

**HARTUV
MEMORIES**

AVRAHAM BECHAR



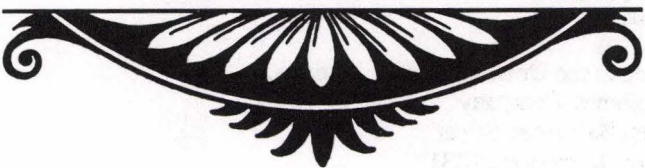
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HARTUY MEMORIES



AVRAHAM BECHAR

The Afikomen Company
1503 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21231

Translated to English from the original Hebrew edition *ZICHRONOT HARTUV* by Corina Shoef. 1989/5749. English translation copyright: Corina Shoef, P.O. Box 227, 99101 Beth Shemesh, Israel.

Book Copyright: 1989/5749 The Avraham Bechar Memorial Foundation, Jerusalem.

Published in the United States of America by:
The Afikomen Company
1503 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21231

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Printed in the United States of America

DEDICATION

In memory of
the founders
of Hartuv,
who struggled
for survival in the
War of Independence.

On the occasion of
the 75th anniversary of the
establishment of the
first agricultural settlement
on the Judean Hills —
the settlement
which was destroyed
in the
War of Independence



The author of "Hartuv Memories," Avraham Bechar, (1896-1976) stands near the ruins of his beloved village.

FOREWORD

Being seventy-three years old, I am sitting down with trembling hand and tearful eye to write these memories of my beloved home, Hartuv.¹ In this way, I wish to build a monument and light a memorial candle in its honor.

Since Hartuv was destroyed and abandoned in the War of Independence, it was forgotten. But I never forgot. For my roots are still deep in its soil amongst the rocks. I was outrooted from Hartuv as a tree from its mother earth.

Ever since the people of Hartuv went on exile from their home on the Judean Hills, I come back from time to time to visit its ruins; breathe its clear, fresh air and remember the heroic resistance of its people against the blood-thirsty enemy.

Our settlement stood alone and distant on the mountain in the country of Samson.² It was a pioneering settlement and the first Jewish link between Jerusalem and the coastal plain. It was amidst Arab villages and a great distance from other Jewish settlements. All the years Hartuv fought bitterly for its survival, not only to cultivate its poor and dried-out soil, but also to overcome attackers and ill-wishers.

The Arabs destroyed Hartuv twice. The first time was in the riots of 1929, but with fierce determination we succeeded in returning. The second time was in the War of Independence in 1948, when we were requested by the authorities to evacuate the place for security reasons, as we were a small island in the sea of Arab attackers. We were a struggling few against many. Several times we stopped them from invading our beloved land; but finally, with heavy hearts and tearful eyes, we had to abandon our homes.

The Hartuv family was scattered, but one thing remains which connects us all—our love and longing for that precious pearl won by sweat and blood, where our fathers and founders are still buried.

For the last 21 years Hartuv stands deserted. The place which was once the first on the Judean Hills is now just a few ruins amid the rocks and trees. There is no monument for Hartuv. It just vanished from all maps of Israel. There is no reminder of its sacrifices and heroism in those harsh, troubled days.

Therefore I wish to write these pages in order to provide a modest monument for our beloved and tragic settlement. I do not pretend to be a historian writing the history of Hartuv. That would be beyond my humble capacity. I am just collecting my very personal memories.

Avraham Bechar 1969
(Son of Hartuv)



Esther Givati, daughter of Avraham Bechar, grew up in Hartuv. Zvi, her husband, a retired Israeli general, is a liaison between the Christian Embassy and the Israeli government.

PREFACE

It is my great honor to write the preface to my father's booklet. He tells of the unknown heroes who lived in the last century; how they left their well-established homes and came to work the land of Eretz-Israel.

We are living in a great and significant period of world history, where each day brings changes in the world. The renewal of the nation of Israel was only made possible by the stubborn efforts of a people who had suffered so much and worked so hard. They were sustained by the hope of the fulfillment of the dream of two thousand years—a restored and secure Israel. To make that dream a reality, they were willing to leave behind all their possessions. Today, for multitudes of Jews, that sacrifice must still be made.

They knew very little about the condition of the country and the hard life that awaited them. But they did know the Bible and the Word of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-2:

"Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

Also Ezekiel 11:17:

"Thus saith the Lord God, 'I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'"

They learned these verses by heart and made them part of their lives.

