

RABBI WITH WINGS

STORY OF A PILOT

SAMUEL BURSTEIN



RABBI WITH WINGS

by

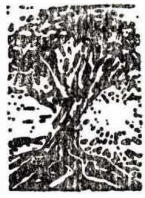
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2024



HERZL PRESS NEW YORK

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 65-16642

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Printed in The U.S.A.
by
HARRY GANTT Publishers Printing Representative
NEW YORK 40, N. Y.

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PREFACE

Since the dawn of civilization, as the written records attest, societies have been concerned over the development of their youth. For the same period of time young people (in our society we call them teen-agers or juveniles) have felt themselves confined by what seems to be a static way of life, and they seek unconventional patterns for proving their power and worth.

Adventuring and exploring can be virtuous, can help in creating rather than in destroying, if young people look about them for new worlds to conquer or for old worlds to improve.

Within the hearts of many people who are now middle aged there still sparkle memories of well directed youthful enthusiasm. This is the story of some of them, as seen through the eyes of one.

The people, incidents and historical background are factual. In preparing this book I was able to contact many of those mentioned; other names were supplied by them or drawn from my own memory and records. I apologize to those who should be mentioned but are omitted. I hope that

no one will be offended by what I say about him or her, and I beg forgiveness in advance for unintended oversights.

About half the material in the book has appeared previously in various magazines, and I am grateful to the editors of the *Canadian Jewish Review, Flying, Canadian Flight, Canadian Zionist* and *Hagesher* for their permission to use the material again.

I am also grateful to those who aided me at one or another stage of the preparation: my father, Rabbi Abraham Burstein; my sister, Miriam Burstein; and the editor of Herzl Press, Doctor Raphael Patai.

Agudas Israel Synagogue
Hazleton, Pa., 1964 - 5724

Samuel M. Burstein

1

MODERN MACCABEES

The life of a rabbi is presumed to be made up of study, theology, preaching, teaching, and pastoral visiting – with a goodly measure of public relations. That is, in outline, my life at present. Many years ago, by taking a four year vacation from rabbinic activity, it was possible for me to see at first hand the two outstanding events in Jewish history over two thousand years: the destruction of Jewish life in Europe and the re-establishment of Israel.

While living the history and geography which most rabbis learn only from books or tourism, I was privileged to witness one of the most striking modern evidences that the spirit of good will and devotion still asserts itself, that there exist even today men and women ready to abandon their birthplaces and the homes of their ancestors to pursue an ideal: the ideal of international authority of rule of law, which alone can lead to peace on earth.

Do you remember the background of Israel's war for survival? By 1947, European displaced persons had reached the end of a desperate one-way road. Assurances of resettlement

were not being carried out by the "civilized" world. Immigration policies of most countries were calculated to restrict the entrance of members of the most needy group, the Jews, the only people anathemized by both Nazi and Communist as the symbol of Western ideals of democracy and individual rights.

Suddenly news came of the establishment of a new nation dedicated to the ingathering of the international shuttlecocks. The U.N., by majority vote, held out the last straw of refuge: a homeland to right the injustice of years – nay, centuries – of international intrigue and domestic persecution.

The conscience of the world, of mankind, had spoken, and its voice was cheered around the globe. But the governments of the world, in following the dictates of power politics, and unmindful of the humane principles at stake, stood by, unassisting, as the new-born nation was viciously attacked by its neighbors. Official protests by the U.N. proved unavailing; the world was to wait another three years before agression aroused armed intervention in Korea, and it was realized that an unprovoked attack even on a small nation must be squelched.

But men of conscience took up the challenge ignored by their governments; men and women of all faiths and nations rallied to defend the authority of the U.N. and the new nation to which it was giving only verbal encouragement. With the November 29, 1947, resolution as their guide, they streamed to Israel. They abandoned careers in Australia, Brazil, South Africa, and England. They cast aside the security and comfort of Canada and the United States. They risked their citizenship, their health, their lives.

An American Indian from Oklahoma, Jesse Slade, mindful of the mistreatment accorded his ancestors, traveled to

the southern desert of Israel to protect the rights of a contemporary underdog.

The son of a Methodist preacher, Gibson, was told: "Son, go fight for the Children of Israel."

A Catholic doctor from France, who had learned the meaning of aggression, and had fought with the Maquis, came to fly a bomber in order to help preserve human rights in the Near East.

Shlomo Alexander, a Brooklyn lad of fifteen, left radio, television, and education to aid the migration of DP's, and was imprisoned with them on Cyprus for almost a year.

Karl Zavatsky, Polish pilot, realizing that human values must be defended against the onslaughts of both materialism and international hypocrisy, left his birthplace and a flourishing lumber business. He came to the homeland of his long forgotten ancestors, the land where they had written the holy volumes despised in the country of his birth, now under Soviet domination.

A Canadian war ace, Buzz Buerling, seeking an outlet for his enthusiasm for justice and decency, died on his way to the frontier battleground. (His Norseman crashed in Rome.)

A Sudanese, knowing full well what discrimination and prejudice had meant for his kin in Africa, fled to Israel where he could carry arms in the eternal battle for equal justice for all races.

I met all these people a few months after the proclamation of the State of Israel, when I arrived in Israel myself. Most of the immigrants to Israel, who doubled the population of the country within three years, came under pressure as refugees from DP camps, from Yemen, Iraq, India, and Shanghai, from North Africa and Egypt. Immigrants of military age were taken directly into the army, which served as a great patriotic educational institution. The lowest ranks

were usually composed of newcomers, and Israelis did not have to read the newspaper to learn which country had most recently confiscated Jewish property or passed repressive legislation against Jews. But enroute to Israel, and while serving as a pilot in its Air Force, I met hundreds of volunteers in the fight for morality in the most inclusive meaning of the word, martyrs in the cause of the United Nations and security for small nations. Each one was proof that those willing to risk their all for the sake of the noblest and best still walk the earth.

2

PREACHER WITH A PILOT'S LICENSE

My own participation in Israel's War of Liberation had its roots in childhood, spent in the confining streets of New York where my father is a rabbi, author and literary critic, and my mother a retired public school teacher. My education at home and school had made me aware – as any religious upbringing should – of the problems of all mankind. Of special concern during my college years (1937-1941) was the plight of the Jews of Germany and the rest of Europe, destined for extermination.

Studies at Columbia, my father's alma mater, gave me a good understanding of the world in general. The courses I took, ranging from calculus to philosophy, astronomy and geology to social psychology, zoology to humanities to molecular physics, still illumine my knowledge and attitudes. Concurrent studies at the Seminary College of Jewish Studies strengthened my Jewish heart and soul, already set along the proper path by parental example and earlier training. I was under the influence of Rabbi Herbert Goldstein, whose young people's Sabbath afternoon service helped many ado-

lescents through the years when religious attitudes are permanently established; I was attending Friday evening Talmud classes in the home of Rabbi Leo Jung; my teachers at Marshalia Hebrew High School – especially Shmuel Zaretsky and Levi Soshuk – and the lifelong friends I acquired there, played their role in shaping my attitudes. At the Seminary College teachers like Hillel Bavli, A. Halkin, H. L. Ginsberg, Ovsay, Rosenzweig, and Chertoff depicted the Jewish situation in the world, and implanted a love of the Jewish people and Zion, including the obligation to work on behalf of our eternal homeland.

While doing undergraduate work, and later while attending the Jewish Theological Seminary (1941-45, again to follow in my father's educational footsteps), I joined Hashomer Hadati, a religious halutz organization, and served as a club leader in west side Manhattan, under Menahem Stern and Pinhas Spielman. Under the impetus of Zionist idealism, I found time in the midst of theological studies to attend an auto mechanics school, to learn carpentry in the shop of my good friend Ed Greenwald, and to spend several summers at the *hakhsharah* training farm near Livingston Manor, run and directed, under the tutelage of the neighboring Gottliebs, by the youthful members of the group dedicated to the principles of Torah and Avodah, religion and work. I had always been interested in mechanical and technical things, perhaps through the inspiration of my maternal grandfather, Jacob Cohn, who, though a merchant in the Bronx most of his life, had once operated machinery, and would often make gadgets for household use.

The influence of Cejwin Camps, where I spent many summers as camper, counselor in training, assistant head counselor, and maintenance supervisor, also added to my Zionist dedication. The camp, begun by the Albert Schoolmans

before I was born – my mother was one of their first counselors – supplied me and hundreds of others with a vision of what kibbutz group life must be like, and afforded me an opportunity to acquire many abilities whose application was to find its fruition in Israel.

As a theological student before and during World War II, I was exempt from the military draft until the completion of my studies. I applied for military chaplaincy before my ordination from the Seminary (summer of 1945), and had already passed enlistment examinations for the Marines when V-J day brought an end to chaplaincy procurement. I kept in touch with the Army, in the hope that later on I might be able to fulfiill my military obligations as a chaplain. More as a courtesy than because of real need, the Army offered me a reserve commission while I was serving as rabbi of Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a replacement for its regular rabbi, Harry Jolt, who was in Japan at the time.

It was in Lincoln that the adventure part of my story had its beginning. As an American boy, I had been interested in flying. Somehow, the spirit of youthful adventure had not yet abandoned me. In the wide open spaces of Nebraska I took advantage of my free time between religious school teaching and pastoral work in the small community to study at the Union Air Service. I considered this training as a kind of *hakhsharah* (preparation).

My pilot training was routinely uneventful. I was already old and wise enough not to be too bold or take unnecessary chances. The only serious trouble I had was during an early solo flight, practicing S-turns across a road. After I had been out for half an hour, another plane approached and flew directly at me, with a message chalked on its side: "Return to field." The day before there had been a series of dis-

astrous tornadoes, and even though the weather was now clear, I thought there might have been some storm warnings. At the field, while I was taxiing the plane to the hanger, it seemed as though everyone was staring at me, waiting for something terrible to happen. Something terrible almost did. If I had been practicing stalls that day, the plane would have come apart in the air. A mechanic had been working on the wing, and had not yet refastened the nut on the bolt which held the wing strut to the fuselage. Another mechanic, not knowing of the repair, had authorized me to take the plane. The smoothness of the air and the casual nature of the maneuvers I was practicing had not yet dislodged the bolt when I was called back. Since then, I have been most careful to examine those bolts whenever I make a line inspection before taking a plane . . . The following Sabbath I recited the "gomel" prayer for deliverance with deep sincerity.

During my solo cross-country flight, required for licensing, I had a minor accident, which my instructor, Norman Meyer, assured me was long overdue. While landing at a different field, I tried to fly along the mile-long taxi strip, rather than remain on the ground. A hard second landing broke the tail wheel. Since then, the worst I have done was to bend a prop against the ground while taxiing in a very high wind. This was during an emergency flight in Israel while we were evacuating wounded personnel from an isolated post. The saving of life warranted the risk of flying under conditions that would normally prevent using a light plane. Perhaps next in danger was a miscalculation in fueling a plane, which almost left me without gasoline while taking my fiancee for a flight over Israel's desert.

3

CHARITABLE CHAPLAINS

My years of training began moving toward their fulfilment overseas in the summer of 1947. Jews made up about two-thirds of the innocent uprooted civilians of the war, and the U.S. Army of German occupation was using Jewish chaplains as liaison between the army and the DP camps under its supervision and protection. Jews who had survived the crematoria, the wandering, and the slave labor found reassurance through this sympathetic contact with an official representative of Jewry within the U.S. Army.

I was interviewed by Major Abraham Hyman (then in the office of the Advisor on Jewish Affairs of the Commanding General of EUCOM) as to my interest in participating personally in rebuilding Jewish life overseas. I was placed on active duty, and immediately flown to the Wetzlar Military Post, where the borders of the British, Russian, and U.S. Zones of occupation came to a point.

The office to which I was attached supervised about thirty hospitals, homes, and "camps"; most of the camps were former German army barracks in which each individual was

allocated ten square yards of floor space for all his needs. Sanitary facilities were public; there was no privacy for families. Twenty of our installations were Jewish, with Latvians, Poles, and Czechs making up the rest. Although basic food and shelter were being supplied out of the German economy, there was still room for the additional assistance provided by the IRO and its successor UNNRA, by the Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the British Jewish Relief Organization, ORT, International YMCA, Red Cross, Quakers, Unitarians, and CARE.

Typical, yet outstanding, of the contribution which chaplains had made was the work of Abraham Klausner, my immediate predecessor in Wetzlar. He had been one of the many war-time chaplains who accompanied U.S. troops into the death camps of Hitler and organized on-the-spot relief activities. Then, and while on special DP duty, he organized schools, secured printing presses for books, and uncovered sources of equipment not supplied through the normal relief channels. He established the "Central Committee of the Remnant of European Jewry." Working on his own, and together with agencies, he arranged for the transportation of large groups enroute to Palestine. On one occasion, he took me to the railroad station in Kassel to see the last few escapees from the ill-fated S.S. Exodus of 1947. They had been forcibly returned to Germany by the British, and were now on their successful, but still illegal, journey to Palestine. Months later, I saw many of their names written on the walls of a villa near Marseilles where I myself spent a month as an illegal immigrant to Israel.

Smuggling of people, especially Jews, from behind the Iron Curtain, was an organized operation. (It cost about $300 to bring a person out of Poland.) While I was in Germany, the escape of Jews from Romania was at its height, directed

by the "Briha." Hundreds of people would arrive at one of our camps in the middle of the night, in organized transports, and by morning would be completely absorbed into the camp population, with quarters and false papers so that no inspector would be the wiser. These people, having lived under Communist domination, formed a strong body of convinced anti-Communists. It is unfortunate that the West was not prepared to trust and welcome them as it did the Hungarians in 1956. Due to the intimate knowledge so many Israelis have acquired about true conditions in Russia and behind the Iron Curtain, the Israeli Communist party is smaller and less effective than in any democracy overseas.

During my tour of duty in Germany, one of my colleagues was discharged from the army for lending his passport to a Briha agent, another was caught leading a group of refugees across the Austrian border.

The greatest hope for the DP's was to leave Germany. Those fortunate enough to be able to purchase forged papers of the type that consuls insist on, could go, in small numbers, to the Americas. A few relocated in Europe. Most of the wanderers were accepted only by the Jewish community in Palestine. In anticipation of eventual settling in Palestine, the camp inmates lived vicariously in that country, with camp politics and organizations patterned after Zionist ideological lines.

From my work with these unfortunates, the innocent backwash of the war and persecution, I came to appreciate the strength of the human spirit and its recuperative powers. Families, homes, citizenship, property, had been lost. It was a rare family that managed to keep itself together through the years of slaughter and wandering – indeed, visitors would be introduced to such a family as to a museum exhibit. The men were not allowed to engage in productive

occupation (to avoid undermining the German labor market), although some men and women worked in factories subsidized by ORT and Joint. The entire wealth of a family might be a camera or watch, bought on the black market and easily transportable into whatever country might offer refuge. The years of repression, of being able to survive only by living outside the "law and order" of the Nazis or Communists, or the restrictive rules of military occupation, could be counteracted by a few months of proper living in such countries as Israel.

There was something in the background of the Jewish DP's that made them better behaved than the other groups, despite lack of education for over a decade. Drunkenness was rarer than in the average French or German city. The crime rate for personal violence was lower than in England (although Jews were always being arrested for illegal sales of food and clothing). Standards of cleanliness, however, due to the background of poverty, were lower than those in the Latvian camps, which held many Nazi sympathizers.

Despite the lack of education and culture, there was considerable respect for Judaism and its heritage. I once participated in a secret trial, trying to conceal intra-camp troubles from the Army authorities. The chief judge was the camp rabbi, Poses, who later settled in Jaffa, and there was a Sefer Torah (Pentateuch Scroll) on the bench. I was a bit fearful lest some of the irreligious Jews be tempted to mock the procedure. I was reassured by one of the DP's, chairman of the local Hashomer Hatzair (an irreligious organization), that no Jew would dare to treat the Torah with disrespect.

On a few occasions I intervened in political disputes within the camps, working out compromises among the parties vying for office. I once answered an emergency appeal from

a member of a minority party who had been kept from leaving camp for several weeks because he refused to contribute to a partisan collection sponsored by the camp administration. One time an alert from a DP brought me into the Russian Zone to halt the desecration of a Jewish cemetery by telephone linesmen; the cemetery had been a battlefield during the war, some of the stones having been dug up for barricades and the graves used for foxholes.

