutenant Colonel Eliyahu Yekutiel Shwartz *Z"l*,
the son of Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Shwartz *Z"l*,
and Rivka Shwartz, née Klein *Z"l*

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Editor's Introduction

Every Shabbat morning, upon entering Lower Merion Synagogue, an Orthodox congregation on the outskirts of the city of Philadelphia, I began by exchanging greetings with the late Lt. Colonel Eliyahu Yekutiel Shwartz. He used to give me news clippings and booklets which, in his opinion, would enhance my knowledge. I, in turn, would express my personal views on current events, especially related to our shared birthplace, Jerusalem. Throughout the years we had an unwritten agreement; Eliyahu would have someone at the Israeli Consulate of Philadelphia fax the latest news in Hebrew to my office (Eliyahu had no fax machine at the time), and I would deliver the weekly accumulation of faxes to his house on Friday afternoons before Shabbat. This arrangement lasted for years. Eliyahu read the news, and distributed the material he thought was important to other Israelis and especially to our mutual friend Dr. Michael Toaff. We all had an inherent need to know exactly what was happening in Israel. Often, during my frequent visits to Israel, I found that I was more current on happenings in Israel than the local Israelis. This is the price of the *Gallut*.

When I had a question about a particular event or detail that happened in Israel, or about a word in Yiddish or in Arabic, I often would call Eliyahu, and he usually knew the answer. Once I investigated the history of the eucalyptus trees in Israel. Did the British bring them to Israel from their colony in Australia? Perhaps they were brought even earlier? I don't remember if it was Eliyahu or I who found the correct answer, which was that the tree was brought to Israel at the end of the eighteenth century¹ during the Turkish period. But Eliyahu liked the question, and he worked on it until we found the answer. On another occasion I investigated the source of the expression, "*Parat Moshe Rabeinu*," which in English is translated "ladybug," I asked him, "What

¹There is more than one claim for being the first to bring eucalyptus trees to Israel. The British Consul to Jerusalem, James Finn, claimed to have brought them in the 1850s, whereas Carl Neter, the founder of the Mikveh Israel school, claimed to have brought the seeds in 1883. The tree was very useful in draining swamps, as it grows very fast. It can grow 60 feet in six years.

did they call these bugs in Jerusalem?" He immediately replied, "*Mashiach Ferdle*;" in English, "the donkey of the Messiah." But more than anything else, I loved to hear him tell his stories, stories of Jerusalem from the last generation. These were stories which reminded me of the Jerusalem of my own childhood, even though Eliyahu was the same age as my father. Eliyahu was a sixth generation *sabra* on both his mother's and father's sides.³

Generally, it is hard to assess a man in the abstract, or in theory, whereas it is much easier to assess him according to his deeds. Eliyahu was a man of action all his life, and for me he was also a living testimony to the history of Jerusalem and Israel in the early part of the twentieth century. It should be pointed out that Eliyahu was a very organized person; everything was filed in the right place. He had a natural gift for languages, and could get along in Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Arabic and even German.

In his later years I suggested several times that Eliyahu write his memoirs, and I volunteered to transcribe and edit the text for him. Indeed, I transcribed and edited the material on his army service and, on a subsequent visit to Israel, Eliyahu personally gave it to the IDF archives. The non-army related text was transcribed by his cousin in Israel, Benjamin B. Rothkowitz.

²In most European languages this bug is named after Maria, the mother of Jesus, and the Jews of Palestine translated it to Yiddish as "*Mashiach ferdle*", in connection with the mother of the Christian savior [*mashiach*]. To my understanding this bug is called in Hebrew, "*Parat Moshe Rabeinu*," [meaning in English, "the cow of Moshe our Rabbi"], as the word *Mashiach* was transformed to the word Moshe. This is one of the few bugs which destroys other pests and helps agriculture, and therefore messianic qualities were attributed to it. Thus Eliyahu helped me resolve indirectly the etymology of the word. The accepted explanation of the source of the name "*Parat Moshe Rabbeinu*" is that the name is a direct translation from the Yiddish, "*Moyshe Rabeinu's Kiyeleh*," an expression which derives from the Russian "the Lord's Cow." This leaves unexplained how the word "Lord" was transformed to "*Moshe Rabeinu*," but explains the derivation of the "cow" portion. On the other hand, the transformation from *Mashiach* to Moshe is more logical, as both in written and spoken Hebrew the letter *chet* is sometimes written and pronounced as *hey*.

³ This is according to the eulogy I gave in his memory on the 30th day of his passing, in the Lower Merion Synagogue, 24th of July, 2000.

Eliyahu wrote and prepared the material in an associative way, meaning that any story which came to his mind, assuming that it was unique and interesting, he included in his writing. The stories are not necessarily connected to one another, except in that they all happened to Eliyahu. In this book I have attempted to group together the paragraphs dealing with similar subject matter, or similar time periods, so as to make his stories more readable and more cohesive. However, I have made no more than the minimal changes necessary to this end, retaining Eliyahu's own words and flavor. Generally, when I have found parallel sources that verify or enlighten Eliyahu's original material, or sources which either give it historical context, or are a source for his own writing, I have added them in my footnotes

Eliyahu wrote the general material (excluding the military material mentioned above) in his own hand, and sent it to his nephew Benjamin B. Rothkowitz, the son of his sister Malka, who resides in Jerusalem. Eliyahu received Benjamin's first draft, made his own corrections and notes, and then I had my hand at the correction of the second draft before it was sent it back to Benjamin. After Eliyahu's passing, Yona, his widow, and Avshalom, his son, asked Benjamin to further edit the material, and he did so, sending back the corrected second draft on May 9, 2000. The family wishes to thank him very much for his help in this endeavor.

Benjamin B. Rothkowitz, in his introduction, wrote:

"As the task of transcribing [Eliyahu's] life story was given to me with great trust and respect, I cannot merely return the material of my dear uncle Eliyahu, and I therefore allow myself to say some words in his loving memory. As it is said in Midrash "*rafiduni batapuchim*," these are legends whose smell and taste is like apples; the stories of vivacious life. While I have been sitting here, working on his fascinating material, I have seen his shadow, his image, his voice, and I have felt as if he stood next to me, telling me what to put here and there, and where to place the emphasis. I can hear the melodies of the song "*Yochai li, amali li, ya chawadja mussa*,"⁴ which he taught us when we were four or five

⁴ This song was one of the most prevalent songs of the Lag Ba-omer celebration, the festivities celebrating Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Meron. How did "*Chawadja Mussa*," meaning "Mr. Moses" in Arabic, come to be associated with the celebration of Lag Ba-omer? This I do not know. Since in Arabic "*chawadja*" is an honorific title for a non-Muslim, it is reasonable to assume that "Moses" refers to the biblical Moses. In my view,

years old in my mind's ear. Eliyahu, in his memoirs, brought back memories of my own past. Many of the family stories are well known to me. Let his memory be blessed."

My thanks to Zvi H. Muscal, who took upon himself to raise funds for the publication of this book, and to Harriet and Charles Tabas, Joseph Zuritsky, Esq., Daniel Tabas, Dr. Walter Cohen, Eugene Feiner, Leonard & Barbara Sylk, the Borowsky Family Foundation, and Ms. Terry Katz, who gave generously to this project. Thanks to Mrs. Yona Schwartz (Eliyahu's widow), Ettie Lassman, Dina Zilberman, Dr. Michael E. Toaff, and Dr. Harvey Sicherman, who went over the earlier versions of the book, and improved it a great deal. Thanks to my son Michael Benjamin Gevaryahu, to Gerald Gornish, Esq., and Dr. Irvin Hirsch, who translated portions of the book to English; and to Dr. David Wiener, who also translated part of the book and edited the translation in its entirety.

Gilad J. Gevaryahu -Editor

therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that there is a connection between this poem and the purported tomb of Moses on the way to Jericho (discussed in Eliyahu's text later in the book). A similar song, "*Ya chawadja Mussa/Mussa karakussa*," belongs to the same period as "*Yochai li, amali li, ya chawadja Mussa*," mocking the Muslims and their fake holiday regarding Moses. Perhaps this idea is "off the wall." The Sephardic Jews who lived in Israel spoke Arabic with their neighbors and, perhaps in order to complete the rhyming stanza, this section was added in Arabic. Jerusalemite children of the fifties and sixties also knew this poem. Bar-Nash, the poet, wrote the labor song with the refrain "*Ya-chai-li-li Ha-amali*," an expression which is similar to the above phrase, with a different melody. I am unsure of any connection. Another possibility is that the Jews copied a local poem, Muslim or Druze, and there, "*chalil*" in Arabic means "the beloved one" *Chalil*, in Arabic, usually refers to Abraham, as he is the beloved of God (Sura 4:125); and *Amal* in Arabic means hope. What we have may in fact be an adaptation of an Arabic or Druze song by the Jews to fit Shimon Bar Yochai, Lag Ba-omer festivities and Meron.

Testimonials from Eliyahu's years in the United States

Eliyahu knew that the stories which he had managed to record dealt primarily with the period in which he lived in Israel. He wanted to include some sections dealing with the period in which he lived in the United States, first in the Chicago area, and later in the Philadelphia area. Unfortunately, because of his illness, Eliyahu was unable to complete this section. Yona, his widow, and I asked several people who knew and worked with Eliyahu in the United States to write stories about Eliyahu in this context, to add the missing segment of his life.

Many wrote about Eliyahu's ability to work with men and women, to give them all good feelings, and to sweep them up with his enthusiasm. Other women spoke of him as a father figure, while other individuals noted his military punctuality. When Eliyahu came to shul in the morning, he always came on time, and never late.

These are the stories:

Avrum M. Chudnow writes:

I met him [Eliyahu] when I served as director of the JNF of Wisconsin. At the time he was the Midwest director of JNF in Chicago, with the smaller offices in Milwaukee, Minneapolis and Detroit also under his aegis. I would meet Eli and we would *daven* at the Jewish Home early in the morning and would plan the day's activities. Each year Eli would conduct High Holiday services at the Labor Zionist Beth-Am Lyceum. His marvelous voice and cantorial talent were a welcome addition to our community. Eli endeared himself to our family by spending Shabbat evenings with us. Because of his warm personality and dynamic spirit, the JNF income from our region increased by \$100,000. Even though we were the smallest region in the country, we regularly produced from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per year.

The JNF fundraising banquets which we organized each year, banquets at which we honored a key individual from the Jewish community, were both financial successes and a means to solidify the Jewish community. In 1982 we honored Burt Zien, who was a friend of Governor Gaylord Nelson. Col. Shwartz led a group of us, including the Governor, on a mission to Israel in which the governor visited Eilat. The purpose of the visit was to obtain a grant from Congress to help pay for a desalination plant in Eilat. We also dedicated a *nachala* in the Negev to Burt. Accompanying us was a rancher friend of Gov. Nelson who was so impressed with Col. Shwartz that he invited him to his ranch. Eli brought back a \$25,000 gift to JNF from the rancher. Each year thereafter, a holiday gift of a smoked ham would arrive from the ranch, which Eli promptly delivered to a non-Jewish neighbor.

In 1983 Eli guided us to Timna Valley and King Solomon's Pillars, where we met the regional council leaders of Eilat. At Eli's prompting, the suggestion was made to create an artificial lake in the desert. I committed to raise \$250,000, to draw plans to build a lake. I headed the Timna Valley project, which now is coming to fruition as the Timna Valley Copper Mining Museum at King's Solomon Pillars.

Mark M. Grossmann writes:

I first met Lt. Col. Eliyahu Shwartz in the late fall of 1982 when I interviewed for a position as "Field Director" for the Philadelphia office of the Jewish National Fund. A young man of 23, I had recently returned to the United States from Israel, where I had spent time living and working for the international media, based in Jerusalem. I was told of the open position at JNF by a friend. After arriving at the JNF office for the interview, I was called into the office of this imposing-looking man and told to call him Colonel. I was scared. I took out my ill-prepared resume and offered it to him. He gave it only the briefest glance before he literally tossed it aside. He looked up at me and asked one question, "Tell me why you want to work for Israel?"

The question began a conversation about Israel that must have lasted an hour and a half. We spoke about my passion for the land of our people and how I felt it in my blood. He told me about the places I had visited and historical perspective on events that I had witnessed. I asked him if he had any questions about my resume. His answer still resonates for me today. Lt. Col. Eli

Shwartz said: "I don't need to see your resume. You love Israel. That is the most important thing. I can teach you fund-raising. I cannot teach you to love Israel in your heart. That you already have." With those words he told me that I was hired and introduced me to the rest of the staff.

A few months later I had the opportunity to make my first solo solicitation. It was to assist a potential donor to plant a forest of trees in a barren hillside of Jerusalem. A novice fund-raiser, I made every mistake in the book: from not asking for a gift when the donor implied he was ready, to giving long-term payout options for a man who desired to give cash immediately. The next morning, I walked into the "Colonel's office," told him about the solicitation, and placed the \$50,000 across his desk. He took a look at the check, took out a magnifying glass, looked at the check again to confirm it really WAS \$50,000 and put down the check. He called his secretary Shirley to bring the other workers into his office. I had no idea of what was going on or what would happen next. He had not said one word to me. When the staff had arrived, he opened a desk drawer, pulled out a bottle of schnapps and 6 paper cups. He poured the whiskey into each cup and passed them around. It wasn't even 9:30 AM! He toasted a "L'Chayim" to me and to my success. When everyone left, he put away the bottle, looked at me and said, "So, where's the next one?" and dismissed me. Though somewhat deflated, I came to understand the significance of his important words. Our work demands that though we can congratulate ourselves on our success, our responsibility is to continually face the challenge of "the next one."

Mark Grossman worked for Eliyahu for the next 10 years, moved on to manage the fund-raising and development of the JNF regional office in New England, and today is the regional director for the Jewish Theological Seminary in New England.

Shirley Mangel writes:

I came to work for the Jewish National Fund in 1975. At that time it was a small, quiet office. We received donations for tree certificates and blue boxes and on occasion larger donations for a grove or woodland of trees. However, all of this changed in February, 1976, when Eli was appointed the executive director of the Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey region. Col. Shwartz went about recruiting a new board of directors who would work with him. His

enthusiasm and zeal rubbed off on all who came in contact with him. He was determined to have an annual city-wide dinner by the end of that year. Hundred of invitations were mailed. The response was truly great. We had over 700 people in attendance in the Sheraton Hotel ballroom in Philadelphia. The office staff missed his dominating force when he retired in March 1993.

Patty Feldman writes:

I remember particularly a JNF dinner honoring William Batoff. It was an historic and momentous occasion for two reasons: The Berlin Wall came down that day, and it was my first dinner. With over 500 people in attendance, what impressed me the most was how Colonel Swartz had every detail organized and under control. The dinner was an outstanding success, just as he told us it would be. He inspired confidence in all of his staff with his strong work ethic and energy.

Norman R. Goodman, DDS writes:

The Colonel ran his office, meeting and dinners with the strict precision of a military operation but with caring for his staff and dignity to all volunteers.

Allen L. Marmon writes:

My all-time favorite occurred during my first trip to Israel in the fall of 1984, under the leadership of Eli. We visited Jerusalem during the holiday of Succot. On Simchat Torah, Eli led our group to the Great Synagogue. We marveled at the beauty of the building and its congregation, who were dressed in their holiday finery. Shortly after we arrived, the *hakafot*, or processions with the *Sifrei Torah* began. Eli asked me what I wanted to do. I replied that it would be great personal honor to carry a *Sefer Torah* around the interior of this wonderful edifice. Immediately, Colonel Shwartz asked me to accompany him as he approached a man holding a Torah. The man greeted him, and Eli, in his inimitable stentorian voice, commanded the man to turn over his *Sefer Torah* so that I and his "boys," Joe Zuritsky and Byron Pokras, would have the opportunity to carry the Torah during the next procession. The man gulped and

said, "Yes Sir, Colonel," and gave me the Torah. Eli told us later that the fellow who gave us the Torah had served under him when he was with the IDF.

Leonard A. Sylk writes:

It was the night of the JNF dinner honoring my wife Barbara and myself, and it was time for Eli to begin the program as the Master of Ceremonies. When he got to the podium to speak, Eli began the program and spoke in his normal voice. Everyone heard clearly everything he said. It wasn't until the speaker came to the podium, that we all learned that the microphone had not been turned on yet. No one who knew Eli was surprised.

Zeev Kahanov writes:

I began working for JNF in Jerusalem in 1979, and soon came across Eli's name in correspondence and discussions with visiting American donors, lay leaders and professionals. When I first came for a multi-year assignment to the US on behalf of the JNF, I visited Eli in his Philadelphia office to learn from him what he had to offer and teach. He taught me fundraising management and operation. I was struck by his ability to combine deep love for Israel with efficient fund raising. From that time forth, whenever a new Israeli representative arrived in the US, we sent him to be with Eli and learn the operations.

Eliyahu Yekutiel Shwartz⁵, Z'TL – His life and work 1915 – 2000⁶

Eliyahu relates in his own words:

Not far from the Street of the Jews in the old city of Jerusalem, known as *Di Yiddishe Gass*,⁷ lived my parents, Moshe Mordechai and Rivke Shwartz, in their little apartment. The home was near an old age home in which both of my mother's parents lived, as well as one of my mother's sisters and her family, the family of Rabbi Moshe Mintz. There was also a small residential center nearby named "Bet David."⁸ This small neighborhood was financed and built by the

⁵It is interesting to note that the proper spelling of the surname in Hebrew is with two *vavs*, but Eliyahu spelled it with only one *vav*. At the direction of his wife Yonah, we have thus spelled it with one *vav* in Hebrew. On the invitation to the wedding of Eliyahu and Yonah, however, the spelling was with two *vavs*. On his report card from the seventh grade, the name "*Shachor*", a translation of the name Shwartz into Hebrew, appears (apparently this was an alternate rendition of his name used by a particular teacher).

⁶Eliyahu passed away in the United States on the 22nd of Sivan (June 25th, 2000), and was buried near his daughter Ofra, in New York.

⁷The streets in the Old City had official names, and occasionally also had Yiddish names used by the Ashkenazi community. For example, from the Street of the Jews there branched off a street on which Sephardic Jews primarily resided. This street was referred to by the Ashkenazi community as "*Di Frankeshe Gass*" (the street of the Franks: Sephardim). The street properly named "*Shalsholet*" was referred to by the Ashkenazim as "*Di Finster Klaiten*," the street of dark shops, for it was a dark and covered street.

⁸"Bet David" is a small neighborhood in the center of the city, along Ticho Street near Rav Kook and Yaffo Streets. It is named after its builder, David Raizen. The second story of one of the buildings on its northern end is Beit HaRav Kook, which was constructed some years after the neighborhood was built. The neighborhood was established in an Arab area in 1922, and during the 1920's its residents would not leave their homes at night due to the danger.

“General Committee Knesset Israel,”⁹ which was originally under the aegis of Rabbi Shmuel Salant,¹⁰ ZTL, and thereafter under the aegis of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook,¹¹ ZTL.

I was born in the Old City on a Friday, the first day of *Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan* 5676 (October 8, 1915). My sister Malka was two years old at the time. I was given the name Yekutiel Eliyahu, after my maternal grandfather. My mother’s family had the distinction of two generations in the old city of Jerusalem. Eliezer Klein and Yehudah Klein came to Jerusalem from Odessa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no information at all about them after this point, except that they are buried in the small Jewish cemetery on *Har Tzion* in Jerusalem. Eliezer’s son was R’ Yitzchak “Itza” Klein, my mother’s grandfather, and he also came to Jerusalem in the early part of the nineteenth century. R’ Itza Klein’s son R’ Yekutiel Eliyahu Klein, and his wife Chanah, had three sons: Yoseph, Avraham, and Gershon (Avraham was murdered by Arabs at the Jaffa Gate), and six daughters: Chana Rachel Eizenberg, Tybil Tovah Mintz, Raisha Slutzkin, Paya (who died young), Dina Rosenbaum (who emigrated to Argentina), and my mother Rivka Shwartz.

There was a period during the early 1800s that R’Yitzchak Klein dressed in Sephardic¹² garb, identified with the Sephardic community, and

⁹The “General Committee Knesset Israel,” which was previously named “the Committee of All Communities,” was the main organization of the old *Yishuv*. It performed great works over many years, and until the Second World War (1912-1918), was the de facto official representative of the old *Yishuv* to the Turkish authorities. The National Committee and the Jewish Agency were the official representatives of the Jewish *Yishuv* to British mandatory rulers. “*Knesset Israel*” was the adopted name of the organized Jewish community in Israel during the British mandate period; and when the Israeli parliament was established, it was known as the “*Knesset*,” which exemplified continuity with the old “*Knesset*.”

¹⁰ Rabbi Shmuel Salant ZTL (1816-1909), the legendary chief rabbi of Jerusalem.

¹¹Rabbi Avrohom Yitzchok Hakohen Kook ZTL (1865-1935), was the Chief Rabbi of Israel and the greatest of his generation.

¹²Pinchas Ben Tzvi Grabowsky writes: During the first period of the establishment of an Ashkenazi settlement in Jerusalem, the members of the Ashkenazi community who came to the Holy Land were required to disguise themselves in the clothes and turbans of the Sephardim in order to avoid the enmity of the Moslems, who despised the

prayed in the Sephardic synagogues, for Ashkenazic Jews were prohibited from living in Jerusalem after they were banished by the Turks and the Arabs. This occurrence came in the wake of the *aliyah* of Rabbi Yehudah Hechasid¹³ and his disciples in 1700. They had purchased land in Jerusalem and constructed a synagogue and housing, calling the neighborhood "*Dir Al-Ashkenazi*,"¹⁴ i.e. the Ashkenazi neighborhood. When they did not have sufficient funds to pay for the land, the Arabs fell upon them, burning everything and banishing the Ashkenazim (from Jerusalem). The Ashkenazim then went to live in Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias.¹⁵ In the beginning of the 19th century, under the leverage on

"*Frankim*" with long-standing pent up hatred. The Arabs derogatorily called the Ashkenazi Jews "*Shiknazi*," in contrast to the Sephardic Jews whom they referred to as "*Yahud*." And woe unto the "*Abu al Boornito*" – those who wore European hats. (Ashkenazim). Any Arab who was to run into such a man would immediately call out loud, "*Shiknazi*," and pursue him with stones, humiliate him, curse him and beat him. In the presence of a Jew wearing a *tarboosh*, however, they would bow their heads. The wise ones amongst the Ashkenazim would discard their garments and would put on a long, wide caftan, woven of cotton or half silk, with a large linen belt wrapped around it. On the caftan was an outer jacket called a "*jobah*," which was long and wide with wide sleeves. On their heads they wore a burdock of black linen wrapped many times around a red *tarboosh*. On their necks they wore a long white scarf. Women's clothing was also distinctive: dresses were generally woven from multi-colored fabric, and the rich ones were made with gold embroidery. Women's heads were covered with a kerchief of wool or silk and ran from their foreheads to the back of their ears. When they went outside they wrapped themselves in a white cloak. To this day there is a custom among the Chasidim that a bride is required to wrap herself in a white cloak as she goes under the *chupah*. [Taken from "The Book of Jerusalem," edited by Efraim and Menachem Talmi, Tel Aviv 1958, p.206].

¹³In 1700 a group of 1500 Chasidim made *aliyah* under the leadership of Rabbi Yehudah Hechasid and settled in Jerusalem. This *aliyah*, which occurred during the Turkish Regime, paved the way for the followers of the Baal Shem Tov to make *aliyah* to Jerusalem about two generations later.

¹⁴"*Dir Shiknaz*": in colloquial Arabic. The word "*dir*" in this context means "area."

¹⁵Yitzchak Ben Tzvi, the second president of Israel, wrote that in 1721 the Moslems destroyed the synagogue of Rabbi Yehuda Hachasid, and that the Ashkenazim in Jerusalem were left with less than a minyan and were swept into the Sephardic community. To the outside world, they appeared as Sephardim because of fear of the government (Sinai, 34, 5714). Given this situation, we know that R'Yitzchak Klein was one of these Ashkenazim who dressed as a Sephardi in order to remain in Jerusalem.

the Turkish sultan of local persons of influence, an order emanated from the sultan¹⁶ forgiving the obligation, and permitting the Ashkenazi Jews to return to the city to assist in its development. In this way the Ashkenazim returned to Jerusalem, according to the story my mother told me. My grandfather, Reb Yitzchok, was the tenth person to make the Ashkenazi minyan, and was also a member of the *Chevra Kadisha*. Together with other community leaders,¹⁷ he acquired a section on the Mount of Olives as a burial place for Ashkenazim. They were pleased that henceforth the Ashkenazim would be able to bury their dead without the assistance of the Sephardim.

My father, Moshe Mordechai, was born in Tiberias to a family that had also arrived in Palestine at the beginning of the 19th century from a place called Chemelnik-Volin (Volhynia) in the Ukraine. My father's maternal grandfather,

Pictures of Eliyahu's grandparents dressed as Sephardim are attached to the book (the pictures are not dated but appears to be from the mid 1800's). Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias were referred to as the "Four Lands," and they cooperated among themselves and raised funds to distribute ("Emissaries of Israel," Avraham Yaari, Jerusalem, 1997, pp.23-24).

¹⁶In order to receive a building permit it was necessary to seek a special permit from "Hash'ar Ha'elyon," the Sultan himself. The expression "Hashar Haelyon" originates from the Arabic expression, "Bab-I Ali," "the supreme gate." Such an authority to build was called a "firman" (a royal decree in Persian and Arabic). To obtain this authority, Reb Shlomo Pa'ch (the letters *Peh* and *Chet* are the initials of *Pituchei Chotam*, i.e., an engraver, an etcher) was sent to Constantinople, the capital city. Some say permission was obtained specifically by Rabbi Zalman Tsoref in 1836 from Mohammed Ali Pasha, the ruler of Egypt. In any event, monetary problems delayed the beginning of the project until 1855. A third opinion holds that the *Kaadi* of Jerusalem (judge of the Islamic court) issued a decree in 1831 discharging all debts owed by the Ashkenazim, relying on the pronouncement made by "Sheikh il-Islam" of 1812 in which he announced to all his followers that none of the creditors in *al-Quds* [Jerusalem] may demand payment of obligations from the newly-arrived Ashkenazim. I believe there is a bit of truth to each of the three explanations. Each represented a stage in the release of the Ashkenazim from these ancient debts. Remember that in order to achieve each of these "releases" a great deal of "bakshish," i.e., bribery, was required.

¹⁷Yaakov Yehoshua writes: "In his days (of the *Rishon L'Tzion* Rav Panigel), Rabbi Yosef Rivlin, Yehoshua Yellin and A. Solomon went and acquired a *firman* from Istanbul to create a cemetery specifically for Ashkenazim" (Between Tradition and A Way of Life – in the Sephardic Dwellings in Jerusalem, Part I, Jerusalem, 1979, p.174).

Reb Yehuda Leib, settled in Safed and was the head of the local *Chevra Kadisha*. Afterwards, the family moved to Tiberias. Reb Shevach and Ita Shwartz had four sons: Netanel Mendel, Meshulam, Binyamin and Moshe Mordechai (my father), and two daughters: Esther and Hinda. Binyamin went to live in Jerusalem. Through the intermediacy of my mother's brother, Yosef, who was a very intelligent man, and through the intermediacy of his own brother, Reb Binyamin Shwartz who lived in Jerusalem, my father met Rivka, the daughter of Yekutiel Eliyahu, and married her. And so Rivka Klein from Jerusalem, my mother, married my father Moshe Mordechai Shwartz from Tiberias, and they moved to Jerusalem. Interestingly, in order to visit his family in Tiberias, or to attend the celebration of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Meron, which was my father's "hobby," they would ride on mules for three days in each direction, from Jerusalem to Meron, for there was no other means of transport. And so my father rode on one mule and my mother rode on one mule with two boxes, one on either side of the mule. One box was for me to ride in, and the other was for my sister. Of course we always rode in caravans, with stops at the "*khan*"¹⁸ in Nablus

I will mention here that my mother had friends from the Armenian Quarter, who taught her how to knit, how to weave, and how to do needlework, and that she prepared quilts for the beds, tablecloths and curtains.

Transportation

While I was a child, I remember that transportation was based solely upon donkeys, mules, and carriages pulled by horses. I'd like to talk about my uncle, Rabbi Yehuda Mintz, and his son Avraham Yitzchak Mintz *Haya'd* [may G-d avenge his blood] who was murdered by Arabs on the Mount of Olives.¹⁹

¹⁸"*Khan*" is an Arabic guest house or inn.