When they arrived in Israel they bought historical land where Samson had once lived. A few kilometers down in the nearby valley of Haela, the famous battle between David and the giant Goliath took place.

Every time they suffered from their Arab-enemies, they remembered the words of David in I Samuel 17:45:

"Then said David to the Philistines, 'Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.'"

Twice the village of Hartuv was destroyed and rebuilt.

My husband Zvi and I travel throughout Europe and the United States of America to speak in churches about Israel. Our desire is that by these talks, we will help to strengthen the relations between Jews and Christians and so build a bridge of understanding between these two religious groups.

I hope this book will open up a small window for you to view the life

of a pioneer of Israel.

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to Sid and Betsy Rigell for the love and support they have shown to Israel and to us for making it possible to translate and print my father's book.

Many thanks to Corina Shoef for the translation of the booklet from Hebrew to English.

And many, many thanks to all our Christian friends in Denmark, the United States of America and all over the world.

My husband and I love you all and pray that God will bless you. Amen

Esther Givati

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

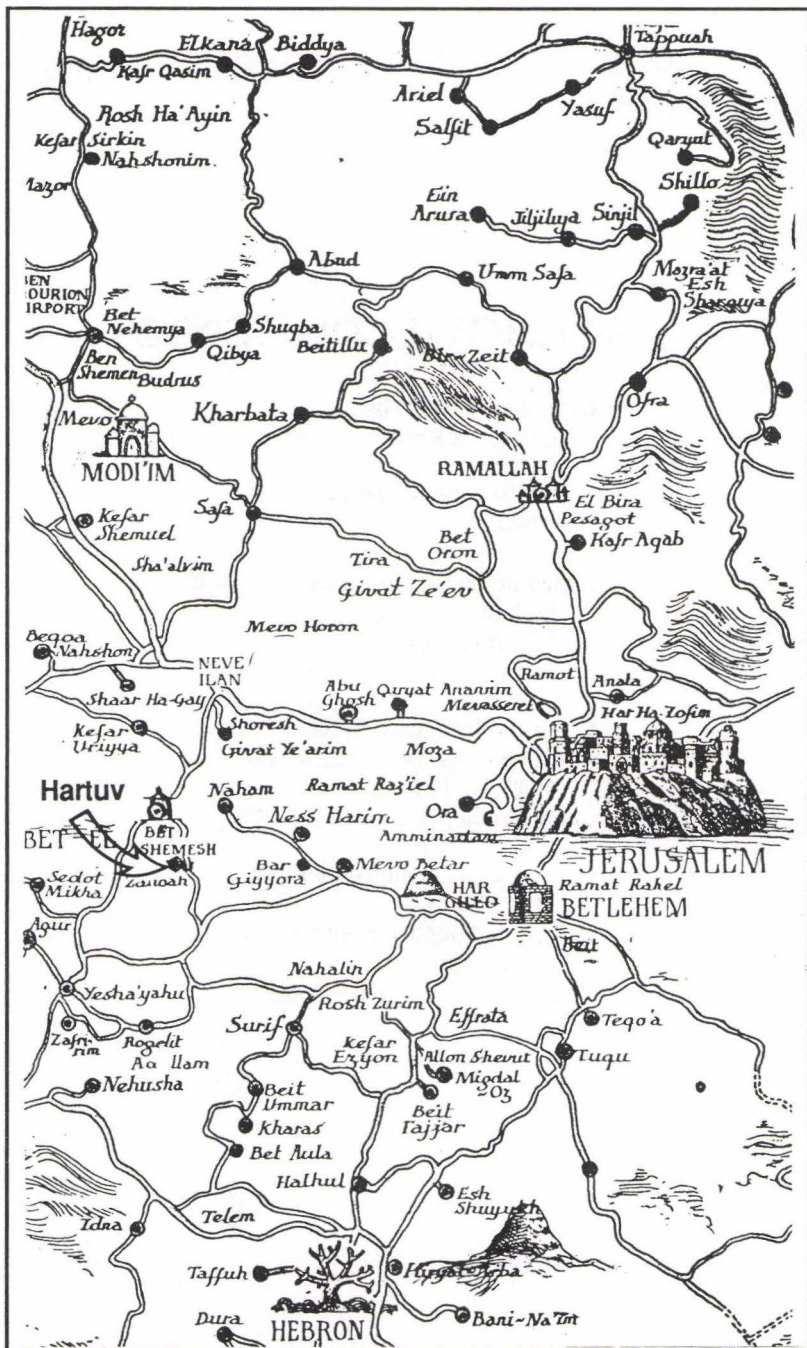
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Nashville, Tennessee 37212

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Printed by Vaughan Printing, Inc.
411 Cowan Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37207





The governor and police commander with the mayors of all the Arab villages (Avraham Bechar is standing in the second row, far left).