As the camps became fewer and fewer, as refugees from behind the Iron Curtain replaced the original concentration camps survivors, and in their turn went on to Israel, the need for special chaplains was no longer felt. While flying in the Israel Air Force I heard that the "DP Chaplains" had been discontinued about the middle of 1949.

4

AND LET THESE NOT BE FORGOTTEN

The rebuilding of Jewish life in Europe for the small percentage which wished to remain there (more than half the present Jewish population of Germany and France is composed of refugees from eastern Europe), the saving of lives and spirits, and the preparation for new life in other countries, depended on the devoted labors of many workers in the relief organizations. Jewish soldiers in the United States and British Armies did their bit, visited the DP camps, brought gifts to the children, and tried to treat them as more than numbers on a refugee roster. The GI's around Frankfort, for example, where Steve Katz served as a chaplain's assistant for many years, even when there was no chaplain, aided in the building of a synagogue in Duisburg.

There were professionals from the United States, working for the "Joint" and other relief organizations. Rabbi Mayer Abramowitz, a classmate of mine at the Seminary, served as a DP chaplain and then as director of the JDC in Italy, through which country many of the refugees traveled on their way to Israel. Rabbi Morris Fishman also worked for the

"Joint." Another graduate of the Seminary College of Jewish Studies, Betty Adler, directed a home for children without families near Hamburg, together with Reuma Schwartz of Israel (sister-in-law of General Moshe Dayan). Betty's brother, Leon, also a rabbi, served for a while as a DP chaplain, after completing his tour of duty in the Far East. Betty went on to settle permanently in Israel; our paths ran parallel on three continents for a dozen years.

The most dedicated workers were the Palestinians serving under the Jewish Agency, some openly and some underground. They were recruiting future citizens of their own country, and knew better than anyone else what was at stake not only for the individuals but for Israel and Jewish history.

A goodly number of Agency *shlihim* (emissaries) were active in underground migration, living and identifying with the displaced persons in order to organize escape and transportation. The officially recognized and uniformed emissaries aided in this work, also in the legal migration, and in organizing the camps for education and cultural life. They established schools and organized leisure time activities for young and old, to build up morale, to develop character and good citizenship, and to encourage emigration to Israel. Dr. Clara Perlberger, a well known Tel Aviv psychologist, was in general charge of the Jewish Agency personnel in the Kassel area. Mordecai Lauber was in charge of religious education in the area, and also served as advisor to the Bnei Akiva movement in the U.S. Zone (he was a member of the executive in Israel). He is still working for the Youth and Hehalutz Department of the Jewish Agency, in charge of contacts with international youth organizations, and lectures at Bar Ilan University, having earned his Ph.D. His family changed its name to Eliav, and his brother has had

a distinguished career in the Americas and Europe in the Israel foreign service.

Among others who proudly wore the Jewish Agency uniform were: Nehama Piltz (whose father was head of a Mizrachi yeshiva outside Petah Tikva); Rachel Maklev (organizer of the religious school in one of the largest camps near Kassel); Yashke Vitkin (member of the Mapan kibbutz, Ein Hashofet); Miriam Dubinsky-Ciszik (whose parents came to Israel with Ben Gurion, and lived next door to him in Tel Aviv; her brother died in defense of Hulda in 1929); Mathilde Levi (who married Rabbi Poses); Zilla Rosen (member of Kibbutz Sarid, in charge of social work around Kassel); Jehoshua Barukki (member of Tirat Zvi and organizer of aliya (immigration) around Kassel).

The head of the Joint Distribution Committee in my area had also come from Palestine. Michael Engelhard had fled Germany as a child. After the war he returned to work in Kassel for the JDC and to try to locate members of his family. He did not find any survivors, but did gain a wife, Sophie Gollenziner. She had fled Poland as a child, spending most of her life in England. After the war she joined the British Jewish Relief Agency, so that she might help others to life as she had once been helped. Mike, a skilled mechanic, is now one of the directors of El Al at Lydda.

Americans, as well, worked for a while in Germany and then proceeded to Israel. Harold Seligman, after completing a job as a civilian economist, went on to become one of the two vice-presidents of the Palestine Economic Corporation.

Others traveled through Germany on their way. It was pleasantly surprising to encounter old friends at unexpected times and places. The only time that I went for a soda in the U.S. snack bar opposite the railroad station in Frankfort, I met Moshe and Sylvia Ettenberg. They were on their

way to Israel (he is an electronics engineer, worked on radar during hositilities, and has more recently spent time teaching at the Technion; Sylvia has been director of most of the activities under the wing of the Teachers' Institute at the Seminary). They had come to Frankfort to meet her sister Helen and husband, on their way to Berlin to work for the U.S. Army of Occupation.

Two newspaper correspondents out of Israel, the Shapiros from Nahalal, traveled through our sector to write on Jewish life in Germany for Israeli and American Yiddish papers. They had originally lived in Cleveland, Ohio, before settling in Palestine shortly after the First World War. They had known my grandfather, a rabbi, physician, and renowned Talmudist, in Cleveland. The world is indeed a small place: wherever I went I found old friends or new ones engaged in the same work, motivated by the same ideals, devoted to their people and trying to restore our Jewish body politic to strength and viability after the destruction.

5

HOW TO WORK YOUR PASSAGE TO ISRAEL

When the UN authorized creation of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, the rest to be organized as a self-governing Arab state, the Jewish refugees were overjoyed. It would now be possible for them to emigrate from the camps legally, and to re-establish their lives in Israel. In May, 1948, when England left Palestine without stabilizing the situation, members of the Arab League proclaimed their opposition to the UN resolution, and invaded Palestine. I felt that I could best serve the homeless wanderers – one branch of my people – by helping to safeguard their prospective home. I applied for my discharge from the Army. On my terminal leave I was invited by the Jewish Welfare Board to conduct High Holiday services at their chapel in Frankfort. The evening after the holiday I took my last trip as an American for years to come, traveling to Munich. There I officially disappeared, and a David Szupack appeared, with my face and birthdate, but with nothing else in common with my background.

For a month I lived as a DP under an assumed name; for a week I traveled over the Mediterranean under another

name. During this trip I had to live wherever the Jewish Agency provided accommodations, carrying all my earthly possession in four valises. It would have been illegal for me to travel to Israel at that time, with the possibility of ending up in the armed forces, using a U.S. passport – the UN had placed an embargo against the entrance of all men of military age into Israel. United States passports, in keeping with that action, contained a paragraph against joining foreign armies. My subterfuge required using code references whenever I wrote home. I had divided my clothing into two batches: those with name tapes and American labels ready for instant jettisoning, if necessary, and the other with nameless clothing and equipment. I had to be ready to destroy any proof of my American background and to use false names and false emigrant identification papers.

After this change in appearance and identity, I was assigned to a transport, which was controlled by a six-and-a-half-foot Israeli, Barzilai. The transport consisted of 400 persons traveling to Marseilles by rail. I was able to travel in comparative luxury, having been assigned a compartment with only two others, Jewish Agency workers returning home. A European railroad compartment consists of two hard wooden benches, about six feet long, on opposite sides of a small room and with less than two feet between. I entertained my companions royally, boiling tea and coffee or cooking army rations or DP supplies on my small chemical stove, and using up my stock of candles so we could play chess on my pocket set most of the night. Then I piled my four valises on the floor, and managed to sleep quite comfortably, while my companions slept on the benches.

The halts were especially interesting. We stopped at Strasbourg for six hours to clear customs and to gain permission from the union to continue our voyage during a railroad

strike. As soon as announcement of the delay was made, the DP's, traveling six to the compartment, rushed from the train. Some set up small stoves to cook a warm meal. Others washed clothes, and hung them in the fresh air. Some foraged for firewood. Many tried to bathe under the water faucets in the station.

In Marseilles we were met by trucks, and taken in smaller groups to hostels around the city. I was taken to a small farmhouse about half a mile past the end of the streetcar line in the suburb Caillols. Although some of the transient camps did not expect us till the next day, the supervisors immediately distributed cots, which my fellow travelers, experienced DP's, seized and arranged in the rooms. Lacking such training, I waited for instructions where I was to be quartered; one of my companions advised me to reserve floor space before being left in the cold.

The more experienced and faster acting chose smaller rooms, sharing them with friends. The room I finally settled in was about twenty by fifteen feet containing twelve U.S. Army cots; it held two families (two children each), a widow and young daughter, an old man and myself. The sleeping habits of these people, who had survived years of Soviet labor camps and forced migration, were in marked contrast to ours. The choicest locations were away from the windows, which were kept closed at all times, even blocked with luggage. The one electric lamp burned all night, for the convenience of the children.

The fifty of us at Camp Caillols A had the use of two single outhouses and one cold water shower, but this was comparatively luxurious. Our camps were actually villas and farm houses, rented by the Jewish Agency. At a nearby camp, there was one room with sixty beds, so closely packed that it was impossible to move without stepping on a cot.

After the second night, I decided I would be more comfortable and less embarrassed if I slept in the courtyard. Although cold and damp during rainstorms (my cot would fill with water, which seeped through my sleeping bag), I felt that this would allow me to retain some remnant of Anglo-Saxon prudery. One of the group asked me to join him and his friend's family in a smaller room, to enjoy the "warmth and coziness of a room without windows." I officially moved in with them, but still slept out of doors. I think the real reason for the invitation was to quiet criticism that the room was too spacious for only eight.

6

FROM SUPERVISOR TO INMATE

During my three weeks' stay at the transient camp an escaped gunman came to visit me. Several months earlier he had been interrogated by my former army unit for having brandished a gun to defend a Jewish DP camp against a raid by German civilians. Under Military Occupation law, the German police who arrested him had to turn him over to Army authorities for trial, and I had served as his interpreter. Members of a German soccer team, led by a man who boasted of his *Ritterkreutz* (a Nazi military medal), had stoned and attacked the Hofgeismar DP camp. Some of the DP's raced after them in a truck, and a small riot ensued. Strangely enough, no Germans had been arrested for the violence. As to the gun in question, it was completely unserviceable.

While traveling under M.P. guard from our office to jail, the Jew had jumped off the train, and eventually turned up in a transit camp in France, enroute to Israel. He was as surprised to learn of my changed status as were the other transients in Camp Caillols A. After we had settled down in Mar-

seilles, they recognized me as the army chaplain who had been their supervisor a few weeks before.

A good deal of our time in the transient camp was spent in discussion about religion, life in America, and prospects in Israel. There was nothing for the men to do, since the women prepared food for all. The men would visit Marseilles or other camps in the area, or just talk.

Our camp was not one of the kosher ones (two out of twenty in the Marseilles area were supervised and maintained by the Mizrachi), and so I had some difficulty with the food. There were two observant families in our camp, and they shared the stove with the women assigned in rotation to cook for everyone else. When the mass cooking was over, I would put my small pot on the stove, and boil beans, potatoes, tomatoes, and onions into a stew. For variety, I would sometimes roast the beans or buy chestnuts in town and steam them. I offered some to my comrades, but they begged off, being reminded of the poisonous chestnuts of Poland.

Before leaving the States, I had studied *shechitah* (ritual slaughtering) to be ready for any eventuality. The permanent director of the camp (an employee of the J. D. C.) once brought in a live chicken, which I slaughtered for him. He gave me a leg as my fee, and so I was able to enjoy a meat meal for once.

After a few days, I heard of a kosher restaurant in the center of town, and I dined there several times. While thus luxuriating, I welcomed the opportunity to feel myself an American for a few hours. I met a group of American lads whose ship, a converted liberty boat, was lying over in Marseilles for a few days enroute to Israel. They were members of the Hashomer Hadati *hakhsharah* group to which I had belonged, and they brought me up to date on many of our

friends, quite a number of whom were already in Israel. I also met an American chaplain, Herman Dicker, whom I had known in Germany; we encountered each other quite by accident, and he treated me to a good meal and a warm shower at his hotel.

During this trip, as well as throughout my life, I found my Boy Scout training invaluable. I had been scout and scoutmaster in Manhattan, and I had learned not only the skills of scouting but the attitudes as well. The specific skills are always useful. In the transient camp, as well as during most of my travels, I would do my own cooking on a small chemical stove. The use of such stoves is quite common in Europe. Travelers on trains warm their meals and coffee in their own compartments over stoves which use dry alcohol tablets — Esbit or Heatabs. I usually washed my own clothing, did my own darning and sewing. I carried a light hose with which I could siphon a shower from any pail of water. Far more valuable than the particular abilities, however, was the mental and emotional preparation to get along without the trappings of our contemporary life of ease, comfort, and push buttons. No matter where I was, no matter where I expected to end up, no matter what the conditions, I felt that I could manage to keep going despite deprivation, disability, lack of facilities or amenities. The Scout program, properly implemented, can develop the courage, confidence, and self-reliance that will enable one to face any contingency.

From the DP's I acquired a habit which remains with me to this day: always to travel with some food. They had learned that meals were not always available immediately on arrival at a new reception center, and that sources of supply were not always reliable.

7

ARK-ING ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN

While in the transient camps, in October 1948, we were medically examined by the OSE and fed by the JDC. Late one Saturday night, a representative of the Jewish Agency (recognized by the French government as responsible for the migration) gathered us in the dining hall. We were all given new names, to fit a collective visa. My second alias in a month was Sawdi Litman, and I wrote it carefully on all my luggage. The next day, groups from all over the area were brought by truck to a pier where stood the S.S. Negba, ready for its first voyage under the Israel flag. They were unorganized civilians, gathered from over thirty camps within a radius of fifty miles. After they boarded the ship, they were given bunk assignments, and in a few hours their baggage was stowed. There were no conflicts in the allocation of space; there were no empty bunks nor extra passengers. Families were separated into male and female barracks, with hammocks or bunks running into the hundreds. Pregnant women and mothers with infants were assigned to second class cabins, usually with twelve bunks.

This maiden voyage of the Negba was not actually its first trip. Under different names, it had served on a ferry run in the States, then under the Dutch flag. But we were the first to find shelter under the Israel flag on its mast, and to rejoice in its new Hebrew name. We were the first to be thrilled by the blue bands and star of David on the funnels, on its maiden trip from Marseilles to Haifa, carrying immigrants to Israel despite the UN embargo and the Arab blockade.

Several hundred of the passengers, myself included, were traveling "oleh style," the Israel version of steerage. My room, at the water level, contained 87 built-in steel cots, three high. Each cot was two feet wide and six long, and was equipped with a thin mattress, two sheets, and a blanket. The aisle was less than two feet wide.

The less fortunate slept in hammocks, even lower in the hold. These were mostly North Africans, who did not seem to mind the discomfort. Paying passengers were the privileged class, though not according to usual standards. Because of the crowding, the first class accommodations, originally built for two, held six. These had showers and private toilets, while we had no bathing facilities and used public toilets.

About half of the olim, whose passage was paid by the Jewish Agency, were DP's from Germany; the other half were Moroccans who had traveled to Marseilles on French passports and thence to Israel. It was difficult to converse with them; few of them spoke Hebrew, their main languages being Arabic and a corrupt French. All the passengers, however, mingled freely. Our common goal and sharing the primitive conditions of the boat drew us together. The captain's deck was technically reserved for the paying passengers. However, in an assertion of equalitarianism and democracy, the

universal trait of all inheriting the Old Testament ethic, neither the signs nor the guards kept the olim from the bridge.

There were about a dozen English-speaking passengers, some first class, others olim like myself, and two crew members. It was on the ship that I was first called an Anglo-Saxon, an honor I had to travel to Israel to achieve. (American Jews, because they speak Yiddish, are also called "Germans" by many of the Levantine Jews. It is remarkable how one's identity can change with geography!)

One of the English girls, Sylvia, was on her way to Israel to trace her boy friend who had joined the Israel Forces several months previously. One of the ship's crew, a representative of a left-wing settlement, persuaded her to join his group, although she had no understanding of the life in a collective kibbutz, nor indeed did she have any knowledge of anything Jewish. Several months later I heard that she had found her Zionist soldier, married him, and returned to England.

There were two young people from India, and a young American dentist (Matt Weiner) and his wife, on their way to a kibbutz in Galilee; his office is now in Jerusalem. One of the American crew members had only vague memories of his childhood, and was mentally dulled; he had been brutally beaten by the British and imprisoned on Cyprus during the days of unauthorized immigration.

We English speakers spent our time together, and joined with an English tourist and a native of Haifa. They invited us into their room for an occasional shower, and would pass us food from their dining room to vary our diet. The ship's bar was open to all for several hours a day. Fruit drinks were always available to the olim. Those who could pay in "hard"

currency could purchase liquor, chocolate, cigarettes, and other luxuries. Our route led close to Cyprus, to avoid Egyptian planes. As we passed the island we learned from the radio operator of the re-election of President Truman.