¹⁹"The Jerusalem Post" dated June 12, 1939, described the murder as follows: "Yesterday morning, while working with his father in the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, Avraham Yitzchak Mintz was attacked by four Arabs, who succeeded in taking away from him the pistol that he carried with a permit, and murdered him. Avraham Yitzchak went out to work on the Mount of Olives together with his father Yehuda and his brother Eliyahu, at 6 a.m. The three of them separated to perform different tasks at different locations. Avraham Yitzchak was engaged in conversation with four Arabs when suddenly, without any warning, they fell upon him, took away his pistol, and

Their job was on the Mount of Olives, and they used donkeys to get there. A friend of my father's, Meir Segal, from Yavniel, used to come and visit us on a mule. In later years he would come with a car, which was very pleasurable for us to ride around in. Usually horses pulled carriages, and that was the public transportation in the city. There were several locations where such carriages were stationed for public use. These included near the Jaffa Gate, near the Nablus Gate, and sometimes in the neighborhood of Machaneh Yehuda. In order to get to the city of Jaffa people would use the Diligence, which was a fancier carriage,²⁰ and in order to get to the Galilee one used mules. There were no roads, and only when the British conquered the land from the Turks in 1917 did they begin to pave roads. Buses came with the British.²¹ While traveling from Jaffa Gate to Machaneh Yehuda, one could stop the bus at any spot he wanted. Benches ran lengthwise throughout the bus. Conditions on the buses improved, and bus stations were built. On the other hand, the Turks were the ones who developed the rail system,²² and the British merely expanded and enlarged it.

murdered him. His father and brother, who were working in other areas, heard the shots but were unable to do anything because they were unarmed. Empty bullet shells from the pistol were found at the place. Tracking dogs that were brought to the site lost the scent of the murderers a short distance from the location of the murder.

²⁰A paved road from Jerusalem to Jaffa, which could be used by the Diligence carriages, was opened only in 1869. The Turkish engineer who was in charge of paving that road did not manage to complete it in a timely fashion, and there was a need to bring a more skilled engineer from France to complete the road on time. The Austrian Kaiser, His Highness Franz Joseph, while coming back from the opening of the Suez Canal, stopped and dedicated the new road. Before that, it would have taken several days to make the trip on foot from Jerusalem to Jaffa, or a 36 hour ride. With the opening of the new road, every day two Diligences went back and forth, one from Jerusalem and one from Jaffa, and it was only a ten-hour ride. An interesting report on these carriages came from Yitzchak Weisman, who came to Jaffa by boat on Rosh Hashana 1920. "In Israel at that time they would travel from Haifa to Jerusalem on a Diligence carriage with three horses; occasionally you had to replace a horse so that one horse could take a rest. On the Turkish road the passenger was shaken until his guts spilled." ("My Path of Aliyah and Labor," published by Kvutzat Yagur, 1977, p. 66).

²¹The first car appeared in Jerusalem in 1908, driven by Charles Gilden, an American.

²²The railway track was laid and the train line between Jaffa and Jerusalem was opened during the Turkish era, between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur of 1892.

My parents had a small grocery store on *Rehov HaYehudim* in the Old City, across from the entrance of the synagogue, "*Chorvat R' Yehuda Hachasid.*" It is interesting to note that underneath these stores, as was discovered after the Six Day War, lay the Roman street known as the "*Cardo.*"²³ The grocery store did not last very long and was closed; my parents moved to the neighborhood known as Hornstein Homes²⁴ near the Zichron Moshe and Achva neighborhoods.

During this period my father was unemployed, and he did anything that came his way in order to support his family. He worked as a waiter at celebrations, the town crier (this was before radio), a poster of notices on the sign boards in the streets, and a distributor of the newspaper "*Hachavatzelet,*" that was published by the Frumkin family, our family's close friends. Gad Frumkin, the son of the editor of "*Hachavatzelet,*"²⁵ became a Jewish justice of the high court during the mandate (the only Jew), and he, too, was a close friend of the family's.

²³ "*Cardo*" is from the Latin word for "heart;" in other words, the center. It was a street built by the Romans in Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple.

²⁴ Hornstein Homes, a neighborhood to the south of Kerem Avraham, was built in 1905, and was named after the philanthropist, Rav Duber Hakohen Hornstein, who died in 1918. Settlements in the area of northern Jerusalem, outside of walled Jerusalem, were developed by the British consul James Finn (1806-1872; served in Jerusalem 1848-1863), many years before the neighborhood of Meah Shearim was established in 1874. In 1853 he purchased a tract of 40 dunams (about 10 acres) of land, which was called by the Arabs "*Kerem Al Halil.*" A translation of this name into Hebrew was adopted; "*Kerem Avraham.*" The consul tried to educate and accustom the inhabitants of Jerusalem to creative and productive manual work on his farm, while at the same time attempting to convert them to Christianity. Nearby to this agricultural farmstead, the neighborhood called by the same name, Kerem Avraham, was established in 1920. The house of Consul Finn, which today is situated on Rechov Ovadya, was used by Mishmar Haam in the early days of the state as its headquarters for activities in Northern Jerusalem. Surely Eliyahu must have served in this building. It was only any years after in 1874, that the Meah Shearim section was established nearby.

²⁵ Yisrael Dov Frumkin (1850-1914) was a Hebrew journalist; one of the founders of Hebrew journalism in Israel. He was an editor, an author, and a communal worker. He immigrated to Israel with his parents in 1859, married the daughter of Israel Bak, and published the Jerusalem newspaper "*Hachavatzelet.*"

This was all during the period before my father was accepted to work for the organization, "The General Committee Knesset Israel." Over time, my father was accepted as a volunteer for the general committee under the recommendation of R' Leib Dayan, Z'TL. Since my father had been raised in Tiberias, he was sent temporarily to Tiberias before the festival of Pesach to supervise fishing in the Kineret and the delivery of fish to Jerusalem; this was accomplished by salting the fish in cans and transporting them to Jerusalem on mules.

The Shwartz Family – Tiberias

The Shwartz Family was known in Tiberias as "*R'Shevach's Mishpocha* [Reb Shevach's Family]" for various reasons. Firstly, R'Shevach owned one of the inns for travelers in Tiberias. Secondly, R'Shevach's wife, Ita, was very talented, and an expert in orthopedic treatment and, although she was not a doctor, she helped many people with dislocations of the hand or foot,²⁶ fractured elbows, hands, or feet. My father and his older brother R'Netanel Mendel Shwartz learned this skill from her, and while my uncle R' Netanel Mendel became a serious expert and helped many people gratis, my father only worked on the occasion of a dislocation of the hand or foot. Interestingly, people always managed to come to him precisely on Shabbat after prayers, and he helped them.

Above all, the family was famous for the tradition of going up and praying at the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in Meron on Lag Ba'omer, and participate in celebrating the "*Hilula* of Rabbi Shimon." Reb Shevach and his sons entertained the congregation and danced with them, by the light of the bonfires, on the grave of Bar Yochai. This tradition continued for many years, even after the passing of R'Shevach, the family patriarch. R'Netanel Mendel, the elder son of R'Shevach, continued the tradition from Tiberias, while my father and other members of the family continued the tradition from Jerusalem. So too did the son of R'Netanel Mendel, R'Elazar Shachor (who Hebraized his name: *Shachor* means black in Hebrew) continue the tradition.

²⁶Many Jewish women worked in this field. See an example of woman dealing with matters of healing, "until Hashem brought to me a widow from Prague who prepared a bandage and medicine for me." ("*Travels in Israel of R' Moshe Bisulah*", edited by Avraham David, Jerusalem, 1999, page 14).

In the early days, they used to go out in caravans, on mules, from Jerusalem to Meron. Later, they chartered buses. For my father, this was a greatly valued traditional religious experience. My mother always participated. Over time my father was accepted as a volunteer worker in the “General Committee Knesset Israel.” This committee served as a salient Jewish organization before the Jewish Agency became active, and dealt with the Ashkenazi Jewish Community.

Hornstein Homes

My parents moved²⁷ to the Hornstein Homes neighborhood, adjacent to Zichron Moshe²⁸ and Achvah.²⁹ In making the move, my parents were assisted by the *gabaim* of the Volin (Volhynia) community, Reb Nachum Yaffe and Reb Yitzchok Yoel Margolis, who lived in the neighborhood. Various people lived in this neighborhood, including Reb Mordechai Tepperberg – owner of the well-known winery in Jerusalem “Efrat,”³⁰ Reb Nachum Yaffe and Reb Y.

²⁷ Throughout all the stories about old or new Jerusalem at the beginning of the twentieth century, it appears that the Jews would move from place to place quite frequently. The reason was due to Turkish law, which required the Jews to move every year or two. The custom in Jaffa was similar. Moving was called “*Muharram*” after the first month of the Moslem calendar, the holy month, during which moving took place. However, since the Moslem calendar is based on the lunar year which is about eleven days shorter than the solar year, whereas the Jewish calendar is corrected for and Christian calendar is based on the solar year, the Moslem calendar moves each year in relation to the solar one, and makes a complete “revolution” every 32 years.

²⁸ A neighborhood in Jerusalem, to the west of the neighborhood Mevor Baruch. It was established in 1906, and was named after the philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore.

²⁹ A neighborhood in Central Jerusalem south of Geulah and close to Schneller military base. It was built by members of the Bnai Brit organization in 1908, who preached “*Achvah*” [brotherhood] amongst their followers. In the book of regulations of the organization, they proclaim: “we came together in a covenant to establish for ourselves a residential area of twelve dwellings, with a house and courtyard for each, a new synagogue built like the heights for torah and prayer and we called the name of the settlement Sha’arei Achvah (the “gates of brotherhood”) so that the name would be a good omen, and so this undertaking would signify for us a large gate opened wide.”

³⁰ “Efrat” was the first winery established in Israel. It was erected in Motzah at the

Margolis, the Beck family – who built the synagogue “Tiferet Yisrael - Nisan Beck” in the Old City, Sappir – the owner of a large clothing store, and Mousayof – the communal leader, and more.

All in all, this neighborhood was like one family, both the old people and the young people. Until today, I keep in touch with Menachem Tepperberg, the owner of the “Efrat” winery. We grew up together, and felt a familial relationship to one another on every Shabbat and festival. On Simchat Torah, for example, we went from one’s house to the other’s, and then returned in the evening at the end of the festival for “*Hakafot Sh’niyot* [a second round of processions with the Torahs].” One always helped the other.

Shmirah - Guard Duty

In 1920, a bloody tide of events arose, as the Arabs in the Old City of Jerusalem and its environs ran wild with cries of “*Idbach El Yahud – Adwallah Ma’na;*” literally, “kill the Jews – the government is with us.” During this period, Ze’ev Jabotinsky³¹ organized the first Haganah together with soldiers who had served in the Jewish Brigade. He was consequently arrested and sent to prison in Acco. At the time, I was 5 years old and my older sister was 7, and we lived in the Hornstein Homes neighborhood, near the Lemel School.³² Once, in the middle of the night, we saw Father grab a tree branch and go outside. We asked him in Yiddish, “*Vu Geisteh?*” [“Where are you going?”], to which he replied, “*Ich gei aich bashitzen*” [“I am going to defend you.”]. The branch was taken from the Sukkah covering, and my father went out to the street together with all the other men who lived on that street, which is today called Rechov

entrance to Jerusalem in 1870 by the Tepperberg family.

³¹Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky (1880-1940) was an author, a journalist, one of the leaders of world Zionism, one of the founders of the Jewish Legion during World War I, and the founder of the Revisionist Movement, in which he served as president.

³²The Lemel school was established in 1856 by Aliza Hertz Von Lemel in memory of her father, Shimon Von Lemel, despite the opposition of the *Charedi* zealots. It also served at first as an orphan’s home. The school was dedicated in the presence of the Turkish Pashah, foreign consuls, and the *Rishon L’Tzion*. It was later moved from the Old City to the New City in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Yeshayahu (after Yeshayahu Press),³³ and they prepared to defend the neighborhood. At this time, the Arabs used daggers, knives, and wooden clubs. After some time my father returned and related that the military governor of Jerusalem, Storrs,³⁴ had arrived and told them to return to their homes. The expression that my father used, "*bashitzen*," stayed with me and accompanied me until I joined the second Haganah.

Betar and Me – Tel Chai

Another thing stayed with me all the years until I had the opportunity to join the youth organization *Betar – Brit Trumpeldor*. This is the story: One day my mother sent me to the grocery store in the "Zichron Moshe" neighborhood to buy several food items, including kidney beans. In these days there were no paper or plastic bags, and the storekeepers used to wrap items of food in old newspapers. Part of the kidney beans were wrapped in a part of the newspaper called "*Haaretz for Children*." When I arrived home, my father took this page of the newspaper and read to me a story about the bravery and might of Yosef Trumpeldor³⁵ and his comrades at Tel Chai, and of how he was killed. He said before he died, "It is good to die for our country." This phrase was always with me. The rest of the story takes place years later, after I completed my studies in the Mizrachi Talmud Torah, and it was suggested to me and my friends that we

³³Yeshayahu Press (1874-1955), was the principal of the "Lemel" school in Jerusalem for many years, and was also active in the Jerusalem community. He was a member of the Hebrew Language Committee (*Vaad HaLashon HaIvrit*) and published books on the history and topography of Israel as well as a book of memoirs.

³⁴Sir Ronald Storrs (1881-1955) was the first military governor of Jerusalem (1918-1926) under the mandate. His contribution to the city was in the building regulations he established, allowing no more than 3 stories' height, and requiring that buildings be made of stone. The stone construction saved Jewish Jerusalem from destruction by the shells fired by the Jordanian army during the War of Independence. In addition, his order to protect the holy places of all religions contributed to preserving Jewish sites. Once the State of Israel was founded, the street bearing his name was changed to Cyrus Street because he was not remembered fondly.

³⁵Yosef Trumpeldor (1880-1920) was an officer; a symbol of Jewish pioneer spirit and self-defense.

join the youth group Bnei Akiva. Rabbi Neriya³⁶ Z'TL was the chief leader of the local branch of Bnei Akiva, and was also our neighbor in the Knesset neighborhood. After a couple of Shabbat afternoons spent attending Bnei Akiva only to deal with the same subjects and eat *Shalosh Seudot* time and again, we were not satisfied. Two friends and I decided to visit several of the other youth organizations. On a few Shabbatot, in the afternoons, we visited the HaShomer Hatzeir club, the Noar Haoved club, and the Scouts club. These did not attract us, because we were *Shomrei Shabbat* and were religious and these were completely secular. One Shabbat we went to the Betar club house, which was located in the basement of the Palatin Hotel on Agrippas Street. When my friends and I entered, they received us very well and had us join a group to hear how they ran their programs. It is interesting that on exactly that day, the leader was Penina Horen, and she told us the story of Tel Chai and Yosef Trumpeldor. That immediately reminded me of the story my father had read to me from the newspaper called "*Haaretz for Children*," when I was a little boy. And that is how my activity in this organization began, and I advanced from a regular participant until I had become one of the main leaders of the organization.

The miracle of the corrugated sheet metal

One Thursday during a bitter winter in Jerusalem, snowy and stormy outside, my mother asked my father, "what will we eat for Shabbat?" His response was, "God will help." He said that he was going to the neighborhood of Meah Shearim, and maybe he would find something there. Between the neighborhood of Hornstein Homes and Meah Shearim³⁷ was an area which was

³⁶Rabbi Moshe Tzvi (Minkin) Neriya (1913-1995) emigrated to Israel and settled in Jerusalem in 1930, his trip having been financed by Rabbi Kook. In Rabbi Kook's yeshiva, Rabbi Neriya learned and received *smicha*. He was originally a counselor in the Bnei Akiva chapter in Jerusalem and later became the head of the chapter. In 1939 he founded the Yeshivat Bnei Akiva in Kfar HaRoeh (named after Rabbi Kook). Eventually Rabbi Neriya became the head of all Bnei Akiva Yeshivot in Israel, and a member of the seventh Knesset representing the National Religious Party. In 1978 he received the Israel Prize for all his accomplishments. He authored several books, which predominantly deal with the philosophy of Rabbi Kook.

³⁷Meah Shearim is a religious neighborhood in Jerusalem. The neighborhood was one of the first to be built outside the walls of the ancient city in 1874. It is named after the

empty except for a few houses and the Warsaw Homes.³⁸ He was walking in a snow storm with no umbrella (who had something like that?), with no galoshes or boots, walking through the deep snow towards Meah Shearim. Suddenly, a big wind blew, and a piece of corrugated sheet metal fell near my father from the roof of a house or storage building. My father picked up the sheet metal, held it above his head to protect himself from the snow, and was very happy about his find. His happiness was even more complete when he entered the gates of Meah Shearim with the sheet metal above his head and heard the cry, “My fellow Jew, would you sell me that sheet metal?” Of course, my father answered affirmatively, and his happiness was twofold because with this money our family had what to eat for Shabbat. A true miracle.

Education in the “Cheder” (Jewish Elementary School)

As my mother told the story, the initial education that my sister Malka and I received was at the kindergarten of Bnei Brit, in a building next to where Beit Strauss,³⁹ was built many years later; I have no recollection of this. Similarly, I have no memories of the two “cheders” with “rebbe” that I attended for a short time, with the exception that one of the “rebbe” kept a matchbox for each child in which he saved for us the *prutot* that we brought, so that after several weeks I owned several *grushim*. Similarly, there remains in my memory that in the cheder of the synagogue of the “Achvah” neighborhood they gave each child each week a quarter of a loaf of bread to bring home; this was war time.⁴⁰

verse, “and Yitzchak found that year *meah shearim* [100 gates]” (Genesis 26:13). Both the Schneller Base and the farm of Kerem Avraham preceded the establishment of this neighborhood by about twenty years, and are located west of it.

³⁸Warsaw Homes is a neighborhood in central Jerusalem, west of Meah Shearim. It is named after its builders, immigrants from Warsaw. The building process began in 1898.

³⁹ Beit Strauss was named after the American philanthropist who financed this building, Nathan Strauss (1848-1931).

⁴⁰The time period here is World War I, which ended in 1918. The British mandate became effective only on July 1, 1920, and up to that point there was a military government. The feeling of war still remained in the air, even after the war’s official conclusion.

The world famous cantor visits our neighborhood; Jabotinsky visits our neighborhood

I recall that when the world-famous cantor Yossele Rosenblatt⁴¹ visited our neighborhood synagogue, the entire neighborhood was “on its feet” and there was great joy. I remember an evening when my parents and I went to the Lemel schoolyard near our neighborhood to see what was taking place. We saw a large crowd and a man speaking excitedly; I later learned that it was Zeev Jabotinsky, who had returned to Jerusalem after he was released from the Acco jail.

The “Knesset” section

My father had two close childhood friends, one from Yavniel named Meir Segal-Fogel, who served in the Turkish army and would visit us from time to time and would even bring us food. Another friend, who was also our relative, named Zvi Tepperberg, lived in Givat Adah near Binyamina, and would visit us frequently, and help us out. I recall one day that we heard that the British were nearing Jerusalem, and we saw Turkish soldiers passing by, one by one, begging and crying out “*ekmek yok*,”⁴² which is Turkish for “there is no bread.” It was a pity to leave the neighborhood and its inhabitants, but because of my father’s work, we were obliged to move to the Knesset Yisrael section,⁴³ as my father’s⁴⁴ assignment in the new neighborhood was to ensure

⁴¹Yossele Rosenblatt (Ukraine 1882-Jerusalem 1933) performed on 180 cantorial recordings, and was considered one of the great cantors of the 20th century. He elevated Jewish liturgical music to a world class level, especially during his years of activity in the United States.

⁴² The “*ekmek yok*” tale is repeated in many of the stories of the Jews who lived through the First World War in Israel and experienced the Turkish retreat. For example, the essay of Asher Barash “Ekmek” in the book “*Alei Adamot*” [“On This Land”], Tel Aviv, 1936, pp. 109-116.

⁴³ “Knesset Yisrael” is a neighborhood in central Jerusalem north of Nachlat Achim. It was founded in 1891 and was named for its founding organization, *HaVaad HaKlali Knesset Yisrael* (literally the General Council of the Community of Israel, which was the administrative body of the organized Jewish community in Palestine under the British

the integrity of the houses there, their repair and maintenance, to deal with the changing tenants and to collect the meager rent that they paid. There was an enormous difference between our old and new locations. The Knesset Yisrael neighborhood lacked a feeling of family. There were frequent disputes over every little item, and hatred or jealousy among adults and children alike. There were some good families with whose children it was possible to play, however, on account of my eyesight and the fact that I had to wear glasses, I was always made fun of. At times this caused me great sadness and brought me to tears. I overcame all that even though I was a shy and quiet child; I had no toys, and I was forced to find my own amusements after school.

We grew up in a house consisting of two rooms and a kitchen. It was initially without running water and electricity – those were installed later on. In this house lived my parents, my older sister Malka Nechama, my younger brother Yehuda Leib, my younger sister Hanna Ita and I. Interestingly, the house never seemed small, and was large enough not only for us, but also to host friends and relatives, which we did by spreading mats and cushions on the ground to sleep at night. Despite the crowding and the simple way of life, the house was filled with joy. When we moved to the Knesset Yisrael section, I was sent for a time to *cheder* in the Old City, to a *cheder* associated with the Chayei Olam yeshiva, which was on Rehov Hevron in the Old City. Why specifically there? It seems father had a connection with the *gabbaim* (sextons) of Chayei Olam, who also ran the Volin (Volhynia) community to which my father belonged. Each day, I made my way to the Old City together with another boy named Naftali. We would take a short cut through the Christian Quarter, and pass near the “*Treife Geissel*” (the *Treif* Alley) by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher,⁴⁵ where each time we passed we would say, “thou shalt utterly

Mandate).

⁴⁴ Reb Moshe Shwartz, Eliyahu’s father, who was the neighborhood administrator, was nicknamed in Yiddish by the residents of the Knesset neighborhood of Jerusalem, “*Reb Moshe der Langer*” (Reb Moshe the Tall). All the members of the family including Eliyahu were particularly tall. Source: Gilad Gevaryahu’s aunt Hasidah Gevaryahu (née Rakovsky), who lived in the neighborhood and remembers Reb Moshe, Eliyahu, and their family.

⁴⁵ A street in the Old City, on which the church stands containing the grave in which Jesus is said to be buried.

detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a devoted thing" (Devarim 7:26), and we would spit three times, as our Rebbe had instructed us.⁴⁶ I won't say much at this point except for the fact that when we would stand in the schoolyard of the yeshiva, which was high up, we could see the activities on the Temple Mount, and we said to each other how lovely it will be when the Temple will be rebuilt and we will see the priests and the Levites running about in the Temple. As a consequence of my studying at Chayei Olam, I was required to go to the home of Rav Ze'ev Mintzberg⁴⁷ on Shabbat, who lived in the Old City near Misgav Ladach Hospital, to be "taken on the *farher*," namely to be quizzed on what I had learned during the week, and receive candy treats.

Likewise, I remember how jealous I was of Naftali, the boy with whom I walked to class in the *cheder*, as what I had for lunch was two pieces of bread dipped in oil with a few olives, whereas he would bring fried salted fish with bread. For reasons I did not know, perhaps for safety reasons, or who knows why, I was taken out of that *cheder* and was transferred to a *cheder* close to home in the "Mazkeret Moshe" section.⁴⁸ It was a small house next to a synagogue,

⁴⁶ Compare: "My uncle Joseph [Prof. Joseph Klausner] once told me something like this: 'in your school, my dear, they surely teach you to hate this tragic and exceptional Jew [Jesus], and would that they did not teach you to spit vigorously as you pass by his image or his cross" (the Israeli author Amos Oz, "A Tale of Love and Darkness," published in Hebrew by Keter, Jerusalem 2002. page 80). The members of the Old *Yishuv* (the Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem in the early 19th century) tried in every possible way to avoid contact with the sites or places of other religions, which they regarded as "gentile impurity." In the *Aleinu* prayer, in the sentence, "who bow down to vanity and emptiness (*va-rik*)," "*va-rik*" (emptiness) refers to Christianity, which represents emptiness; this symbolism was suggested by the numerical equivalents of the Hebrew spelling of *va-rik* and *Yeshu* (Jesus), which both equal 316. Jews customarily spit on the floor when they recited this (the root of the Hebrew word for spitting contains the same letters as the word for emptiness, R-I-K). In some synagogues are found instructions not to spit on the floor, the source of that custom being "*va-rik*." The censors removed this sentence from Ashkenazic prayer books, and only recently has the phrase been restored. "Vanity" (*hevel*) in the sentence from *Aleinu* refers to Islam, as I indicated in another footnote.

⁴⁷ Rabbi Yisrael Zeev Mintzberg (1895-1962) was the Rabbi of the Old City until its capture in 1948.

⁴⁸ The "Mazkeret Moshe" section is located in central Jerusalem south of Machane Yehuda. It was founded in 1883 and is named for Moses Montefiore.

which contained three classrooms: A) Reb Moshe Salant; B) Reb Chayim Yissachar Dostrovsky; C) Reb Alter; I was placed in classroom B with Reb Chayim Yissachar for the year. All the lessons, which consisted of prayers and *Chumash*, were in Yiddish, such as: *kometz-aleph-aw*, or *Breishis = unzer bashafen*, and so on. Each rebbe had his own craziness in dealing with the children. Chayim Yissachar would threaten a child with a smack on the rear, on his bare bottom if he objected, or, in order to embarrass a child he would unbutton the child's pants, this of course being if the child did something wrong. Reb Alter had other crazinesses: he would stand the child in the corner wearing an insulting sign, and he kept a belt known as a "*kanchik*,"⁴⁹ with which he would give the child blows. One time we got even with him when he was out of the room. We took garlic and smeared it on the *kanchik* so that the leather dried out, and when he started to deal a blow the belt fell apart.⁵⁰

I was a good, obedient and studious child, but I suffered personally. My vision wasn't good from birth, and it was hard for me to read small print, so I wore glasses at the time. It was such a strange phenomenon for a small child to be wearing glasses that I was made fun of for it and called names like "cross-eyed" and "blind," and my glasses were even broken on several occasions.⁵¹ This was a very painful experience for me, but I couldn't do

⁴⁹ Also spelled "*kantchik*" (Yiddish), it was a Russian switch made of leather and used for "educational" purposes. *Melameds* throughout Eastern Europe used similar switches. The root of the word is likely to be the Turkish *kamci*, meaning whip.

⁵⁰ Shalom Yaacov Abramovitsch, known by the pen name Mendele Mocher Seforim, deals with Jewish education in his first book "*Mishpat Shalom*" ("The Judgment of Truth," Vilna 1860, page 78 in the footnotes), in the article "Is It Necessary to Strike Children on the Behind And to Denigrate Them In Front of Their Friends?" where he says: "and among the Jews the custom had become widespread to strike them on the eve of each holy Sabbath, that is the last of the six days of creation, as is written 'a wise man afterwards praises it' (Proverbs 29:11) [ed. note, this being a pun on the Hebrew words in this verse, which can also be understood literally as 'on his rear end praises it']." It is clear that children's education included using leather belts, and the verse "spare the rod and spoil the child" (Proverbs 13:24) was a guiding light for educators, and part of the societal norms of the time.

⁵¹ As a language evolves, the insulting names for those who wear glasses evolve as well. Here is how the journalist Lisa Peretz cites the testimony of one interviewee about wearing glasses in childhood: "insults and abuses like 'four eyes,' 'magnifying lens,'

anything about it. At the end of my school year in Reb Alter's class, I was skipped two grades into the Yeshivat Etz Chaim⁵² building, to a class where the rebbe was referred to as "The Russian," a reflection of his cruel and heartless nature. The head of the yeshiva was Rav Aryeh Levin, of blessed memory. The Russian rebbe was cold to me and always told me that I was blind. I constantly restrained myself from reacting until one day he told me to read Rashi and I found it difficult. He laughed at me insultingly, and said, "you're blind; you don't need to learn Torah, you should be a shopkeeper and then you should die." I stood up in tears, went up to him, tugged on his long beard, and told him to drop dead. I bolted home from *cheder* crying, went to my mother and later to my father, and told them what had happened. I said that for me the *cheder* was dead, and that I wouldn't go to the cheder any more. Rav Aryeh Levene came to our home and asked me to return, and I refused. That was the end of going to that *cheder*, where the instruction was solely in Yiddish.

My parents transferred me to the Mizrahi Talmud Torah, where I studied from fourth grade until my graduation from eighth grade. It was a regular school in which all subjects were taught, entirely in Hebrew. Throughout my elementary school years I was very much attached to my home and my neighborhood, and helped my parents as much as I could. I did not have many friends apart from those in my neighborhood. We would get together in an empty field nearby, or in the evening near the Lux lamp.⁵³ I had several friends from school mainly from the Sephardi community and we became very close. The Mizrahi Talmud Torah was stimulating, as I liked to study a lot, but I never became immersed in any one subject. This was probably

and 'Coke bottles,' were my lot throughout my elementary school years" (from "Whom Did They Call Four Eyes?" Maariv, August 30, 2002).

