

Toldot Yisrael Facilitator's Guide - Yom Yerushalayim

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF INTERVIEWEES

Yitzhak "Izzy" Rahav fought in the Palmach and served as Commander of Jerusalem's Old City during the early part of the War of Independence. He was one of the first commanders of Shayetet 13, the IDF's elite naval special forces unit. He passed away in 2015.

Rabbi She'ar Yashuv Cohen was a Haganah fighter during Israel's War of Independence and was wounded in the battle for Jerusalem's Old City. Confined to a stretcher, he was the last fighter taken out when the Arab Legion forced the evacuation of all Jewish inhabitants. When Jerusalem was reunited in the Six Day War, Rabbi Cohen was the deputy mayor and was the first civilian to return to the Old City of Jerusalem; (Last one out, first one in.) He served as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Haifa from 1975 - 2011 and passed away in 2016.

Danny Shapira is a graduate of the Israeli Air Force's first flight course. He took part in Operation Velveta, a secret 1948 Israeli Air Force operation to ferry Spitfires fighter planes purchased in Czechoslovakia to Israel. Shapira flew a Mirage fighter plane in Operation Focus, helping destroy the Egyptian Air force on the first day of the Six-Day War.

Yeshayahu "Shaik" Gavish (Major-General, Ret.) was a company commander in the Palmach and a battalion commander during the War of Independence. Gavish was appointed head of the IDF Southern Command in 1965 and was one of the heroes of the Six-Day War. Gavish was one of the founders of the Palmach Museum and continues to serve as its chairman.

Elad Peled (Major-General, Ret.) was a squad commander in the Palmach and the commanding officer in the battle of Tzfat in the War of Independence. He continued his military career until 1968 and was Commander of the 36th Armor Division in the Northern Command during the Six-Day War. Peled holds a PhD in Education from Columbia University and is the former Director General of Israel's Ministry of Education.

Aryeh "Arik" Nachemkin (Lieutenant Colonel, Ret.) fought in the Haganah and was a squad commander during the War of Independence. During the Six Day War he fought in the Alexandroni Brigade. He served as a Labor Party MK and Minister of Agriculture.

Yisrael "Putcho" Visler fought in the Palmach and took part in the battle to capture Bee'er Sheva. During the Six-Day War he served as driver for Shlomo "Gorodish" Gonen, Commander of the 7th Armored Brigade. He is a well known Israeli writer, poet and playwright, and author of more than 40 books, many for children and young adults.

Mordechai “Moral’eh” Bar-On was a member of the IDF’s first officer training course in 1948 and served as a platoon commander and company commander in the War of Independence. During the Six-Day War, Bar-On was the Chief Education Officer of the IDF. He was a Member of Knesset for the Ratz party and is a historian at Yad Ben Zvi.

Chaim Herzog served as an intelligence officer in the British Army during WWII and helped establish the IDF’s Intelligence Corps during the War of Independence. During the Six-Day War, daily radio broadcasts featuring Major-General Chaim Herzog’s soothing voice of authority calmed Israelis throughout the Six-Day War. His illustrious career included service as Israel’s UN Ambassador and Israel’s 6th President. Herzog passed away in 1997.

GLOSSARY / REFERENCE

The Waiting Period [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_period_\(Six-Day_War\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_period_(Six-Day_War))

The three weeks from May 15th, 1967, when Egyptian forces moved across the Suez Canal into the Sinai Peninsula, until June 5th and the outbreak of the Six-Day War. Belligerent calls from Nasser, “The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel” and threats from other Arab leaders, “there will be practically no Jewish survivors”, made this a very anxious and stressful time in Israel and for Jews around the world.

Operation Diamond https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Diamond

In 1966, through the defection of an Iraqi pilot, the Mossad finally succeeded in acquiring a MiG-21, the most advanced Soviet fighter plane at that time. Danny Shapira trained Israeli pilots on how best to confront the aircraft which was the primary fighter plane for Arab forces, leading to tremendous success in the 6 Day War. (Aftermath: In January 1968, Israel loaned the MiG to the United States, which evaluated the jet and helped pave the way for the Israeli acquisition of the F-4 Phantom, which the Americans had been reluctant to sell to Israel.)

Operation Focus https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Focus

Operation Focus was the preemptive strike by Israel at the start of the Six-Day War in 1967 that destroyed the majority of the Egyptian Air Force on the ground. By noon of the first day of the war, 450 aircraft from the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian Air Forces were destroyed, as well as 18 airfields in Egypt, crippling Egyptian Air Force operations for the duration of the war.

Yafa Yarkoni / Bab al Wad https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yafa_Yarkoni, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sha%27ar_HaGai#Song

Yafa Yarkoni was an Israeli singer, known as Israel’s “songstress of the wars” due to her frequent performances for Israel Defense Forces soldiers, especially in wartime. One of her most famous songs was Bab al-Wad, written by Palmach veteran and poet Haim Gouri . The song commemorates the battles for access to Jerusalem in 1948 in what is called in Hebrew Sha’ar HaGai along the Tel Aviv Jerusalem highway. Yarkoni won the Israel Prize in 1998 for Hebrew song. She passed away in 2012. The song Bab al Wad has four verses, with the fourth verse spoken before the final chorus:

*Here I walk silently
And I remember them, every single one
Here we fought, together, over cliffs and boulders
Here we were to one family*

*Bab al Wad
Forever do remember our names
As convoys broke through to the city
On the roadsides lie our dead
The iron hulk as silent as my comrade*