We were deprived of the soul-stirring sight of the Haifa lights at night, the city being blacked out. The ship landed on the Sabbath, which caused some concern to the religious families on board. They wished to remain until Sunday, but were warned by the police that they might not be able to enter the immigrant transient camps if they waited. This threat prompted them to debark on the Sabbath.

A receptionist for immigrants, sent by Hakibbutz Hadati, had boarded the boat to recruit members for his kibbutz. So serious was the labor shortage in the settlements that the government exempted from the military draft those immigrants who registered for them. I stayed on board, despite threats of a police captain that I would be returned to Marseilles unless I violated the Sabbath.

I stayed with all my earthly possessions (four valises) below me in the hold. I had no definite plans except to live in Israel, no concern even over the present (the ship's crew invited me to share their meals). It was a true Sabbath, a day when time and place blend into the eternal, when human personality, free of machines and temporal worries, can rediscover itself.

The next day, Eliyahu Kanofsky spotted me sitting on the pier, and arranged for my registration as an immigrant.

There were no bands playing when we arrived, but while docking most of us had sung Hatikvah. For the entire trip, one of the Jewish Agency emissaries who had completed his assignment as an underground camp inmate had been singing the latest song, about the Finjan; I had sung, from time

to time, a melody and words that had been haunting me since the age of ten. That year I was attending Etz Hayim Yeshiva in Boro Park, Brooklyn. One of our classmates was leaving for Palestine, and our teacher had arranged a party for him. At the party we went around the room, singing for each member of the class, "He is traveling to Eretz Yisrael." I was able to sing the song, in its original Hebrew, and with heartfelt truth, in November, 1948.

8

ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND

The immigration office registered me as a member of the American kibbutz in formation at Ein Hanetsiv, a Mizrachi colony in the Beth Shean valley near the Jordan River. Elia (using a Hebraized last name, Kanai) suggested that I hitchhike to the kibbutz to meet old friends, and arrange for my formal acceptance before going on the customary two weeks of *hofesh* (leave) during which time new haverim could travel about the country and orient themselves ere settling down to work.

Immigrant registration entitled one to *tikun rishon* (immediate settling allowance) of 24 Israel pounds, a cot, and a blanket. I accepted the money but had no immediate use for the furniture. Years later, when I applied for permission to return to the States, I had to return the money to the Jewish National Fund. I had registered under my DP name, David Szupack, and used it a few weeks later in the national registration. It took months (due to changes of address) before I was able to locate my personal identity booklet, which was needed for food rationing. Mr. Lemberg, in

the Tel Aviv registration office, went beyond the strict courtesies of his office to trace it for me. Since I was then using my newly adopted *nom de guerre,* Shmuel Barav, we had some difficulty in getting all papers all together. My name was finally officially changed to Barav.

Many immigrants to Israel, especially those in government service, changed their *galut* (diaspora) names to Hebrew, often biblical ones. The very capable adjutant at one of my posts was called Yannai — a name dating back to the Maccabees. Another officer changed his name to Baruch ben Neriah, scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. Herbert Wechsler, (who had been adopted together with his brother Joe by Rabbi Louis Fineberg of Cincinnati after they fled Hitler), changed his name to Eytan. Pilot Lachovsky changed his to Lahav. Placzek is now known as Alon. As the Israeli joke had it, in addition to a "Who's Who in Israel" there was a great need for a "Who Was Who."

My first night in Haifa was spent at a cheap hotel. Even in the first class hotels one did not rent a room, but a bed in a crowded room or corridor. The next morning, I carried my luggage to one of the "hitching posts" on the eastern edge of the city, on the road to my kibbutz. Most traveling during the war days was by hitch-hiking, there being few private cars, not enough bus space, and no operating railroads. Trucks would slow down when hailed by groups of people, and everyone would try to clamber aboard the body. (In the United States, on the other hand, no hitcher will stand near another — few drivers will pick up even two strangers.) The army later built barriers and destination signs at certain spots on the main roads for queues of hitchers.

En route to Beth Shean, I stopped at Ein Harod. It was meal time, and in the mess hall, all unexpected, I ran into

Rachel Wiener, a former fellow student at the Seminary College, who had settled in Israel.

Several more "tremps" (from the English "tramping") took me to Beth Shean, although false information in that city led me to a kibbutz, Avuka, on the wrong road. I arrived there with two other hikers about dusk, and we were invited to stay for supper, which consisted of cucumbers, tomatoes *lebeniya* (similar to yoghurt and tasting like sour cream), and plenty of bread and sugarless tea. After the meal, I asked for directions to Ein Hanetsiv. It was about one mile to the west. Two miles to the east was Jordan; about six miles to the west the Iraqi army maintained a stronghold; five miles to the south were the Arab Legionnaires. This peninsula of Jewish settlement was constantly under bombardment, with the enemy sending regular patrols of spies, or raiding parties, or trying its hand at thievery.

After walking for about ten minutes in the fine sand of recently drained swamps and seeing the tractors set out for their nightly plowing (to use machines more efficiently, plowing was a 24-hour activity). I thought it best to return to Avuka. The uncertainty of the road, the noise of nearby shooting, and the danger of mines, made me feel a bit unready for the cross-country hike. The next day, I crossed the narrow countryside from Avuka and arrived at my own kibbutz.

After a few days of rest and reunion with old friends from the States, I set out for Tel Aviv, with Zvi Reich's admonition to return quickly – we had both been truck drivers, auto mechanics, and carpenters on *hakhsharah,* and he could use another pair of skilled hands at this essential work. My first ride was in a truck from Tirat Zvi, which was carrying live fish in aerated tanks to the market in Haifa. House-

wives would keep them alive in tubs until needed – few homes had refrigerators.

In Haifa I took a bus (one of the passengers was carrying two live chickens and another was transporting a small goat) to the "hitching post" on the Tel Aviv road. The buses carrying new immigrants from the pier on their way to the reception centers drove by this very corner. As the hitchers shouted to the drivers for rides, the immigrants thought the shouts were welcomes, and responded in kind. Although the groups misunderstood each other, the new arrivals were certainly inspired by this apparent greeting and were made to feel at home.

With a U.S. army cargo pack strung over my shoulder, containing enough clothing to last (with regular washings) indefinitely, I traveled through the country toward Tel Aviv. Near the hotel where I slept that night a building was under construction. By working a day at *binyan* (construction) before I entered the Air Force, I could earn enough for hotel and meals for two days. In traditional Jewish hospitality, friends – and even strangers – invited me to stay with them later on.

Since I was incognito (to avoid detection by American authorities) my parents could not remind me of a great-aunt who had been living in Jerusalem since the early twenties. Aunt Kate Biskind, formerly of Cleveland, Ohio, second daughter of Rabbi Judah Berman, my great-grandfather, had gone to Palestine with her husband, one of the first Hadassah doctors, after the first World War. He died soon after arrival, leaving her with three sons. She had remained in Palestine, even though her sons returned as adults to the States. She lived in the Rehavia section all the while, through days of peace and war, plenty and starvation, and enjoyed the company of her many friends from English speaking coun-

tries. She is now buried in the family plot of her good friend Dov Joseph, with my grandmother, Pauline, a few steps away. From the cemetery at Sanhedria, one can look over Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives, now in Jordanian hands, where my grandfather, Dr. Simon P. Burstein, was buried in 1933. I was able to spend considerable time with Aunt Kate a year after my arrival in Israel, and she lived to see my fiancee. Later on I learned of some relatives of my mother, the Lev Bernsteins, living in Tel Aviv. For at least a year, however, I was unaware of any family connections in Israel.

As time went on I had many unexpected reunions with friends from the states, fellow graduates of the various schools of the Seminary, *haverim* from Hashomer Hadati, or former campers at Cejwin. Some were planning to settle, others were tourists or short term visitors, some were continuing studies at the Hebrew University. My adaptation to Israeli life was aided by the small Young Israel synagogue in Tel Aviv, around which many Americans gathered. During the ensuing few years, one friend was to lead to another, in an ever widening circle of contacts with both Israelis and visitors.

During my first month, however, I had to rely on kibbutz people and my most recent contacts, those made in Europe. Mordecai Eliav, who had just returned to his office at the Jewish National Fund, gave me much valuable advice about the country. He planned a route for my first tour of the country which took me to Kfar Haroeh for one weekend. At this boarding school yeshiva the lads studied Talmud out loud, in the eastern European style. After studies, I discovered them playing a sort of cowboy and Indian game called "Henzup." It took me a few minutes to realize that they were imitating the "hands up" of the British police who had but months before been in control of the country. A few yards from the

yeshiva was the town Kfar Haroeh, where I sat in on a high school class in general science. The town, founded by religious German Jews, could boast of having a high school as up to date as any in the United States. I was especially interested in the school since I had trained for high school science teaching, and was keeping this ability in reserve for possible use either in the kibbutz or in private life. Still, in the light of the military emergency of the time, I felt that my flying ability might be most useful for the country.

I left Kfar Haroeh to make my way to Jerusalem, over the newly opened Road of Courage, for the second week of my leave from kibbutz.

9

IN GOOD COMPANY

I had heard that an old schoolmate of mine was living in Jerusalem. I did not know his exact whereabouts, other than that he was doing welfare work in the army. By an almost miraculous coincidence, the first soldier I questioned knew him personally, and directed me to his house.

When hostilities had broken out, Rabbi Moshe B. Sachs and his pregnant wife, as American citizens, were afforded an opportunity to leave. They chose to remain in the besieged city. He told me of the hardships endured by the community. Food had to be brought into the city on back-packs, through enemy lines, for all roads had been captured. Warehouse floors were swept for every last grain of wheat. Soup was cooked from grass and weeds. Water, distributed by trucks, was strictly rationed. For days on end no water was available, not even for drinking. In a serious moment he confessed: "It has been the greatest privilege of my life to participate in my small way in the defense of Jerusalem. For years I've known the plight of our people in the lands of the diaspora and its desperate need of a state. I was fortunate to have been in Jerusalem just at the right time, in Novem-

ber 1947, and to be in just the right condition to be able to do my duty – no children to hold me back, in good health, with my formal education completed. I arrived in Israel well trained – perhaps not in using a gun, but I knew Hebrew; I knew the significance of Zionism, thanks to my membership in Habonim back in the States. My training as a rabbi and my experiences as an army chaplain had taught me a great deal about how to help people in times of trouble. I had learned from my youth movement education in Habonim that halutziut means to put yourself at the service of your people when the cause is just and the need great. To stay was only to do what came naturally to one with my background. To go home would have denied the education of a lifetime. Frances felt the same way."

While I was staying with the Sachs's they took me to visit Betty Schoffman Levine, formerly a student at the Seminary College, who had just given birth to her first child. A few days later, while I was walking down Allenby Street in Tel Aviv, Rabbi Mordecai Chertoff called to me from a passing bus. He was a writer on *Bamahaneh*, the army magazine. Later on I met Rabbi Av Goldberg, another Seminary graduate, who has settled in Israel.

Some months later I met the son of the Kansas preacher and we started reminiscing about the States. We compared the reasons for our being in Israel. He told me:

"My father believes literally in the truth of God's word, in His promise that the Children of Israel shall inherit the land of Canaan. The League of Nations, and later the United Nations, validated that claim through international agreements. Some countries were opposed to the idea, but a majority vote of the nations established Israel. My father told me to come here and make sure that the plan of God was not thwarted."

Many other Americans who were studying or visiting in Israel joined the battle. Typical of them was a sister of my future wife. David and Claire Solomon had come to study at the Hebrew University and stayed to fight and work. Others who were outside the country, the Mahal (foreign volunteers), arranged to go to Israel after the outbreak of hostilities. They came willingly, not as refugees from oppression. Although there was a government office to care for them, many arrived (as did I) privately, so that the official records were not too accurate; those already in the country were not always listed as Mahal. Estimates of the number of Mahalnicks range from 400 to 5000.

The Mahal volunteers were motivated by more than sympathy for Israel. We felt that we were creating an informal United Nations army, to aid the implementation of a UN resolution which was being subverted by a group of intransigeant nations. The partition resolution of November 29, 1947, had called for establishment of two independent states in what had formerly been Palestine, to be bound by a customs unions. The bulk of the territory earmarked for the independent Arab state was annexed by Transjordan, part occupied by Egypt as the Gaza strip; and about 1,400 square miles fell to Israel by the fortunes of war. I met one American who was communicating with a group of Arabs in Hebrew, and was prepared to volunteer his services as a navigator to aid in the establishment of the independent Arab state, so internationally minded was he.

While the term Mahal usually referred to people in the armed forces, there were hundreds in other capacities: school teachers, skilled laborers, scientists, nurses, medical personnel, unskilled laborers. These were in the nature of an informal, spontaneous, Peace Corps, or along the lines of the *Shnat Sherut* sponsored by the Zionist Organization of Great

Britain and the Jewish Agency. Two American dentists, for example, Harold Levine of Brooklyn and Lou Goldblatt of Cleveland, worked a mobile clinic to provide dental care for the burgeoning population and the military in the Negev and Galil. They had to learn how to use foot-powered drills. In Jerusalem was Kurt Lewin-Epstein, whose family includes the well-known Israeli printer. He was born in the United States and had served in the Marines in the Pacific. He had moved to Israel before establishment of the State.

Of my various skills, I felt that my flying ability would be most useful at the time. I approached various offices in the Air Force to see whether I could join as a pilot. The military situation was so fluid that one week they were not interested in me; a few days later, although I had only a private pilot's license and 60 hours flight experience, I was welcomed and recruited. The Force had recently decided not to enlist any more pilots qualifying only on a "Primus," the Israeli nickname for any light aircraft, such as British Austers or American Pipers of the basic Taylorcraft model. They were so named after the "putt-putt" sound of their engines, reminiscent of the kerosene pressure stoves, patented by Primus, the main type of cooking instrument in Israel and the British colonies. It was felt that these light planes were no longer needed now that heavier aircraft had found their way to the country.

But the Primus-es soon came into their own again, the very week that I was introduced to Ralph Muster (later killed in a crash in Lake Tiberias) and Jerry Renov (the only pilot besides myself with a traditional Jewish and Zionist background). The light two-seaters were suddenly assigned to low level bombing over the Faluja pocket (an Egyptian island of resistance commanded by Major Gamal A. Nasser), while the heavier craft, with accurate sights, bombed from

the heights. After a flight test by Jerry Renov, I became a pilot in the Israel Air Force.

Until 1954, United States citizens could serve in foreign armies without losing citizenship as long as they did not take an oath of allegiance to the other country. The Israel forces had a special oath for the foreign volunteers: "To follow orders of superior officers and not to reveal military secrets." The recruiting officer did not tell me of this special oath, but the man ahead of me on the line warned me; through the grace of Air Force number 115351 it was possible for me, number 115352, to preserve my American citizenship.

10

LOOKING DOWN ON ISRAEL

My first post was at Ekron, or Akir, sometimes called Tel Nof. This had been one of the largest British air bases, and the remains of the planes wrecked and abandoned by the British when they left the country could be seen from what was then the main road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. At the base were stationed bombers, transports, fighters, and the Light Plane Squadron 100. The latter had been formed by the Hagana, and had three wings: Galil, Negev, and Central. Much of the Hagana spirit still prevailed among the pilots, most of whom had had their training and experience in Israel. Most of the foreign pilots were more highly skilled, and flew the heavier craft. It was easy for me to get along with the Israeli pilots; I was one of the few "Mahalnicks" who could speak fluent Hebrew and who felt at one with the "natives" – an insulting term when used by the British, but which we sometimes used in comradely affection.

Things were rather quiet at Ekron, except for one or two bombing attacks in which no one was hurt, and occasional excitement when a bomber would return with a bomb "hung-

up" and it was feared that the landing might jar it loose. I asked for a transfer to the Negev wing, then in Beersheba. This wing had established its reputation by maintaining wartime communications with southern colonies through bases at Ruhama and Revivim. There were two Americans at the Beersheba base, the flight controller and Jack Sklover (now an attorney in Rochester, N.Y.), who was in charge of radio communications. Yonatan Moller was the commanding officer, and when he was discharged a few months later, I was made commander of the base, while many of the pilots with permanent commissions went to larger bases for advanced training.