⁵² Yeshivat Etz Chaim is one of the oldest yeshivot of the *Edah Haredit* (Ashkenazic) community in Jerusalem. It was established in 1841 in the Old City, and after the reconstruction of the Hurvah Synagogue in 1864, it was relocated to the Hurvah building. It also transferred to the New City (Western Jerusalem) when the Old City fell in the War of Independence (1948). Among its teachers were Jerusalem's greatest rabbis, including Rabbi Shmuel Salant, and Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer.

⁵³ The modern Lux lamp is a kerosene lamp, invented in Sweden in 1901 for indoor and outdoor use. It gave off a large amount of light, was used widely in the *Yishuv*, and was used throughout Israel in areas where there was not yet electricity. As early as 1890, an early version of the Lux lamp was installed in the winery at Rishon LeZion.

a result of my shyness. We played soccer. We took trips around the environs of Jerusalem: Ein Farah⁵⁴, Ein Kerem⁵⁵, Motza⁵⁶, and also a one-time journey to Tel Aviv to the “*Yerid HaMizrach*” (“The Middle Eastern Fair”).

By the time I had reached eighth grade, the school, which had been situated on Rehov HaChabashim (Ethiopians) near “Bnei Brit,” had moved to a new location. The Tachkemoni School moved into a building in the Mekor Baruch neighborhood.

In the month of Av 5689 (August 1929), riots took place in which Arabs attacked in Hebron, killing Jews in their homes and in the Hebron Yeshiva. On the Shabbat of the week that this occurred, a young man came into our synagogue in “Batei Rand”⁵⁷ with a small pistol in his hand (I now know it was a Browning ¼) and announced that the situation was getting bad and that we had to defend ourselves. We each collected stones and placed them on the second story balconies of the houses, lest we be attacked. Everything passed peacefully in the neighborhood.

After the murders in Hebron, we took two children from Hebron whose parents had been murdered into our class, the son of the Slonim family and the son of the Reizman family. It was very moving and painful, but we behaved in a proper fashion towards them.

During the difficult winter nights of torrential rain, ice, and snow, we would crowd into our house around the table and the large kerosene lamp. The lamp was called a “Blitz Lamp,” and it served as a source both of light and of heat. My father would read Bible stories to us and teach us Torah in Yiddish,

⁵⁴ A large spring in the riverbed of Wadi Farah (Nachal Perat), 8 km northeast of Jerusalem.

⁵⁵ A section in southwestern Jerusalem built on the site of an Arab village abandoned during the War of Independence. Hadassah Hospital is found on the hill above this village.

⁵⁶ A small rustic village about 5 km west of Jerusalem at the junction leading to the Shfelah (coastal plain).

⁵⁷ A neighborhood in central Jerusalem, south of Machane Yehuda, named for its founder, Rav Mendel Rand from Galicia. It was built in the years 1907-1910.

from the articles that appeared in the American Yiddish newspaper “*Der Forverts*” (“The Forward”)⁵⁸, which he received at work.

During the period right after Hanukkah, the institution for which father worked, *Vaad HaKlali Knesset Yisrael* (General Council of the Community of Israel) would mail publicity materials out in order to collect money in the European countries and the United States, and during the difficult winter nights, the material would be brought to our house, and the entire family would stuff the envelopes, which were then mailed. Sometimes I even went to the office to help out, and in return received 5 *grush* (the smallest denomination of coin) as compensation.

In 1925, when the cornerstone laying ceremony for Hebrew University⁵⁹ took place, my mother took my sister and me on foot to Mount Scopus. The road was filled with people, and the interest was great. It was wonderful to see such a crowd streaming to Mount Scopus.

Our family contained many branches, not just in Jerusalem but all over the land of Israel, and anyone who had a problem would come to my father for advice. Thus I became acquainted with the entire family, and when I grew up I would visit them throughout the country. In the neighborhood in which we lived, the Knesset Bet neighborhood, many important and special people lived, including the Kabbalist Reb Shimon Leder-Horvitz⁶⁰, Rabbi Arieli⁶¹ the local

⁵⁸ “*Der Forverts*” [“The Forward”], a Jewish socialist newspaper, was established in New York in 1897. In its prime, during the First World War, its circulation reached 200,000 copies daily, in eleven regional editions. The *Forverts* was the largest of the Jewish newspapers in the United States, and during its peak years, its circulation exceeded even that of the New York Times.

⁵⁹ The Hebrew University in Jerusalem was dedicated in the presence of Lord Balfour, Rabbi Kook, and the nation’s dignitaries, in the amphitheater on Mount Scopus on April 1, 1925.

⁶⁰ Reb Shimon Tzvi Leder-Horvitz, together with Reb Chaim Leib Urbach, established a Kabbalistic yeshiva in Jerusalem in 1906 called “*Shaar Hashamayim*” (Heaven’s Gate). Reb Chaim Leib is the father of Rav Shlomo Zalman Urbach, one of the giants of the generation.

⁶¹ Rabbi Isaac Arieli (1897-1974), a native of Jerusalem, son of Rabbi Avigdor Zembrauer, was the spiritual leader of the “Knesset Yisrael” section of Jerusalem, was one of the

rabbi, and at one point Rav Neriah the director (*Rosh Yeshiva*) of the Bnei Akiva yeshivot. Rabbi Goren's⁶² family as well, then known as Gordonchik, lived in the area.

My Bar Mitzvah

On the second day of *Rosh Chodesh MarCheshvan* 5688 (1928), my bar mitzvah celebration took place. In those days, much less emphasis was placed on such celebrations than today, and the concept of a bat mitzvah was completely unknown in Jerusalem. On the previous Shabbat I had been called to the Torah for *Maftir*, but inasmuch as we belonged to the Hassidic synagogue "Batei Rand" it was not the custom to read the *Haftarah* aloud as was done in the synagogues of the "Prushim"⁶³ (i.e., non-Hasidic synagogues of the "mitnagdim"), so I only recited the blessings and said the *Haftarah* silently. My parents hosted a festive meal at our home for our relatives, distinguished leaders, and rabbis. I prepared to deliver by heart a long speech which Mr. Mordechai Ostrovsky (my teacher from the Mizrachi Talmud Torah) had taught me, and lo and behold – when I began to speak the Hassidic rabbis began to sing and did not allow me to finish.⁶⁴ I was personally offended but I endured

founder of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav, and the spiritual director of that yeshiva. He was the author of the book "*Eynayim LaMishpat*" (an outstanding work citing all the Halachic sources pertinent to any given *sugya*). He was awarded the Israel Prize in Torah Literature in 5726 (1966).

⁶² Brigadier General Rabbi Shlomo Goren (1919-1994), the Chief Rabbi of the IDF, later became the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, and finally the Chief Rabbi of Israel. He won the Israel Prize in 5721 (1961), authored a number of books, and wrote hundreds of articles.

⁶³ There were two large waves of immigration (aliyah) to Palestine prior to the *Bilu* movement in 1882, namely the aliyah of the *Hassidim* in 1777 and the aliyah of the *Prushim* in 1809. The *Prushim* (literally abstemious) were so named because they abstained from worldly delights in Europe and immigrated to Palestine. The *Prushim* were *mitnagdim* who followed the rulings of the Gaon of Vilna, in contrast to the *Hassidim*.

⁶⁴ Compare: "It is a Torah custom in Israel that the bridegroom delivers a speech but is not allowed to finish it, as those dining with him stop him by breaking out in song" (Joseph Levi, *Minhag Yisrael Torah*, New York 5762, Part 4, page 198).

it. I was told I must drink a *schnapps*. A cup was filled for me – and, after drinking it, I nearly passed out.

In my last year in school I encountered a young educator named Mordechai Ish-Shalom,⁶⁵ a very charming and popular man. His subjects were social studies and sports, and every good student was recommended by him to be accepted as a member of the Bnei Akiva religious youth movement. Therefore, I joined that movement. I graduated from the Mizrachi Talmud Torah and wanted to continue my studies in the Mizrachi Teachers College. A visit to the college convinced me it was not for me, and I went looking for somewhere else to attend. At that time a business track was started in the Kiyach-Alliance High School and, even though I had only the barest knowledge of the English language, I was accepted into the school and there I studied for three years. In addition to the usual subjects we studied English, French, Hebrew and Arabic. Most of the vocational courses were in English, and the school was coeducational.

From the time I started at this school a change came over me. I was no longer the shy child but became very aware, active and practical, to the point that the class appointed me the head of the class council. The teachers were fond of me as well. I will point out that one of the Hebrew teachers was the lawyer Tzvi Schwartz, the father of Rachel Dayan. He invited me to his home, and it was he who organized trips to the Valley and to the kibbutzim. My political inclination was leftist (the Mapai party). In general, I was a good student, despite my nearsightedness; I always sat in the first row near the blackboard and that helped. I organized groups of students from the entire high school, and we all heard lectures about the Jewish community, settling the land, Zionism and Jerusalem. Among the speakers were Mr. Yeshayahu Press, Mr. Yitzchak Ben Zvi,⁶⁶ Mr. Tzvi Schwartz,⁶⁷ and Mr. Ben Zion Netanyahu⁶⁸ and others. We would meet once a week for these lectures.

⁶⁵ This probably refers to the Mordechai Ish Shalom (1902-1991) who was the mayor of Jerusalem between 1959 and 1965.

⁶⁶ Yitchak ben Zvi (Shamshelevitz) (1884-1963), author, philosopher, and a leader of the Labor movement, was the second president of Israel.

⁶⁷ A Jerusalem lawyer, the father of Rachel Dayan, Moshe Dayan's first wife.

⁶⁸ Ben Zion Netanyahu (1910-), one of the editors of the Hebrew Encyclopedia, professor

Upon starting my studies in high school I left Bnei Akiva and joined the Betar movement (see the topic, *Betar*). Also, upon the recommendation of my gym teacher Mr. Joseph Bar-Nun, I joined the Maccabi sports organization.

Maccabi

In the Maccabi organization I did standard gymnastics, also distance running, shot put and various drills. Our Jerusalem team took part in the first Maccabiah games in 1932. We came to Tel Aviv to the Gymnasia Herzlia (High School) which was located at the time on Herzl-Ahad Ha' Am Street, dressed in the Maccabi uniform, a bright blue shirt and white pants, and we marched in procession. We marched with all the groups along the length of Allenbee and Ben Yehuda streets to the stadium. Ben Yehuda Street was not paved at the time and we had to march in the sand. It was very exciting to take part in this event.

Meanwhile, as I was a member and a leader in Betar, we had many discussions about the situation in Palestine. At the end of one conversation, one of the members approached me and asked me to take a walk with him. We walked along, then he again brought up the security question. As we spoke, I remembered how when I was a child my father went out with a tree branch, saying he was going to protect us. I told him we must organize for self defense. He then asked me if I would be willing to join such an organization, and my answer was affirmative. We separated, with him telling me that he would get back to me (see *The History of the Haganah*). This meeting got me to thinking all kinds of thoughts, how it could work, what and whom, but all this remained unclear until one day two weeks later I met the same fellow who, in the meanwhile, had made all sorts of inquiries about me. We continued to talk, and finally he told me to come to a certain location that evening, to knock on the door and say a certain code word, and that's what I did. This was all quite secretive and mysterious: when I said the code word after knocking three times, the door to the place opened and he took me by the hand in total darkness and sat me down on a chair without speaking. One detail I remember to this day was the ticking of the clock on the wall: "tick-tock, tick-tock." After a short time, I was taken by another person and brought to a nearby room. In this room

of history, author of important texts about Don Isaac Abarbanel, on the Jews of Spain before the expulsion, and on Zeev Jabotinsky. Father of Yonatan Netanyahu, hero of Entebbe, and of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

the light was shone on my face, blinding me so I could see nothing. Several men apparently sat opposite me, how many I could not see. They asked a few questions, whether I knew to where I had come? And was I ready to join up? My answers were affirmative and I was told I would hear in a few days, but I must keep the meeting a secret. I left the place excited and honored to be on the verge of becoming a member of the Haganah. I did not know at the time just how many self-defense organizations there were; I learned that afterwards.

After a few days I met up with the fellow, happy and cheerful, and he told me I was accepted as a member,⁶⁹ but that I must return to the same place a second time, and he again gave me a code word. The entrance process was the same as before, I was brought into the room and saw before me several men, a small table with a map of the land of Israel on it, a Zionist flag and a pistol, and I was asked whether I was ready to swear allegiance. I answered affirmatively, and the one who swore me in was my cousin Gershon Slutzkai. After that they told me I would be called into action in the near future, and so it was. Someone told me to come to a certain place with a code word. That was my first substantive contact with the Haganah. I also remember that my commander's name was Yonah Appel. And so began the weekly drills. Just before Pesach or shortly after, we were mobilized to various posts for a few hours each day. At the same time that I was busy with Betar activities, I was also involved with the Haganah; despite that, I did not neglect my studies in school, and even recruited friends for Betar and even for the Haganah.

In Jerusalem, sports meets took place for the city high schools, and here too I participated, in the 800 meter races and in shot put, something that interested me very much.

⁶⁹ Compare: "How was I inducted? Like in stories. After I expressed to my closest friends my desire to join the 'Haganah,' one day contact was made with me in the form of a friend who whispered in my ear to come at night to the Kupat Holim building. It was a dark night, and the place was shrouded in total darkness. I arrived, and was told to go towards one of the rooms, whose windows were covered with black fabric. I groped my way there, opened a door, and was startled to find the room lit up. The bright light within was directed straight into my eyes, so that I could not see who was speaking to me. He read the oath of allegiance, I repeated it, I placed my hand on a pistol and a Bible which lay on the table...." (Yitzchak Kop, *The 'Michmash' Brigade in the Jerusalem Vicinity*," *Jerusalem*, 2002, p. 27).

I simultaneously passed the Haganah and Betar leadership course which had been initiated by Zeev Jabotinsky and was under the direction of Baruch Blankenfeld, and we were very active on Tel-Hai Day. We traveled to Tel-Hai to visit the graves of Joseph Trumpeldor and his comrades, and another time we visited the grave of Sarah Aronson⁷⁰ in Zichron Yaacov. I took part similarly in the national congress in Tel Aviv. There literally were riots on Pesach on the part of the left-wing organizations.

In 1934 I graduated from high school and attended Hebrew University on Mount Scopus to study Judaica but, because I was so involved in the various organizations, I had to drop out. I took a vacation and traveled to my relatives on my mother's side in Haifa, Berel Rabinovitz and his son Zvi, who were engineers who surveyed and apportioned the Carmel. I joined them and helped them as much as I could.

Supplying and Distributing Water to the "Knesset" Neighborhood

There were three neighborhoods, the old "Knesset Yisrael," the "Bet" section and the new neighborhood. The new part was constructed when we were living in the Bet section. I recall the cornerstone laying ceremony when Rav Kook of sainted memory laid the cornerstone. The main problem in these sections was the water situation. Each neighborhood had a cistern which collected the rain water, and it was insufficient to meet all the needs. There was no structure or organization, so father organized and set up the distribution of water. The homes had no running water, and the lavatories were on the fringes of the neighborhood. When the municipality began laying a network of pipes for running water, a pipe and a faucet were placed in a central location in the neighborhood, which was under father's jurisdiction, however water did not always flow to it and it was necessary to find ways to influence the municipal water works officials to provide more water to the neighborhood, and this was always accomplished in the middle of the night.

⁷⁰ Sarah Aronson (1890-1917), one of the leaders of the "Nili" organization (a Hebrew acronym for "the Eternal One of Israel does not lie" – *Netzach Yisrael Lo Yishaker*), (I Sam. 15:29) which spied for the British against the Turks during the First World War. The Turks uncovered the ring, tortured Sarah for four days, and she finally committed suicide.

And here is a story which has to do with the distribution of water in the neighborhood. I believe it was 1927 on Pesach. Father was asked to prepare food and to bring it to a group of Persian Jews who had arrived on foot, and were staying at the Ehrlich soup kitchen in Me'ah She'arim. The appropriate food was promptly rounded up with the assistance of Mother and the neighbors, which was sent along to Me'ah She'arim – and so it was throughout the holiday. The question arose of where they could stay and find work. Lodging was arranged in Kfar HaShiloach (Silwan), southeast of the Old City and, as for work – they became the neighborhood water carriers. He moreover arranged for them to obtain containers for the water, and the Persians would fill them and bring them to each house in exchange for a meager payment. Of all things on the eve of the Sabbath and holidays, the water arrived at midnight, and there was no alternative but to fill the containers at night in order to distribute them in the morning. This burden fell to Father, who toiled by himself to fill the containers. There always were disagreements when the subject has to do with water: this one had gotten more, that one less. As the years went by, additional pipes were laid, and then were brought into the homes.

The Era of the “Lux”

In order to illuminate the neighborhood – electricity had yet to come – there was a post at the edge of the courtyard with a “Lux” on top of it, a special lamp which a municipal employee came to light each day. This well-lit spot also served as a play area for the children in the evenings.

In the courtyard was also located the matzah oven of Reb Hayim Yisrael Halperin, who was busy baking matzahs from the month of Tevet on. The aromas of the baking were flavorful and pleasant. One year I worked at the oven during vacation. We always enjoyed seeing how the matzahs were prepared as well as having the privilege of receiving a piece of fresh matzah. Next to the oven was a storeroom which father had set up to store the neighborhood succahs and, when the high holidays came, they used to take the succah parts out – wood, reeds, etc. – and they were returned to the storeroom after the holiday of Sukkot. As I mentioned, there was no electricity yet, and kerosene lamps were used to light the homes and kerosene stoves for cooking; later on the Primus stove (a pressurized kerosene stove) appeared, but one of the oldest methods was the small stove on which the cholent was prepared for

Shabbat. This stove occupied a small space in the corner of the kitchen. The cholent was covered with “*cholent schmattes*,” rags designated especially for this purpose. These were like pillows. There was an oven nearby in the Ohel Moshe⁷¹ neighborhood, and sometimes the cholent was brought to that oven on Friday and picked up on Shabbat after services.

Marriage

Wedding ceremonies took place on Tuesdays, and for the most part on Fridays. Before weddings began to be celebrated in hotels, the actual ceremony or *huppah* would take place on a Friday afternoon in a hall, and the family then gathered for Shabbat at the parents’ house. The parents hosted a substantial *kiddush* in synagogue and, after Shabbat, the main part of the celebration took place, called “*nochada*.”⁷² My family and I participated a

⁷¹ The “Ohel Moshe” neighborhood was built in the center of Jerusalem in 1883 and was named for the philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore.

⁷² An all night celebration, from the Ladino *nochada* (the Spanish word for night is *noches*). What we see, then, is an Ashkenazic concept, in Hebrew and Yiddish, for the *motzaei Shabbat* (Saturday night) wedding celebrations in Jerusalem, which is based upon a Ladino word. Rabbi Abraham A. Levene, spiritual leader of the Lower Merion Synagogue to which Eliyahu belonged during the last twenty-five years of his life, related to me that he heard in his youth from his father Rabbi Haim Yaacov Levene z.t.l. about the unique Jerusalem custom, whose name he recalls as “*lochada*.” This was the wedding celebration after Shabbat; a custom which existent only in Jerusalem, where cookies wrapped in bedding were brought, and where the only musical instruments were drums. [in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple, the Ashkenazic rabbinical court of Rabbi Meir Urbach decreed that it was forbidden to play musical instruments other than drums in Jerusalem. The Sephardim did not consider themselves bound by the Ashkenazic rabbi’s prohibition, but the Ashkenazim were obligated to obey this prohibition because of their dependence on funds whose distribution was in the hands of the rabbis. Jerusalem’s Sephardic Jews continued to play musical instruments (*Sefer Yerushalayim*, Efraim and Menahem Talmi, Tel Aviv, 1958, p. 185) and would celebrate all night long. The Jerusalem custom of Friday weddings was unique, and was a practice of the Sephardic Jews in Jerusalem. The Ashkenazim joined the Sephardim in Jerusalem as a negligible minority and adopted their customs. Eliyahu Porush, in his book *Zichronot Rishonim* (Jerusalem 1963, p. 39), and Asher Wasserteil in his book *Yalkut Minhagim* (Jerusalem 1996, p. 134) cite the custom, giving it different Hebrew and Yiddish spellings. This word was not listed among those words of Ladino known to have influenced the Hebrew language in Ora (Rodrig) Schwarzwald’s

number of times in wedding celebrations which took place on the roof of the Hurvat Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Chasid synagogue and also on the roof of the Tiferet Yisrael-Nissan Beck synagogue.

Maternity Customs

When a woman gave birth, it was at home with the assistance of an expert midwife. This was the general case even though there were hospitals in the Old City: Bikur Cholim Hospital⁷³, Shaare Zedek⁷⁴, the Rothschild Hospital⁷⁵

excellent article, "Judeo-Spanish Influences on Modern Hebrew," *Paamim* 56, 5753, pp. 33-49.

The Jerusalem custom of holding the *huppah* (wedding ceremony) on Friday, and of displaying the marital bed sheet to the groom's mother (in the Sephardic community), and of a public wedding celebration on Saturday night after Shabbat, incorporates, to my mind, all the elements of the ancient wedding ritual, apart from the custom of the *ketubah*, which is connected to the blessing on the consummation of the marriage. "That among us it is the custom regarding the *ketubah* that it is written on Friday and then signed after Shabbat and the *ketubah* is written on Friday" (*Maasei Ha-Geonim*, p. 55). According to the ancient marriage custom, the *ketubah* was written on Friday and was only signed after Shabbat (once it had been shown that the transaction was not an invalid one, and the "blood of consummation" was made public). Maimonides (*Teshuvot Ha-Rambam*, Blau edition, *siman* 27) vehemently forbade the public recitation of the blessing on consummation of the marriage, such that this custom disappeared over generations (Yisrael M. Ta Shma, *Ha-tefillah Ha-Ashkenazit Ha-Kedumah*, "Birkat HaBitulim," Jerusalem 2003, p. 185). In Jerusalem, there was no need to wait to sign the *ketubah* on Saturday night inasmuch as the consummation blessing had been abolished. Therefore, it seems that the ancient Geonic marriage tradition was preserved, apart from deferring the signing of the *ketubah* until after the blessing of consummation.

⁷³ Bikur Cholim Hospital was built in the Old City (next to the Hurvah Synagogue) by the leaders of the *Prushim* Ashkenazic community in Jerusalem in 1857, and moved to Rehov Strauss in the New City. Its cornerstone was laid in 1910.

⁷⁴ Shaare Zedek Hospital, which was dedicated in 1901, was referred to by the members of the Old *Yishuv* as "Wallach's Hospital" after Dr. Moshe Wallach (1866-1957), founder of the institution and its first physician. The hospital was named for the neighborhood which was located behind its old building on Rehov Yaffo. The Shaare Zedek neighborhood was, when it was founded (1895), the northernmost neighborhood in the New City, and was named for the verse, "open up the gates of righteousness (*shaare*

(later known as Hadassah) and Misgav Ladach⁷⁶, which later moved out beyond the walls to Jewish West Jerusalem.

Children from the courtyard and the *cheder* would come towards evening to the home of the laboring mother to say the *Shema* and several chapters of Psalms, and received sweets in return. If the newborn baby was a boy, people would come to the home of the new mother on Friday night for a “*Shalom Zachar*”⁷⁷ and would sing and would eat “*arbes*”⁷⁸ (chickpeas) and legumes, and on the night before the *brit* everyone would come for “*vacht nacht*,”⁷⁹ an all-night vigil, and the next day the *brit* would take place.

Finding a Job

A few days after I arrived in Haifa for the surveying job, I received a letter from my father that a position had become available for me, and I returned to Jerusalem as suggested by a friend of my father’s. I met with a man named Mondolfo who spoke English and French, and who offered me a job

zedek) for me, I will enter them and praise the L-rd” (Psalms 118:19).

⁷⁵ Rothschild Hospital was built in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1845 and moved to the New City in 1888.

⁷⁶ The Misgav Ladach Society was founded in 1876 and its leaders were among the most respected members of Jerusalem’s Sephardic community. Misgav Ladach Hospital opened its doors in the Rothschild Hospital’s old building, when the former moved to the New City in 1888, served the residents of the Old City until the end of the fighting in the War of Independence, and then was erected anew in the Gonen section. It was a maternity hospital, one of the largest in Jerusalem, and just closed its doors in the early 2000s.

⁷⁷ On Friday night after the birth and before the *brit* (circumcision), it is the custom to gather at home for a festive meal called *shalom zachar*. The meaning of the term – greeting the newborn boy with blessings of peace and welcome.

⁷⁸ “*Arbes*” hints phonically at what God had promised Abraham: “I will greatly multiply (*harbeh arbeh*) your progeny (Genesis 16:10). In Arabic, *hummus*; in Yiddish, *arbes* or *nahit*, and in Hebrew *humtza* – but that word is not commonly used.

⁷⁹ An all-night vigil, during which the Torah and the Zohar were studied all night.

with the Masonite Company (insulation boards which were being imported from Chicago in the United States), and its owner was a German Jew named Otto Frank. I met with Mr. Frank, who spoke German and who asked me whether I spoke German, I answered in Yiddish affirmatively, even though I really had no clue about German. Yet, after a very short time I learned to speak German. He offered me a job as a warehouseman and sales agent, and my salary was 3.5 *lirot* a month.

Compared to the entry level workers at the time, that was quite a good, high salary and many of my school friends were jealous of me. I began to work for Masonite in 1935. A few months after I started working in the main office in the Shfelah (coastal plain), a branch was opened in Jerusalem and I was transferred here – under the direction of Mr. Max Kochman, also a German Jew. I worked with him until February 1944. The majority of our customers were Arabs and Christians from the old city of Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem, and many Jewish companies. During my time with Masonite there were quiet times with many opportunities to work, and times when it was impossible to work, especially in the Arab *souk*.

Once, we received an order from a carpenter in Bethlehem but, because of the situation, it was difficult to transport the merchandise in a Jewish vehicle. We therefore tried to hire an Arab vehicle near the Jaffa Gate. At that time, our office was in the same building as the Neuman Driving School, and because of that traffic officers⁸⁰ would come visit. Among them was one with whom I had become friendly and precisely on that morning when I had to go down to the Jaffa Gate, which was entirely unpleasant, this police officer was drinking coffee with me, and I asked him to come with me to where the Arab truck drivers were, near the Jaffa Gate.

⁸⁰ The traffic officer, with white sleeves and white gloves, was the predecessor of the traffic light in directing traffic. During the period of the British Mandate, at every major intersection there stood a traffic officer who directed traffic. Compare: “At the intersection where Julian Street, Mamilla Street and Princess Mary Street met, there always stood an industrious policeman wearing short pants. His arms were covered by white sleeves. This policeman ruled autocratically over a minuscule concrete island, shaded by a round sort of sheet metal umbrella. From above that island the policeman directed the traffic, an omnipotent deity armed with a shrill whistle, his left hand stopping and his right hand speeding up.” (Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, published by Keter, Jerusalem, 2002, p. 258).

I went there, entered the storefront where the truck drivers were, and immediately heard in Arabic, "*Yahudi! Chutu bil sanduk*" (A Jew! Stuff him in the trunk). I made a bit of noise but as we began to speak the British police officer arrived and remained with me, but I did not reach an agreement with them and was happy to get out of there. I called the customer in Bethlehem and asked him to come with his own vehicle to pick up the merchandise, and so it was.

Special Officer

I lived with my parents in the Knesset Yisrael section, and I would help my parents and neighbors deal with the authorities, as there were many instances of riots, etc. As I mentioned, I worked at the time for a building materials company named Masonite, and I was already a member of the Haganah. Since I was assisting many of the local residents, I approached the British authorities with a request to be appointed a volunteer peace officer known as a Special Constable, and these credentials allowed me to move about freely. The neighborhoods were often placed under curfew⁸¹, especially at night, and a permit to move about freely aided me a great deal in passing information, in rendering first aid and so forth. It is important to remember how few telephones there were in Jerusalem in those days. I fulfilled the task of Special Constable from 1933-1936.

In mid-1936, I was called in by the British police superintendent Mr. Spicer (a British gentile) and was given a certificate of appreciation for volunteering as a constable.

Despite the emergency conditions, life in Jerusalem was pleasant. People knew one another, or each other's families. Each morning as I walked to the post office I met many of my acquaintances, and each one in turn greeted the other with "good morning" or "shalom." During the time I worked for Masonite I took advantage of my connections with the managers and we got

⁸¹ Compare: "the entire city [Jerusalem] was shut down at 8:00 PM by order of the British curfew" (Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem 2002, p. 339). And elsewhere: "From 7 in the evening on we were already shut up at home because of the curfew placed by the British on Jerusalem (ibid., p. 25).

our teenagers to tend their gardens in the Talpiot neighborhood, and the money they earned was donated to the Jewish National Fund.