I arrived in Beersheba a few weeks after the city had been captured and the Arab inhabitants had fled. There were still a few prisoners of war in the mosque, and quite a bit of Egyptian military equipment, spoiled food, and propaganda material, lying around the town. This was about the end of "Operation Ten Plagues," and I did behind-the-lines support flying during the subsequent military action which took over the rest of the Negev, all the way to Elath ("Operation Uvda"). This flying involved reconnaissance of troop displacement and equipment over our own and enemy territory; surveying terrain in advance of engineers and road builders; communications; transportation of VIP's. On a few flights, in the absence of any special equipment, I took photographs with my own camera and then turned the film over to the army intelligence people.

Before being allowed to fly over the desert, I had to undergo several familiarization flights to learn the topography of the area. A few months after my assignment to Beersheba, when I reported for a routine semi-annual psychotechnic examination, the after-effects of these flights gave concern to the Air Force psychiatrist.

In the middle of his interview, the psychiatrist raised his eyes and looked at me sharply. It was not the look of the captor, but of the hunter as he sights a significant quarry. Expectantly – almost hopefully – he fixed me with his gaze, while preparing to write notes on his report.

"Would you say you saw the shapes of animals or people, or felt they were reaching out to grab you?"

It required ten minutes of fast talking to convince him that I was not suffering from hallucinations, but that I had been impressed aesthetically by one of the most striking geological visions on this earth.

After the formal interview, as the South African doctor learned of my American rabbinical background and my activities in Germany, we chatted a bit about some of the religious problems in faraway America.

The Negev terrain reminds one, from the air, of pictures of the moon's surface. Its arid topography is rugged and jagged. There are vast peneplanes, suddenly dropping off into 1,000 foot precipices, miles long. There are bowl shaped depressions, escarpments, and grotesque hills. Lying in my bed at night, dozing off, I would see these extraordinary shapes not as nightmares but as they were – terrifying and striking in their baldness and angularity. In time I grew to love and recognize each mesa, wadi, canyon, and arroyo. I joined that group of a few dozen men who, from their vantage points in the sky, could tell from the shape of one hill exactly where they were in Israel's southern 5,000 square miles.

Tourists are told that the Negev starts at Gedera. Yet the geographic center of Israel is far to the south of that city, somewhere near Mishmar Hanegev. "Negev" refers to the southern part of the country according to one's location. To Haifaites, the Negev starts at Tel Aviv; to Tel Avivians, it

starts at Gedera; to some it starts at Beersheba. The literal meaning of "negev" is "dry" or "wrung out" land. Nonetheless, from Tel Aviv to Wadi Raman and the look-out of Mitzpa Ramon, the land is more or less cultivable, except for a few sandy areas between Beersheba and Revivim, where Hagar and Ishmael once wandered. Although arid, it can produce grain. Israel's bedouins wander about through their ancestral territories, moving from well to well, plowing with camels. Their threshing floors form golden circles on the brownish soil. According to the frequency of threshing, they seem to have three or four harvests a year, each of a different crop. (In biblical times, barley was harvested between Passover and Pentecost, the period of Counting the Omer; other grains were raised on the same plot during the latter part of the year.) From the air, bedouin tents resemble insects: their proportions are about the same, and they are usually divided into three sections. Flying low, one could examine the manner of bedouin living; count their sheep, goats, and dogs; notice the sacks of grain on the backs of donkeys; see how scrawny their horses were, and how the camels undulated over the sunbaked soil. One morning at about six I saw an entire camp fold their tents and silently set out for a new site.

Where not cultivated, the soil brings forth thorns and thistles. The Midrash, in commenting on the curse in Chapter III of Genesis, says that Adam complained against this natural fact, and that God assured him that bread could be produced by work and sweat.

It is in this area that remnants of ancient civilization are found. The ruins of Abda, Subeita, and Kurnub bear testimony to the extent of Palestinian settlement during the Roman period. The stones of Masada take one back to the days when Israel fought off the glory of Rome. Ein-Gedi on the

Dead Sea recalls David and Solomon, perhaps the prophet Elijah and the Essenes. In the midst of what is now considered desert, one sees from the air the outlines of ancient fortresses, now square piles of rubble. When the angle of the sun casts the proper shadow, the imprint of long unused Roman roads can be spotted from the distance.

The wildest part of the Negev is cut by occasional wadis, which carry water only during the rainy winter season. Their borders, however, are rimmed with green during most of the year. Footpaths cross from Transjordan to Egypt, easily traced from the air, but water is scarce; there are about a dozen wells in the 1,500 square miles of the deep Negev. The surface of the "real" Negev, which starts at Wadi Raman, is rocky, covered with cinder-like pebbles and rocks. A desert is far from being a "beach with a long walk to the ocean" as the old vaudevillian called it; only a few portions are sandy. The sandy areas, beds of the wadis and remnants of ancient lakes, stand in contrast to the monotonous brown and brownish yellow of the jagged hills, steepwalled canyons, and the endless palisades. The geological structure is similar to that of the Grand Canyon, but lacking the color.

Here and there are signs of cultivation, especially at Gharandal and Ein Hasb (renamed Ein Hatzeva) but sometimes nestled in unexpected valleys. A practiced observer can tell from the condition of the furrows whether an isolated plot was last cultivated a year, two, or three previously.

All of Israel, for those who know their Bible, contains sacred history. The desert appealed to me most; in the absence of man-made buildings and roads, the land itself could be seen and felt. The apparent sterility of a desert conveys the impression – incorrect thought it is – that the area has remained unchanged for all of time, even since the days that Moses and the freed slaves wandered through it – and one

can imagine scenes from the earliest days of our history. Even the pillar of smoke which guided our ancestors can be seen from time to time: at certain mountain passes the prevailing winds set up "dust devils," small tornadoes or whirlwinds which kick up the desert sand. These are columns usually several feet in diameter, not more than a few dozen feet high, with the winds rotating at less than forty miles an hour. For days on end they stand during the same hours so that one can navigate, for example, to a small landing strip near Wadi Giraffe by aiming at its nearby dust devil.

This comparatively unknown area will remain a permanent frontier – like the frozen north of Canada – with its fluctuating borderline with civilization, eternally challenging and beckoning and inspiring the adventuresome. Here, also, exist unknown possibilities for Israel's mineral development. Solomon's sparse copper and iron mines (whose utilization depends on economic factors and the price of these metals on the international market) may betoken other resources.

11

STARTING AN AIR FORCE FROM THE GROUND UP

When I arrived in Israel (November 1948) the Air Force had already taken over the four civilian aircraft: two Austers, a Widgeon and a Bonanza. The mainstay of the force were Piper Cubs, half a dozen C-46's, a handful of cannibalized Harvards and Mustangs, a dozen Spitfires and Messerschmidts flown in from Czechoslovakia shortly before the Iron Curtain clanged down completely, a few Dragon Rapides, three B-17's, two Mosquitoes, a number of Beaufighters, two Canadian Norsemen, a few DC-3's, and one DC-4. Some of the cargo planes, as well as some of the Primus planes, were equipped with home-made bomb racks.

Commercial air lines, except for KLM, had pulled out of the war area; Israel founded its own air line to fill the gap.

Let us go back in history to see how Israel built up its aviation from less than nothing. The Israelis did not have their own government until May 1948. During the days of the British Mandate, the *Asefat Hanivharim* – the elected representation of the Jewish community of Palestine – established Jewish school systems, organized land reclamation

and city development, built hospitals and sponsored factories.

Aviation was not neglected in the general picture, although the Mandatory power was not willing to permit any large scale growth. License for a single British Auster was issued to the Aviation Club; soon the Club managed to bring another Auster into the country, marking it with the same number. It required tricky coordination to make sure that only one plane was in the air at any time. A wealthy Dutchman, van Leer, established a private company, with a Bonanza and a Widgeon. This was the state of Palestinian aviation in 1939, when World War II forced suspension of all civilian flying.

The British permitted a few Palestinian Jews to undergo air crew training, among them Ozer Weizmann, who later became commander of the Israel Air Force. The British made Palestine their aviation center for the Middle East, building over two dozen air fields and repair shops, in which many Palestinians were trained as mechanics.

Jewish self-defense forces (Haganah) during the waning days of British control, and the Israel Government (established May 15, 1948), felt justified in violating the UN embargo against arms purchases in order to defend the country against invasion by surrounding nations, nations which had been in existence since the twenties and had had plenty of time to build up their forces.

With proclamation of the State, immigration from the refugee camps in Europe increased. A handful of pilots and navigators who had escaped from Poland or Rumania, came to Israel, and joined the dozen or so Palestinians who had learned to fly. There were two American pilots already residing in Israel. Some Israelis were undergoing training in the United States under the auspices of Zionist groups, and some were training in South Africa. The backbone of the Air

Force, however, consisted of Mahal volunteers, some mercenaries, some idealists, both Jews and non-Jews.

During the first few years, the official language in the Israel Air Force was English. Some South African pilots used Afrikaans as a code language. A number of these volunteers remained after the cessation of hostilities to serve as pilots in El Al or Arkia, Israel's commercial airlines; some returned to pre-war civilian occupations, settling permanently in Israel. Trygve Johannes Maseng, now flying for Arkia, was born in Chicago, of Norwegian stock. While a pilot in the IAF he married Eve, the daughter of Rabbi Harry S. Davidowitz, one of my father's friends in theological school and the only U.S. Jewish chaplain to be awarded a Purple Heart during the first World War. (Davidowitz had settled in Israel in the early thirties to manage one of the leading export industries and to translate Shakespeare into Hebrew.) Morris Siegal of South Africa continued his career as architect in Israel. Tolchinsky returned to his kibbutz. El Al enjoys the piloting skill of Feldman, Rosen, Goldstein, Bosches, and Katz of advertisement fame. Alperstein (now Agmon) flies for Arkia.

Air crews were more varied in national origin than those in the American squad of movie stereotype, as attested by such names as Warhaftig, Tibby, Sayevitz. There was, indeed, one Cohn, from India, whose grandparents had moved there from Iraq. There was a girl radio operator from Australia and one from South Africa (Mickey Rosenberg).

Planes from the junk heaps of the world were flown or smuggled into the desperate country. Israel could not afford to be choosy. The British had left, among other material, seven Austers they felt were useless. Israeli mechanics made four flyable craft out of them. I had the dubious privilege of making the last flight in an Auster: one tire blew and the

plane had to be taken from service – there were no spares. During one period, the only serviceable aircraft in the entire country were under my command; for several days the three Pipers at Beersheba were the only craft that could fly.

A few highlights may serve to show the significant role of manned light aircraft in a war which took place as recently as fifteen years ago.*

The first use of Israeli craft occurred during the uncertain days before England removed its troops. On January 10, 1948, a Piper was used to evacuate a wounded civilian from an isolated farming colony.

On April 9, irrigation pipes filled with explosive were dropped on Iraqi troops attacking a farming community twenty-five miles inside the border of Palestine.

On June 4, the flagship of the Egyptian fleet, approaching to shell Tel Aviv, was set on fire and forced to retreat by a grenade dropped from a Fairchild. The plane was downed, and in it the speaker of the Israel parliament, Joseph Sprinzak, lost his son.

Later in June, Israel B-24's bombed the Egyptian staging area in El Arish, and the capital cities of Amman, Jordan, Cairo, Egypt, and Damascus, Syria. These attacks, and the shooting down of Egyptian fighters by recently uncrated Messerschmidts, brought about a stalemate in the air, for fear of mutual bombings of large cities. Until then, Egypt had had almost a free hand in strafing and bombing military and civilian installations.

Much of the war material (there were no arms factories to begin with) had to be flown in. On occasion, planes flying supplies to Israel would bomb objectives enroute, even before their pilots had ever seen Israel. The full story of this

*The following summary is based on Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword,* New York, 1961.

airlift with its smuggling, surprisingly efficient organization, heroism, and general absence of profiteering is too lengthy to retell here. The war effort of Israel, fully surrounded on land by enemies, would not have succeeded without airborne supplies.



The author in June 1949, shortly after becoming commander of the Beersheba air base. *Photo by Leni Sonnenfeld, New York.*



Aerial photograph of the Negev — *Photo: Israel Gov't Press Office*



Beersheba from the air, Israel Independence Day 1949. *Photo by author.*



Author's plane at a desert outpost, April 1949. *Photo: Israel Gov't Press Office.*



Hugo Marom preparing to test the first Fouga-Magister built in Israel. *Photo: Israel Gov't Press Office.*



Author and Pearl Shmidman. *Photo by author.*



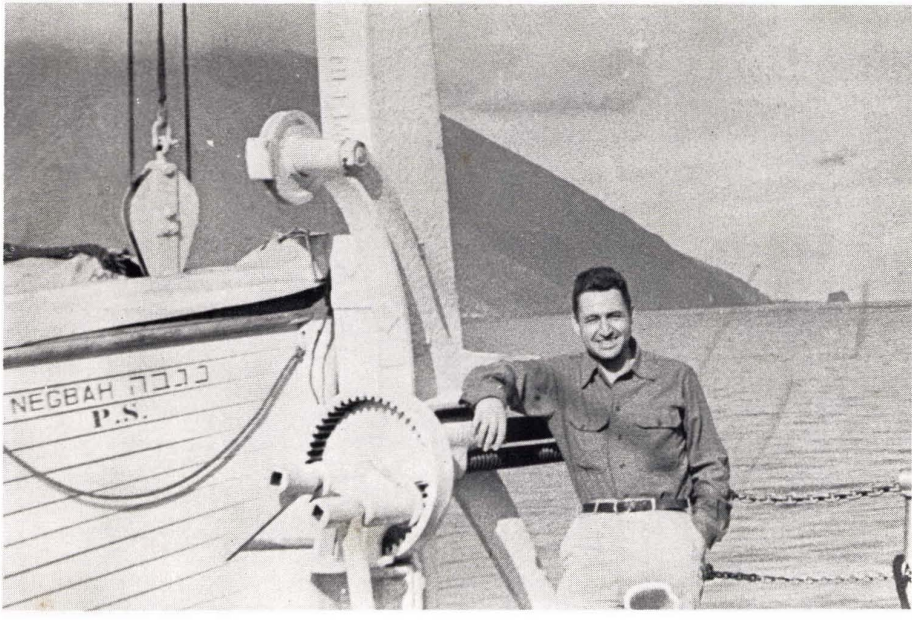
Recruitment poster in a D.P. camp in Germany, May 1948. *Photo by author.*



David Remez, in front of the operations building. The men in back of him are in "official" government issue uniform. *Photo by author.*



Wings Parade of the first graduates of the Air Force Training School, two years after the State of Israel was established. (Author taught physics, math, and aerodynamics at the school, and wrote Hebrew texts in the subjects.) *Photo: Israel Gov't Press Office.*



Author on the Negba. *Photo by author.*



The author and his fiancee, November 1950. *Photo by Pri-Or, Tel Aviv.*

12

CONDITIONS IN THE I.A.F. FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER

The mess sergeant used to come in at every meal with a large can of half ripe olives. He would count seven onto the plate of each pilot, then return the can to a locked closet. These were our "egg" rations. Some half-baked dietician in the Israel Air Force had proclaimed that seven olives would give us the protein equivalent of an egg.

In 1949, when Israel reached the depths of its food shortage, pilots (who usually receive the best nutrition in countries at war) had meat only three times a week. Our main source of protein was frozen fish fillet. The civilian ration was even less nutritious, but strict controls guaranteed minimum subsistence to all even during the worst of austerity times. My first day in Haifa, Israel's second largest city, I had tried to buy a glass of milk – none was available. With luck one might find a restaurant that would offer a cup of boiled milk. Home delivery of milk was effected on the backs of mules or on motorcycles, with the milk ladled out of open cans. The situation has, of course, long since changed; those were the days of Israel's war time economy, its population

doubling in three years, its farms unworked, with foreign trade almost at a standstill.

In the armed services we had the best of everything. By knowing what the "best" was, one can form some opinion of the average.

Basic pay for soldiers was four Israel pounds a month. The pound was officially listed at $2.80, but the more realistic free market (or black market) rate was then about one dollar. Bus fares inside cities ranged from a tenth to a quarter of a pound; the fare from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (45 miles) was a pound. A standard restaurant meal would cost about a pound, while WIZO-sponsored soup kitchens and special restaurants for soldiers on leave charged about a third of a pound; the price of a pack of cigarettes was the same. Officers received four pounds more, while flight pay was seven pounds a month. Some foreign volunteer specialists (such as pilots and engineers) were given additional pay in American dollars. Although I had not known of this arrangement before coming to Israel, the volunteers' office was able to arrange, after several months' prodding by Bonney, my commanding officer, for my parents to receive dollars on my behalf. Foreign volunteers were also issued special rations: four packs of American cigarettes a month, when available. Many of these had special stamps, indicating the American organizations which had sent them to us. Another reminder of home was the Yiddish labels on the army caps, cut along the French Foreign Legion style, which read: "A gift from the American Hat Makers' Union to our fighting brethren in Israel."