When I worked for Masonite I abandoned my activities and membership in *Betar*, inasmuch as there were no active members and there was no meeting place due to a lack of funds. Perhaps there were additional reasons which I do not recall, and I joined Maccabi HaTzair, which was active, and I functioned as leader, a position which at the time was termed "captain." We engaged in sports but along with that were activities, meetings, lectures on Zionist subjects and more. There as everywhere I was quite active.

In the spring of 1936 the Middle Eastern Fair opened in Tel Aviv and the Masonite company had an exhibit there and I served as the company's representative. During that time the Arab general strike erupted and there were attacks on Jews. The roads were dangerous and travel was difficult, particularly to Jerusalem. The port of Jaffa was shut down and the Tel Aviv municipality therefore built a pier in the Mediterranean near the Yarkon River and the Power Company, and it was near the location of the Middle Eastern Fair, and I photographed this event.

In 1936 a change also took place in what I have termed the Haganah; in fact, it was the Haganah Bet or Irgun Bet, while the main Haganah was subordinate to the Jewish Agency (see the history of the Haganah). The Irgun Tzvai Leumi (Etsel or the Irgun) was born. I recall arguments and attempts at persuading one to join Etsel. Our unofficial meetings took place in the Tel-Hai restaurant, which was then on Rechov Yishayahu near the Edison Cinema, and here in an unofficial manner discussions took place and attempts to persuade many people to join Etsel. One Shabbat, on which date I don't remember, all the members of Irgun Bet were summoned to the inner schoolyard of the Alliance School, and at the line-up the commander announced that a situation had arisen and each person could decide whether to join the main Haganah or Etsel, and he ordered everyone who wished to join Etsel to take one step forward; I was among those who signed up for Etsel. The meeting of the unit to which I belonged took place in the Shpitzer School in the Bucharian Quarter⁸², where

⁸² The "Bucharian" Quarter in the center of Jerusalem was founded in 1873 by immigrants from Bucharia. The first name of the section was *Rechovot* [the streets of] *HaBucharim*, after the verse, "and he called the name of it Rehovot, and he said: 'for now Hashem was made room [*hirchio*] for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Genesis 26:22). The neighborhood was one of the most elegant in Jerusalem, built completely of

we heard the commanding officer of Etzel in Jerusalem Mr. David Raziell⁸³ (murdered in Iraq during a British commando raid and elevated posthumously to the rank of brigadier general). The split came about because of the policy of restraint in dealing with the situation which was prevalent in the ranks of the Haganah, whereas Etzel maintained that one must react to each murder and attack. And from hereon in, whenever Jews were killed – in response Arabs were killed; if a Jewish bus was shot at, the next day an Arab bus was shot at.

In one incident, Arabs fired on a bus bound for Talpiot and killed a Jew. The next day, shots were fired on an Arab bus near Bethlehem, and it fell to me to clean the weapons. I recall that a girl disguised as an old woman came and delivered a basket to me and in it were the arms which were to be cleaned. In the neighborhood courtyard stood a storage shed in which the sukkah lumber and boards were stored; it was there that I had prepared what I would need to clean the weapon. Just when I was in the midst of cleaning, my father appeared and saw what I was doing – and was very pleased that I was among the ranks of the Haganah, an organization which up until then he did not recognize.

In 1938, a member of Etzel named Shlomo Ben-Yosef from a Betar company in Rosh Pinah was arrested on the way to Safed, as he and another two members were shooting at an Arab bus in reaction to the murder of a Jew. One day afterwards they were caught by the police and Shlomo Ben-Yosef (may G-d avenge his blood) was sentenced to hang in the prison in Acre. A day or two after the hanging, in the middle of June, the C.I.D. (the British Criminal Investigation Department) arrested suspects who belonged to Etzel and also former members of Betar, as well as leaders such as the attorney Efraim Vashitz, Eliyahu Washvilovsky (he later became M.K. Meridor) the father of Dan Meridor, and Mr. Steimatzky, owner of the Steimatzky bookstore. That morning, two British men in civilian garb entered the Masonite office and asked for me. When I answered that it was I, they asked me to come along with them

stone with gardens and wide streets in a grid pattern. Many of the owners were affluent individuals who used these homes in Jerusalem for vacations.

⁸³ Brigadier General David Raziell (1910-1955) was one of the founders of Etzel and its commander. He immigrated to Israel with his parents in 1914, but, during the First World War, his family was exiled by the Turks. He returned to Israel in 1923. Raziell was among the foremost opponents to the Haganah policy of restraint.

and took me to a car which was waiting outside, in which there already were several people whom I knew. Just as I entered the car, father passed by on the way to his office and saw what was taking place. We were taken to the Kishla⁸⁴ police station in the Old City near David's Citadel, and there I met more of my friends: Zvi Aharonovich (later known as Hazzan Zvi Aroni – a cantor who served in Toronto, Ontario and Forest Hills, NY in later years); David Horn – who later on in prison was nicknamed *Gingi Azrir*, whereas I was called *Gingi Agbir* (in Arabic: the little *Gingi* or redhead and the big *Gingi*). After a brief interrogation we were transferred to the general prison in the Russian Compound section. When we arrived there all our personal belongings were taken from us and we were brought into a large, empty room, we were each given a thin sort of mattress called a "*bourje*," and they brought into the room a pail for use as a toilet, called a *jardal*.⁸⁵ We settled in and entered a new world. We passed the time in conversation, studying the *Tanach*, telling personal stories, etc. How we obtained cigarettes I will never in my life understand, because they were taken away from us when we entered. Almost all of smoked, and each one took a drag from a cigarette.

Each one of us received food from home each morning, which was accompanied by a pot of coffee, on the inside of whose lid short notes were written. Rav Aryeh Levin o.b.m⁸⁶ would come to us each Shabbat, bringing notes from our families in his pockets. Since he was a neighbor of ours, he brought me my tefilin and greetings from my parents.

⁸⁴ The Kishla was a British prison and also a police station in the Old City near David's Citadel. It was built by the Turks in 1838. The word *kishla*, in Turkish *kişla*, meaning a military barracks, and it was indeed at first a building for Turkish military use. And, in fact, in his description of the Armenian Quarter, A.M. Lunz writes, "in this section there stands a fortress or citadel [=David's Citadel] and the new military quarters" [The Byways of Zion and Jerusalem, 1876, p. 2), and in fact the kishla is attached to David's Citadel.

⁸⁵ The Museum of the Underground Fighters, located at the site of the former general prison in the Russian Compound, notes that *bourjim* were woven in prisons from rags (Source: David Wiener). This Arabic word is pronounced *kardal* in northern Israel.

⁸⁶ Compare: "A Tzaddik in Our Time," the story of Rav Aryeh Levin's life by Simcha Raz, Jerusalem, 1989. The story about the notes is found in this biography as well.

One morning, the jail's warden came looking for a man named Boker; we told him there was no such person, but he insisted that, according to his roster, there was such a man and his name was Steimatzky⁸⁷. Mr. Steimatzky had a limp, and when his name was called he limped up and said, "O.K., I'm the 'booker.'" Naturally, this was unintelligible to the Englishman, and it turned out that when we entered the prison an Arab clerk was on duty, and he asked Mr. Steimatzky what he did for a living; he answered, "bookseller" and the Arab wrote down "boker." Luck was on my side due to my father's acquaintance with several police officials: Officer Shlomo Sofer, Officer Langer, as well as two Arab officers, and he succeeded in freeing me from prison after two weeks. But I was placed under house arrest at night for a year and was therefore required to report to the Mahane Yehuda police station each morning and evening. When I was imprisoned, due to the lack of appropriate sanitation, I got a fungal infection on my chest, and whatever the doctors tried was to no avail. My chest was quite unsightly from the fungus, and I literally was embarrassed to take my shirt off. Lo and behold, around 1945 I took a trip down to the Dead Sea (see "Travels"); on the other side of the Dead Sea in a place called "Callirhoe"⁸⁸ are hot springs like the hot springs of Tiberias, but here they were in the open, without any buildings. The closer you were to the ground, the higher the temperature. I myself always loved warm water, so I got

⁸⁷ The Steimatzky Group is the largest chain of bookstores in Israel today.

⁸⁸ "The mineral hot water springs, which are in the Jordan valley and on its banks (Chamei Teveria, Chamat Gader on the banks of the Yarmuk, etc.) and on the east bank of the Dead Sea (Chamam Azerka and Chamam Atzarat, which is also known as Choloroi)" (Isaiah Press, *Eretz Yisrael, Sefer Masaot*, Vienna, 1921, p. 21). Yona Shwartz told me that she joined one of those trips to the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. "we set out, a group of about 40 people, from Jerusalem on a Friday, we rented a boat to cross the Dead Sea. It was just after we were married in 1944. Eliyahu and I had a hut to sleep in with a fan, while the rest slept outside and were jealous of us. We returned to Jerusalem on *motzei shabbat*. The place is incredible in its beauty, surrounded by high cliffs like in a dream, while the hot water springs pour out and are used for immersion. I remember that they mentioned that there was a tradition that in this place Na'aman was cured from his leprosy. (2 Kings, chapter 5.) On the way we passed between rocks in cold and clear water. You could see the bottom of the river. On the way there we crossed the Dead Sea, which was hot and humid." Pliny the elder, a gentile author from the first century CE, emphasizes the medicinal value of Callirhoe that are across the Jordan: "and the name itself, Callirhoe, testifies to its superb waters." (Pliny: *Natural History*, Book V, XV, pp. 70-73). The name Callirhoe itself is the name of a water nymph in Greek mythology.

in and, when I got out, I was as red as a beet. But – miracle of miracles – the fungus was gone! Thus, I came to understand why King Herod had built a sanitarium here for himself.

Despite nighttime house arrest, I continued to work but gave up the youth activities, for my father had been warned from time to time that I was being followed. Within a year I was rearrested along with the other leaders, but only for a night. Interestingly, just as the Arab clerk had garbled Mr. Steimatzky's occupation as described above, he also got my name wrong, and when I was called into the office he called out several times for "Mr. Shorts," to which I didn't even pay attention, and he returned to the office and said, "*mush mabjud*" (no such person), This apparently did not please the warden who had received an order to set me free, so he came himself to find Shwartz, and asked why I had not followed the clerk. I told him it was because the clerk had never called me.

Jerusalem Before the War of Independence

Jewish Jerusalem was at the mercy of the municipal fire fighters until 1939. Fire houses were manned only by Arabs, and as a result the Jewish citizens suffered much unpleasantness. Those were the days of the anti-Jewish riots; attacks on Jews and setting fire to their property became common occurrences throughout the city. On the initiative of several Jerusalemites (Neumark, Lachovitsky and Gutinsky), a Jewish fire station was organized and young people from all over the city were mobilized as volunteers to join the brigade; I too was called to duty.

The Jerusalem Fire Brigades were absorbed by the Jerusalem Civil Defense Command (Hagah) with the outbreak of World War II. Its captain was the Briton Roy and his assistants were Jewish, and I was the captain's assistant for translating from English to Hebrew. We trained on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and the Jerusalem municipality provided us with a fire truck. Thus was founded another public safety unit in Jerusalem which turned out subsequently to be quite useful.

During one of the first drills the fire fighters had under the Englishman's direction, we did dry runs with the fire hose; that is, reeling out the hose, putting it back and connecting it, but without water. The British

captain was a practical joker and decided to soak the Jews, and while I was holding on to the hose he gave an order, without my knowing, to someone behind him to turn on the hydrant under high pressure. I suddenly felt the hose buck and guessed what was going on, and literally at the last moment succeeded in deflecting the hose from the Jewish volunteers to the direction of the British captain himself. He got soaked to the bone, and I apologized as though it were my error. He also apologized and said it was his fault; the hint was clear® no longer would he fool with us.

When my nightly house arrest ended, I joined together with some friends from the elite of the *Yishuv* – Eliezer Argov o.b.m., Yerucham Ben Dror o.b.m., and others of the sort – and we organized a branch of Bnai Brit Youth, an apolitical organization. We had meetings of boys and girls in the Bnai Brit House. It was very pleasant to have activities in which to take part in Jerusalem, but that didn't last long, because when the World War broke out and some of the members left, and the main force behind it, Argov, was drafted into the Army, the activities stopped.

I too reported to the draft office, but I was deferred because of my nearsightedness, so I report to the Civil Defense (Hagah), which was a part of the Haganah. Hagah was headed by Mr. Baruch Katika, Mr. Shlomo Artzi, Mr. Yitzchak Shimoni – owner of the matzo bakery, Mr. Berman – owner of Berman's Bakery, and others. In addition to my job as warden responsible for the Knesset neighborhood, I was appointed to the training section headed by Mr. Shimoni.

Due to the war, shipments of materials to the Masonite Company from the United States ceased, and my employment was cut to half-time. At the same time I was accepted by Hagah for the other half of the day, where I kept busy with training and instruction in the city; the salary was meager.

Acquaintance with Yona-Toni

One evening after work, a friend of mine and I went into Café Atara on Ben Yehuda Street. Two girls were seated opposite our table, one of whom I liked very much, but I didn't have the nerve to go over and ask to sit at their table, so I asked my friend to do it, and he did. I sat with them, and we chatted, and I suggested we go to Café Europa on Zion Square to spend the evening. It

was wartime with a blackout outside, and at the exit from the café was a blackout curtain to prevent the light from being seen from outside. The girls agreed to go with us but, once we had left the café, only one was left, because the second girl, whose name was Toni (that is Yona Wiener) had disappeared, because she didn't want to go since she didn't know us. I was very sorry about that, since I liked her very much.

Several days later as I was hurrying off to teach a class, I went into Café Atara⁸⁹ and I saw Toni-Yona again, and I asked her whether she was willing to go to the movies with me, provided she could wait about half an hour for me to cancel the lesson and return. She didn't believe I would return and I didn't believe she would wait, but it worked out fine: she waited, I came back, and we went to the movies. And from here on we started to become close. After the show I accompanied her to her home and we agreed to go out again the next week. On the very day we were to meet, the last shipment of Masonite arrived from the United States, and Mr. Kochman informed me we were going to Jaffa to Customs to claim the merchandise. I refused because I told him I had to be in Jerusalem that evening. He promised me I would be back, but it didn't work out. At Customs, they put releasing the merchandise off to another day and there I was, stuck in Jaffa. I told Mr. Kochman that I would see him the next morning at the Customs House in Jaffa, and I hastened to an Arab taxi company and went to Jerusalem and made it in time to meet Toni. I told her what had happened and she told me a similar tale: she was returning from a visit to her parents' in the Ramatayim settlement near Kfar Saba, and got off near Kibbutz Kiryat Anavim to visit a friend who asked her to stay for the night, but she refused, saying she must be in Jerusalem, and that is how we met.

From here on in our meetings became more and more frequent. I traveled with her to meet her parents and I introduced her to my own parents as well, and on July 24, 1943, we became engaged at my parents' house in the presence of a number of rabbis, such as Rav Yitzhak Arieli and Rav Pritzker. We were unable to set a wedding date for two reasons: one was finding a suitable apartment, and the second, a more important reason, was finding a better job

⁸⁹ Café Atara in Jerusalem, which is in business to this very day, located on Ben Yehuda Street, is one of the last survivors of this sort of establishment, which has held on for over 60 years. Ms. Ruth Greenspan, its proprietor, relates that on the day on which the British trucks were blown up on Ben Yehuda Street she started serving the rescue workers coffee at 10 A.M.

with a better income. While I was at work at Hagah, on that same day coincidentally, Mr. S. Arzi came to the office and asked how I was doing. I told him what I was up against and that I needed a better job. He told me to come to his office the next day, which was in the Public Works Department⁹⁰ where he served as the chief engineer. The next day I met with Mr. Arzi, who was very happy to see me and to inform me that he had spoken with Mrs. Bowrig, from the office of Food Inspection and Supply. They were looking for someone to work in the Palestine-Israel branch; she would be happy to interview me, and that he had recommended me. I called the Bureau of Food Supply and spoke with Mrs. Bowrig, and we arranged to meet that very day. She impressed me as a very serious and practical woman, and told me about a project to set up "Palestinian Restaurants" in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa. My job would be to allocate supplies, to inspect the activities in the restaurants, to determine the subsidies for each, and to supervise them. I agreed to take the job but she asked me to work on Shabbat; I told her I was willing to work on Sunday but not on Saturday. This position paid me double the salary I had been receiving. I left hoping she would let me know I had gotten the job. I returned home not so cheerful and talked it over with my father, I told him that not only did the job include Shabbat, but that they would check my background with the CID⁹¹, that is, the British secret police, so they would surely not accept me. He encouraged me, saying that everything would work out and that G-d would help. And so, two days later, I received a letter appointing me to the job beginning March 1, 1944. I was not familiar with some of my tasks, so I consulted my friend Mordechai Varshavsky who owned the Palatin Hotel and Restaurant on Agrippas Street. Mordechai and I had gone to school together, and he helped me out and taught me what I needed to know. I started the job, and we planned several restaurants, four in Jerusalem – two of them kosher: the student restaurant and the Terblus Restaurant on Yaffo Street; one near the Jaffa Gate – an Arab one; and a Christian one.

Two restaurants were in Tel Aviv, the WIZO⁹² Restaurant on Ben Yehuda Street, and a second restaurant on Herzl Street. In Haifa, two

⁹⁰ In Hebrew, *Makhleket Avodot Tsiburiot (MAATS)*.

⁹¹ The Committee for Imperial Defence, that is, the British secret police.

⁹² WIZO is an acronym for the Women's International Zionist Organization, a Jewish volunteer organization founded in Britain in 1920.

restaurants in the Hadar section, and two near the harbor. Setting the restaurants up and dealing with them required considerable time and many trips; I appointed a supervisor for each of the Jerusalem restaurants, while in Haifa I picked one supervisor for all the restaurants; supervising the restaurant in Tel Aviv I left for myself. The work was pleasant and interesting and also provided a living for me, and then I began to look for an apartment, which we found on Hashmonaim Street 25, in the Mekor Baruch section of Jerusalem. It was in an Arab house whose owner also lived there, and there were Arabs living across the way. It was not far from the village of Lifta Ilit near the Romema section.

After that, Toni-Yona, our parents and I set our wedding date for the 6th day of the 6th month at 6:00 PM in the Yeshurun Synagogue⁹³ on King George Street. Mr. Eliash, who was the president of the synagogue, and the chairman of Bnai Brit, suggested the place to me in recognition of my public service. We were the second couple to be married in that synagogue. It was war time and very few weddings took place in hotels. Preparations for the wedding entailed many problems; it was hard to get supplies for the preparations as well as for the reception after the ceremony, and it was hard to get supplies for the wedding dinner at home for family and friends. However, I received several approvals for supplies from the office, but they were not enough and my mother was very worried. We prepared as best we could and we were ready, but even so mother was concerned that there wasn't enough cake. And, what a surprise! On the morning of our wedding a truck from Berman's Bakery arrived with a stock of every sort of baked good, cakes of all kinds, challot for dinner. This was a surprise gift from Mr. Berman, with whom I worked in Hagah. The wedding took place precisely on time. The chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Rav Zvi (Hersh) Pesach Frank o.b.m. officiated at the wedding in the presence of a large audience, rabbis, leaders, a delegation from the office in which I worked, family and friends. There was a lovely, family atmosphere, also because we received the good news of the successful invasion of Europe on D-Day.⁹⁴

⁹³ The cornerstone laying ceremony for the Yeshurun Synagogue took place in 5694 (1934) with Rav Kook in attendance, the High Commissioner and the important and respected citizens of Jerusalem. This synagogue served, in effect, for many years as the central synagogue in Jerusalem, its congregants principally religious Zionists who were affiliated with the Mizrachi movement.

⁹⁴ The day on which U.S. forces invaded Europe, June 6, 1944.

After a week's honeymoon which we spent in the Galilee, I returned to my regular job, and here too a pleasant surprise was awaiting me. Mrs. Bowrig, my supervisor, asked me how we were set for kitchenware, and my answer was that we were doing the basics. She asked me to come with her, and we went to one of the store rooms of the Bureau of Food Supply, where a large number of kitchen goods which had been confiscated from German restaurants were stored, and she told me to pick whatever I wanted. I picked dishes of all types and much, much more, filling up the official car which brought the kitchenware to our apartment. When I asked about paying for it, she said to make a symbolic payment of five lirot. What I took helped me, my brother and also my younger sister. To this very day, parts of that gift are stored in the storeroom of our house in Hod HaSharon.

My department had Jews, Christians, Armenians and Moslems, all together eight employees. I took many trips to Tel Aviv and Haifa, and afterwards when I was given the additional responsibility of inspecting the distribution of food supplies to the Arab villages, my journeys became wider ranging, until the end of November 1947, when the trips were restricted due to the security situation.

During one trip to Haifa, British army inspectors stopped our bus near Zichron Yaacov and demanded that all passengers get off the vehicle. For some reason, one of the soldiers said to me, "you stay," for he thought I was English. I remained behind and asked the driver in Yiddish, "*vos zucht er?*" ("what's he looking for?"). The driver answered, "*meine tzuris*" ("my troubles"). Then the soldier interjected in animated Yiddish, "*ich darf nisht dayne tzuris, ich hob genug meine*" ("I don't need your troubles, I have enough of my own"). Presently, we traveled on to Haifa. Due to my expanding job responsibilities, I had in my possession lists of all the Arab villages in Israel, of which I made a copy, and passed them on to our contact in the Haganah, Mr. Kaplan, who sat in the Keren Hayesod office. I am sorry to say he was killed when the Keren Hayesod building was blown up.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ The bombing in the compound of the governing bodies (the Jewish Agency) in Jerusalem, using a booby trapped car belonging to the American consulate, and which was carried out by an Arab driver, took place on March 11, 1948.

As I have described, we would go to the office in convoys, but when a hand grenade was tossed into the office, and it was revealed and all the non-Jews fled, even more work and responsibility was added to our load.

The happiest day of my life was February 16, 1947 when our daughter Ofra was born. In the evening, as Yona was about to give birth, there was a curfew, and soldiers in armored vehicles patrolled the city, and everyone was afraid to go outside. We were afraid as well, but there was no choice, so we left our house, and just then a taxi passed by which took us to Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus, where Ofra was born.

The city was besieged, and food was being rationed. I had an Arab Manager Boy in the office who respected me very much, and offered to bring me eggs from his village, and he would put them in my desk drawer, where I would in turn place money. This was, of course, a great help. One day he arrived filthy and crying because his actions had become known, and they had smashed the eggs in his pockets so he got dirty. Thereafter, I no longer took advantage of his services.

Our office was located not far from the King David Hotel. An Arab who sold bananas was always to be found on that street, and I very much wanted to bring some bananas home. I went up to the Arab and he shouted, "you are a Jew; I won't sell to you." I told my English director about that, and he himself went to get me bananas which I then brought home. At the very same time I worked in the office I continued to volunteer for the Hagah self-defense institutions. All the Jewish office workers came to work until the very last day, May 13, 1948. During the period when the political and economic situation compelled the British to leave Israel immediately, the Bureau of Food Supply collected food for them to take along when they left Israel by sea. At the very last minute there was a change and they received orders to leave Israel by air, so all the food was left behind in Israel. This was a lifesaver for us, because we were called in to the director and he told us to divide up the food supplies – containers of cheese, sardines, dried meat, and more – among the workers. Thus we took home entire bundles. The boxes of dried meat, which were not kosher, we exchanged for fuel and cigarettes.

On Friday, May 15, 1948, the British left and the office was shut down, and that same day I reported to Camp Schneller for civil defense duty in Mishmar Ha'am (The People' Guard). I tried to get a job in the bureau set up by

the military governor of Jerusalem, Mr. Dov Yosef⁹⁶, to ration food, but the position which was suggested to me was not satisfactory. I would have become a minor functionary, so I didn't take the job, and finally was drafted into the I.D.F.

The Family of Aharon and Yaffa Wiener

Yona's family lived in the settlement of Ramatayim near Kfar Saba.⁹⁷ Mr. Aharon Wiener and his wife had a son named Shalom-Zali. The family had succeeded in leaving Berlin, Germany and arriving in Israel. After enduring hardships they reached Ramatayim and purchased a parcel of land, and Mr. Wiener built the bungalow in which they lived with his own hands. Mrs. Wiener saw to everything and although Mr. Wiener had been a furrier in Germany, he turned into a jack-of-all-trades in Israel, doing farm work, carpentry, construction, and mainly he was a glazier in the settlement, a highly sought-after trade.

Yona tried to find employment in Tel Aviv, in Ramatayim and Kfar Saba and did not succeed – there simply was no work. She then decided to move to the Jerusalem area to continue her studies and to find work. It was my luck, here we became acquainted, here we married, and here our daughter Ofra was born – we were very happy.

⁹⁶ Dov Yosef, or according to his English name Bernard Joseph (1899-1980), a native of Montreal, Canada, and one of the most important lawyers in Jerusalem in the era of the British mandate. He immigrated to Israel with the Jewish Brigade in 1918 and settled in Israel in 1921. A senior leader of the Jewish Agency at all levels. He was the military ruler of Jerusalem in 1948-1949. Similarly, he was the Minister of Rationing and Supply in the first Israeli government, and was the one who decreed the austerity measures on April 26, 1949 and enforced them. He was a member of the Knesset from 1949-1959, and served as Minister of Communication, Minister of Trade and Industry, Minister of Development, Minister of Health and Minister of Justice in various governments.

⁹⁷ A city in the southern Sharon region about 9 km north of Petach Tikvah, named after the ancient settlement mentioned in the Talmud (Niddah 64a). The lands of the Arab village there were acquired in 1896 by the settlement authority of Baron Rothschild and were sold in 1903 to the farmers of Petach Tikvah in order to found a settlement for their children.

Due to the War of Independence, travel between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv was impossible. Initially there were convoys which were attacked by Arab rioters, and then the road was blocked. There also was no regular mail delivery. The situation improved when the "Burma Road"⁹⁸ was opened; thus, Yona could not communicate during all this time with her parents, and did not know what had happened to her brother who was 17½ years old. I used all my connections and acquaintances to try to get her an exit permit, but to no avail.

One day during the second cease fire, a food convoy came from the Shfelah (coastal plain), and among them was a driver from Kfar Saba who was an acquaintance of the Wiener family, and he came to visit us in our home and give regards to Yona. Yona – once she decides to do something, she does it. And in this case her decision was to go to see her parents.

The truck driver warned her that it was a difficult journey, military checkpoints everywhere, but that didn't change her mind and she went with our daughter Ofra to see her parents in Ramatayim. And indeed there were delays en route, and all sorts of military checkpoints, but at the end of that journey she reached her parents, who were very happy to see Yona and their one or so year old granddaughter. But the joy was not complete because Yona learned that her brother had volunteered for the army as a sapper and no one had heard from him or knew where he was. After searching, utilizing all our connections, we learned that Shalom-Zali o.b.m. had perished⁹⁹ in the battle for

⁹⁸ "The Burma Road" in the Judean hills was forged during the War of Independence (May-June 1948) in order to hasten the resupply of besieged Jerusalem. The name was borrowed from the original Burma Road: a secret road built by the Allied forces in the jungles of Burma during World War II. The road was built secretly, in the no-man's land between the I.D.F. and the Jordanian Army which had laid siege to Jerusalem. Legend has it that when Amos Horev, Haim Herzog and David Marcus [all of them subsequently generals in the I.D.F.] traveled one dark night in a black jeep in the hills of Jerusalem during the siege. Horev said, "if only the trucks to Jerusalem could get through here." And the answer given by Marcus, an American who was a volunteer in the I.D.F. and who would subsequently be killed accidentally, was: "Why shouldn't we succeed? After all, we crossed the Red Sea!" And thus the State of Israel embarked on an engineering adventure which would forge the bypass road to Jerusalem, through wadis and mountains, and would rescue Jerusalem from starvation.

⁹⁹ A monument to the fallen members of the Alexandroni Brigade includes the name of Shalom (Zali) Wiener, as one of those killed at Latroun on May 26, 1948. Shalom (Zali) Wiener's story appears on the Defense Ministry's Internet memorial site as follows: The

Latroun.¹⁰⁰ It was only long after that his bones were buried in the military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

only son of Yaffa and Aharon Wiener, he was born on 29 Nisan 5690 (23 April 1930) in Berlin, the capital of Germany. He immigrated to Israel together with his parents in 1934, grew up in Kfar Malal where he graduated from the local high school, moved to Tel Aviv, studied as a decorator and found a job while completing his degree at night. As a fighter in the Alexandroni Brigade, he took part in the bridges ambush, and guarding workers in the orchards near the border, he sabotaged Arab transport routes, particularly in Kalkilya and Tul Karm. He participated in the capture of the villages of Hiriya and Salma. He was laid to rest in the military cemetery on Har Herzl in Jerusalem along with the other casualties of the Battle of Latroun.