Physical accommodations in the armed forces were poor. Ranks were given a wooden pallet, a tick to be filled with straw, and one blanket. Air Force officers were issued sheets, but I do not know whether the army enjoyed this luxury.

Our barracks varied. In Beersheba most of us lived in abandoned Arab houses, built in the Mediterranean style which dates back to the ancient Roman atrium type of architecture. A high wall usually enclosed a garden. Within this was a house with four rooms opening onto a large central hall. The ceilings and windows were high, making it possible to store the cool night air for the hot days. At a pilots' training base, where I served after my tour of duty in Beersheba, we lived in British huts with cinder block walls and corrugated metal roofs. These had been built in 1940 to last five years. By 1949 the walls were full of cracks through which small hedgehogs and mice could scamper; the floors gave entry to huge centipedes. There was no roof on our base under which it was possible to stretch a cot without rain falling on some part of it.

Until the end of 1949 the army had no standardized uniform. Soldiers were given two sets of underwear and two pairs of stockings. Since the soap ration was low and both water and time were at a premium, many of the troops coming from lands of low sanitary standards gave aromatic warning of their proximity. We wore surplus British, Canadian, American, French, and Italian shirts and pants. Few wore ties, and no official insignia were issued until the middle of 1949. The usual sign of an officer was a pen (often just a pen cap) in the shirt pocket.

With all the hardship, morale was high, among both civilians and military. Hospitality was proverbial, as was the willingness to share. Any soldier could apply for an invitation to a Sabbath meal with a private family. Whenever a group of hiking tourists stopped over in Beersheba, we would give them our recreation room for overnight quarters. (Group tours, both by truck and on foot, were one of the chief leisure time activities of the Israelis.) Meals were

shared, by civilians and military, even though rations were meager.

There was, as there always is under such conditions, some black marketing and dishonesty; in general, and especially on a personal level and with regard to privately owned property, the people were incomparably honest and trustworthy. The country had experienced several months of complete anarchy, with no police force, when the British left in May 1948 without arranging for continuity of government. The crime rate had not gone up during that period.

Both the hospitality and honesty of the inhabitants of the country, oldtimers as well as newcomers, citizens as well as visitors, were brought home to me when I spent a day at Air Force Headquarters. Even with official orders, billeting was up to the individual, and I was on my own to find a place to sleep. I walked through the officers' quarters until I came across a South African radio man loafing in his room. In answer to my query about sleeping over, he told me that one of his roommates was out of town, and that I could use his bed. Each of the six men in the room left his valuables unlocked. My host, noticing my camera, compared it with one of his friend's, then replaced the latter on the top shelf of a dresser made of orange crates. He knew nothing about me other than what I had told him, yet it would never have occurred to either of us to mistrust the other, or anyone else who might be strolling through the halls. My luggage from Marseilles was just as secure during shipment within Israel. It took me several weeks to trace my hold baggage, which had been sent to a succession of reception camps. When I finally claimed my valise, it was broken, but held together with rope. Nothing had been molested. On the other hand, my foot locker sent from New York to Germany through the U.S. Army had been broken into and pilfered.

Not all my time in service was spent as aircrew. After an attack of hepatitis I was grounded for three months. During that time I was assigned as welfare officer for the largest bomber and heavy transport base. In this capacity I was able to add knowledge of the new immigrants to my understanding of the human nature of the DP's, the native Israelis, and the foreign volunteers. At that time the largest immigration came from North Africa. With my halting French I was able to discuss their personal problems. On occasion a Spanish or Arabic speaking client would bring his own interpreter with him, and we would translate through and into several languages. One of the chief problems was arranging for immigration of a family, finding housing for them, or securing an additional allocation of relief or welfare funds. While visiting the families of stockade prisons I saw conditions which made me grateful for having a sleeping bag I could call my own. The stories they told of life in the countries of origin revealed a level of poverty which we on this continent cannot imagine. Though some of the immigrants returned to their countries after a few months, most of them were happy to be in a new land, where their race and religion would not be a cause of discrimination, and where there seemed to be a future of advancement and development.

13

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN
MARCH 1949

Not all of our flying was in the line of duty. One of my extra-curricular projects could be called "Operation Pennies From Heaven."

A biblical scholar might compare it to manna.

If you are well versed in Jewish customs, you might think of the old practice of showering candy and pennies on the desk where a child learns his alef-bet.

When no one was looking, we used to drop things from our planes. Low flying and throwing objects from planes were against the safety rules, in addition to violating all regulations, military as well as civil. During military operations, of course, it is sometimes necessary to make a drop; at other times, a pilot may try his hand for private reasons. It was usual for us to drop messages near the homes of fellow pilots while they were on leave, or to reach their families. Although this was intended for efficiency and speed, the messages would often be received later than the normal mails would have brought them.

Emanuel Giladi, for example, once returned to our base after a week's leave with not a word about some magazines

I had dropped for him at his moshav. Five weeks later a friend of his, out for a walk, found a bundle with his name on it in the midst of a grove. My "bombing" had not been too accurate. I had tried to drop the parcel, tied to a handkerchief parachute, in the middle of an open field. Many good intentions go even further astray.

Official dropping of supplies, however, was needed in many circumstances. During the days of violent fighting, the Air Force maintained many isolated communities by dropping medical supplies, emergency food and material, as well as instructions. Isolated outposts (*mishlatim*) were also sustained in this fashion for days on end. There is a little squiggle on the map of Israel, on the section of the border running from the Hebron-Beersheba road to Ein Gedi. In order to make sure that this sector and the area south of it would remain Israel territory, the army established an outpost on top of a small hill. There were no roads, and on the rugged terrain land communication would take many hours, through unfriendly areas. We were asked to make daily drops of mail, munitions, and limited amounts of food. A truck would make the trip once a week to bring in heavier supplies. The outpost covered about a city block, which meant that we would have to fly close to the ground, releasing the items, suitably wrapped for protection, with considerable accuracy. After one drop, we continued on a reconnaissance flight over Dahariya and Hebron. We were fired on by an armored car, but not hit, and brought back the location of a new Jordanian military depot. After the flight, when we had time for chit-chat, I discovered that the army commander who had directed the flight was Shalom ben Zvi Baskin, brother of a *shomer* I had known in the States.

Similar drops would be made from time to time to groups of scouts in the southern desert. One of our special operations

was to maintain twice-a-day contact with a truck unit making its way down the Negev to map out a new road. They could not use their radio, except for emergencies, for fear of revealing their location to infiltrators. Yuval, a lad from Jerusalem, or Zerubavel, the local army intelligence officers, would usually fly with me, to give me the daily position of the group, and to signal to them. Although they were encamped on a plain, the large rocks which cover most of the desert made landings precarious, so we would circle overhead trying to get messages across. They had their own supplies, but we would bring them, whenever we could, luxuries, like bags of oranges or chocolate bars. We would drop these without too much damage, from a few feet above the ground, while flying the planes close to stalling speed (35 miles per hour).

These drops were authorized and therefore legal. I also established my own private supply line for my kibbutz, which was going on to settlement (*hityashvut*) during the summer of 1949, near Yavneh. The group was to be named Kfar Darom, after a kibbutz near Gaza destroyed and overrun by the Egyptians. The membership of the kibbutz consisted of survivors of the original Kfar Darom, plus English speaking halutzim from the United States, England, and India. Most of the latter, of the old Bene Israel community, were very religious. Later on, a group of Iraqi and North African refugees was added to the kibbutz, so that it became quite polyglot. The members had completed several months as a *garin* at Ein Hanatsiv, learning to work together and to receive additional training until land could be acquired from the Jewish National Fund for their own village. As soon as development of their new area was authorized, several families went to live at Yavneh, making homes in the unfinished yeshivah building which also served as a fortress.

Inside lived several families, as well as some single people. To create a modicum of privacy, piles of straw or sandbags were arranged to serve as partition walls. Lighting was by gasoline pressure lanterns. The surrounding fields were mined, and every night we would hear explosions, usually caused by jackals or wild dogs. The path from Yavneh itself, and from there to the new area of settlement, was marked by barbed wire. The overall plan called for building a coterie of Mizrachi colonies in the area close to Nebi Rubin (where Allenby had landed during the first World War), with kibbutz Yavneh as the "mother." There would be a kibbutz, a moshav shitufi, and perhaps even an urban development. Kfar Darom (now called Bnei Darom) was given land which contained an orange grove, one of its chief agricultural assets, and a well. On our land there was also a Crusader inn, now in ruins, which gave an air of historical continuity, as did a nearby site where Yohanan ben Zakkai had built his academy and thus preserved Jewish life after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.

At the time when the first pioneers came to the empty field, which was to become the settlement, I was flying military mail from Beersheba to Tel Aviv every weekday. My circuit took me also to the air fields of Akir and Qastina. At Akir were stationed the Back brothers whom I had met at Marseilles while they were sailing to Israel, and who were also members of Hapoel Hamizrachi. Their sister was on *hityashvut*, and they sent her frequent gifts (usually several pounds of halvah) through my private mail line. I frequently visited Nahum Stepansky, at the office of Hakibbutz Hadati in Tel Aviv, where he was in charge of cultural affairs and the absorption of Anglo-Saxon immigrants. He too, would send along items for air delivery. I would add my own ration of cigarettes and newspapers to the "bundle

from heaven" which lifted the spirits of the hard working pioneers.

On the day when (after preliminary tents, water tanks, and trenches were in position) the official opening took place, I flew over the encampment taking pictures of the ceremonies to be used in an English magazine published by Hakibbutz Hadati – "Hagesher." When I left Israel, an overzealous censor confiscated all my air pictures. Some were returned to me as a special favor after several years, on petition to the government censor. They did not, however, return the best part of my collection, pictures from the air of most of the settlements in the Negev.

Changes in the economic situation in Israel diminished the importance of the kibbutzim, just as development of the United States brought to an end many of the cooperatives (e.g. Amana, the Oneida Community) in the pioneering of this country. By now the kibbutzim have lost their dominant role in the country; private industry and initiative, as well as large corporate aggregates usually sponsored by the Histadrut, have taken over. Most of the American *haverim* have left the kibbutz to employ their higher levels of training in private industry: Bennett in electronics; Meir Kaplan in criminology; Moshe Kalner in social work. Other members have returned to the States, often losing many years in their professional advancement, after being among the last generation of halutzim. There are many more Americans permanently settled in Israel, but I could not begin to list them – some of them members of halutz organizations, some who migrated privately and on their own, some who went to study and decided to remain. They are to be found in all areas of life, from research in cosmic rays to literature, from medicine to public relations, from government service to store keeping, from engineering to school teaching.

14

PLANES HAVE TO LAND

It is presumptuous and almost arrogant to speak of a specialized radio operator in a Piper Cruiser, yet that precisely was Dov Tabori's function. During the early days of the war, he had been a bombardier. He would carry grenades, bombs, and even empty beer bottles (which fell with a demoralizing shriek) and hurl them by hand from the window of a three-seater Auster. This primitive bombing was effective – the Egyptian destroyer was repulsed from Tel Aviv by hand thrown grenades.

Now that Israel possessed, despite the UN embargo, a few military planes and light planes rigged so that pilots could release the bombs, the bombardiers were assigned to other tasks. Dov Tabori was our assistant intelligence officer, going along with me "for the ride." He sat behind me with a walkie-talkie (1944 model) on his lap. His voice was urgent as he repeated: *"Aviron kore lamahaneh lematah"* ("Airplane calling the camp below").

We were trying to rendezvous, April 17, 1949, with a convoy containing the commander of the Air Force, Remez, and his father, then Minister of Communications. We continued to

circle the headquarters of the Eighth Brigade (formerly one of the religious units of the Palmach, under the command of Major Allan of Tirat Zvi, and the first to enter Elath) about half way between the Dead Sea and Elath, near Wadi Giraffe.

After a few minutes of risky buzzing (the camp was in a bowl-like area, surrounded by 400-foot hills), their radio finally responded. They were expecting us, but it took some time to locate our frequency on their own radios. They told us that the convoy had been delayed on its return from Elath, and was expected the next day. As I prepared to return to our base in Beersheba, they asked for our help.

A party of tourists had lost contact with their water truck in the badlands at the western end of Wadi Raman, and no one knew what had happened to them. They begged us to land and discuss the possibility of helping the search. At my instructions, a truck ran the length of their landing strip, and a smoke grenade was set off to show the wind direction and strength. We managed to land without hitting the bowl of hills and without overrunning the field into a hill and a ditch. The strip was less than 200 yards long; the plane's manufacturer boasts that its minimum take-off run, in no wind conditions, is about 700 yards. This landing strip eventually became our main light plane base in the Aravah, despite the fact that we could land and take off in only one direction.

A few weeks later, I overheard some soldiers talking about their local airport: "That was quite a tense moment," said one. "I wasn't sure that the plane could land there." "A Primus can land any place, ask the pilot." I was forced to admit that their airstrip was not too comfortable, and that two landings and take-offs were enough to shatter your nerves for a week.

Something in their manner made me suspicious. "Was this field used before I landed here on the eve of Pesach?" "No." "Did anyone ever tell you people that this area would make a good landing strip?" "No." "Then why the devil did you instruct me to land there?" "Well, we needed a plane, and that seemed to be the best place around here for you to land in." None of my instructors had ever warned me of this type of emergency landing.

On the return to Beersheba, Dov and I searched out the lost party. We flew directly over them, but the walls of the canyon in which they were resting were so steep, and the shadows so dense, that we did not see them. A searching party on foot managed to get to them in time.

In Beersheba we heard startling news. A different group of tourists had been ambushed in the salt flats between Ein Hasb and Sodom. The truce with Transjordan was still too fresh to be taken seriously, and we all expected this to renew hostilities. As next ranking officer in the absence of our commander, I was in charge. I put the base on a stand-by, and had all our equipment and bomb supply checked over. After consulting with the military governor and giving full instructions to the other pilots, I prepared to establish an auxiliary base in the Aravah.

I tied jerry cans of gasoline to the passenger seat of a plane and took off for Giraffe. Although I realized full well that its value was only psychological, I took along a fire extinguisher. If anything happened to the plane or its cargo either in the air or on the ground, it would burn completely in less than thirty seconds. When I landed, I immediately cut the switch and walked away from the plane to calm down.

Using these four cans as a beginning, we established a fuel dump by sending subsequent supplies by truck. This

made it possible for a plane to carry out reconnaissance flights in the area. A tankful allowed about four hours flying. Since the time from Beersheba to Elath was two hours, local flying would be impossible without refueling somewhere in the Aravah. By the end of Pesach, we had established a chain of landing strips between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, with strategic caches of fuel and oil. The land forces were instructed how to mark the fields, and always welcomed us, a reassurance of physical contact with the rest of Israel, with their greatest gift, cans of orange juice.

After establishing the auxiliary supply, I returned to the Passover seder in Beersheba. The army had invited us to a community seder (there were fewer than a dozen civilians in the city at that time) held in the newly built Kassit café, and led by Avraham Harzfeld, the "grandfather of kibbutzim." The first day of Pesach was quiet, with the military governor consulting with local forces and headquarters. On the second day, the intelligence officer of the Army and the operations officer asked to be flown to Sodom, for on-the-spot investigation.

The plane's specifications forbade more than one passenger, and I asked them to send only one. They insisted that the emergency required them both. Because of the cloudy and windy weather, I advised them of an additional danger, that of an emergency or rough landing. Although I warned that, in such a case, any one of us could suffer a broken arm or leg, they persisted in taking the risk. When, however, I took out three parachutes, and started putting one on as an additional measure of safety, they suddenly decided that the trip could wait for calmer weather.

The next day, I carried both to Sodom. My own conviction that the plane could carry all three of us on its two seats stemmed from an apocryphal story about the strength of the

Cubs. It was claimed that on New Year's a group of six pilots had celebrated in Tel Aviv and missed the last transportation to their base (about 25 miles away). All the six flew back to camp in a Piper Cub, four in the two-seat cabin and two sitting on the struts. The story, if true, is a remarkable tribute to the plane's construction; if not true (more likely the case), it is an example not only of Israel tall tales (*chizbat*), but indicates the heights of imagination to which our faith in the plane could lead.

15

IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

On May 18, 1949, one of our pilots was overdue from a reconnaissance flight over the Negev desert. We had no way of communicating with him, nor, indeed, with any of our light planes. There were no permanent radio installations in the craft, although we sometimes carried walkie-talkies when necessary to keep in touch with ground forces.

Before setting out on the search, we tried to get information from the army radio network, which occasionally reported departures and arrivals, but no one had any news of our missing plane. We went to the army headquarters in town for information as to where the plane might have gone. They refused to tell us; they insisted that their commander had gone on an intelligence mission and they wouldn't reveal this military secret.

Yonatan Moller and I took off for Ein Hasb (now called Ein Hatseva) about twenty miles south of the Dead Sea and the base of most operations in the Avarah. At this oasis, the roads to Sodom and Elath branch off after the road con-

necting with the rest of Israel descends Maaleh Akrabim. I served as observer on the flight, with binoculars to my eyes, scanning the area for miles around for any sign of wreckage. (When I had gone through customs, the officials were supposed to confiscate all binoculars for the armed forces; fortunately for the Air Force, mine escaped detection. I had "bought" the binoculars in Germany for a carton of American cigarettes — one of the few items I had purchased on the black market; and I still have them, a very good 8 x 30 Leitz.)

There was no sign of the plane, but we heard that it had arrived at Ein Hasb, taking off a few minutes later. Again, no information was available as to destination. One of the soldiers standing around at the small landing strip declared that the plane seemed to fly away in a northerly direction, and we took off again.

At Ein Quseiba (near a point now called Ein Hakikar), an oasis about halfway to Sodom, we learned that a plane like ours had flown overhead, still going north. At Sodom the same direction was pointed out to us.

Further north were only the Dead Sea and the isolated outpost at Ein Gedi. There was no road (although one was under construction) and the only contact was by boat. We were sure the plane had crashed; its fuel would have been enough to return to Beersheba after a flight around Ein Gedi, but that would have brought them back hours ago.

Flying over Ein Gedi, we spotted the plane at the end of a small clearing. From the air, it looked as though the clearing was as long as a football field. The normal landing run of a Piper under no wind conditions is about 200 yards. Somehow, Yonatan managed to land our plane safely.

The lost and found plane had a bent prop. The pilot re-

ported that his passenger-observer, the commander of the army base in Beersheba, had given him orders to land at the clearing, which was being prepared as a landing strip. (There was a road grader on the site, but I do not think the strip was ever completed.) The commander, in turn, insisted that he had only joked with the pilot, wondering whether he would dare to land. The pilot had taken up the dare, and they were lucky to walk away with only a damaged propeller.

While Yonatan flew back for a replacement prop, I stayed at Ein Gedi as guest of the small army outpost. The area is a garden spot in the middle of nowhere — between the desert and the salt sea. It is a triangular canyon about midway on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Steep walls make access from the Judean desert impossible for any sort of vehicle. There are two permanent streams out of the mountains, water softer and purer than any south of Jerusalem. Caves in the walls are ascribed to David, to Solomon's Shunamite girl friend, to Elijah, and to a succession of hermits.

The two of us, who were stranded overnight, enjoyed the pleasure of swimming in the small pot holes formed by the streams, walking through what amounted to a jungle in forest-starved Israel, spending a few hours in what Americans would consider normal topography. The area had been abandoned a year or two earlier, when the Bedouin who lived there left during the war. Wheat was growing in scanty patches, from the grains dropped in a harvest of earlier times. Neither wheat nor maize will normally grow wild; the vast number of seeds from each stalk end up by choking each other. Yet wheat was growing wild in Ein Gedi, a year or two after any cultivation — a reminder that during the sabbatical years in ancient times the fields of Canaan could

produce food on their own, without human labor, as the Torah and Mishnah describe.

A few days later (May 22, 1949) Moller went on terminal leave, and I was made commander of the field at Beersheba. With the memory of our desert search still fresh, I decided to furnish our planes with emergency equipment for forced landings in the waterless no-man's land of the Negev. There had never been any forced landings in the desert, so that the pilots had grown rather confident. Some may have felt that a forced landing in Arab territory or in the middle of the desert would be fatal in any case, so there would be little point in carrying survival material. Indeed, one plane (a British built Aerovan) had been forced down in an Arab area during the days of violent fighting, a few miles south of Tel Aviv. The crew, including a girl, had been obscenely mutilated and left to die. The incident prompted the Air Force to change its policy of having female pilots and air crew. (In 1950, while I was instructing pilots, there was a girl at the cadet school; I believe she was being trained for the police force, not the military.)

The only survival equipment pilots normally carried was a .25-caliber Czech semi-automatic pistol, in a belt holster with two clips of ammunition. I usually wore mine on the left side, for ease of drawing in the cockpit's cramped sitting position. We could also requisition Sten submachine guns when we felt the need for heavier armament. These had been devised by the British for guerilla fighters in World War II, and were easy to make in almost any machine shop. One time, while on loan to an army unit for scouting, I asked one of the men to show me how to use the Sten I had been carrying for several months, and on which I staked my life. (We had never been given instruction in the use of the pis-

tol or the Sten.) Mine was completely inoperable. The weapon was not too reliable, as attested by the wartime legend that a plane was shot down over Tel Aviv not by bullets from a Sten but by throwing pieces of it at the plane. I felt that an American carbine or "Tommy gun" would be the logical armament for a small plane pilot, and visited the emergency equipment office in Jaffa to see what might be available. I was able to obtain three .45-caliber Thompson submachine guns, with 20 cartridge magazines. Their original serial numbers had been obliterated, indicating a non-legal journey from the United States, through Europe, to Israel. New numbers had been stamped on them in Israel. A few of the army scouts had been able to obtain U.S. Army .30-caliber carbines for their special personal use, and there had been rumors in Europe and Israel of a cache of 3000 of them in Italy awaiting purchase and smuggling to Israel.

At that time, the Uzi submachine gun was first being made available to special troops. It was developed and produced in Israel, and is now also being manufactured in Belgium under license from Israel. According to an article by Larry Sterett in John Amber's *Gun Digest 1962*, the Uzi has earned international respect as one of the finest submachine guns now in use because of its compact recoil system, with all moving parts being internal. It seems to have been developed from a similar Czech gun, one of the few submachine guns with the magazine in the grip. The weapon has also received favorable notice in *The American Rifleman*, published by the National Rifle Association, e.g. Dec. 1961, Sept. 1964.

Most of the light weapons in use in Israel were of Czech manufacture, and a number of artillery pieces came from Italy. There were also weapons left behind by the British, or

stolen from them. The weapon carried by the Officer of the Day at one of my bases was a British revolver for which there remained only five cartridges in all of Israel.

Other items in our survival kits were cans of water and rations, bandages, compass, and knife. The kits did not include signal flares, for fear of ignition from the heat of the sun, but we often carried smoke grenades in our pockets for such purposes as showing wind direction for a landing.

16

AIR LIFT TO LIFE

I did not do as much flying, much to my present regret, as I could have; I felt that the men under my command who were planning permanent careers in the Air Force deserved as much flight experience as possible. The light planes were used, in addition to reconnaissance, for communications and transportation of VIP's, also for evacuating wounded where larger planes could not land.

On June 13, 1949, a group of soldiers had been on their way back from Ras el Naqura, a check point on the Egyptian border, the first line of defense of Elath against the Egyptians, when the brakes failed. The truck went over a cliff; some were killed, about two dozen injured. The Air Force was asked to transport the wounded to a hospital where better care could be given than at Elath, which then had only two permanent buildings — one-room mud brick houses. The small air strip at Elath (especially during the winter rainy season and whenever the soil became too moist from the Red Sea) could not hold large planes, and our Pipers were called in.

David Dankner, Balfour Simantov, myself, and two other pilots were each able to make about three flights a day, carrying one person with us in each flight, to an airfield where larger planes could take them on to "civilization." The two others worked for only one day, leaving the rest of us to continue, sleeping on the ground at Elath, flying dawn to dusk in temperatures well over 110. One of the others flew away in one of our planes just after I had broken the propeller on mine, leaving us for one day with only two serviceable aircraft.

This emergency situation brought out the true nature of the men involved. Till that moment I had been tempted to side with the Israelis in their derogation of foreign volunteers. They often criticized most of the "mahalnicks" for coming to Israel to make money, describing them as unreliable in times of stress. In this emergency it was two Israelis who failed.

One of them, after making two flights, returned to our home base with the remark, "I'm not going to miss a date in Tel Aviv with my girl friend just to save some fellows from the damage they suffered while on a joy ride." The other, also Israel-born and trained, whose family had been in Palestine for generations, complained that it was too strenuous to fly so much in the hot weather, and told us he would return home. An army officer standing nearby almost shot him on the spot.

Three of us were left to complete the work. Dankner never had been too interested in flying, but he forced himself to continue under the strain. He had been one of the group sent to the United States several years before Israel was established in order to learn to fly. Dankner joined when not enough men could be recruited for the training program. He was, nonetheless, a better investment than the other two,

one of whom went on to many promotions in the Air Force, while the other entered civil aviation. Simantov had learned to fly in the Palestine Flying Club, and also served and worked well beyond the line of duty, even though his training had not been as complete as that of the others. It takes more than technical training and skill to make a reliable pilot.

Simantov, whose family had lived in Hedera for several generations, was my roommate at my first base, lived in my barracks in Beersheba, and then returned to Akir when I did. Knowledge of his character and personality gave me an insight into the attitudes and interests of the sabras. He was not especially religious in our sense of the word; he did not pray in the mornings, and I do not recall exactly how he marked his Sabbaths or whether he watched his diet. Every night, however, he would read several chapters of the Bible; he carried it with him wherever he went. His wedding to Sarah was celebrated with the classic Sephardic songs, based on the Song of Solomon, which have recently become popular in recordings in America.

The religious sentiments of Israelis are more complex than it would appear from the descriptions of most analysts. We are told that they are either orthodox or atheistic, that there is no "middle ground" of religious feeling. I met Israelis who ate only kosher food but would travel on the Sabbath and holidays. I met others who would not smoke on the Sabbath, but would eat anything. There were out-and-out religious skeptics who would join a *minyan* for Tishah B'av services, considering it a national holiday.

One Purim eve our "culture officer" tried to arrange for the reading of the book of Esther. A few of us got together, ranging from our cook, a very pious lad from North Africa who would spend an hour each morning praying, to others

who were curious about a ceremony they had never seen. Our culture officer, himself a freethinker, approached one of our men, and asked him whether he would like to hear the reading of the book, in which the name of God is not mentioned. The man became angry, scolding the officer for trying to force religion on people and trying to make converts to Orthodoxy by having them celebrate Purim. "You religious people leave us alone on Purim." Attitudes in Israel are as varied as the geography and climate.

17

BELIEVE THIS ONE OR NOT

One Simhat Torah evening, I heard a strange story of the early days of the Israel Air Force, about an experiment not described in any written records other than my own. I doubt that the Air Force will vouch for the events. The story, indeed, is appropriate to Simhat Torah or to Purim, in that it is a "corking" good one; and perhaps might best be ascribed to "high spirits" . . .

During the early days of the war, flying in the I.A.F. was restricted to daytime; a wise public relations officer had proposed this restriction. The Arabs predicted that Israel would be wiped off the map within a few days; in order to help prove that Israel was not a "fly-by-night" affair, all night flying was prohibited.

After a few weeks of the war, however, it was not only the nights that were dark, but the days became darker and darker for our beleaguered heroes. Although they were never dubious of final victory, conditions became more and more *"finster in die eigen,"* so that some arrangement had to be made for the planes to fly even in the dark-

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est of days and nights. In keeping with the earlier policy, and to save foreign currency, no bulbs had been purchased for the night flying equipment then on the aircraft. A special American appeal was being planned to be known as "Mighty Bright Light for the Flight at Night," but until a director with a glint in his eye could be found for this campaign, something had to be done locally.

At first, all pilots were fed overdoses of carrots, to improve their night vision. The only effect was to lengthen their ears and to give them all buck teeth. This could not be tolerated, as it interfered with the wearing of flight helmets. It was also politically inexpedient. The foreign correspondents would be confused to learn that not only were there rabbis in the government, but that there were rabbits in the Air Force. A different approach was necessary.

One of the high ranking officers had read of "fire water" in an American adventure story. This gave him a glimmer of hope, and inspired the novel experiment. His theory, which he managed to sell to the Air Force, in its desperation, was to create an alcohol man, whose eyes, containing combustible fluids, would have superior night vision. The medical men and physiologists agreed with the plan. It was decided to alter a pilot's metabolism, replacing the water in his tissues with alcohol. A suitable subject would have to be a man who had never tasted alcohol, whose body had not had an opportunity to develop anti-bodies.

After an exhaustive search such a man was found, named Zolel Bakbuk. He agreed to undergo this world-shaking experiment in the shakes. Under suitable anesthetic, his blood was entirely drained, the water centrifuged out, and pure alcohol was used for a retransfusion. We cannot mention the trade name of the alcohol; we can only reveal that it was

distilled from imported spirits, and that the money paid for its purchase was immediately transferred to the account of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

This process was repeated after a few days, until all the H_2O in the body cells of Zolel Bakbuk had been replaced. His metabolism had altered, based now on alcohol soluble chemicals, on the substitution of alcohol in all the body processes for which water is normally used. The experiment was a success. Zolel Bakbuk was permanently lit up, so that his aircraft did not need any landing lights.

Supplementing his combat duties, he achieved some noteworthy records in aviation. He brought the altitude record to Israel, since he was always "higher" than any other pilot in history. In fact he was so high that he would often fly without aircraft. Once, during an alert, he took off without a plane. As with Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, his nose guided us to his position in the firmament. A line was thrown to him from a plane, so that we could haul him down, but it did not reach to earth. We scoured the country for more rope, but could not find any. (Israel was then at the end of its rope.) By unraveling his stockings, however, and tying the strands together, he managed to get a line to earth, and was pulled down.

It was a cheering sight to see his airplane defending the country. It soon gained the nick-name, "The Flying Cucumber," because the pilot was always "pickled." On his discharge from the Air Force, Bakbuk could not find a job. Wherever he went his breath was too strong for his co-workers. The veterans' bureau took him under its wing, and found him a job in a bottle blowing plant. The bottles he blew were immediately sealed and sent to one of the country's largest vintners. By merely adding colored water to

the fumes in the flasks, they produced an outstanding type of whisky, profits from the sale of which went to aviation research.

The last I saw of him, Zolel Bakbuk was at his work, blowing happiness in the way of spirits for the Israeli population. He became one of the spiritual leaders of the country, showing the way to a lighter, brighter, more cheerful future.

18

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE I.A.F.

Although death is the leveler of all human beings, there are unequal feelings toward it. People in armed combat acquire a rather casual opinion of death, because of its daily expectancy. Their attitude is similar to that of people in countries where infant mortality is high, or where violence is commonplace.

As hostilities come to a close, the lessened possibility of being killed in action produces a noticeable change in requests for military assignments. During the days of battle in Israel, men would compete for assignment to kitchen staffs, where they were less exposed to danger. When hostilities were over, the trend was away from the kitchens; in a peacetime army, work is harder in the messes than in protective units.

Pilots face almost equal risks in peace as in war, and only the glamor (and flying pay) can counteract the continuous exposure to dangerous conditions.

Pilots – who take their lives in their hands every day, and whose lives depend on a small bit of control wire and a bolt

and a column of air – are no strangers to the possibility of an unexpected end to living. At times our approach may seem callous or unfeeling, but it is the only mood in which military pilots, especially, can operate. The first year after my return to civilian life, the difference between the military and civilian approaches to funeral practices shocked the president of my congregation. A member had died in an out of town hospital, and I asked whether he would be buried in the distant city. The possibility of burial anywhere but in the family plot was inconceivable to him. In the U.S. Army, the chaplains (and many others) objected most strenuously to the repatriation of men who had died on foreign fields; it is part of the tradition of soldiers fighting on the far flung lines of international conflict to be buried where they fall. In Israel, the feeling of the foreign volunteers was the same, and the Zionists, particularly, did not dread the possibility of being buried in Israel – was this not the final hope of all lovers of Zion throughout the ages? There were many who recognized the possibility of dying in Zion when making the decision to volunteer; many felt that if Israel were destroyed, there would not be much point in personal survival. It was, indeed, this consideration which clinched my own decision to enter the battle in Israel rather than return to the States to engage in Zionist educational or political work.