¹⁰⁰ The Battle of Latroun was one of the most difficult battles of the War of Independence in an effort to liberate Jerusalem from its blockade. In the battle, losses were heavy for a number of reasons, the best known of which is that young, untrained soldiers took part in it. Only once the Burma Road was opened was the siege of Jerusalem lifted. The importance of Latroun as a turning point was immense. This was the place where the roads leading to Jerusalem, Lod, Ramle, Jaffa, Gaza and Ashkelon met. There are two versions of the origin of the name Latroun, both of which arise from errors. One version is that the name comes from "The Tower of the Knights," in French "*Le Toron des Chevaliers*," named after the Crusader fortress from the 12th century which was located there; and the second, is that it was the name of the "Fortress of the Good Thief" [*latro* means thief in Latin] uttered by the pilgrims, according to the story in the Evangelists (Luke 23).

Mishmar Ha-Am – People’s Guard¹⁰¹

In mid-September 1947, the People’s Guard (Mishmar Ha-Am) was founded and established by order of the Haganah command in Jerusalem. This corps was intended to serve as the above-ground arm, in distinction to the Haganah, which worked underground, and to work openly in the Jewish *Yishuv* in Jerusalem, which numbered some 100,000 residents. Carrying this out was the task of a group of commanders from the ranks of the Haganah; they were to organize the corps on a military basis, in preparation for the founding of the state. Draft notices for the new corps were issued by the Council of the Hebrew Community of Jerusalem (*Vaad HaKehila HaIvrit BiYerushalayim*) – People’s Guard (*Mishmar Ha-Am*). The city was divided into districts, and a commander was appointed for each district. The months of September, October and November 1947 were spent in organizing, during which relative quiet prevailed in the city, the calm before the storm, while the British were repressing the Jewish community at every possible opportunity. During this organizational period, younger persons were transferred to the Haganah while older individuals were assigned special tasks. In 1947, shelling of Jerusalem – which was blockaded – began, and the People’s Guard was organized to deal with civil defense and other issues. I joined the People’s Guard, and we returned to organizing Hagah civil defense units where I served as chief instructor.

On November 29, 1947, news arrived of the United Nations’ decision to establish a Jewish state in a portion of *Eretz Yisrael* and the joy was great,

¹⁰¹ This translation of the term “*Mishmar Ha-Am*” (People’s Guard) comes from the Central Zionist Archives of the WZO. According to *Sidrat Idan* number 2, published by The Rachel Yanait Ben Zvi Center for Jerusalem Studies, entitled “Jerusalem 5708,” Jerusalem 1983, p. 114: “*Mishmar Ha-Am*” was a volunteer corps which functioned in Jerusalem from November 1947 to May 1949, whose responsibility was ensuring security in the Jewish sections. In June 1948, *Mishmar Ha-Am* in Jerusalem comprised 3200 men. Among its duties: placing sentries at roadblocks, extinguishing fires, administering first aid and organizing blood donation. I tend to favor Eliyahu’s dating of the founding of the organization (September 1947) over the date appearing in the booklet “Jerusalem 5708” (November 1947), since the September 15, 1947 date is confirmed both by Dov Yosef, the then-military governor, as well as by Yisrael Amir, the commander of the Jerusalem district of the Haganah and others (Proceedings of the Jerusalem “People’s Guard Militia,” published by the Former Activists of the *Mishmar Ha-Am* and the Organization of Haganah Members, Jerusalem, April 1964).

however on the next day, November 30, 1947, the War of Independence began. The Arabs attacked the old commercial center on December 2, 1947. They burned, looted and destroyed the place, and only with the assistance of the members of the Haganah and the People's Guard were the Jews rescued from the burning commercial center, accompanied by Jewish police officers, while the British stood by and did nothing. The members of the People's Guard and the Civil Defense came to put out the fires and save the people trapped in the center, in the houses and stores. From hereon in, organized action began to store up water and food for an unclear future, and likewise regarding all things necessary to maintain normal life in the city. One of the first activities was organizing a municipal police force. Each district was charged with appointing a civil defense command structure, and also evacuation and rescue crews.

The Bombing on Rehov HaSolel (today Rehov Hahavatselet)

On February 1, 1948 at 11 P.M., a British military truck arrived in the alley on Rehov HaSolel, on which the editorial offices and printing press of the Palestine Post were located, and stopped next to the building. Several Englishmen in military uniform jumped out of the truck and fled. The British later contended they were deserters from the Army, but don't believe it! The truck exploded, causing a great deal of damage and destruction. This was the first time that rescue, evacuation and firefighting activities were performed by the men of the Civil Defense (Hagah) and the People's Guard, and I was among them. In the wake of this incident, the level of operational preparedness was raised, and it gave impetus to raising the importance of Hagah- (civil defense-) related matters.

The Bombing on Rehov Ben Yehuda

Precisely three weeks after the first bombing, on February 22, 1948, at 6 A.M., a British military convoy of three trucks and one armored vehicle arrived on Rehov Ben Yehuda in Jerusalem, and stopped in front of the Atlantic Hotel. All those riding in the convoy took off in the armored vehicle, and the explosives-laden trucks blew up and caused enormous damage to all of Rehov Ben Yehuda. It was an atrocity in which over 50 people were killed and many dozens injured. Hagah and People's Guard crews – I among them – arrived rapidly on the scene and engaged in rescuing the injured and keeping order.

During that entire period I served simultaneously as a Hagah instructor and a light arms instructor in Jerusalem.

Until I was drafted into the I.D.F., I served in the People's Guard-Hagah, and as soon as independence was declared, all those who served in the People's Guard began to be drafted. I appeared at the draft office and was deferred on account of my poor vision. I complained that in the underground and in the People's Guard-Hagah I was deemed fit; yet now, in fulfilling my lifelong dreams – a Jewish state and a Jewish army – was there no place for me? I was very insulted, and immediately went to my commanding officers, principally to Mr. Baruch Katinke¹⁰² and Shlomo Arzi and complained. They calmed me down and made several telephone calls and said: "go back to the draft office and everything will be in order." I went to the office and now was received cheerfully, and the draft officer said to me that I would be his sergeant and he would be my captain, however later the situation turned out to be exactly the opposite. See the continuation of the article on the I.D.F.

Mother told us

Mother told us that her father, Reb Yekutiel Eliyahu Klein, was one of the organizers of the local *Gvardiyah*¹⁰³, whose aim was to prevent robbery,

¹⁰² "The Christian Arab contractor Joseph Albina and the Jews Tuvia Dounie and Baruch Katinke (Albina, Dounie & Katinke) were partners in an engineering and contracting firm which carried out various projects in the city [Jerusalem]." Architecture in Jerusalem: Construction during the British Mandatory Era, by David Kreuanker, Jerusalem, 1989, page 75.

¹⁰³ The *Gvardiyah Hayehudit* (Jewish Guard) was the name of a Jewish armed force, which was established in old Jerusalem in 1812. The goal of the group was to protect the lives and property of the Jews in Jerusalem from Arab robbers and murderers. The men of the *Gvardiyah* protected the Jews and assisted immigrants who arrived on the shores of Jaffa and set out for Jerusalem on the unsafe roads of those days. Member of the *Gvardiyah Hayehudit* trained with weapons and organized an efficient intelligence service. At its inception, the force was called "*Sharey Tzedek*," an acronym for the Hebrew words for guarding (*shmirah*), work (*avodah*), healing (*refuah*), rescue (*yeshuah*), public affairs (*tzorchei tzibur*), holy objects (*divrei kodesh*). The term *Gvardiyah* came to Jerusalem from the Yiddish and to Yiddish from Russian. The term originally referred to the royal guard of the Tzar, and in Russia today, refers to elite troops.

theft, attacks on Jews, etc. One day, she was walking along Rehov “Batrak,¹⁰⁴” Rehov David in the Old City, in order to leave the Old City, and mother was wearing long braids;¹⁰⁵ an Arab came up to her and yanked on her braids. Without hesitating, she smacked him in the face, which is a serious insult¹⁰⁶ among Arabs, so he wanted to beat her up, but the Arabs who were nearby yelled at him not to touch her because she was “*binat Chader*,” that is to say she was Eliyahu’s daughter (Eliyahu in Arabic is “*Chader*”¹⁰⁷), so he left her alone and she went on her way.

“A-nabi Mousa” – Moses the Prophet

The Muslims in Jerusalem declared a new made-up holiday, and decided that *Moshe Rabbeinu’s* grave was miraculously moved from Mount Nebo, on the east bank of the Jordan River, to one of the hills on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. They made up this holiday to correspond to the fact that in the spring the Jews have the holiday of Passover, the Christians have Easter, and the Muslims had no holiday¹⁰⁸. They invented the holiday of the Prophet

¹⁰⁴ Batrak is Rehov David in the Old City of Jerusalem. The origin of this street name is “*patriarchiah*,” that is, the location of the Christian (Armenian) Patriarchate. And, indeed, the street runs by Armenian Christian institutions. In Arabic, the letter ‘p’ does not exist and is pronounced as a ‘b’ – hence the corruption and the source of the name *batrak*. The head of the Armenian church is thus called ‘*batrak*’ in Arabic.

¹⁰⁵ Braids, in Yiddish *tzepalach*, were a sign by which unmarried Jewish girls who were looking for husbands were recognizable. A similar custom exists to this day in the Ashkenazic haredi neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Thanks to Neil Tannebaum, who brought this custom to my attention.

¹⁰⁶ Even as of 1481, Moslems were apt to hit the Jews if they so desired, so states Meshulam of Voltara: “and Jews and Gentiles [=Christians] are forbidden to raise their index finger [against the Ishmaelites], for they could force him, G-d forbid, to become an Ishamelite [= to be forcibly converted to Islam] or else be killed” (“The Travels of Meshulam of Voltara in the Land of Israel in 5241,” Avraham Yaari, Jerusalem 1949, p.58); thus, 450 years later the Moslems would still hit Jews at will, without the right of self-defense.

¹⁰⁷ Eliyahu (Elijah) the prophet is called *al-Khadir* in the Koran; see, for example, Sura 18.

¹⁰⁸ Meshulam of Volterra, summarized the main tenets of Islam thusly: “and it was in

Mousa, which became over time a political “holiday” against the Jews and later against the British rule. This holiday was formally cancelled by the British in the last few years prior to the end of the British Mandate¹⁰⁹ in Israel. On this holiday, throngs of Muslims headed by the *Mufti*¹¹⁰ and the Arab mayor of Jerusalem would gather near the city wall on the Mount of Olives road leading to Jericho. They would have a parade accompanied by a band, cheering and singing whose main theme was “*Idbach el Yihud – Adwallah Ma’ana*”¹¹¹: “slaughter the Jews – the government is with us”. Seven days later, they would return to the city in the same fashion. An incident happened on the seventh day of Passover when father, my seven year old sister and I walked to the Kotel via Shaar Shechem (Nablus Gate), and returned the same way. As we arrived on the way home at Shaar Shechem at the corner of Via Delarosa¹¹², exactly at

reference to them [the Moslems] that the author of the prayer *Aleinu Lishabeach* established that bow to *hevel* (*hey-bet-lamed*); the *hey* [which has the numerical value of five] corresponding to the five daily foot washings [of Islam] which are associated with the five daily prayers; the *bet* corresponding with the two Islamic holy days: *Id Al-Adha*, the festival of the sacrifice, and *Id Al-Fitr*, which concludes the Ramadan fast; and the *lamed* corresponding with the 30 fast days of the *Ramadan* month. (*Masah Meshulam Mivoltaira Le’eretz Yisrael Bishnat RMA* (The Travels of Meshulam of Volterra to Israel in 1481) Avraham Yaari, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 59).

¹⁰⁹ The British mandate banned the festivities of *Nabi Mussa* in 1937.

¹¹⁰ Haj Amin al Hussein (1893-1974) was the *Mufti* of Jerusalem between 1921 and 1937. He was appointed to this position by the Jewish governor of Palestine Herbert Samuel! Hussein, scion of a respected Jerusalem Muslim family, was a known anti-Semite, who organized the riots against the Jews in 1929 and in 1936, and was sentenced by the British to a ten year imprisonment as a result. He served the Nazis in Germany between 1941 and 1945.

¹¹¹ The full expression is “Slaughter the Jews, the government is with us, and the Jews are dogs.” Dogs in Islam are despised, and are considered to be low class even among animals. Thanks to Professor Israel Bartal for calling to my attention the expression in its complete form. A similar version appears in a book by Amos Oz, “Palestine is Our Country, And the Jews Are Our Dogs.” (*Sippur Al Ahavah Vachoshech* (A Tale of Love and Darkness), Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 2002, p.380).

¹¹² *Via Dolorosa* (The Way of Suffering) Street, in Jerusalem, is located in the Old City, and is a holy site for Christians. According to their tradition, Jesus carried the cross along it in his final approach to be crucified. There are stations along the street to commemorate the stops on his way.

the same time the Arab parade entered Shaar Shechem shouting “slaughter the Jews” while brandishing their swords and knives. We stood there not knowing what to do. Fortunately on the street corner was a small police station, and in it a black Arab policeman. When he saw us he told us to come into the small station before we were harmed. An awful fear went through us until the masses passed. Father thanked the policeman and we went home.

Father told us

The Boyaner Rebbe¹¹³ came to visit the Holy Land and an apartment was arranged for him in Jerusalem neighborhood of Beit Yisrael.

Father visited numerous times for what is called a “*farbrengen*”¹¹⁴; however in time the Rebbe and the Chasidim went to Meron for Lag B’Omer to take part in the festivities of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Father was with them and stood next to the Rebbe for the bonfire lighting, but he had yet to meet privately with the Rebbe for a bracha. On the day before the Rebbe left Jerusalem to return to the Diaspora, father went with mother to visit the Rebbe. On the way, mother asked: “Moshe, what are you going to ask from the Rebbe”? Father answered: “A blessing that God should show me grace and kindness in all my actions”. When father entered to see the Rebbe, the Rebbe asked: “Moshele, why did you come so late, as I am, with G-d’s help, leaving the country tomorrow. Father answered, “as you know, I am a public servant and very busy.” The Rebbe’s answer was: “And so God shall give you grace and kindness in everything;” the same things that Father was hoping for as a blessing.

That same day, father and mother continued on from the Rebbe to Dr. Avraham Ticho (1883-1961), the well known Jerusalem eye doctor, to have mother’s eyes checked. In his clinic, you had to wait a long time to be seen by the doctor. No sooner had mother and father entered the waiting room than Mr.

¹¹³ The city of Boyan in Western Galicia, near Krakow, Poland of today. In recent times, the Friedman family has lead the Hassidic Boyan dynasty.

¹¹⁴ *Farbrengen* is a Yiddish word which means to be together for a while, and in this particular usage, it refers to a spiritual visit with a Chassidic rabbi.

Hashban (the manager) ran over and shouted: “Reb Moshe Schwartz is here – the doctor is waiting for you”. This, father says, was the Rebbe’s blessing of “grace and kindness”.

The period of approaching holidays and the holidays themselves with the arrival of the month of Elul was a special experience, with the blowing of the shofar after the morning prayers. In various neighborhoods you could hear people practicing the shofar blowing for *Selichot* during the week before Rosh Hashanah. You could also hear the *shamash* awakening the Jews to rise early in the morning and there was a contest to see who would be the first to reach the synagogue .

The awe of the high holidays was felt in everything. People would go to their ancestors’ graves, or to the *Me’arat Hamachpelah* (The Tomb of the Patriarchs) in Hevron; at that time you could only go up a few steps.¹¹⁵ They would also go to *Kever Rachel* (Rachel’s Tomb). I remember that they would surround the tomb with a red ribbon for a *segulah* (a good omen).¹¹⁶ Even when I was young we would go at night on foot to *Kever Rachel*.

The high holidays themselves, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, were full of awe; the prayers themselves had a special feeling of holiness. On the eve of Yom Kippur, we would go for *Mincha* to the Western Wall; the most interesting part was that these were the same people that over the course of the year would fight and curse each other.

The joy of the holiday of Sukkot started when the beams holding the Sukkah were put in place, the Sukkah was erected and adorned. Sometimes, there was a contest as to who had the nicest Sukkah. We would sleep in the Sukkah, sit and sing holiday songs, and late at night, especially on the eve of Hoshanah Rabbah, we would sit and learn in the Sukkah all night. But for us, the children, the joy was when we went “*visitn*,” visiting relatives, our pockets

¹¹⁵ The Muslims allowed the Jews to climb only the first five steps, and to pray from there. Only when Israel liberated the cave in the Six Day War in 1967 could Jews pray inside the cave (and Muslims also on their days).

¹¹⁶ This red ribbon is called a *bendel* in Yiddish and has a talismanic function to guard against the evil eye, in particular among the Hasidim. The *mitnagdim* view this custom as a foreign one and prohibit, based on Tosefta Shabbat (Lieberman), chapter 5.

would fill with almonds, nuts, and especially “*piñones*”¹¹⁷ (pine nuts), with which we would play. Purchasing the *arbah minim* was a special endeavor, to go to Meah Shearim and sort through the *lulavim* and *etrogim*.

On the holiday of Chanuka everyone would hang their *chanukiyot* next to the door outside, and it was a pleasure to see all of them light their candles and sing. Everyone would make *latkes* at home, from sour dough rather than from potatoes, and my family would gather together to enjoy them. On Tu-Bishvat while I was still in the *cheder* we used to bring all kinds of fruits, especially *boxer* (carob), but once I was in school it was entirely different. All the pupils in city schools would gather in the Lemel schoolyard. Groups of kids dressed in holiday attire, ornamented with flowers, would parade inside and outside of the city, for instance to the neighborhoods of Beit Hakerem and near Rehavia. There were select students who would plant trees. There was an orchestra, a lot of singing, dancing, and various fruits were distributed to the pupils.

Purim

There was *Megillah* reading, and huge noises upon any mention of Haman. People were dressed in costumes, and sent *mishloach manot* (Purim gifts of food) to each other. To top it all off, everyone would drive to Tel-Aviv for the 14th of Adar “*Ad Delo Yada*”¹¹⁸ parade. It was a large parade, and at its head would march the mayor of Tel-Aviv. The following day, the 15th of Adar, was “Shushan Purim,” and Purim was celebrated in Jerusalem on that day. I would like to note here, that every year, I would go with my father to bring gifts to Palestine’s chief Rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook Z’TL, on behalf of the “*Vaad Haklali Kneset Yisrael*.”

¹¹⁷ *Piñones* is a Ladino and Spanish word; Eliyahu knew it in that language because the Sephardic inhabitants of Jerusalem referred to the nuts using this term, and the Ashkenazim followed suit.

¹¹⁸ The source for the words “*Ad Delo Yada*” is from the Gemara: a person must get sufficiently drunk on Purim until he can no longer distinguish (*ad delo yada*) between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai’ (Talmud Megila 7b).

As Pesach approached, the house would be cleaned in a very thorough way, and no one was allowed to enter with food any part of the house that had been cleaned, lest, G-d forefend, a crumb would fall there. By the time Shabbat Hagadol¹¹⁹ had arrived, our table was set very carefully (in order not to contaminate the house with *chametz*). If the holiday fell on a Sunday, we took the precaution of eating only by the door [ed. note: in that case, *chametz* was eaten by the door on Shabbat as there would not be time to clean the house again before Pesach began immediately after Shabbat]. We went to the matzah maker's oven to purchase them, because at first boxes of matzah were not sold in the shops; you had to bring a bed sheet, and inside they would place the matzah, and weigh it. On the day before Yom Tov, we used to buy special "*matzot shmurot*"¹²⁰ (guarded matzot).

Seder Night

It was very pleasant when the entire family, from near and far, would sit together. My father would run the *seder*, make *kiddush*, and we would all have the four cups from aged wine that Mr. Mordechai Tepperberg send us for the holiday. The food was aromatic, with the gefilte fish and *kneidelach* that my mother prepared together with *gribens*.¹²¹ *Gribens* are pieces of duck skin, fried with duck fat. We ate it together with all the other goodies. We opened the door for *Eliyahu Hanavi*, and the *seder* lasted for hours, singing, talking and reading the Hagadah. During *chol hamoed* family and friends came to visit, and we kids played with nuts.

¹¹⁹ The Shabbat immediately before Pesach is called Shabbat Hagadol. On this Shabbat the "*Haftara*" concludes with the words, "*Hagadol Vehanorah*." (Malachi 3:23).

¹²⁰ Matzot shmurot derive from the Torah passage, "*Ushmartem et hamatzot* [and you shall guard the matzot]" (Exodus 12:17), and from here our sages learned that during the process of making matzot they require special "guarding." The Gemara deals with this subject in Tractate Pesachim page 40, and Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of "*Shulchan Aruch*" summarizes it as follows: "The wheat from which matzot are made should be guarded so no water may touch it, from the harvest onward, and certainly from the time of grinding, and only in times of great need should one buy flour from the market" (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim*, 453:4).

¹²¹ Also spelled as *grievens*, or *gribenes*.

A couple of days before Lag Ba'omer we went from house to house among our neighbors to collect kerosene, rags (*shmattes*), and wood for the bonfire, while my parents went to Meron in the Galilee to take part in the celebration of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

The Holiday of Shavuot

As the Holiday of Shavuot approached, we used to go out and collect branches from trees, to decorate a special *chuppah* in the shul, and we would decorate our own houses with flowers. The food for Shavuot was always *milchig*. For *mussaf* on that day we used to go and *daven* (pray) at the Kotel, and to visit King David's tomb.¹²² In school they used to celebrate *Chag HaBikkurim*,

¹²² The scroll of Ruth ends with the lineage of David, that he was the son of Yishai, the son of Oved, and the son of Ruth. The day of his death and the day of his birth were determined by *Chazal* to have been on Shavuot. Therefore, it is customary to go and visit the grave site on either the eve of Shavuot ("[King] David died on *Atzeret* [Shavuot] and was born on *Atzeret*;" Yerushalmi, Chagiga 2:3 ; Kiddushin 38b). There is an ancient tradition that King David was buried on Mount Zion, but the current grave location is doubtfully accurate, and maybe it is actually the tomb of an Arab sheik.

The source that this is the tomb of King David appears for the first time in the book of Benjamin Mi-Tudela, who visited Palestine in 1130, and tells us that until 15 years before his visit this grave site was unknown. The story goes that one of the walls of a Christian building on Mount Zion fell, and the Christian patriarch designated several priests to build it anew. They said that when they brought the stones to build the new wall, they found the mouth of a cave, and in the cave while they searched for treasure, they found a splendid palace, built of silver and gold, and determined that this was the grave site of King David (I summarized the story from Kalman Shulman, *Har-El*, Vilna, 1866, pp. 25-26).

"In the year 1427, some of the Jews of Jerusalem tried to purchase the place on the lower floor of the Franciscan monastery on Mount Zion where, according to Jewish tradition, King David's grave site is, and where according to Christian tradition, the last supper of Jesus took place. The Jews did not manage to purchase this place, but as a result of this bargaining, the Franciscan Christians were kicked out of the eastern lower floor, and this place was taken over by the Muslims" (*Masah Meshulam MiVolterra*, Avraham Yaari, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 11). And indeed the visitor Moshe Basoleh, who visited Israel in the year 1521-3, tells us, "They say that there King David and King Solomon are buried, but the Yishmaelites will never allow anyone to enter" (*Masaot Eretz Yisroel LiRebi Moshe Basoleh*, edited by Avraham David, Jerusalem, 1999, p. 20). In the last centuries, outside the walls near Zion Gate, Arabs lived, and they had the rights

the holiday of first fruits by bringing fruits and vegetables, all beautifully ornamented, for the Jewish National Fund.

Shabbat

On Friday evenings, and festival evenings, I loved to go to the *shuk* with my father to buy fish, meat, fruits, and vegetable. We did so by walking to the *shuk* in Mea Shearim, and the *shuk* in Machaneh Yehuda, and sometimes to *Rehov Hayehudim* in the Old City. I liked particularly those Fridays in the Old City when my father took me to a Sephardic restaurant where we ate plates of rice and beans.¹²³ The house was very pleasant and very festive and the table was set anticipating *kiddush* and the singing of *zemirot*. It was very intimate. When I grew older, I took advantage of the time on Shabbat after services to walk around the city. On a regular Shabbat afternoon you could see many people walking around the city, especially on Jaffa Street, cracking sunflower seeds.

Tours and Travels

Even as a little child I loved to explore the alleys of the old city, in the Jewish, Muslim, and Armenian quarters and I loved to visit the *Kotel HaMaaravi* [the Western Wall]. I loved visiting family relatives like my Uncle Yehuda

to King David's Tomb. They wouldn't allow the Jews to come and pray at the graves, except on Shavuot and the day after, for payment. Only after the Israeli War of Independence was this place opened to everyone, under the supervision of the Ministry of Religion. The importance of King David's Tomb was enhanced after the War of Independence, with the encouragement of Dr. Kahana, the head of the Ministry of Religion, because of its proximity to the Old City and the Temple Mount. With the liberation of old Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967, the importance of the place was diminished. The nearest gate of the Old City to King David's tomb was Zion Gate, and its name amongst the Arabs was *Bab Nebi Daud*, which translates as The Gate of the Prophet David.

¹²³ It is customary among the Sefardim that the wife sends the husband and children for a Friday lunch of rice and beans outside the house, so they will vacate the kitchen, and not disturb her while preparing the Shabbat meal.

Mintz and his daughter; Eliyahu Mintz; and Chaim Benjamin Shwartz – my father’s brother – and his family. I also enjoyed visiting the Western Wall. There were holidays on which I went with my father to the Nisan Beck Synagogue,¹²⁴ and we also visited the Churva of Yehuda Hechacid.

In later years I joined some of the official Old City guides like Knaani, Vilnai, and even Isaiah Press. These were very interesting and educational tours.

On Tisha B’Av Night we used to visit the Western Wall, and later circle the walls of the city. There were years that we stood guard on the walls (to avert attacks by Arabs).

On Shavuot we would usually pray *Shacharit* early in the morning, then go down to the *Kotel* for Mussaf, and after that go to David’s Tomb on Mount Zion. In 1939, a visit on *Chag HaShavuot* to King David’s Tomb motivated me to find out more about Jerusalem. The story goes as follows: When I went to visit the tomb, I went south from there, and reached a broad iron fence with an open gate. I entered, and a priest approached me and asked in French, “What do you want?” I answered him in French that I wanted to tour the place, and to know what was there. He willingly agreed to show and explain everything to me. The name of that church was Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu (The Call of the Rooster), as according to Christian tradition, someone would deny Jesus three times before the call of the rooster.¹²⁵ The name of the priest was Brother François. He was very kind and friendly, and described the place as the dwelling place of the high priest in the times of Joseph. He showed me a silo of wheat collected for tithes and gift offerings, and a storeroom for wine and oil. This was not all, for he told me that at the Notre Dame Monastery they have a museum where one can see the weights that are mentioned in the Torah such as *eipha*, *seah*, and *chatzi hahin*, and he suggested that I go there and talk to Father Mamer, who later died in the bombardment of the church by the Jordanians in 1948.

¹²⁴ The synagogue was referred to as the *Reb Nisish’s shul* by Ashkenazim. The name Beck is probably the abbreviation of two words, *Ben Kedoshim*, son of martyrs.

¹²⁵ This story of the call of the rooster appears in all the four Gospels, see for instance Matthew 26.

I visited the museum, and was received very nicely by Père (Father) Mamer, and from then on, these two priests toured the city with me, and introduced me to the holy places of Christianity that I had not known of before, such as on the Via Dolorosa. During one of these tours with Father Mamer, he took me to the Church of the Sisters of Zion, in the area of Antonia Castle.¹²⁶ We entered the inner court, where there was a cistern or pool of water with a rope ladder. We went down into the pool in a barrel and swam in the pool. It appears that this pool was from the Hasmonean period, and it was rediscovered when they opened the Western Wall tunnel. Since that visit, I started to organize tours of the Old City every Shabbat for young people. I took Bnei Brit, Young Hadassah, etc. I explained all these places to them from the historical and geographical perspectives. Interestingly, on one of these tours we got to *Shaar Shechem* (Nablus Gate), and I saw a group of South African and Australian army officers. Their travel guide was telling them *bubeh maishes*, (“old wives’ tales”) so I turned to my group and said in Yiddish, “*Oy draiter zey a kopf*” (“He is telling them bull”). Some of the officers were Jewish and understood Yiddish and one came to me and said, “*kum du un zog vos daw is*,” (“You come and tell us what is here”) and I told him, please pay for your travel guide, and then come with me. There was a period that I was the unofficial old city guide for the commander of the Haganah.

The first trip that I participated in was when my school, Talmud Torah Mizrachi, took us to Tel-Aviv, and they opened the first *Yerid Hamizrach* fair. It took place at the time near old central bus station of Tel-Aviv. This tour caused a lot of worry to all the parents, because the train came back to Jerusalem a couple of hours late. Almost all of the parents came to the Jerusalem train station waiting worriedly, and of course at the end we came late as a result of the train’s breaking down.