In all armed forces the presence of death moves men and women to guarantee some continuity of feelings and plans. We would write wills, leaving them in our foot lockers, and change them every time we changed girl friends. Often the only disposable property we had (military equipment had to be returned) would be a camera or favorite jacket or a few books. It was the responsibility of the commanding officer to see that the last wishes of a casualty would be car-

ried out – mysterious disappearance of valuable items after death is not unknown.

One of our men was killed in a crash. He merited little sympathy, for it seemed to have been his own fault. He made a "cavalier" or "sportsman" take-off at Elath, and his plane spun in from about 100 yards altitude and burned completely. In this type of dramatic take-off, the pilot stays close to the ground, building up speed. When he feels that the momentum of the plane is equal to the need, he climbs as steeply as he can, vertically if possible. The trick can be accomplished with a powerful fighter plane, but a civilian plane doesn't have enough power. The friends of the pilot insisted that he understood the plane's capabilities well, and that the accident must have been caused by something the passenger had done, perhaps grabbing the control stick in terror at the rapid ascent. Two lives were lost because the pilot had violated either the rules of aerodynamics or the rules I had laid down for cautioning passengers before starting the engines.

Most of our passengers were people who had no experience with planes, and our landing strips had no assisting personnel. I had warned my men to make very clear to their passengers exactly what to expect. They were to be told where to keep their hands and feet and not to touch the controls under any circumstances. If the pilot had to leave the plane to spin the prop himself, the passenger was to be shown how to hold down the brakes and how to shut the ignition if the plane should start to move. Two planes were demolished on the ground because the latter instruction was overlooked.

Two of us flew to Elath to make arrangements for the funeral (to take place in the military cemetery near Tel Aviv). Our former comrade was in a plain wooden box sup-

plied by the local army base, with just the word *tayas* ("pilot") written on it. We added his name in pencil, and a larger plane shortly arrived to take him away.

Back in Beersheba, his closest friends and I took all his personal effects to the operations office, to make sure that nothing would "disappear." We felt that it might be best to make a list of all his possessions, and to take out the government issue items before his property was sent to his only survivor, his mother. It was fortunate that we examined his valise. He had a batch of "nature" magazines which would have embarrassed and disappointed his mother. He had either been a nudist himself, or enjoyed a collection of nude pictures. We destroyed these items, feeling justified in protecting his memory.

As is customary in military units, we capitalized a bit on the accident. A few weeks earlier, we had found that our arms room was short two pistols. Pilots who had been in our outfit months before had walked off with the weapons, and we had no way to trace them. The supply officer saved some melted pieces of metal from the wreck, and when an investigator came for a report on the missing pistols, told him they had been destroyed in the fire of the crash. The investigator looked at the remains of the gyro compass and the melted down altimeter dubiously, but went along with the subterfuge – at least the paper work could be cleaned up.

19

SKY PILOTING

The commander of the army base at Sodom was an Englishman, Nahum Treibush, who had settled in Jerusalem. He would occasionally visit me in Beersheba, on his way to or from Sodom and the main part of Israel. Soldiers serving in the desert would try to hitch rides with us, rather than travel the rough and bumpy road to their posts. Unfortunately, we could seldom offer them rides, but the possibility prompted many of them to drop in at our operations office. During our conversations, Treibush learned of my rabbinical background; most of the air force knew me only as the "Flying American Rabbi," and I was seldom called by my American name or my nom de guerre.

One could say, of course, that there is a certain kinship between the rabbinate and flying. In both areas one must be able to find his way around in the heavenly sphere, either spiritually or navigationally; and clergymen are sometimes referred to as "sky pilots."

But after three years of congregational responsibility, I was relishing the more adventuresome life of Piper Cubs,

landing strips, sleeping on the ground under the wings of a plane, carrying a canteen of water at all times, and "packing" a small Czech pistol, Sten gun, or Tommy gun. The second week of July 1949, for the first time in many months, a call came for the other, almost forgotten, half of my dual personality.

A radio message had come from Treibush, at Sodom, asking if I could officiate at a funeral; few posts had chaplains, and there was no layman who could conduct the rites. A soldier had been injured by a mine at Ein Gedi. On the boat trip back to the infirmary at Sodom (there was no road connection) he had died. I rummaged through my valise for an appropriate prayerbook, and found the funeral service in the minuscule *Kol Bo* siddur, which had traveled with me from the States, through Germany, and into the Negev.

As in other air forces, it was our policy to give flights to the ground crew whenever possible; this was good for their morale, it helped them share the glamour of the "fly-boys," and reassured them that their work was being appreciated. My very capable adjutant, Aharon Levy, was not around. One of the radio men was going on leave the next day, looking forward to a visit with the *garin* of his kibbutz, in formation, soon to go on settlement in the middle of the Negev desert. But Shimshon felt that the invitation to accompany me was not to be missed; he would be leaving the Air Force in a few months, and would never again be able to fly. We took our toothbrushes, tissue paper, sweaters, canteens, and set out. I had my own emergency and overnight equipment: my old U.S. cartridge belt with matches and compass; Swiss army knife, bar of chocolate, tefillin, and siddur.

The flight to Sodom was always easy, short, and interesting. The ground trip, before money from Bond campaigns built the new road, was about 90 treacherous miles by way

of Ein Hasb. By air, traveling the straight 45 miles, we would see the end of civilization and paved roads, when they petered out into mule paths and disappeared at bedouin camps. We could see the vague outline of old Roman roads, whose building blocks had many centuries ago been scavenged for homes by the wealthy Arabs of the region, living in Beersheba or nearby villas.

Our route took us almost directly over Kurnub, famous and populous in earlier days, with its remnants of dams and hill terracing. We could make out the regular contours of rubble heaps, where once stood Roman or medieval forts. Further along came the Small Makhtesh, and the dropping off place to the Great Rift Valley. In a straight line distance of nine miles, the ground dropped from 1700 feet above to 1200 feet below sea level. Since our plane had a gliding ratio of about one to seven (it would sink 1,000 feet in gliding 7,000 horizontally), we could idle the engines while only 1,000 feet above the Makhtesh and glide almost half way to the landing field at Sodom.

From the air we could see the ruggedness of the hills, which made road construction so difficult. (One of my assignments was to aid survey groups by scouting the terrain ahead of them from the air.) The Dead Sea was a bright blue, with its algae green salt flats to the south.

The dead soldier had no next of kin. I cut *keriah* (the ritual rending of garment) for him on my own army shirt in the biblical and traditional manner, read the appropriate psalms, and delivered a short eulogy. Interment was at the small six-plot cemetery. He was carried to his grave on a stretcher, which proved too long for the grave; he was laid to rest, sewn in a sheet, in the ground.

That night, the scene over the Dead Sea was a dream sequence of the classical tropical lagoon. The setting sun red-

dened the hills of Transjordan across from us, and the full moon rose blood-red on a cloudless sky.

The next day we went on a tour of the salt mountain. About 300 feet high and several miles long, it is composed solely of crystalline salts. One of my most cherished souvenirs of Israel is a small cube, about two inches on a side, transparent and salty, chopped off a fallen rock of this strange geological structure. There are caves in the mountain, like the underground caverns of limestone areas, cut out by water entering, during the occasional rains, from the tops of the hills. By following the caverns, you come to the "chimneys," circular chambers, tapering upward to the daylight.

Late that afternoon, we returned to Beersheba. I was later mentioned in dispatches for unexpectedly practicing my true profession in an out of the way place, carried thither by my own wings — the first time in history that a rabbi had done this.

20

CONDITIONS IN THE I.A.F. MEDICAL CARE

Before leaving Germany for Israel, I had arranged through medical friends in the U.S. Army for a variety of inoculations, in anticipation of the worst. In addition to the routine tetanus, typhoid, and smallpox, I received shots for yellow fever and cholera (of which there had been a small outbreak in Israel in 1947). One cannot, of course, anticipate everything, and Salk vaccine had not as yet been developed. During my stay in Israel, there were several severe epidemics of polio, one of which occurred a few miles from the base just outside Petah Tikva, to which I was assigned between September 1949 and January 1951. One of our men caught the disease.

When the base doctor heard the diagnosis, he swore that he would commit suicide if he ever caught it. His remark showed his weakness as a man, and we found out later that he was not even a qualified medical man. He had been recruited by the Air Force for lack of sufficient medical personnel, to serve a suddenly expanding military establishment, and had managed to bluff his way to rank and privilege on the basis of his experience as a first aid specialist in

the Yugoslav underground during the German occupation.

The story of our polio casualty leads into a description of medical facilities in general, and ultimately to the "romantic element" in this book.

Basil, a pilot from South Africa, had died of polio two days following his arrival in Israel. With Maurice Sidlin, Sam Levinson, and Max Sher, he had trained in South Africa, under the auspices of the South African Zionist Federation; they came to Israel in the summer of 1950 to instruct at Kfar Syrkin, the newly established pilot training center. Maurice was my roommate, and I felt it my responsibility to introduce his gang to Israel life, especially since they did not speak Hebrew.

As soon as they were settled in their barracks, I asked them what they might like to do. A South African girl had traveled with them, and was working as a nurse at the immigrant reception center at Rosh Haayin, close by. We decided to visit the *ma'abara,* not only to become acquainted with the nurses but to see this dominant aspect of Israel life. At the *ma'abara* I met Hadassah Schoolman, an old friend in the States; we had gone to Cejwin Camps many years earlier, and I was surprised to learn of her arrival in Israel to work as a nurse.

When Basil died, the *ma'abara* was quarantined, and so was our camp. The polio rate was rather high among the Yemenite Jews who had recently been flown from Yemen to Israel in the famous "Operation Magic Carpet."

The health precautions taken at our camp were almost laughable, but perhaps understandable in the face of the pervading hysteria. All buildings were immediately painted with DDT. This had been the practice whenever buildings or cities (such as Beersheba) were taken over from the Arabs,

or whenever an epidemic broke out. This chemical was accepted by many as the magic cure for any and all ills. In much the same way as an earlier age accepted superstitions based on religion, our age bases its superstitions on science. The extreme of nonsensical precaution was reached in the officers' club. I noticed that the bartender was not washing glasses too well after each serving, and asked him whether he had any instructions as to special care during the time of the scare. He assured me that the glasses were perfectly safe; according to the instructions he had received, they were dipped in chlorine water twice a day. By some magic of modern medicine, apparently, this was supposed to keep them sterile. It was only with great difficulty that he was persuaded to wash and rinse the glasses after each use.

No other cases of polio occurred in our camp, and the quarantine was lifted after two weeks although it kept me from spending much time with my brother Joel who had come from the States on a visit. The three remaining South Africans and myself went on dates together, in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Through some special form of telepathy, which bachelors away from home seem to develop, we were able to find out when groups of American girl tourists were in the neighborhood, and managed to attach ourselves to them. One of the groups we became friendly with was a Mizrachi tour, even though the other lads were not especially religious; I later became engaged to one of the girls, Pearl Shmidman. She had an aunt, Yehudit Zametchkovsky, in Tel Aviv, whom we would often visit for a taste of American coffee, and Uncle Joseph Yablon farmed in Beth Shearim. Her single sister, Esther, was working in Kol Yisrael, the radio station. Sister Claire was teaching in Jerusalem, while brother-in-law David Solomon was working for the government press information

office. The Shmidmans and I had a good mutual friend in Petah Tikva, Hasida Katz Sorotkin, who often arranged parties for English speaking service people.

Sam Levinson did not last out the year. He was asked to give a demonstration of aerobatics at a military celebration off the shore of Tel Aviv. An Army officer remarked that his maneuvers did not seem to be too exciting; the next day, Sammy recovered from a spin a few feet too close to the sea in order to make his demonstration more thrilling. An Israeli cousin of his delivered the eulogy, a few days later, in Hebrew, while I spoke in English.

Pearl and I flew to the States with a three month leave in the summer of 1951 to be married, planning to return to Israel for permanent settlement. While in the States, we heard of Maurice Sidlin's death. He had given a student a fraction of a second too long to try to correct an error in landing procedure; he had always felt that the pupils could learn only if they were given as much opportunity as possible to correct their own errors. When he did take over the controls, it was too late.

Pearl and I were married in New York, although we had also taken out a marriage license in Jerusalem. Our immediate return was forestalled by another medical problem: the after effects of the hepatitis attack I had suffered in Beersheba in August 1949.

The illness had not been diagnosed immediately by the Army doctors in Beersheba; they were looking for typhoid or malaria – even though I had had the inoculations, took atabrine, and used halazone in my canteen. Both diseases could be found in our area. By chance, Zippora Borowsky Porath (whose family lived in the same apartment building as my folks in New York) visited me in the small Beersheba military hospital and immediately diagnosed my illness as hepa-

titis. (She has married, settling permanently in Israel, where she is active in the Association of Americans and Canadians.)

It was in this hospital – really a converted private Arab home – that my parents found me, after many inquiries. They, and my sister Miriam, had come to visit me after years of absence, during which time we did not know whether the vagaries of warfare and citizenship legislation would ever permit us to be together again. Before coming down with hepatitis, I had been able to take my sister for a short flight over the Negev, but I was in bed during most of my parents' visit.

Aside from such unusual incidents, the care which military personnel received was more than adequate. They were privileged to use the facilities of Kuppat Holim (the labor union health service), and many civilian physicians would treat us in their own offices without charge. The main problem was in finding transportation to the doctors' offices.

In addition to the medical personnel who had been in the country during the Mandatory period, there were many foreign and recently arrived doctors. During one visit to an Army hospital for a special examination, I ran into Dr. Issler, who had been in charge of the DP hospital in my area in Germany. He had managed to survive Hitler's persecution and years of wartime wandering in Russia. As a qualified physician, he had been placed in charge of the JDC hospital, and he eventually settled in Israel.

During my service in Beersheba I had an opportunity to witness the growth of medical services there. The first civilians (mostly from Morocco) began to arrive around Passover 1949. Hadassah established a clinic for them, staffed by an Israeli public health nurse, Neora Garfunkel of Haifa. Her main job was to distribute such supplies as UNICEF powdered milk, teach personal hygiene, and care for the frequent

injuries from grenades left in the streets from the recent fighting. Doctor Koslovsky and his wife arrived about the same time, he to become the permanent resident doctor, and she to do social work among the immigrants. I had met them in Germany where he (originally from Egypt) and she (a welfare worker from England) had been working with the DP's. He died in Israel in 1955, after he had spent several years working, especially, among the Bedouin. At the same time, another friend from Europe, Dr. Pearl Ketcher (sister of Col. Moshe Pearlman, then press officer of the Israel government), arrived, and she has become chief medical officer in the Lassky Memorial Hospital in the new Beersheba.

By now, medical care in Beersheba is as good as that in any city of comparable size in the United States.

21

OTHER USES OF AIRCRAFT

Did a "date" of yours ever have to walk home?

This can be embarrassing to anybody, but especially to a minister of religion, even when his intentions are honorable.

It is the more disconcerting when it happens in a plane.

Even more so when the walk back is through an unsettled desert, in wartime, with enemy infiltrators all about, and dozens of miles between wells.

With the cessation of official hostilities (although border incidents continued), I was assigned to ground instruction, writing text-books, and lecturing in Hebrew on mathematics, physics, and aerodynamics. A few months before my discharge from a full term of service in the Israel Air Force, I asked Les Easterman, commanding officer of the pilot's school, for one last flight. Les, now a pilot for El Al, is the son of the director of the Department of International Affairs of the World Jewish Congress, and was one of the first foreign pilots to come to Israel's aid. As a reward for my good work at the school, he ordered a "refresher" flight (Nov. 23, 1950) in one of the trainers, and gave me permission to take

along my fiancée, although she was a civilian then working as a secretary in the Knesset.

Gedda, the kibutznik commander of the entire base, suggested that I take a plane of Dutch manufacture, a Fokker trainer, then being tested by the Air Force for purchase. This plane, and the Canadian Chipmunk, were being considered as trainers, to replace the war surplus (mostly Stearmans) being used as primary trainers. I had been given my test flights on both by Adam Shatkai. He was subsequently loaned to Ghana to develop its pilot training program.

No other nation at that time was willing to offer Ghana any form of assistance.

The plane had a cruising time of five hours. I planned a flight to the desert part of the country, where I had once been a base commander, about two hours going and two back. I checked with the Bowser tank truck, and saw that a full thirty-six gallons had been pumped into the plane's two tanks.

About three hours out, on our way back, I noticed that the fuel gauges read a bit lower than they should have. To add to my trouble, the last time I had flown this craft, the wires were crossed, so that the left gauge read for the right tank, and vice versa. I did not know whether this condition had been corrected (a pre-flight check would have told me). By alternating tanks for a dozen minutes I learned that the gauges were now reading on the proper side.

But we were still lower than we should have been. Remembering the caution not to land with my civilian passenger at any base but our own, I resolved to take a chance on returning to base, rather than stopping off at Beersheba to refuel.

We made it back, although I was too concerned over the fuel, and too occupied switching from one tank to another

to entertain my passenger with the sightseeing routine or any other line of patter.

I reported the plane as possibly having a fuel leak, when I suddenly saw the light. The plane did call for thirty-six-gallons – thirty-six imperial gallons. The bowser fuel truck was graduated in American gallons. With a "full tank" of thirty-six gallons according to American measurement, we were actually one-sixth of a tank short – enough to reduce our flying time from five hours to a little more than four. We had landed after three hours and fifty minutes in the air.

The next time you cross the U.S.-Canada border, keep this arithmetic in mind. Whether by car or plane, tell the man, "Fill her up." Don't rely on a specified number of gallons, or you may end up short or with your tank overflowing. Five Imperial gallons (used in Canada and the British Empire) make six of ours.

In addition to this social use of planes, and the "pennies from heaven" angle, there were some other unusual uses for our craft. The engine of one of our cars could not be repaired for lack of a valve key. It was a Chevrolet, and I heard that a "Jimson" truck was immobilized at Elath. ("Jimson" was the name given to GMC equipment by the people in Europe and Israel, for phonetic reasons.) I managed to arrange a flight to Elath in order to cannibalize this small part, common to both the truck and car engine, so that Yohanan Rabinowitz (originally a New Yorker, and now a mechanic at IAI) could repair the car. Flying to Elath meant a special treat for me, because it was the only place in my territory where one could get pure drinking water. The water in Beersheba, as in most parts of Israel, is very hard, with chemicals dissolved out of the layers of rock which serve as natural underground reservoirs. At Elath, which has no natural sources

of water, there was a distilling plant from which I could fill my canteen. The drink was hardly worth it, however; after spending a day in Elath one would acquire a thirst that would last a week, so hot was it and so dry. My taste for pure water was further affected by my health precaution of adding halazone tablets to my canteen at all times. This gave the water a rather strong taste which even the addition of lemon juice and sugar could not mask.

Another time, I used my plane as an unofficial courier for the doctor at Sodom. During a drought, when the reservoir was very low, an epidemic of internal hemorrhaging broke out, first noticeable among the female personnel at the base, who were transferred away immediately. The doctor asked me to take a bottle of the drinking water to a laboratory in Jaffa for examination. He was unable to give me official orders for the flight, nor would these have helped very much. I flew to a base about 25 miles from Jaffa, then hitchhiked the rest of the way, carrying the bottle in my hand. I never did find out what had caused the illness.

22

BACK TO EARTH

Early in 1950, as part of the reorganization and regularization of the Air Force, the Mahal arrangement was discontinued. Those foreign volunteers whose skills were still needed were given civilian contracts and they continued their work as civilians. Others left military service. I opted to remain in the Air Force under the same conditions as those in force for the Israelis, and to fulfill the ordinary term of active service. After my discharge in January 1951, I signed up as a civilian, continuing my work at Kfar Syrkin, the cadet training base, living in the same barracks, eating the same food, but wearing different clothing.

I was able, in the course of the next few months, to complete technical manuals in Hebrew on the three subjects I was teaching (mathematics, aerodynamics, and physics) — and also to develop a course of study in English (based on "Basic English" and with certain grammatical short cuts I discovered). These courses were for the future pilots, and the curricula which I developed were aimed exclusively toward the needs of air crews. None of the cadets, at that time, had gone to high school, and so we had to start most

of our instruction from scratch. I also felt it was not expedient to take time out for subject matter that would not be of immediate application. The texts now in use in the Air Force (the director of training during my recent visit to Israel was kind enough to give me copies of them) seem to be translations or special editions of standard high school and college texts in those subjects, some of the chapters even going into post-graduate mathematics and engineering.

I was able to arrange for a three months' leave in the summer of 1951, to visit the States, and for Pearl and me to be married in the presence of our families in New York. We also planned to purchase furniture and household equipment in the States for shipment to Israel. (Six years after my ordination as a rabbi I had about $1200 saved up.)

We arrived in New York a week before the date set for our wedding, but all arrangements had been made and we were married on July 1, 1951, in the synagogue of Yeshiva Toras Chaim which my father-in-law, Rabbi Isaac Shmidman, has headed since 1930.

While in New York, I underwent full dental and medical examinations to make sure that my unsettled experiences had not left me with any disabilities. Dr. Hillel Blondheim (who has recently spent several years teaching at the Hadassah medical school in practice in Jerusalem, a friend since early childhood) found that my liver was still weak from lack of proper care during my hepatitis. The doctor of the Israel Embassy also recommended that I remain in the States for at least six months to build up my health before returning to Israel. The longer we remained here, the more difficult it became to think of returning to Israel – although it took almost four years of emotional and occupational turmoil to be reconciled to the possibility of not returning. In any case, a repeat aliya could not be under the earlier, adventuresome

conditions. Our daughter, Ilana Judith (born in Ottawa, Canada, in 1955), has been inspired by her studies at the Hebrew Day School in Kingston, Pa., to suggest occasionally that the move might be a good one, if not for us, for herself in future years.

With the help of the placement committee of the Rabbinical Assembly and Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, I was able to return to the profession for which I had trained, and from which I had taken a four year leave in order to participate in what I consider a "virtuous adventure" in the cause of humanity and the household of Israel. My pulpit in Ottawa was followed (1959) by Agudas Israel in Hazleton, Pa.

I sometimes wonder which type of "sky piloting" is the more stimulating, challenging, and rewarding: the spiritual or the mechanical. Directing an aircraft is far easier than trying to guide opinion and develop character. Looking down to the earth from a seat in the sky contrasts quite strongly with examining, from a heavenly point of view, the nature of human behavior. While realizing that they are days beyond recall, I often dream about the years when I was more directly engaged in the work of building a new society, and when I was, so to speak, closer physically to God. I think of those comrades in the days when Israel stood in need of everyone who could help; of those whose names and faces I remember, and the greater number who must look to other records for their memorialization. I think of those interred in Israel; of those like Moshe Pearlstein of Brooklyn who volunteered to make the supreme sacrifice; of those who have returned to the countries of their origin after answering the call of Zion our mother; and of those who continue to live there, to fashion their lives and careers in a country which is still in the formative stages and still requires heroic dedication.

APPENDIX
ISRAEL AVIATION
AS OF FEBRUARY 1962*

Aviation is an expensive proposition. United States airlines receive hidden subsidies. Construction of civilian aircraft and their development is only possible when military contracts keep factories in operation. We are a wealthy country, with sufficient corporate and individual resources to support a fleet of over 100,000 private aircraft and commercial airlines with 3,500 planes. The other nations of the world must look to the resources of government for the development of aviation, which is a matter not only of pride or autarchy, but of survival itself.

Israel must be able to stand up against a group of Arab nations whose finances, derived from the sale of oil to the United States and Europe, far outstrip hers; whose geographic location and population give them a strong bargaining advantage in seeking the support and aid of both the United States and Russia. The United Arab Republic, for example, receives gifts of MIGs and submarines from the

*Part of this material appeared in the February 1962 issue of *Flying*, a Ziff-Davis publication.

USSR and financial assistance from the United States. At present only France sells Israel military aircraft.

Israel's aviation activity is maintained by a population of just over two million, living in an area smaller than New Jersey, with a per capita income less than a third that in the States. Determination, wise planning, and the judicious use of foreign assistance have made it possible for Israel to improve her aviation picture while simultaneously advancing human values and the general economy. A stable government, democratic rights in the American understanding of the word, a literate citizenry – these achievements can serve as a noble example to the newborn nations of Africa and Asia.

In the summer of 1960, when I revisited Israel, Hugo Marom, chief test pilot of Israel Aircraft Industries (Bedek) took me around Israel's pride and joy, the largest and best equipped aviation plant between Italy and Singapore. Bedek has converted and remodeled over two dozen types of craft for clients the world over. Its shops can do everything but make engines; grades of steel, trained technicians, organizing ability, are available for everything else.

In his own life history, Hugo Marom symbolizes Israel's history. He was born in Czechoslovakia with the name Meisel, escaped to England as a child refugee, later to undergo flight training in a Czech unit sponsored by the British. He came to Israel in 1949, and served with me for a while in the Negev desert squadron. Since then, he has earned engineering degrees in England and France. His department makes over 1300 test flights a year. At the time of my visit he was breaking in new test pilot Twersky (now called Tabor), who had been one of my ground students in 1950.

IAI was formed, under the name Bedek, as a government corporation in 1955, beginning with 120 employees. Since then the payroll has grown to 3,000; its financial break-even

point was reached in 1958. Under license by the French, they manufacture the Fouga Magister twin jet trainer (all but its engine) for the Israel Air Force and for export.

The Air Force is now equipped with jet trainers, fighters, and bombers purchased from France or manufactured in Israel under franchise. The army has a full fleet of helicopters and light aircraft, as has the police force. The parachute forces are well trained; their chief chaplain, Goren, has earned his own jumper wings, and is so highly thought of in the country that his name came up for consideration for the post of chief rabbi of Israel.

Israel has been limited in its supply of aircraft by the refusal of England and the U.S. to answer its requests for equipment. The United Arab Republic, its sworn enemy, has been able to receive (according to testimony before a Congressional committee Sept. 28, 1961) over half a billion dollars worth of military equipment from Soviet Russia in the previous few years, and $150,000,000 from the U.S. in 1961 alone; about two-thirds of these supplies went to Egypt before Syria split away.

El Al, Israel's international airline based at Lydda and with offices in twenty-five cities the world over, undertook its first flight in June 1949. Most of its corporate stock is owned by the Israel government, with smaller portions held by large investment groups within Israel. From its start, with DC-3's released by the Air Force, it has managed to bring itself to the forefront of service and speed, from time to time setting new records in flights from New York to England or to Tel Aviv. Its down time is lower than that of any other line, and aside from the gunning down of one of its planes by Bulgaria several years ago, it has never suffered any fatalities. It now uses Boeing 707's and Britannia jet-props to serve cities between New York and Nicosia, Teheran and

Johannesburg. Beginning with pilots from many lands, most of its air crew are now Israelis.

El Al holds 50 percent of the stock of Arkia, Israel's domestic air line, which also operates its DC-3's on charter flights to Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. Its main function is to connect the larger cities (Tel Aviv, Haifa, Rosh Pinah) and to offer speedy connection across the desert with Elath, Israel's port city at the southernmost tip of the country, on the Gulf of Akaba.

Jerusalem, the capital, situated on the tops of many hills, does not boast a scheduled service. Its small airport serves Monavir, an air taxi and charter service run by Miss Rina Levinson. From time to time, attempts are made to establish helicopter flights, mostly for the convenience of tourists. Aviatour and Al-Shem also supply charter services.

Three other civilian air companies round out the picture of Israel aviation. Chim Avir is owned by a farm cooperative, Ihud Hakibutzim, and competes with Marom, a private company, in crop-spraying. Jerry Renov, formerly of Shreveport, Louisiana, has founded an investor-owned company, Kanfey Israel, primarily for spraying, and he owns the only light plane for hire — when it is serviceable.

The Aero Club of Israel, which faces recurrent financial crises, has 70 branches including some at the airports of Tel Aviv, Haifa and Ramat David (a military base in the center of the northern agricultural area). Due to the high cost of equipment and fuel, the emphasis is on gliding, and most powered flight is for towing purposes, although private licenses can be obtained through the club. In 1960, the club had 2,000 members and owned eight Pipers.

The Israeli equivalent of the U.S. Civil Air Patrol exchanges cadet visits with many nations. "Gadna Avir" enrolls many high school boys and girls. It is sponsored and directed

by the military, as is another "Gadna" group for agricultural pioneering and border defense. The purpose of these voluntary groups is to prepare students for universal military conscription, which begins at the age of eighteen. (Women are drafted also, and there are still some in combat units; in the days of the War of Liberation they served in complete equality.) Club meetings are held during the school year, with summer encampments of two or four weeks at Air Force bases. Instruction covers all areas of aviation activity. Regular examinations and physical checkups keep tabs on progress and suitability during the four-year course of study and training.

Israel has no economically useful coal or iron deposits. The country produces (at great expense) enough copper for her own needs, and her oil wells produce 10 percent of her requirements. A third of her population have come in the past fourteen years, from countries where the highest level of mechanical skill was the making of filigree silver. Foreign assistance, in the way of international loans and grants, private contributions (through U.J.A.) and investment (Israel Bonds, etc.) amount to a sum which equals about 20 percent of the national budget. Confidence, careful planning, determination, the wise application of foreign aid and the utilization of foreign advice, have made it possible for a country which is one-third useless desert to build up its aviation industry.

APPENDIX: SPECIAL CREDITS

I would feel remiss if I were not to acknowledge the bonds of comradeship and association which sustained me during the four years described in this book, especially since the adventures were shared by many whose names were not listed in the narrative. With a reminder of the apology voiced in the preface, I hazard a list of those whose lives and experiences touched mine and whose names I am able to conjure up after so many years of lost contact. There are many names unavoidably omitted, others which are no better than nicknames, others who may have forgotten me.

Asher Horowitz of Winnipeg, who left the Seminary College of Jewish Studies in 1940 to serve the Jewish people overseas.

Former members of Hashomer Hadati and other friends from the States who worked and lived and fought in Israel: Chana Stein Azariah, Esther Margolis Bannett, Max Berenblut, Carmi Charney (now T. Carmi), Aaron Feiner, Aryeh Fishman, Batsheva Fishman, Herzl and Priscilla Fishman, Yehiel Fredman, Yehudith Freilich, Yossi Glatt, the Harbaters, Yocheved Herschlag, Miriam Levy Hessel, "Herky," Moshe Klein, Hadassa Kohler, Serena Konowitz, Esther

Krasner, Paul Krauss, Dvora and Zev Lederer, Bernard Lipnick, Asher Marx, David Melmed, Noah Stein, Yitzchak Rosenblum Vardi, Shoshana Hirsch Vardi, Sigi Weil.

Friends acquired in Israel, people from many lands (including the US) and in all walks of life: Pinchas Adler, the Gershon Agrons, Anita Davis, Zusia and Dvora Guzner, Harari, Moshe Helner, Leo and Sylvia Krown, John Lev, Aliza Levine, Ilana May, Joseph Miller, Zippora Ophri, Zvi Opus, "Ozzie" Osrin, Don Peretz, Ilya Rosenberg, Judy and Al Rosenfeld, Sarah and Artie Roth, Moshe Schwartz, Daniel Spicehandler, Ezra Spicehandler, Daniel Shimshoni, Judah Stampfer, Ray Sussman, "Tibby," Hadassah van Friesland, Eliezer Wartman, Jeoffrey Wigoder, Asher Zidon, "Zachik."

The friends who kept alive my contacts with the United States, either through correspondence or through personal visits in Israel: Michael and Claire Arm, Erich Brunngraber, Moshe and Lottie Davis, Jack Diamond, Harold Ewen, Martin Goldstein, Morris Grumer, Stanley and Maureen Kessler, Harold Korbel, Louis Kraft, Jacob Milgrom, Sidney Morgenbesser, Albert Sanders, Jonah Schwartz, Reuven Siegel, Sam and Ahuva Soifer, Howard and Miriam Singer, Paul Steinberg, Paul and Lillian Steinfeld, Harold Stern, Joseph Soffen.

Teachers and mentors whose influence continues to travel with me: Max Arzt, Boaz Cohen, Irwin Edman, Eugene Erdos, Louis Finkelstein, Joseph Fuchs, Louis Ginzberg, Robert Gordis, Simon Greenberg, James Gutmann, Mordecai Kaplan, Otto Klineberg, Saul Lieberman, A. K. Lobeck, Alexander Marx, Gardner Murphy, James McGregor, George Pfeiffer, Herbert Schneider, L. P. Siceloff, Henry Steinbach, Robert von Nardroff, Daniel Weiss, Mr. Westbrook.

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