Throughout the years I traveled the length and breadth of the country, and I literally knew every Jewish and Arab settlement in Israel. I spent vacations in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Zichron Yaakov, Givat Ada¹²⁷ and Tiberias. On

¹²⁶ A castle that King *Hordus* (Herod) built in Jerusalem north of the Temple Mount, which is named after the Roman Emperor of the time, Antonius. Herod captured Jerusalem in the year 37 BCE.

¹²⁷ Zichron Yaakov is a settlement in the southern part of the Carmel mountain range. It was established in 1882, and named after Yaakov (James) the father of the well-known philanthropist, Baron de Rothschild. Givat Ada is a settlement on the plateau of

one trip in the Judean Desert we went down east of mount Scopus in the direction of Masada. On the way we encountered a Bedouin encampment. The people received us very pleasantly, as is typical of Bedouins, and we gave them oranges in return. It appears that after we left, not too long after, they started to shoot at us, and sent a police force after us on camels. Everything went fine, and we reached Masada. In the evening we slept at the bottom of the mountain, and early in the morning we climbed the Snake Path to the top of the mountain.

I visited Masada several times, either on foot or by vehicle, but the most interesting of these visits was when Yigael Yadin (Sukenik)¹²⁸ invited me with a group to visit the archeological dig that he conducted there. I knew Yigael Yadin and his father personally.¹²⁹ Yadin also invited me, with a group, to visit Chatzor Haglilit¹³⁰ while he conducted an archeological excavation. We arranged special trips to the Dead Sea on *Motza'ei Shabbat*, on nights with full moons. There were organized by Maccabee Jerusalem. The most interesting excursions were once we arrived at the Dead Sea. We organized transportation to the east, we rented a big boat, brought with us food for a whole day, and left

Menashe, about 8 kilometers southeast of Zichron Yaakov. It was established in 1903, and it is named after the wife of the well-known philanthropist Adelaida de Rothschild. Binyamina is also a settlement near Givat Ada, and it is named after the Baron Edmund de Rothschild. Slightly south of Binyamina, one finds the settlement of Pardes Chana, which is named after Chana, the daughter of the Barron Mayer Nathan Rothschild. Therefore one can say that in this area the Rothschild family had total 'control' over the names.

¹²⁸ Major General Yigael Yadin (1917-1984), born in Jerusalem, the second chief of staff of the Israeli Army, and one of the most illustrious archaeologists of the twentieth century, awarded the Israel Prize in 1957, and a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

¹²⁹ Professor Eliezer Lipa Sukenik (1889-1953), the father of Yigael Yadin, was the head of the department of archeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and it was he who discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls and immediately recognized their importance. Professor Sukenik received his doctorate at Dropsie University in Philadelphia in 1926.

¹³⁰ A town in the Upper Galilee about 2 kilometers north of Rosh Pinah. The name stems from the biblical town of Chatzor, whose ruins were excavated at nearby Tel Chatzor. Within the town limits lies an ancient tomb, which is attributed to *Choni Hameagel* and his grandsons.

from Kaliah¹³¹ eastward to the hot springs of Kolorai (Callirrhoe), which are similar to the hot springs of Tiberias. Here King Herod built himself bath houses. From there, we continued to Zarka, and from there to Nachal Arnon, a place with gorgeous natural beauty. We walked in the water until the canyons, and saw the eagles' nests above. The beauty was amazing. It is a wonder why the Jordanians are not developing this place. To this place, which is called *Nachal Arnon* (the river Arnon), we went several times during the summer, and during my army service we visited the Negev.

We came to Eilat in 1950, before there were any houses there. The name of the place then was Um El Rash Rash. An incident happened while we were there, when the guys went swimming in the Red Sea, and two of our group were stung by sea urchins. We had to call for a Piper plane from the north to bring them to a hospital. A few years later I came to Eilat again, while on army duty. That evening a serious fire broke out which burned several of the huts.

On a reconnaissance mission to Ein Feshcha, our army unit camped and readied for lunch, and suddenly heard gushes of running water. The commander ordered us immediately to get in our vehicles and flee the place. A couple of minutes later there was a flash flood from the Judean Mountains.

The most successful trip I had to Eilat was with a group from Milwaukee Wisconsin, and among the participants was Senator Gaylord Nelson. He helped Israel with water distillation, and we visited the Zarchin¹³² distillation plant in Eilat with him, the outdated plant and the new plant, and from this tour something interesting came out. When we visited Timna, everyone was impressed. Mr. Abe Chudnow, who was at the time president of the JNF in Wisconsin, and he said that in this place there should be a national park. I replied and said, that is a great idea but you need a lot of money for that.

¹³¹ Kaliah is a kibbutz near the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea near the ruins of Qumran. It was first established before 1948 as a beachfront and hotel, and was reestablished in 1968 in an abandoned Jordanian Army camp as a Nachal settlement. The meaning of the word Kaliah is an acronym for the words *Kam Litchiah Yam Hamavet* (the Dead Sea has come alive). The Jordanians never realized that the name has a Hebrew origin, and continued to use it between 1948 and 1967!

¹³² The Jewish engineer of Russian extraction, Alexander Zarchin (1897-1980?), invented a method of seawater distillation that was successfully tested and used in Eilat.

He gave a large contribution on the spot, and today Timna Park,¹³³ with an artificial lake, is there. I raised a huge amount of money for this endeavor.

Rebellion in High School

I studied in the Kiyach high school, an acronym for *Kol Yisroel Chaverim*, in the business track. The school was located near Yeshivat Etz Chaim, in the neighborhood of Machaneh Yehuda in Jerusalem. We had a teacher named Zahavi who taught us algebra (even though he himself did not know what algebra was). Luckily for me, there was a pupil in the class from the Gymnasia Haivrit high school in Rechavia. His name was David Cohen, and he knew algebra and the teacher always took advantage of him. Our class organized a student government, and I was its chairman together with two other friends. Mr. Zahavi had the following scheme. He would call a student to the blackboard for an algebra problem, and when the pupil did not know the answer, he would kick him out of the class, and call David Cohen to solve the problem. This went on for weeks. The student council met and decided that if he did it one more time the whole class would leave until they got a new teacher. We warned David Cohen that he should not solve the problem, and so it was. Mr. Zahavi called a pupil up who did not know how to solve the problem, and he kicked him out of the class. I got up, and called the entire class to come outside, and we told the teacher that we were striking. The members of the class and I went down to talk to Mr. Basan, the principal of the school, and we told him what happened and demanded a new teacher. The principal was very happy to hear this, and said that he had wanted to fire Zahavi for a long time and now was an opportunity. They got a new teacher named Avni, and he was excellent.

¹³³ The newspaper "*Haaretz*", on the November 18, 2001, reports under the headline "Between the Pillars of Solomon" that a new visitors' center opened in Timna Park, which included an exhibit entitled "Mines of Time" which describes the mining and the melting of the copper in ancient times. The article states that the valley of Timna near Eilat is the oldest site in the ancient world in which copper was produced. Eliyahu Shwartz was therefore a pioneer in the development of this area by the JNF.

Dress Code

I was very active in the Betar youth movement in Jerusalem, but I never showed up to school wearing its uniform because that would be improper. Nonetheless I recruited for the movement, and got boys and girls to join. On day, on the first of May (a big day for socialists), a pupil named Shirizly from a different class came to school with a blue shirt and a red ribbon, the uniform of "HaShomer Hatzair"¹³⁴ and "HaNoar Haoved." What did I do? I went home, and came back dressed in my brown *Betar* shirt. Mr. Basan, the principal, called me and demanded that I will change my clothes. My reply was that first Shirizly should change his attire, then I would do the same. The principal called Shirizly and demanded that he change his, and when finally he did so, so did I.

The Feeling That A Miracle Had Occurred

In those days there were no washers or dryers. You would wash your clothes at home or in the courtyard, in a washtub, and you had a washing lady come and help you with this work. The laundry was put in a big copper or tin vessel¹³⁵ in the courtyard, which stood on two big stones, and you would use coal and wood to heat the water. You would hang laundry on ropes that were stretched in the courtyard, which was frequently the cause of fighting between neighbors. In the beginning of July, 1938, my mother was doing the laundry in the morning, and suddenly she sensed an urgent need to check my drawer. She found in it a pistol, bullets, and two picture albums. She took the pistol and bullets and threw them into the water well in the courtyard, gave one album to her sister who just happened to be there, and the other she burned in the fire under the laundry pot. She did not know why she did it, apart from an inner impulse that she had to do it. An hour later two British policemen from the CID

¹³⁴ A leftist Jewish youth movement which was founded in Europe before the First World War.

¹³⁵ The washtub in which one washed laundry in Jerusalem was called a *paylah*. This expression is found in the Mishnah (Sotah 15b) and the source of the word is Greek, a utensil for cooking and drinking, round and flat. It entered Jerusalemite Hebrew via the Ladino; in Ladino the word means a cooking bowl.

came to search the house, and they found nothing. Only then did my mother understand that an unusual miracle happened here. She felt she had saved me, because holding weapons was prohibited. As a result of this, I kept my weapons from this point on in a place that could not be found in a search. In the house there was a large clothes closet with three doors. In the middle door was a mirror, and on top was a design. Behind the design was an empty space, and I arranged a piece of wood to cover the empty space and in it I placed my weapons.

Aravot and Hoshanot

In 1929, after the Arab riots of 5689, the Jews of Jerusalem were prevented from going to the Jordan River near Jericho to pick the much needed *aravot* for Hoshana Rabba. The lack of *aravot* was a problem, so the *Va'ad Haklali Kneset Yisrael* had to search for a solution. My father worked for this institution, which was under the auspices of the chief rabbi of Israel, Rav Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook ZT'L. Rabbi Kook knew my father, and knew that my father knew people in Tiberias, where he had grown up. He asked my father to travel there, and go with others to the Jordan River near Kibbutz Degania¹³⁶ and to pick the *aravot* up there and bring them to Jerusalem by the time the holiday arrived. Two days before Hoshana Rabba, my father went to Tiberias, hired people, and went to pick up the *aravot*. Father hired a truck and set out for Jerusalem via Nablus (Shechem), but before he left, one of the farmers from Yavniel gave my father a little coop with chicks. My father did not know that it was prohibited to transport chicks because of the quarantine.¹³⁷ When he reached Shechem he was stopped for inspection and the chicks were found. They arrested my father and would not allow him to continue on to Jerusalem. All of his explanations that all that was on the truck were necessary for the holiday did not help. My father asked the police officer to call Jerusalem and talk to the chief rabbi, Rav Kook. This also did not help; the reason for his arrest was solely as a result of the chicks. My father argued that they should take the

¹³⁶ This refers to one of the two kibbutzim called Deganyia. Degania A was established in 1909 in the Jordan Valley on the southwest bank of the Sea of Galilee. Degania A is called *Em Hakvutzot* (Mother of the Kvutzot) because it was the first communal kibbutz in all of Israel. Degania B was established in 1920, next to Degania A.

¹³⁷ There was at the time in Israel a medical quarantine to prevent contagious animal and avian diseases from spreading.

chicks and let him go, but they would not allow him. Only after Rabbi Kook himself called the office of the High Commissioner of Palestine, was an order given to release my father with the truck and *aravot*, but the chicks were kept in Shechem. My father arrived in Jerusalem with the truck, and the *aravot* were distributed for free around the city. A couple of weeks later, a police truck arrived at our house, and brought a big cage with chickens (not chicks!) with an apology for the arrest. This was a happy surprise.

Business Travel

As part of my work for the company Masonite I was in charge of inventory and a traveling salesman. In 1935 I had to travel to Shechem (Nablus), to meet with an engineer, and with the person in charge of the Municipal Works. I went down to the Nablus Gate of the old city of Jerusalem, and got on a bus that was going to Nablus. While I entered, I heard an inspector telling the driver, "*min el Englisi chut mino ashra grush*" ("from the Englishman please take 10 *grush*") while the actual bus fare was only 5 *grush*. When the driver was collecting the money, I gave him 5 *grush*, but he requested 10, so I told him in Arabic, "*ana mush Englisi, ana watani,*" ("I'm not an Englishman, I'm a native"). He was bewildered by my Arabic, took the 5 *grush*, and left me alone. On the way back I happened to have the same driver, who laughed about the incident, and we spoke Arabic on the way back.

As part of my job I traveled to Netanya,¹³⁸ which was a tedious journey. I drove to Jaffa, and from Jaffa I took a bus to Tul Karm, from there via Beit Lid to Netanya. En route near Beit Lid, I had to wait for a long time, and I was getting increasingly hungry. There sat an Arab who was selling watermelons.¹³⁹ I spoke to him in Arabic and told him that I was very hungry. He was very courteous, and offered me pita, "*karbuz*" (watermelon in Arabic) and goat cheese; of course I paid for this. I reached Netanya, a new city that had just begun to be constructed. There were only 3 or 4 houses in total. I stayed overnight with one of these tenants, where the workers stayed. The entire trip

¹³⁸ The city of Netanya was established in 1929 and was named after the U.S. philanthropist Nathan Strauss (1848-1931).

¹³⁹ Watermelons are called by longtime Jerusalemites "*karbuz,*" from the Arabic.

was a waste of time because there was no one there to sell our Masonite material to.

In a similar way I traveled to Gaza to a meeting in the city. I traveled to Rechovot, where I stayed with a cousin of mine, and in the morning I took the Arab bus that went to Gaza. It was not a direct route, because we stopped in many local Arab villages and the city of Ashdod, and only towards evening we got to Gaza. I found a small hotel, and stayed overnight. In the evening I went to a small coffee shop near the hotel, and ordered Turkish coffee. I drank the coffee from the little coffee cup, so the waiter came and filled it up again, and then again, and I said to him I didn't want any more, and he replied that I had to put the cup upside down¹⁴⁰ if I didn't want any more, and so I did.

The hotel windows had steel bars that were difficult to see through, and across the street a house had similar bars, which were there in order to prevent one from looking at the women in the courtyard. I innocently went up to the window and looked outside, and the women started to scream. The hotel owner came to me and told me to leave the hotel on the spot, or I might be attacked by the neighbors for looking at their wives, and so with no recourse I was forced to return immediately to Jaffa.

In the course of my work in the office of the food supervisor, I was called in by the office manager, who wanted me to do an unrelated job, to travel to Shechem to the local office of the food supervisor, and to check for improper transactions done by the local manager, whose name was Juari. A driver, a car, and a British police officer were placed at my disposal. We traveled to Shechem and entered the office, and spoke English. The policeman and the driver remained in the car behind. When I introduced myself Mr Juari said to the clerk in Arabic, "take these files to your room," and in the meantime we spoke and drank coffee. As I drank the coffee I started to sip in the Arabic way, pulling into the mouth. Mr. Juari looked at me and said, "you drink just like we drink." And I answered him in Arabic, "I'm a local and I speak Arabic." I also told him to go with me to the other room, to see the files he was talking about. I confiscated these files. I called the policeman, who took them to the car, I thanked Mr. Juari, told him that this had been the purpose of my visit, and I went back to Jerusalem, and that was exactly what they were looking for. It

¹⁴⁰ This is also the custom of locals in Hevron (See Roey Politi, *Arnavonei Gagot*, 2001, p. 293).

was good that it happened at the end of November 1947, because from then on it was very dangerous to drive to Shechem.

Military Training

In the Betar youth movement, we trained regularly in the club building, and subsequently in the field and in the Maccabee field in the Shchunat HaBucharim neighborhood. We also got trained in sparring with clubs. The name of the instructor was Benjamin Levantin. Here a sad incident happened. He told me to hit him with the stick while he was in the defensive posture, and he forgot to get into the defensive posture, so I to my dismay broke his nose when I hit him. The organization instructed us also in close order drill and light armaments in various schools in the city such as the Alliance school¹⁴¹ and the Shpitzer school.¹⁴² I remember that one of the commanding instructors was Chaim Haimowitz-Chatzkowitz. Naturally, when we got to those training places we had special secret codes or passwords to get admitted. Training was interesting, especially when we learned how to use Morse code,¹⁴³ and also Semaphore (flag code). We used to go out on the hills around Jerusalem, and train in flag communication. Also we got training in marching, which we did in a field at the edge of Rehavia neighborhood. The name of this field was Ratisbonne, because it belonged to the Ratisbonne Monastery.¹⁴⁴ In this field I

¹⁴¹ The French school Alliance Israelite Universelle, which is known by its Hebrew acronym *Kiyach* (*Kol Yisrael Chaverim*) is part of an educational system of modern Hebrew schools. The organization was established in 1860, and its headquarters was in Paris. Schools of this organization were established in many countries, and generally the instruction in the schools was in French. Doubtless this was where Eliyahu learned French.

¹⁴² A Jerusalem religious elementary and high school for girls. It was first named Yad Chana, and with the passing of its principal Mrs. Shpitzer, the school adopted her name in memoriam.

¹⁴³ Communication via Morse code was first demonstrated by the American Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), in 1837. It became a very important communications method, and is still used to this day. The principal behind the Morse code system is that dash and dot combinations represent letters and digits.

¹⁴⁴ The Monastery of Ratisbonne was built in Jerusalem on Shmuel Hanagid Street, by Theodore Alphonse Ratisbonne in 1855. In the Arab uprising of 1929, the people of the

also trained in running long distances. We used to go out on Shabbat mornings, at around 4 or 5, summer or winter, in short pants. In the winter we had long pants on top of the short pants, and we trained for about an hour. Our hands froze in the winter, and it was very difficult to button the pants up, so we helped each other. When we would go out to the Judean Desert, we used to go early on Shabbat morning, and go down from the eastern side of Mount Scopus, where Hebrew University had a campus.

During the long marches in the Judean Desert, we trained in throwing hand grenades and in close order drill. In one of the exercises, when I was leading the group, I was taller than everyone else, and the command was given to advance. While walking I encountered a thorny bush, and without thinking much I jumped over the bush, and the rest followed [editor's note - in order to attract the least attention, the correct method was to walk stooped around the bush.]. The drill commander, who stood at the top of a high hill, called me to go up to him. He punished me by making me go up and down the hill 10 times. One time I was late for evening training, because of work in my office. The officer told me as a punishment that I had to come to his house twice at 12 midnight. In reality it was a punishment for him, because I had a girlfriend whom I used to go to movies with, etc., and I came knocking on his door at 12 midnight, and woke him up from sleep.

One time we went to train on one of the hills near the neighborhood of Givat Shaul¹⁴⁵ across from an Arab village.¹⁴⁶ As soon as the training started,

Rehavia neighborhood in Jerusalem were sheltered in this monastery, and during the War of Independence in 1948, the women and the children who were evacuated from Gush Etzion lived there. After the War of Independence, a large section of the structure was rented out to Jewish people and institutions, among which a whole wing was leased to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and my friend Supreme Court Justice Professor Itzhak Englard, finished his law degree in this building.

¹⁴⁵ A neighborhood in western Jerusalem, near the entrance to the city from Tel-Aviv. The neighborhood was established in 1914, and was named after Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Eliashar, the Sephardic chief rabbi of Jerusalem, who is better known as Yissa [an acronym for his name] Beracha. The largest Jewish cemetery in Jerusalem is found on the outskirts of Givat Shaul at the entrance to Jerusalem.

¹⁴⁶ He probably refers to the infamous Arab village, Dir Yassin, where a bloody battle took place in the War of Independence, and there is a calumny that members of the Etzel murdered several of its inhabitants.

Arab kids came from the village, and we had to leave. The same thing happened while we were training in Sanhedria, near the beautiful caves. At the beginning of our training, when we had only around 10 men, an Arab shepherd came with a *shabria*¹⁴⁷ on his thigh, and started to threaten us. I talked to him, and while I did so, the other nine surrounded him and disarmed him.

On one of the Shabbatot, early in the morning, I was training a small group in the courtyard of the Lemel school near the Maccabee club. I was training a group of Irgun members in close order drill under the “cover” of the Maccabee club, while on the other side a group from the Haganah was training, headed by Yigal Yadin (Sukenik), whom I knew. When I came to the Army General Staff in 1948, I entered the dining room, and Yigal, who was a general, stopped me and asked what I was doing there. At that time he was head of military operations¹⁴⁸ (a short time after this, he was appointed chief of staff).¹⁴⁹ We were glad to see each other.

The Betar youth group and me

I already related above how I joined Betar with my friends. After a while I joined a small subgroup called the *SHeVeT* (“*She’ifat Betar Tehorah*” – “yearning for a pure Betar”). This group included 6 or 7 male and female members. The instructors were Abba Achi-Me’ir,¹⁵⁰ Yavin, Y. Katzenelson, and Professor B.Z. Netanyahu (the father of Benjamin Netanyahu). We had to

¹⁴⁷ *Shabria* is an Arabic word for a knife which is used as a weapon. A dagger, generally a sickle shaped blade in a scabbard.

¹⁴⁸ The headquarters of military operations (General Staff) at the time was in Ramat Gan while today it is in the Kirya in Tel-Aviv.

¹⁴⁹ *Ramatkal* is the acronym for “Chief of General Staff” (*Rosh Mateh Klali*) in Hebrew. The acronym for Military Operations is *Agam* (*Agaf Mivtsaim*).

¹⁵⁰ Abba Achi-Meir (1898-1962) was the head of the *Brit Habiryonim*. The organization *Brit Habiryonim* was established in 1931 and was the most extreme of the right wing organizations. The members of this organization were accused and indicted for the murder of Arlozorov, and many other extreme anti-British acts. He published many articles and books.

lecture on various subjects regarding the history of Zionism, prepared by ourselves. This was a very interesting period. We suffered harassment from the other youth movements who opposed the philosophy of Betar, however in high school I was a serious recruiter for Betar and then in my last years of high school recruited new members to Etzel. The Betar movement in Jerusalem went through various stages. During that time there was a lot of activity and many members, alternating with periods of sparse activity as well. Throughout the years I dedicated a lot of time to these activities, and took an important role in that organization in Jerusalem. I also had the honor and pleasure of passing the officers' training course, under the guidance of Baruch Blankelfeld and the aegis of Ze'ev Jabotinsky. This was a very intense course. For lack of means we relocated from club house to club house, but nonetheless continued our activities. It is worth noting that Yitzchak Navon,¹⁵¹ future president of Israel, was one of my trainees. So was Chaim Korfu, who was to become a minister in Menachem Begin's government. I participated in all the seminars, and visited many Betar units. In a short time I also joined the Maccabee organization, where I participated in intense sport activities, and in 1932 I participated in the first Maccabiah games and marched in the ceremonial exercises.

When Shalom Rosenfeld, one of the editors of the "*Yediot Achronot*" newspaper, visited Betar in Jerusalem, I was the one to receive him. As a result of my participation in Betar, I was recruited to join the Irgun Bet¹⁵² and I also recruited other. This was the period of transformation to Irgun Tzvai Leumi (Etzel). Since I was arrested by the British secret service right after the hanging of Shlomo Ben-Yosef,¹⁵³ and was under constant surveillance by the British, and was on house arrest for an entire year, I had no choice but to leave Betar. Since I was very much a part of youth activities, I joined Maccabee HaTzair, and I

¹⁵¹ Yitzchak Navon (1921-) descendant of a much respected Sephardic family in Jerusalem, was a member of the Knesset, a minister in the Israeli government, and the fifth President of the State of Israel. Navon managed the Arab Department of the Haganah in Jerusalem between 1946 and 1949.

¹⁵² All the illegal organizations law were called "Bet", like Aliya Bet (illegal immigration), Irgun Bet. The letter *bet* was the first letter of "*bilti chuki*," which means illegal.

¹⁵³ Shlomo Ben-Yosef, may God revenge his blood, (1913-1938), a Betar member, was the first Jew to be hanged by the British in Israel, in the Acre prison, on the 29th of June 1938.

served as chief instructor or as they called me, Ha-Mefaked (i.e., the Commander.)

My father tells

My father was a native of Tiberias who spent all his youth in that city, until his marriage. His parents had a small inn which served travelers. Throughout the years many of the pioneers who worked on the roads stayed in their inn. One of them was David Gryn, known later as David Ben-Gurion.¹⁵⁴ One day my grandfather, Reb Shevach Shwartz, summoned my father, who was very young, to take a mule and ride to the Yavniel settlement,¹⁵⁵ south of Tiberias. Yavniel was located on a hill west of the Sea of Galilee. His job was to warn a man named Dov Ber that the Turkish were about to arrest him, for he had killed one of their officers who had raped a Jewish woman. With the help of a family friend named Segal, my father found Dov Ber and warned him. Dov Ber disappeared and no one knew what happened to him.

As a JNF director in Philadelphia, I received a phone call to my office in 1989 from a man named Dov Ber who wanted to plant a forest in Yavniel. The man lived in upstate Pennsylvania. I took a vehicle and a driver, and went to see him. I became very excited when he insisted that the JNF plant a forest in Yavniel, and I asked him why he insisted on Yavniel. He started to cry. Suddenly it dawned on me, that this must be the Dov Ber of the story. I told him, "I know who you are, my father is the one who warned you," and it was very moving. By coincidence I had met him 80 years after the event. JNF couldn't plant the trees in Yavniel, but we did plant them near the Kaduri¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ David Ben-Gurion (Gryn) (1886-1973), was the first prime minister of Israel, the minister of defense for many years, an author, a thinker, an intellectual, and was one of the leaders of the labor movement in Israel.

¹⁵⁵ Yavniel is an agricultural settlement in the lower Galilee which was established in 1901 and served as one of the centers of the "Hashomer."

¹⁵⁶ The Kaduri school is located by the foothills of Mount Tabor, two kilometers north of Kfar Tabor. The school was established in 1933, via the contributions of Sir Eliyahu Kaduri, and it is named after him. Yitzchak Rabin is its most illustrious graduate.

school nearby. Dov Ber invited me for lunch, and he was a very old man (over 90 years old). Unfortunately about a month after our meeting he passed away.

Going up to Meron

My father's custom was to go up to Meron¹⁵⁷ to take part in the celebration for Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. This was the custom of the family when the family lived in Tiberias, and he continued with that tradition.

My father told the following story:

"My grandfather, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Z'L, came from the district of Podolia or Volhynia, in the Ukraine, in 'Fonyah' country.¹⁵⁸ In Safed my grandfather was the head of the Chevra Kadisha (i.e., the burial society) and he was familiar with the paths and graves in the Safed cemetery almost as much as the Amorah Shmuel was familiar with the paths of Nehardea, as he said, 'I know the paths of heaven as well as I know the paths of Nehardea.'¹⁵⁹ Every single grave and tombstone was fixed in his memory, as if they were in a box in his pocket." And here he started to tell us an unbelievable tale that happened to his grandfather, Rabbi Yehuda Leib, while he served in that position (head of the burial society), in the cemetery of Safed.

¹⁵⁷ Rabbi Menachem ben Shlomo Hameiri (died in France 1306) claims that in the Geonic period there was a tradition that on the 33rd day of the Omer the plague that killed the disciples of Rabbi Akiva stopped (Hameiri's commentary on Yevamot 61). A tradition prevailed amongst the kabbalists that the 33rd of the Omer is the day of the celebration of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, as this is the day that he revealed his secrets to his disciples. It is celebrated in Meron, and *zaitra* is practiced, which is grave visitation, in this case of revered rabbis. Three years old boys get their first haircut (called in Hebrew and Arabic *chelka* and in Yiddish *upsherin*) in Meron during Lag Ba-Omer festivities. This Hebrew word, carrying the connotation of haircut, appears in the book of Genesis: "My brother Esau is a hairy man while I am a smooth [*chalak*: smooth, hairless] man" (27:12).

¹⁵⁸ *Fonyah* is a derogatory name for the Russian Tsar and for Tsarist Russia. The etymology of the name is probably Ivan to Ivanya to Ifanya to Fonyah. The Jews usually used the term as *Fonyah Ganef*, meaning that Fonyah are thieves.

¹⁵⁹ Brachot 58b.

One time on the night of the third of *Marcheshvan* 5611 (1850), as he laid asleep on his bed, and it was already past after midnight, he suddenly heard loud knocking on the door of his house, and a voice from outside saying, “Yehuda Leib get up quickly and go to the cemetery, and dig a fresh grave near that of the *Ari Hakadosh* [Holy Ari] – may his merits protect us – since the Tzadik of Rizhin¹⁶⁰ – may his merits protect us – is leaving this mortal coil. He will be brought to the holy city of Safed for burial. Therefore hurry, go down and dig a grave for him.” My grandfather, Rabbi Yehuda Leib, jumped right up, ran to the door, opened it, and looked around in every direction, but could not see the person whose voice had spoken to him. Rabbi Yehuda Leib went back to bed and deliberated and thought to himself, “the knocking on the door and the voice calling must have been a dream, and I just thought it was reality.” But while he lay in bed contemplating that dream, the banging on the door repeated, and the voice said, “get up and go to the cemetery to dig the grave.” Again my grandfather Rabbi Yehuda Leib got up quickly from his bed, for he now knew that it wasn’t a dream as he had been wide awake and not asleep at all. He went again to the door, and looked to the right and to the left, and saw not a living soul. But by then he was starting to think that there was something to it, and he weighed in his mind what he should do next. Suddenly, the banging on the door repeated itself, and the voice thundered. This time it was no longer a request, it was a commanding and threatening voice, urging him to hurry up and fulfill the command lest he pay the price on the Day of Judgment. Now my grandfather wasn’t wondering anymore, or hesitant. He dressed quickly, lit his lantern, took his digging tools and, by the lantern light he went towards the cemetery while his knees knocked together.¹⁶¹ He came near the grave of the Holy Ari, found a vacant spot there, and without hesitating he started to dig and dig and dig, as if invisible hands helped him dig the grave. When he finished digging, suddenly he saw a flame the size of a man, flying

¹⁶⁰ Rabbi Yisroel Friedman of Rizhin (1796-1850), the son of Rabbi Shalom Shachna of Pohorovitch, and the great grandson of the Magid of Mezeritch, was arrested by the Tzarist police by someone who turned him in, and was forced to transfer his Hassidic court to Sadigora in Bukovina. He is the head of the Hassidic Dynasties of Sadigora, Chortkov, Hosiatin, Boyan and others. See the comprehensive book about the history of his life, “*Derech Malchut: Rabbi Yisrael Mi-Rizhin Umekomo Betoldot Hachasidut*,” David Assaf, Jerusalem, 1997.

¹⁶¹ This expression follows the Book of Daniel 5:6.

and advancing toward him very fast, coming from the northwest. My grandfather was overcome and frightened, and was stuck to his place like a piece of wood, with the shovel stuck in his hand as well. The flame landed at his feet and came to rest in the open grave and, when my grandfather saw that he had an inner compulsion to fill the grave atop the flame which had landed within it, with the very same soil he dug up before. He began to fill it in and again felt as if some invisible hand was helping him. Quick as a wink he filled the grave in, and in the end there was a mound of soil on the ground covering the grave. Awestruck, and not finding his senses, with trembling knees, he went back to his house. He did not go back to bed, but waited for the rooster call, and immediately rushed to Rabbi Shmuel Dayan, who is Rabbi Shmuel Heller T'ZL, the rabbi of Safed at the time. Rabbi Shmuel Heller was very fastidious that no one should call him Rabbi, rather *Dayan*, because he said that in Safed in those days there was but one rabbi, Rabbi Avraham Dov Me-aberitch,¹⁶² and he was irreplaceable. From now on any rabbi who would serve in the holy city of Safed would be called only Dayan.

And so when my grandfather told Rabbi Shmuel Heller, the Dayan, what had happened to him, Rabbi Shmuel scolded him and said he was hallucinating, and shouldn't tell him his dreams because everyone was sure that the Tzadik of Rizhin (the Rabbi of all members of the Diaspora) was alive and well, and was sitting with great honor and leading his community in his city, Sadigora. A couple of days later it became known that the Tzadik from Rizhin had died early on the 3rd of Marcheshvan 1850, at exactly the same time that Rabbi Yehuda Leib was called to dig his grave in Safed next to the holy Ari's tomb.

This story was very famous in Safed, and is even brought in one of the books of Rabbi Moshe Klieres,¹⁶³ the famous Rabbi of Tiberias who was a native

¹⁶² Rabbi Avraham Dov of Aberitch, the son of Rabbi David of Aberitch, came to Safed in 1832, and died in Safed in 1840. He was one of the disciples of Rabbi Nachum of Chernobyl. He was the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Safed, authored the book *Bat-Ain* on the Torah, and helped with the restoration of Safed after the great earthquake of 1837. Rabbi Shmuel Heller was appointed the Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Safed after him and served in that capacity for some 40 years. Both were *Hassidim*. The *Perushim* (*Mitnagdim*) left Safed for Jerusalem after the earthquake.

¹⁶³ According to the book *Beit Eked*, Rabbi Moshe Klieres wrote two books: 1. "*Torat Haaretz*" [dealing with the mitzvot related to *Eretz Yisrael*], Jerusalem, 1925; 2. "*Mipi*

of Safed. From then on, anyone who mentioned the name of Rabbi Yehuda Leib did so with great respect. As to the story itself, till this very day, people point out to the extraordinarily tall mound on the ground near the tomb of the Holy Ari on which there is no marker or tombstone, and Kabbalists are very careful not to step over that spot, as it is the burial place of the Tzadik of Rizhin, who died in Sadigora, and merited that the angels brought him to burial in Safed next to the tomb of the Ari. Rabbi Yehuda Leib was therefore not only a pure and holy man, but a prophet as well.

Making a friend

During my time in high school, a French Admiral came to visit, and invited the entire student body to visit a French warship that was anchored in the port of Jaffa. This was very interesting and exciting; we all traveled to Jaffa, and sailed in small boats toward the warship which was anchored at sea. As it is customary in the Jaffa port, we received many explanations regarding the ship's function and its armaments. After the visit we visited Tel-Aviv, and slept in our counterpart school in Tel-Aviv, "Kiyach," which was located on Shabazi¹⁶⁴ Street. In the evening, youth from Tel-Aviv came to visit us, including the upper class students of the school. Among the visitors was a young lad on whose lapel I noticed the insignia of Betar (a menorah), so I immediately introduced myself. His name was Theodore Cohen Moskowitz, and he lived near the school. We became good friends after that evening. This friendship lasted for many years, even once he had married an American girl named Ahuva. We used to visit each other, and years later we met in New York, while I became acquainted with Ahuva's family when I worked in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Through Theodore I met a group of boys and girls in Tel-Aviv and Ramat Gan, whom I used to visit once a month, and they used to come to Jerusalem, and always used to stay at our place.

Dodi' [memoirs written by Rabbi Moshe Aharon Perlman which were published by Rabbi Moshe Klieres], Jerusalem, 5695 (1935). The above story must have appeared in the book of memoirs. Rabbi Moshe Klieres was the chief rabbi of Tiberias, and the head of Yeshivat Or Torah and Beit Talmud Torah in Tiberias. The editor possesses a letter signed by him on the 4th of Elul 5695 (1935).

¹⁶⁴ Rabbi Shalom Shabazi (1619-1720) was the greatest of the Yemenite poets and a famous Kabbalist.

Walking to the office

During the siege of Jerusalem, during the War of Independence, while the Mandatory government was still in control, Jerusalem was divided into sections, and government workers from the Jewish side needed a permit to go the other side. It seems to me that the Arabs were much freer to pass from the Old City. My and my friends' entry was via a gate next to the Jewish Agency on King George Street. I was in charge of security in the office, which was located next to the King David Hotel in *Beit HaJazitim*. The liaison officer in charge at the Jewish Agency was Mr. Kaplan, whose office was at the Jewish Agency headquarters on Keren Hayesod Street. He was killed in an explosion at the Jewish Agency parking lot.¹⁶⁵ My personal weapon was a box of Players cigarettes, wherein ten cigarettes were real, the other ten were explosive. You had to light a real cigarette and put it next to the explosive material and they would explode, making a huge noise but not causing any real damage. Every morning we used to walk as if in a caravan from the entrance gate of the fence to the office, and then from King George Street to a side street, pass the Terra Sancta Church,¹⁶⁶ and pass through an alley behind the YMCA sports stadium near the office. One day I was late for some reason, I missed the caravan, and crossed alone toward the office. Everything was in order until I arrived at the small side street behind the YMCA. Suddenly there appeared before me three Arabs, who shouted in Arabic, "A Jew - shoot him." My outfit apparently made an impression on one of the Arabs, who said, "He is not a Jew, he is an Englishman." This saved my life, as he said to me in Arabic, "Get out of

¹⁶⁵ The explosion in the offices of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem occurred on the 11th of March, 1948.

¹⁶⁶ Terra Sancta Church, at the intersection of Ben Maimon and Keren Hayesod Streets in Jerusalem, is an Italian, Franciscan College, which was dedicated in 1927. This college served the Christian Arab population. After the War of Independence, Mount Scopus was inaccessible for use by the Hebrew University, and the Terra Sancta building served the Hebrew University for various purposes. Among them, the national library was located in the Terra Sancta building as well as the chemistry laboratories, which were located in huts in the courtyard. At the top of the building there is a statue of Maria the mother of their savior.

here!"¹⁶⁷ I went quickly in the direction of my office, and as I arrived there I met the general manager Mr. Harris, and he asked me why I look so pale. I told him the story of what happened to me, and he said that I should stop coming to the office. I replied: "As long as you are here, I am coming," and he liked that.

A grenade in the office

In one of my meetings with Mr. Kaplan, the liaison for government workers in the office of the *Keren HaYesod* (United Israel Appeal), there was a discussion that there was a need to bring a grenade into our office, and that one of the young women would bring it in through the main entrance, where a British officer and an Arab policeman were stationed. I objected to this and said that I would be the one to deliver the grenade, because I was the department head, and I would be easier for me to do so. On the day before I brought the grenade, I came to the entrance with my official briefcase upon which was written "Government of Palestine," and the officer asked me, "What's in the briefcase?" I answered, "A book, a sandwich, and a bomb." He took this quite seriously and opened the briefcase only to find a book and a sandwich. On the next morning my briefcase contained a book, a sandwich and a hand grenade. The same thing happened. "What's in the briefcase?" asked the officer, and I answered him, "A book, a sandwich and a bomb." He looked at me, laughed, and sent me through. This is how I transferred the grenade. We placed it in the chimney and covered it with a map. After two days one of the young men in the office was raking out the chimney and found the hand grenade. He began to scream, "*ressess yahudi*," a "Jewish bomb." All the Arabs in the office fled and never returned, whereas I was called to the office of the general manager, who said to me that he was certain that this was a Haganah grenade and that, since the Arabs fled, the burden of the work would be upon our shoulders.

Daharia near Hevron

In mid-November 1947, I returned from Beer Sheva from one of my trips in my capacity as an inspector of food supplies, checking the distribution

¹⁶⁷ In Arabic he apparently said to me, "*Roch Min Hon*," meaning, "Run away from here."

of food in the Negev. In the office that I worked we distributed essential food items such as rice, sugar, flour and oil. I traveled in a government car with a driver, and when we arrived at one of the turns in the road that lead to Hevron and Daharia not far from the police station, we were stopped by an Arab whose face was covered, with a pistol in his hand. He opened my door, and demanded my money and my watch. I hesitated, got out of the car, and the Arab thought I was about to give him my money, and wasn't expecting my response. To this day I will not understand where I got the courage to do what I did. I grabbed the pistol in one hand, and with the other I tore off his *kaffiah* and told him in fluent Arabic that he should be ashamed of what he intended to do to me, for I was returning from distributing the food to his Arab brothers. We threw him into the car and transferred him to the nearest police station

The period of the siege of Jerusalem

I will mention here two incidents which occurred during the siege of Jerusalem in which I took part. As you know, Jerusalem relied on caravans of food that arrived from the coastal plain and here in the city of Jerusalem the food supplies were distributed according to institutional plans.

The first incident

At the end of the second *Hafugah* (truce), which occurred during the first days of the week, the food caravan was therefore forced to arrive on the Shabbat. I was instructed to go out with several men to scatter a group of extreme *charedim* who lay down on the road in the area of Givat Shaul to block the caravan. We went out to this place and ordered them to get up and leave, because Jewish law indicated that the Shabbat may be "pushed aside" in order to save lives, and that on the very next day they would be the ones standing in line to receive this food for their children. They resisted, and one of them recognized me, and yelled, "Eli, the son of Rav Moshe, you would hurt us?" I ordered my men to surround these protesters, and counted to five, firing a shot into the air from my Sten submachine gun, and all of them fled like flies. I am convinced that these were men of the Neturei Karta, who never agreed with the instructions of the Rabbinat.

The second incident

When the Burma Road was built, which essentially saved the entire city of Jerusalem from the siege, part of the road in its central portion would not accommodate trucks or large vehicles. Therefore the trucks arriving from the coastal plain brought the food supplies on one side to a location beyond which they could not proceed; and from the other direction, from Jerusalem, trucks would come with volunteers who transferred them on their backs from one side to the other. This once occurred on the holiday of Shavuot, and we had to find volunteers to go out to the Burma Road. Indeed, we entered several synagogues, and called the attention of the congregants to the situation, and immediately many volunteers dressed in their holiday clothes went out to the Burma Road.

Sephardic Hebrew in the synagogue

We moved to a settlement called Ramatayim¹⁶⁸ which today is Hod Hasharon. Here lived my mother and father in law, Aharon and Yaffa Wiener. This transfer came as a result of my new job in the army in the Tel Aviv region. I was active in the newly-constructed synagogue there, and served as its chief *gabbai*. The prayers were conducted in the Ashkenazic dialect and at times with a deep Galician accent. Most of the congregants could speak modern Hebrew, and could not stand this antiquated dialect. We were two lieutenants, a captain, and a sergeant, and we decided to change the outmoded pronunciation of the prayer to the modern Sephardic pronunciation. Early one Shabbat morning, we arranged our own minyan so that there were not enough men for the remainder later that morning. They were forced to accept our approach and from then on prayed in the Sephardic dialect.

¹⁶⁸ Ramatayim, which was founded in 1925, was the first settlement in Israel that merited having its own local council after the establishment of Israel. Hod Hasharon today includes the towns of Hadar, Ramat Hadar, Magdiel, Ganeh-Tzvi, Neveh-Ne'eman, and Gad-Migad.

A choir

All of my family was blessed with beautiful singing voices, and my father would sing and encourage others during the celebrations of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. In the synagogue, he would sing in a loud voice that would be easily heard even in the women's section on the upper floor, a place where the *baal tefilah* [person leading the prayers] could be heard only with difficulty. Thus when I was a young boy in school I joined the school choir. Later on, I joined the choir of the cantor Rabbi Zalman Rivlin¹⁶⁹ Z'TL and also the choir of Betar under the direction of Zvi Aharonovitch (Aroni) Z'L. My participation in choirs lasted a number of years, and then I stopped. As it happened during the War of Independence, on the high holidays, when I was in one of the settlements in the Galil, I was in the only synagogue in the area and the cantor was a Jew with a beard, a man of good attributes, who would pray for the congregation and prayed beautifully. However, when it came time for *Kol Nidre* on Yom Kippur, the cantor did not appear. The time came and no one was there to begin services. I said to the men responsible at the synagogue that I am not a cantor but I have "*girsā deyanakuta*"¹⁷⁰, and I remember the *Kol Nidre* prayers, and indeed I served as the shul's cantor that night.

This was the first time that I ever led the services, because my father would always say it is our custom for the children not to lead services as long as the parents are still alive, so as not to say the *Kaddish*; however, this had been an emergency. On the next day, on Yom Kippur, this same cantor appeared, and we asked him where he was last night for *Kol Nidre*. He answered, that he had not been paid and therefore he did not come, despite the fact that our synagogue was the only one in the area. I got involved here and said to him (at this time I was a military officer with the rank of captain), that I would lead the services and not him, and so it was.

¹⁶⁹ The cantor Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Rivlin (1886-1962) established the school for cantors that was located next to the synagogue "Shirat Yisrael," and served in this capacity for over 50 years. This synagogue had a famous choir. He instructed most of the great *chazanim* of the generation. He composed several books on *chazanut*, and a Hebrew-English-Yiddish dictionary.

¹⁷⁰ *Girsā deyanakuta*: In Aramaic this means the teachings that one learns during his childhood, which are retained well into adult years; tractate Shabbat 21b.

Rabbi Shlomo Goren Z"TL, the chief rabbi of the Israel defense forces, learned what I did. He knew me because we were neighbors at one time, and later from the army. And so, one year later when I was in Jerusalem, he asked me to lead the services in the army base close to my home, and so it was.

Smoking

When I began to work I began to smoke as well, usually fine cigarettes from England. I would go through two packs a day. During my years in the army I met a friend named Menashe Shaked, who later became the manager of the Dubek cigarette factory in Bnei Brak. Whenever I visited him I would get an ample supply of cigarettes. Even my wife smoked. One evening it was raining outside, and my wife ran out of her cigarettes. She asked me to go out and buy her some. It was raining so heavily that I really had no desire to go out, and I said to her, take my cigarettes and I will quit smoking from here on in. I quit smoking from that evening on, and whenever I came to staff meetings or with friends who smoked I could not stand the smoke. Two weeks later, returning from military staff headquarters, in a car driven by Yisroel Golevsky, we had an accident with a bus in which I was lightly injured. Everyone urged me to have a smoke in order to relax but I refused, and so I stood fast in my decision to quit smoking

My relationship with the Arabs

Up until the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which declared the right of the Jews to a state in the land of Israel, relations between Jews and Arabs were quite proper, especially between the Arabs and the Sephardic Jews¹⁷¹, but even

¹⁷¹ "The elders would recount with sparkling eyes: there is in Jerusalem an old model of coexistence in peace and tranquility. Give them ten minutes and they would tell you, or better 'ten seconds,' and you would hear how they lived together in Jerusalem, Jews and Arabs, in coexistence, such that none of them had even heard of the "Combatant's Letter" [ed. note: a letter signed by a group of Israeli soldiers in January 2002, in which they refused to serve beyond the 1967 borders in protest of Israeli occupation]. You would hear how in Jerusalem within the walls, they would live side by side, Arabs and Jews. Not only would they live together, but they lived their lives in partnership, according to old Jewish traditions of peaceful coexistence, which holds that the Arab respects the holiday of the Jew, and the Jew for his part would know when the Arab

with Jews of European descent as well, and there was cooperation and help between the groups. My parents had Arab Muslim neighbors, who would often help them greatly. For example, when our Arab neighbor learned that we had no food in the house, she brought my mother money, asking only that she return it only when she was able to. Jews and Arabs at this time even sat together and learned trades. After the Balfour Declaration, tension began between Jews and Arabs, and their relations became hostile. In 1920 the Arab riots began. Always on the second of November, the date of the Balfour Declaration, there were Arab riots and protests, and we gave this date the name in Yiddish, "*Der Bayser November*," (the angry day of November [ed. note: the letter "*bais*" (*bet*) has the numerical value of two, and sound like the Yiddish word "*bays*" or "angry"]. However, between the times of bloody riots there were peaceful days, and it was possible to transact business with the Arabs and mingle with them without fear. I would go to the Old City to visit my relatives without fear or, when I would help my father deliver salaries for the rabbis that lived in the Old City from the institution in which he worked. I would traverse the alleys without the slightest hesitation. Right around the neighborhood in which we lived, "*Shchunat Kneset*," many Arabs lived until the 1929 riots. Later they fled, but prior to this time relations were good. There was a very distinguished Arab there who owned a flock of sheep and supplied milk to the neighborhood. I had a special relationship with him. On Passover we would bring them matzot and nuts, and at the end of Passover he would bring us pita and butter.

When I worked for the Masonite company, I had an Arab acquaintance who came to the office and would help me find clients. I even traveled with him to Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem. He would come to our house on holidays, and we attended his wedding. When we did some work in the Armenian monastery, in the residence of the Arch Patriarch, I would go the Old City to the Christian Quarter to inspect the work that was carried out by Armenians.

holidays occurred. An essential part of this agreement was that the Arab formed an integral part of the holiday of the Jew. This was by means of cooperation..." (Sheri Ansky "*Coexistence/Co-observance of Mitzvot*", *Maariv Sof-Shavua* (Weekend), 29th of March, 2002).

Friends

Despite my Ashkenazic background, and the fact that I grew up in an Ashkenazic neighborhood, most of my friends were of Middle Eastern origin: Sefardim, Persians and Yemenites. All of my friendships were made in my school, in youth groups or through my work. I had a school friend with whom I was very close, and tight, with even a family friendship, such that on the evening of the Passover *seder* we would exchange visits between families. I had friends from the Persian community, with whom I went on day trips, hikes, and visited their homes. I would visit frequently the Batei HaBucharim neighborhood, where there were many Persian immigrants. Among my Sephardic friends were the well-known families of Sheetrit, the Yitzhack Navon family, and his sister. I'll mention here Yitzhak Levi Z'TL, the composer and collector of Sephardic music whom I knew. Among my Ashkenazic friends there were those from well known families in Jerusalem, such as Pearlman, Mann, Tepperberg, Margovsky (Argov), Benzman, Lederman, Rivlin and Rashovsky, among others.

With the establishment of the state

On the fifth day of the Hebrew month of *Iyar*, 5748 (May 14, 1948) the state of Israel was declared, and on the 28th of June 1948, the Israeli army swore allegiance to the state, including the national guard (Mishmar HaAm) units. With the establishment of the state, I was drafted into the Israel Defense Forces into the Hagah civil defense unit in Jerusalem.¹⁷² At the end of July 1948, Mr. Mordechai Nimtza-bi¹⁷³ appeared in Jerusalem, with the rank of *sgan aluf*

¹⁷² Hagah (an acronym for *Hitgonenuh Ezechit*, or Civil Defense) was established in May 1948 and was first titled "Riot Defense Service." The Corps was established after a particularly fierce aerial bombardment of Tel Aviv by the Egyptian Air Force, which caused many injuries and deaths and considerable destruction.

¹⁷³ Modechai (Max) Nimtza-bi (Netzavitsky) was appointed on April 4, 1948 as the first director of Hagah and founder of the Corps. He was trained as a jurist. He authored two books: 1. "The Flag," Tel Aviv, 1948. And: 2. "Pick a Hebrew Name!" coauthored with the General Staff, Committee for Hebrew Names, Tel Aviv 1949. He was one of the pioneers and champions of changing the names of Israeli residents and soldiers in the I.D.F. to original Hebrew names.

(Lieutenant. Colonel – at that time the highest rank before general), and asked me to join him on the general staff of the IDF in Ramat Gan, with the goal of having me join the national civilian defense officers unit. There is no doubt that he chose me because he knew me from our days serving together during the Second World War in Jerusalem.

When I was drafted into the IDF and stationed with a civil defense unit in Jerusalem, I approached the recruitment officer, a man whom I knew from the days of the Second World War. He greeted me and said to me that he is happy that I enlisted, and that I could serve as his sergeant and he would be the officer. But as I mentioned earlier, I returned to Jerusalem with the rank of captain and he served as a “sergeant” under my command.

During the siege of Jerusalem, when bombs were landing in the city, I was stationed at the Schneller Base¹⁷⁴. The pattern of bombings by the Jordanian Legion was first to shoot phosphorus bombs that would cause fires. Amidst the confusion, a second round of explosive-laden bombs would land, in order to injure as many people as possible who were putting out the fires, and to kill and wound as many as possible. One Friday I had a short furlough to see my family, who lived not far from my camp, in the neighborhood of Mekor Baruch¹⁷⁵. On my way home a few phosphorus bombs fell, and a fire broke out.

¹⁷⁴ The Schneller military base was erected on Malchei Yisrael Street in Jerusalem. It was the former “Syrian Orphans’ Home.” It was established by the German Protestant missionary Ludwig Schneller in 1855, for orphans who were brought from Syria and Lebanon. This compound spread over one hundred dunam (25 acres). Within it at one time were a print shop, a school for the blind, a tile factory and an agricultural farm. In the compound, burial caves from the Second Temple period were discovered. The language of instruction in this institution was German. In the center of the compound was an administration building that included offices, a church, and a dining room. It was built in south German baroque style and on its front was a clock tower. A wall surrounded the compound, and around it were buildings to house the staff and the workers of the institution, on which were inscribed the names of the donors who contributed to the construction of each of the buildings. During the Second World War, this building was captured by the British Army because it was the property of the German enemy. But the British abandoned this compound in January of 1948, and with the establishment of the State of Israel, it turned into an IDF base.

¹⁷⁵ The neighborhood of Mekor Baruch is near the Machaneh Yehuda market. This neighborhood was named after the verse, “May your source be blessed [*mekorcha baruch*] and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.” (Proverbs 5:18). This neighborhood was

As the local inhabitants ran to put out the fire, I passed them and yelled to them to run from the fire and to take cover. They did so. After a few minutes high explosive bombs landed. And thus, those would-be fire fighters were saved.

I was appointed an officer of the civil defense force, "Hagah-Hagas" Galil district, with the rank of Lieutenant (*Segen*). As I recall, I was the first officer of IDF in the Galil carrying the new officer's insignia [ed. note: i.e., in the new Israeli Army], and my promotion was published in General Staff Order (*Pekudot Matkal*) 7. I served in this position from September 26, 1948 until January 18, 1949; then I was transferred to the civil defense command in the general staff. This rapid transfer of position was a result of Lt. Col. Mordechai Nimtzabi's perishing in a car accident in January of 1949. The accident occurred during the "*Ha'afalah*" (blackout) while he traveled at night without his headlights on. He suffered a head-on collision with another vehicle.

After I was appointed to Galilee district headquarters, in Moshava Migdal¹⁷⁶ near Tiberias, I reported to the head of the camp (I had yet to put on my officer's brass). This was a new framework of life for me. Until then I had never had any contact with formal camp life. The commander of the camp screamed at me, "Hey you, fill up a burlap bag with straw, and it will be your mattress for the night." I did as I was commanded, and was given a small room to spend the night. When I went down to the dining room, I sat by the wall, because I didn't know anyone. The head of the dining room came to me screaming, "Hey you, this is an officers' table... You have to sit over there with the non-commissioned officers." Of course I obeyed this instruction, and moved to sit amongst the soldiers. Two days later, I was ordered to report to the commanding officer of the district, who informed me that he was given a command from the chief of staff's office that I was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. On the spot he put the officer's insignia on my shoulders. It should

established by Baruch Hershkovits in the year 1924.

¹⁷⁶ The Moshava Migdal, in the lower Galilee, 6 kilometers from Tiberias, was established as a worker's farm in 1910. It contained a camp of the famous *G'dud Avodah* (labor battalion) that paved the road from Tiberias to Rosh Pinah. The city of Migdal was an important settlement in the Second Temple period. Inhabitants of the city participated in the revolt against Rome, and when the walls fell, they escaped by boat to the sea of Galilee. From Migdal came Mary Magdalene [i.e., of Migdal], a loose woman who became a disciple of Jesus, and was sanctified in the Christian tradition.

be pointed out that at that time in the state of Israel, people did not wear their brass, and even the commanding officer of the district went about without his insignia. Immediately thereafter, I went to the dining room and sat in exactly the same spot in which I had sat for the last couple of days. Again the head of the dining room came over, and this time he said, "Hey you, you should sit with the officers," however this time I said, "Now I am the commanding officer, and I will decide where I sit." When I was transferred from the headquarters to the Galilee district it wasn't pleasant, because I was away from my family, who were in Ramatayim, and for the first time in my life I celebrated Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot away from home. I was homesick, but there was nothing I could do, this was war time. During this period, I visited most of the communities of the Galilee, and prepared them for potential air raids.

In October 1948 Operation "Hiram" to liberate the Galil took place, and I had a part in it as well. Right after the operation I traveled through the settlements of the northern Galil and reached Peki'in,¹⁷⁷ where the heads of the Druze community came out to greet us, and brought us to the village's synagogue, where they showed us that they had preserved the Holy Ark and the Torah scroll, as well as the shoes of the *Cohanim* (members of the traditional priestly class) which were in the Ark. As I was close to Tiberias, I frequently visited my uncle Netanel Mendel, my father's brother, and helped him out as much as I could, and also visited our friends in the Yavniel colony. During the period from January 1949 to January 1950, Hagah had two commanders: Tzvi Levi and Baruch Baruch,¹⁷⁸ but the two of them dealt exclusively with

¹⁷⁷ A village with a mixed population in the Upper Galilee, along the Hossen-Ramah road in a scenic valley where one finds a cave in which, according to tradition, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Eliezer hid. The remains of an ancient synagogue exist there. At the beginning of the period of the British Mandate, 17 Jewish families still lived there, descendants of the farmers of the Galilee from the era of the destruction of the Second Temple, who had never gone into exile. Most of the Jewish families were driven out or abandoned the place after the Arab riots of 5696 (1936). The Zinati family remained there until the last quarter of the 20th century, and I had the privilege of seeing the pater familias in Peki'in on an annual class trip in the 1960's.

¹⁷⁸ The first commander of Hagah was Lt. Col. Mordechai Nimza-bi, as has been mentioned. In February 1950, Lt. Col. Baruch (Komarov) was appointed the new commander of Hagah. Compare the Jerusalem Post of February 27, 1950, page 3: "A new Chief A.R.P. {Air Raid Precautions} Officer has been appointed by the Ministry of Defense to succeed *Sgan-Aluf* [Lt. Col.] M. Nimza-bi who was killed in a road accident last year. The new A.R.P. Chief is *Sgan-Aluf* Baruch (Komarov)."

organizational activity. During this period we tried to set up courses for Hagah reservists, week-long courses at Training Base 6, but without much success. I was injured during the last course. That particular day I showed up in short pants and short sleeves and demonstrated how to deal with a live firebomb which was made in Britain. When the bomb was ignited I was supposed to cover it with sandbags. I picked up the sandbag, which was too heavy, and it fell on the bomb which then split apart, and I was completely covered with burning magnesium on my face, arms and legs. I was taken to the infirmary but the doctor didn't know how to take care of me. I asked him for a bottle of alcohol because I remembered how my mother was scalded on the hands with boiling oil and without prior training cleaned her hands with alcohol and the burn disappeared. I, too, smeared my face, arms and legs with alcohol, and there were a few days where I was as red as a beet, but everything crusted over without scarring. On the other hand, the doctor did not allow me to wash my left leg with alcohol, and due to an infection in that leg I had to spend about two weeks in the hospital.

During Captain Tzvi Halevi's command in 1949, I was stationed for a while as a Hagah officer in Jerusalem. A little while before that, an explosive device has been placed next to the wall of the Old City, between the New Gate and Damascus Gate (near the New Gate behind the Church of Notre Dame), in order to blow a hole in the wall in a renewed attempt to capture the Old City. But the government canceled the plan and the bomb had to be disassembled. The bomb squad was at the time attached to Hagah (later on the squad was transferred to the Engineering Corps) and I was required by the head of Hagah to inspect what was taking place, but instead of going myself, I assigned this mission to one of the sergeants who was a trained sapper. And when Captain Halevi came to Jerusalem to look the matter over, I was asked whether I had checked out what was going on. I answered that I had sent one of the sergeants. Captain Halevi's answer was that, when a man says the blessing during the morning service, "Who did not make me a woman," he must check himself and not delegate the task. The message was clear: a man doesn't generally inspect his privates in the morning – and certainly he doesn't have another person do it – to ascertain that he hasn't turned into a woman overnight. Only if he's unsure of his manhood does he do so, and he then does it himself! I understood this crude "hint," that there are things that one cannot ask another to do, and I apologized.

During this time, we would collect duds (bombs that had not exploded) in various neighborhoods in Jerusalem. We came to the Batei Ungarin section¹⁷⁹ and, upon our arrival, a Jewish woman came out and shouted to her neighbor in Yiddish, "*di goyim hut gekumen tzu nemen di bombes*" (the goyim have come to get the bombs). That same day, we came to the Scottish Church opposite the Jerusalem railway station to take away several shells, and the minister came out and said to his son, "show the Jews where the bombs are." To the *haredi* Jews we were goyim, and to the goyim we were Jews.

One day I was walking at the end of Rehov Strauss, which today is known as *Kikar Shabbat* (Shabbat Square). A thickly bearded Haredi Jew approached me carrying a live 25 pound bomb. Upon seeing me, he shouted in Yiddish, "*offitzer, a bombe*" (officer, a bomb), and threw it on the ground. I shouted "*Shema Yisrael*" [ed. note: the prayer traditionally uttered by Jews before their impending death!] and "hit the ground!" Lucky for us, the shell didn't explode because the pin was bent, or else it would have been our end.

Establishing the first Hagah base

During this period I was promoted to the rank of captain and my job was to tour the I.D.F. camps and inspect the defenses against aerial attack. Lieutenant Yisrael Golovsky (Gilad) was appointed my adjutant and driver. More intense instructional activity began with the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel David Reshef (he was later promoted to the rank of Colonel) as the commander of Hagah. We sat together for hours and prepared instructional material. Sometimes we would hole up in Reshef's house. We wrote and edited a special booklet, *Torat Hagah* (The Hagah System; literally, The Hagah Bible) modeled after British materials and based on my personal experience in the subject. This booklet, and the sets of I.D.F. lessons in civil defense that we developed, helped us to set up the first seminar of the National Officers' Corps of Hagah Reserves. The seminar took place at one of the bases near Netanya, and at the conclusion of the seminar, we ran a Hagah exercise in the city of Netanya. The instructional materials we developed helped consolidate the

¹⁷⁹ The Batei Ungarin neighborhood is located north of and near Meah Shearim. The area was built by *Kollel Yehudei Ungariah Shomrei HaHomot* (The Hungarian Jewish Community, Guardians of the Walls [of Jerusalem]) from 1897 on.

Hagah system in Israel. We organized the second seminar at a Signal Corps base in Tel Aviv.

In consultation with the headquarters commanders it was decided to establish a national training base, which was set up on a small scale in Pardes Katz near Bnei Brak. Captain Yerachmiel Halevi¹⁸⁰ was chosen as the base commander; however the base was quite tiny and lacked equipment for training, which placed serious restrictions on our ability to make use of the base. Together with Captain Halevi we arranged an instructional program for the base, and thus the idea came about to evolve into a broader military training center. At the end of the period I was promoted to the rank of major and additional responsibilities were given to me within the scope of Hagah headquarters: General Staff Officer, Training Officer, Organization Officer and Acting Hagah Officer for the Central District.

In order to raise public awareness of the subject of civil defense, we organized on behalf of Hagah headquarters and with the participation of District and Command, city-wide exercises in which we sounded sirens; we announced on the radio the differences between sirens for drills and for actual emergencies. Traffic blockades, staged injuries and fires, rescue of the injured in cooperation with Magen David Adom, firefighters and the police. Similarly, we organized Hagah exhibitions which included equipment and demonstrations of Hagah activities, in the large cities: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Netanya. These exhibitions ran for one to two weeks in each location, and thousands of people came to them.

Advanced Study in England

Meanwhile, I was dispatched to England to study the A.B.C. (atomic, biologic and chemical warfare) civil defense program.¹⁸¹ Beginning in

¹⁸⁰ Eliyahu notes: I helped Captain Yerachmiel Halevi years later to advance to the rank of major, which had been delayed because he was a member of Etzel (The Irgun) who was located in Eritrea and therefore was not promoted. I too was a member of Etzel, as has been mentioned, but this detail was for some reason not known in the I.D.F.

¹⁸¹ Eliyahu notes: in accordance with I.D.F. diplomatic policy, every officer sent overseas was required to Hebraize his name. I used my middle name and was called Eliyahu S. Yekutieli in England. Upon my return to Israel I went back to my previous name, Eliyahu Y. Shwartz. For a number of people, the changing of one's name alienated them

September 1955 through January 1956, I visited three Civil Defense training bases as well as military camps, and a number of cities such as London, York, Bristol, Liverpool and Edinburgh, to see civil defense training bases up close. During my visit to Liverpool I merited a unique honor. I was invited to the office of the mayor, who was very interested in the State of Israel, and who placed at my disposal a special vehicle and a municipal civil defense officer, who arranged tours of the city and the local civil defense training base for me. Interestingly, as I was seated in the mayor's office the door suddenly opened, and in came a short man who introduced himself as a Jewish member of the municipal council, and invited me to lunch. This man subsequently became the mayor of Liverpool. After each visit I wrote and sent off a detailed report to the commander of Hagah in Israel. I also took a special course at the training base near Bristol, completing the course with outstanding marks and received a special commendation from the base commander and the British Home Office.

In London, I was invited to visit the Pyrin factory which produced fire fighting equipment, and I was astonished when I arrived to find that a captain from Iraq and a lieutenant from Jordan – countries that were enemies of Israel – were taking part in the tour. I paid them no regard and did not speak to them. After the visit and product demonstration, our host invited us to lunch, and said that pork products and the like would be served. I asked him for a hard boiled egg and a fresh tomato since I kept the Jewish laws of *kashrut*, and he readily agreed. When he turned to the Arab officers and explained that pork would be served, they answered that they would gladly eat it. I pointed out without looking at them that, according to the Koran,¹⁸² Moslems were also forbidden to eat pork, but they answered, also indirectly, "We're not at home."

I made many friends during the course, and we did most of our homework in my room, while eating Israeli delicacies, which I had brought along from Israel or which were provided by the Israeli embassy. A lovely

from their past; for instance, "I killed him [my father] off, principally by changing my name [from Klausner to Oz]" (Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, published by Keter, Jerusalem, 2002, p. 517). Eliyahu was compelled to change his own name for diplomatic purposes, yet he returned to his origins and the name with which he was born upon his return to Israel. Eliyahu appreciated and respected his parents his life long, was strongly connected to his parents and his past and preserved this connection with all his might.

¹⁸² Chapter 2, 172-174 and Chapter 6, 145.

graduation party was thrown on my behalf at the end of the course. As I had spent a considerable amount of time in London, I had made the acquaintance of Mr. Sammy Bloch, who hosted me in his home in the suburbs, and I appeared in synagogue with him on Shabbat dressed in my I.D.F. dress uniform. I was very moved, as were the congregants, at the sight of an unexpected guest, one who was wearing an I.D.F. uniform; and, even though that Shabbat two bar mitzvah ceremonies were taking place, and the two bar mitzvah boys were to be called to the Torah, they nevertheless offered me the *Haftarah* portion [ed. note: with which one of the bar mitzvah boys would ordinarily be honored]. However, I very politely declined, as one of the boys had prepared the *Haftarah*, and it would not have been a proper or correct thing to do to the boy. Instead, they asked me to give the boys a blessing during the *Kiddush*, and I did that. On my back to Israel I passed through Paris and I met with the head of civil defense at NATO Headquarters, which was at the time located at the Palais Chaillot, for a long and interesting conversation.

During my time in London, the British Home Office arranged an instructional tour of the London Electric Company for me. I went off to the electric company, and in so doing learned why Britons always carry an umbrella with them. When I got into the taxi for the trip the weather was excellent and the sun was shining, along the way it began to pour, and when I got out of the cab and ran to the offices I got a proper soaking. One cannot rely even on English weather! Based on the knowledge I garnered at the plant concerning how to respond during aerial attacks and the specific problems of power plants and high tension lines, upon my return to Israel I instructed the staff of the Israel power company, and also recommended the purchase of special equipment for this purpose.

Establishing Training Base No. 16

Upon my return to Israel, Colonel Itiel Amichai of blessed memory was appointed the head of Hagah (he was subsequently killed in an automobile accident overseas), and I served under his command as General Staff and Training Officer. During that period, the idea was born to establish in Tzrifin a large and capacious national training base under the aegis of the Training Command (*Pikud HaHadracha*). This took place in close cooperation with Captain Yerachmiel Halevi, who was appointed commander of Training Base 16.

Many deliberations took place with the Training Command about establishing the base, and to which base to join it or whether to set it up with its own leadership, and suggestions were made to combine it with Training Base 11 (Administration) or Training Base 10 (Medical), and finally the decision was taken to set up an independent base. Several huts were placed at the disposal of Training Base 16 and were turned into classrooms and a lecture hall. The entire area was empty and was devoid of training equipment. Inhabited-area drills took place in Rishon LeZion. Upon the appointment of Colonel Shmuel Eyal (who was later appointed the commander of the Manpower Branch and was promoted to General) as the commander of Hagah, the development of Training Base 16 was given a boost. Training apparatus was built, houses were erected for drills and to be blown up; a drill area was set up for instruction, clearing debris, rescues and so forth. Similarly, much activity took place to establish control centers in the major cities, and local drills took place under the direction of Hagah headquarters, and I also organized local officers' courses. I was borrowed from my job at Hagah headquarters and was appointed the commander of Hagah's advanced officers' course which took place at Training Base 16. At the conclusion of the course we set up nationwide maneuvers in the presence of the Chief of General Staff Chaim Laskov, Interior Minister Chaim Moshe Shapira, and other senior officers, staff from Magen David Adom, firefighters and the police, and at the conclusion of the exercise I received a special commendation from the Chief of General Staff.

On one of my visits to *Etzbah HaGalil* (the northwestern finger of the Galilee) in the context of my responsibilities to verify data for Hagah, I returned via the Northern Command in Nazareth. After having several meetings, I set out with my car and driver and several hitchhikers in the direction of Haifa, but a traffic accident took place when an Arab vehicle struck us. All the passengers were severely injured and we were taken to the hospital in Nazareth. Several months thereafter, the driver of the Arab vehicle was placed on trial in Nazareth and I appeared as a witness. The next day, the story of the trial appeared in the Hebrew newspapers, and it was noted that Lieutenant Colonel Eliyahu Shwarz (rather than Major) had testified. On the following day, when I arrived at headquarters, I was summoned that morning to the office of the commander of Hagah, Shmuel (Mulik) Eyal, and I was surprised to see all the headquarters officers were present, and the rank of lieutenant colonel was awarded to me. Mulik Eyal said that inasmuch as it had already been published in the papers that I was a lieutenant colonel, there was no choice but to award

me that rank. The truth, of course, was that the rank had previously been approved, but without my knowledge.

On September 1, 1960, I was appointed commander of Training Base 16. With the assistance of the base's officers, the Training Corps and the commanders of the nearby bases, we developed the base, and there was a tremendous amount of activity. Among others, we conducted a professional rescue course, officers' courses, inspectors' courses, courses for teachers and for representatives of plants. Similarly, we conducted a course for natives of Africa in conjunction with Training Base 10 Medical Corps. Training Base 16 had an excellent corps of officers and non-commissioned officers who led the courses on the subject of civil defense. From time to time we arranged seminars for the staff as well, to refresh and update their knowledge. At the end of each year, the officers on the base met to prepare the program for the following year; for each type of course and advanced qualification that we taught and for each type of drill, both on and off the base, as well as joint rescue drills. Meanwhile, Colonel Yechezkel Fant was appointed the head of Hagah and after him Colonel Asher Ben-David, and the two of them helped me develop the base.

One day, the participants in a new rescue course appeared for the first day of instruction, and opposite my office there stood a Yemenite Jew from Rehovot with a wagon harnessed to a horse, and on the wagon were his six children. He told me he had come to sign up for the course. To this day, it still is not clear to me how he managed to get onto the base in the first place, not to mention with a horse and wagon and children. In any event, we got in touch with district headquarters for instructions, as to what to do with this fellow and his children, and we finally sent him – and his children and horse – on his way home.

On November 3, 1963, I transferred command of the base to Major Yisrael Gilad, and the Training Corps commander Colonel Yaacov Hefetz hosted a luncheon for me.

Command of Hagah's Evacuation, Support and Casualty Authority

Meanwhile, I received a new appointment to the Evacuation, Support and Casualty Authority [known by its Hebrew acronym as *Pesach – Pinui, Saad*

ve-Halalim], which was attached to the Emergency Status Administration (*Meshek Lishaat Herum*, or *Melach*). This position had to be built from the ground up, because it had not existed before then. The position answered not only to Hagah Command but also to the Ministry of the Interior and to the District Governors who were part of the Ministry of the Interior. Upon taking on the job, I called organizational meetings in the offices of the District Governors with representatives of the cities, and we laid the operating foundations, which included organizing units in each city, practice, and drills under the auspices of "*Pesach*," which included Hagah. My job also required me to meet with mayors, representatives of burial societies, photographers, forensic dentists and the like. The calculations of theoretical damage and the enormous numbers of casualties from the bombs, which we employed for the large cities such as Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, depressed me, and I asked to be transferred to another assignment. I served at this assignment in "*Pesach*" until October 15, 1965. I turned to the staff command – which was headed by my friend and former commander Shmuel Eyal, and he suggested that the I.D.F. might lend me to the Jewish National Fund (J.N.F.), and accordingly I was sent by the J.N.F. to the United States, and worked there for many years.

At the end of my service, a testimonial dinner took place with the Commander of Hagah Colonel Goder, and so I parted from an institution in which I had served for many years.

Addenda

During the period when I was at Hagah general headquarters, I learned that one of the officers, a native of South Africa, had been being sent by the J.N.F. to the United States and that he had been "borrowed" from the Army; his name was Major Osrin. When he returned from this assignment, he told me about his work in the state of Texas and his contact with the Jewish community, which sounded very interesting. I told Yona about it and she suggested to me to approach my acquaintance Moshe Rivlin, who was the secretary of the Jewish Agency, to see what the possibilities were. I met with Mr. Rivlin (Mr. Rivlin's father had worked with my father on the *Vaad HaKlali*), which was a very interesting meeting during which I was shown great respect. By the way, whenever I appeared in public in my military uniform and insignia, I was treated with respect. After a friendly chat, he recommended that I travel to Africa for the Jewish Agency for a month or two, an idea which did not thrill

me, and I did not agree to it. Years after, when I was working for the J.N.F. and Moshe Rivlin was then the Director General of the J.N.F., I had contact with him regarding my work in the United States.

A close childhood friend of mine by the name of Eliezer Argov-Margovsky served in the J.N.F. administration in Jerusalem, and he was responsible for the J.N.F. organization in the United States and, at one of our meetings, he told me that the Fund was sending I.D.F. officers overseas. I already knew about that from Major Osrin who was an officer at headquarters. He said to me jokingly, “perhaps you too will go to the U.S.?” Yona and I liked that idea. I approached the head of the corps and my former commander Colonel Shmuel Eyal, and he recommended I get in touch with the J.N.F. I met with the staff of the J.N.F. and also with the Director General, the late Mr. Zvi Tsur, and I was accepted with the intent of being sent to the United States to the city of Chicago. My acceptance by the J.N.F. signaled the beginning of a period of intense study to acquaint myself with the J.N.F.’s work in the area and its projects throughout Israel, clearing and preparing land, roads, water, and also topics with which I was acquainted through my duties in the I.D.F. and in Hagah.

I will mention here that, on one of my reconnaissance tours in the I.D.F. together with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense, we went down to the Northern Negev – what is now Kiryat Gat¹⁸³ – this was when we were planning to establish a settlement there. As we stood on that barren place, we suddenly saw a cloud of dust and several Jeeps arrived, and out of one of them jumped none other than David Ben Gurion, who said in a loud voice, “here shall arise a mother city in Israel.” I am telling you this because in 1986 I arranged a tour for leaders from the state of Pennsylvania, and we came to Kiryat Gat, to dedicate a playing field which one of the donors had donated, and I related the aforementioned story. When I finished, an older resident of Kiryat Gat stood up and shouted out to me that he remembered it, and that he had been there. I was happy to hear that. The J.N.F. also arranged several seminars for us to learn the ropes of soliciting funds, preparing bequests, life insurance, and planning public works. One of the instructors was

¹⁸³ Kiryat Gat is a city in the Lachish district, on the site of one of the most important Philistine cities which was known as Gat (Joshua 11:22). The city was established in 1956.

a childhood friend of mine named Yerucham Ben Dror, of blessed memory, who was the representative in Philadelphia.

All of this “Torah,” which we were taught was new to me. To come from the Army and suddenly be turned into a fund raiser, the modern-day “*schnorrer*” (beggar)! I took everything in and decided to do it my own way. It was decided that on October 20, 1965, the day after Sukkot, my entire family would embark: Yona, our daughter Ofra and our son Avshalom.

Ramatayim

While I was at G.H.Q. in Tel Aviv, Yona and I decided to leave Jerusalem and move in with her parents in Ramatayim. I would travel from there each day, from Ramatayim to Tel Aviv or to the base. We moved to Ramatayim, which was a “little settlement” between Petach Tikva and Kfar Saba. Yona’s parents lived in one side of the house and we in the other. It was not so easy. I filled many different roles in the I.D.F. and in Hagah and was often traveling about the country. Yona’s parents’ yard was quite a cultivated Garden of Eden, with flowers and various fruit trees, chickens and turkeys, geese and doves. On the hill on the eastern side was an ancient olive press, which had been transferred by the Regional Council to the municipal park. Nearby the house was the “Kfar Malal¹⁸⁴” school, while on the other side of the road stood the public school, therefore the road was called “Yehoshua ben Gamla.” Yehoshua ben Gamla was the high priest at the end of the Second Temple era, and decreed that teachers of young children should be placed in every city.¹⁸⁵ Ofra studied in the public school. Avshalom was born on April 30, 1951 in the maternity hospital in Kfar Saba and he also studied at that public school.

We celebrated Avshalom’s bar mitzvah in the central synagogue in Ramatayim on the Shabbat following the seventh day of Pesach, Nisan 5764.

¹⁸⁴ A moshav (cooperative settlement) in the Sharon plain, south of Kfar Saba, belonging to the Moshav Movement. Its name was an acronym for Moshe Leib Lilienblum, a writer who belonged to the Hibat Tzion movement (an early 20th century Zionist movement); it was founded in 1914, was abandoned and destroyed during the events of 1921, and rebuilt about one year thereafter.

¹⁸⁵ Talmud, Bava Batra 21a.

The timing made the bar mitzvah quite difficult, as we were compelled to prepare only kosher for Pesach food. A week later we made the bar mitzvah party for family, relatives and friends in a hall in Tel Aviv. It was a very lovely party, and was also the last family gathering at which my father was present; Father passed away on the 21st of Sivan 5764. We also had the opportunity at this celebration to host one of our relatives named Fruma, who was visiting from Australia.

As I mentioned before, our yard was richly planted, and it was so very pleasant to sit in the yard, and I always tried to come home early on Fridays in order to enjoy it, to sit out in the yard with my family. In addition, we had friends from Tel Aviv, the Gottfreund family, who owned the "Argaman" factory, who would come on Fridays to relax on the lawn with us; and, when we would turn on music on the transistor radio, Yona's parents' geese would sit down around us to listen to the music.

In addition to my position in the Army, I was involved with our synagogue and served as the head *gabbai* (sexton), and was similarly active in the local organization of Haganah members. Owing to my involvement with the synagogue, I was made a member of the *Irgun Batei Kneisivot HaArtzi* (The National Council of Synagogues), an arm of "Hechal Shlomo" in Jerusalem, directed by Dr. Moshe Yaffe, of blessed memory.

Yona's father decided to build us a house on their property, and thus – and with his own two hands – he built a house with two apartments, one for us and one to rent out. It was very nice to come home and find everything verdant and orderly, all this thanks to Yona's mother, Mrs. Yaffa Wiener of blessed memory.

After Shabbat, the 6th of Tevet 5721 (December 25, 1960), the most distressing possible news arrived, that my mother had passed away, something I had not expected even though I knew she was ill with skin cancer. I immediately went to Petach Tikva to get my sister Malka, and we went to Jerusalem, where father described mother's last moments to us. On Shabbat afternoon, mother had asked father to turn on the lights as a matter of *pikuach nefesh* (life or death), and said to father: "this evening I will be going, until now I did not want to ruin the joy of Hanukkah for you, or the joy at the birth of a great-grandson (a son had been born to Binyamin and Rivka, my sister Malka's oldest son) and, in so saying, she breathed her last. My mother's (of blessed memory) funeral was very distinguished, with neighbors, relatives,

acquaintances, leaders and military officers present. Mother was buried on Har HaMenuchot in Givat Shaul, for there was no access to the Mount of Olives which was at that time part of the Kingdom of Jordan. As mentioned, her grandfather Reb Yehuda (Yuda) Klein of blessed memory had purchased and developed the Ashkenazi part of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

On the 21st of Sivan 5724 (June 1, 1964), a meeting took place in Rishon LeZion's city hall to plan a "*Pesach*" – *Pinui, Saad Halalim* [Evacuation, Support and Casualty] – drill. I was called to the telephone and Mr. Polikman informed me of the death of my father, of blessed memory. I immediately traveled to Petach Tikva, got my sister and we traveled to Jerusalem. The story of my father's death was interesting as well. Here is what my sister Hannah said: "on the morning of the 21st of Sivan, father arose, washed up, and asked for fresh clothing. My sister told him that he had worn fresh clothing the day before, she offered him breakfast and he replied that he would not be eating any more. He said the morning prayers and heard footsteps outside, and asked if it was Eliyahu; my sister answered that Eliyahu would be coming on Tuesday. His answer was, that "they should summon him today." He finished praying, shed a few tears and recited a chapter of Psalms and asked my sister to round up ten men, and she did that. When they were all there father got into bed, said the *Shema* [traditionally recited at the time of impending death], and breathed his last. May his memory be for a blessing! He was a beloved Jerusalemite who helped others all his life as well as family members, and served as a peacemaker when family members would come to him for help.

The eulogies at his funeral were delivered by Rabbi Aryeh Levin of sainted memory, and by me (see the article on my father's life published a year after his death). One day during the year following father's passing, I was waiting for a minyan in the synagogue in Ramatayim, when a Cadillac appeared and an older man got out and asked whether there would be a minyan. He spoke Hebrew with an American accent and introduced himself as Rabbi Linchner, the founder of Boys Town Jerusalem. He invited me to the cornerstone laying and likewise to the dedication. I met him again in the United States at one of the banquets in Philadelphia.

Parents

The deaths of my parents affected me greatly and it was hard for me to overcome the enormous grief with which I was beset, for I had loved and respected my parents very much. I saw in them living examples of peace, harmony, devotion and gentility. Father was the shopper and provider and mother the homemaker. I will cite an incident where their actions caught my attention at the time that my sister Malka was about to get married. On her wedding day, when everything was ready, something happened with the groom and the wedding was almost called off. Mother and father sat down with us and we talked about it, and the decision was: "if that's how it must be, let's accept it graciously, and everything which has been prepared will be distributed to the poor." But, owing to the intervention of the chief rabbi, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, of sainted memory, who was a family friend, everything worked out without a problem. It was truly a joy when our extended family got together in the evenings on Shabbat or holidays, and especially when celebrating the Pesach *seder* together; it was literally "brothers sitting together."

I lived with my parents until I got married, and thereafter we visited them often. During the siege of Jerusalem, when bombs were exploding all over the city and even though I had been drafted, I found time to visit them almost every day, to see how they were doing and whether they needed anything. Even when I was in the army and we lived outside Jerusalem I found ways to visit them. Upon the liberation of the Galilee at the end of 1949-50 and with the resumption of trips to the Lag BaOmer feast in Meron at the grave of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, father expressed his wish that I try to arrange a visit for him to Meron. With the help of my friend Eli Dekel, whom I met in 1942 at a Hagah course, and who was a senior officer in the Alexander Brigade, and later a senior official in the Israel Police, I arranged the visit to my parents' great satisfaction.

During an earlier period before my marriage, I spoke with mother and told her that I had a very beautiful girlfriend, intelligent and sweet but she came from a Persian family. Mother was not thrilled but she only said: "one should take a wife from among one's own nation,"¹⁸⁶ which sufficed for me to understand her meaning.

¹⁸⁶ She adapted the verse, "thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the

A second incident took place one Shabbat afternoon, when I came home from youth activities, and mother was sitting and chatting with an older woman and they were glad I had come home. The woman was a matchmaker who was trying to introduce me to a girl. Mother asked me not to insult the woman and to give it a try. I acceded to mother's request and met the girl, who was a few years older than I, and, of course, it didn't work out and they didn't bother me again, for I said to mother that I would take care of myself without "that woman's" assistance, and of course that's how it was.

Australia

According to our family tree, father's family branched off from Tiberias-Safed-Australia. Among the other members of the family, a cousin of my father's had emigrated to the city of Melbourne, Australia, and his name was Binyamin Gross, and there he did very well. He owned a weaving mill which bore his name. With his help and with my father's assistance, he brought to Australia three sisters who were his relatives, and their names were Fruma, Pnina and Sara. One day, when I was a base commander in Tzrifin, I was about to run a military drill in a developed area in Rishon LeZion, and I asked one of my friends, Lt. Col. Alex Shapir, to come and observe the drill. We decided to meet at a certain time next to the winery in Rishon LeZion. I arrived there and saw his car parked at the gate, and he was inside the winery. I entered the winery and found him in a room with a group of tourists from Australia who were standing there tasting wine. I came up next to him, and on my right was a tall man who was sipping wine. I told my friend how nice it was that there was good wine available for the tasting. The man on my right answered in British Hebrew, "*tov me'od*" ["very good"]. I asked him where he came from. The answer was Australia. From which city? The answer was Melbourne. At that very moment, I tried to get my address book out to look up the address in Melbourne, but he beat me to it, and shouted out to his wife who was sitting opposite, "Sara look." Sara jumped up with a cry of joy, "Eliyahu, you are my cousin." She was one of the sisters who had left Tzfat for Australia; she

Canaanites but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son" (Genesis 24: 3-4), using the verse in an exegetical fashion to convey a meaning not found in the verse itself.

recognized me from my picture, which she had seen at her sister's. Of course, I brought them home and even took them touring throughout Israel.

Binyamin Gross and his wife May had come to visit Israel; this was at the end of the 1950's, and they stayed in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Binyamin had very much wanted to meet my father but didn't know how to find him. What did he do? He went outside the hotel, and by chance a religious Jew dressed in their characteristic fashion happened by. Binyamin turned to the man in Yiddish and asked him whether he knew Moshe Mordechai Shwartz. The man answered that he indeed knew him and knows that he worked for the Vaad HaKlali, He took the man, hired a taxi and went off to see father (the man who had directed him was rewarded for it). The joy and surprise were great, everyone was very moved, and they even came together to see us in Ramatayim.