Old ruined houses of Hartuv.

Aliza's mother's
home was SIDI.

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Top: The inauguration of the Hartuv School in 1921
 Bottom: Refugees after the 1929 Arab riots

her mother's
 great-
 grand-father

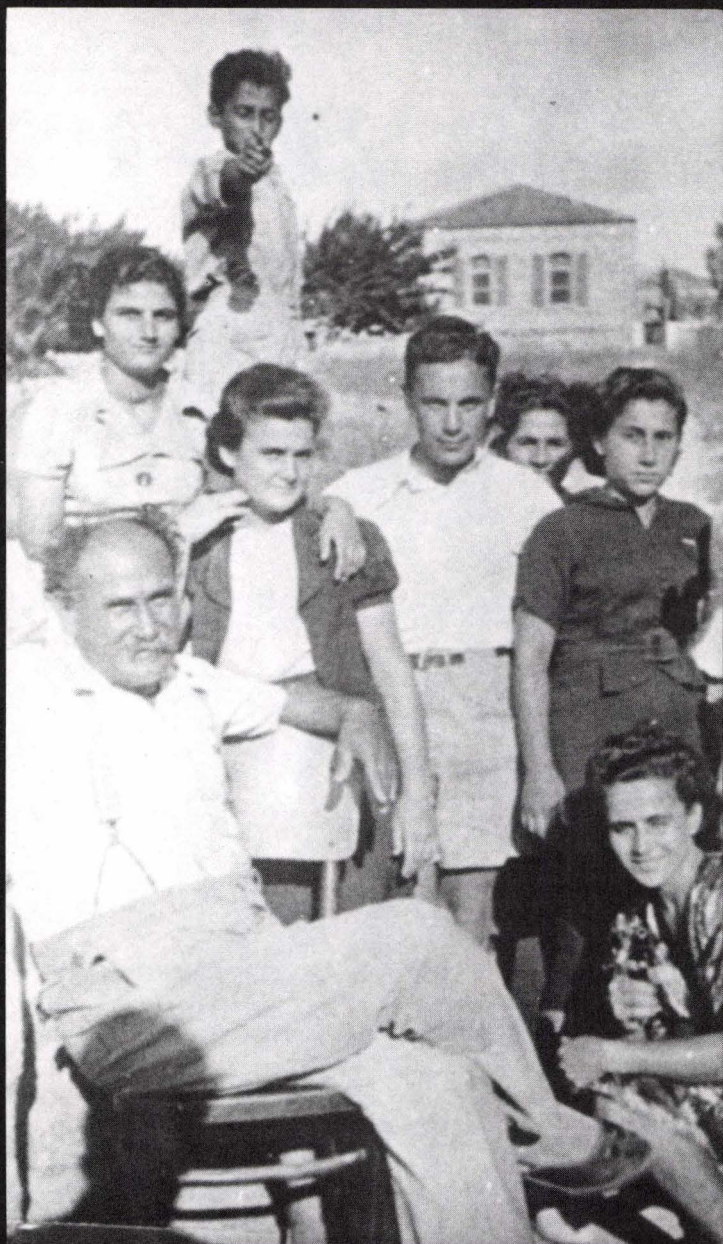
117'2 חלוצי ALIZA KATZ



*Top: Hartuv Station in 1930
Bottom: 1936 recruits*



Yitzhak Levi and his family in front of their house



A group of the Hartuv residents in Gavriel Levi's yard



Top: The house of Avraham Levi became the front bunker during the Hebron Massacre.

Bottom: Hartuv veterans visit the old graveyard.

TWELVE BROTHERS FROM BULGARIA

Those interested in the history of the Bulgarian settlers in the Land of Israel can go as far back as the beginning of the Zionist movement. Even the great leader, Dr. Benjamin Zeev Herzl, wrote in his diary about the great fervor he found among the Bulgarian Jews.

That same enthusiasm brought about the first settlement on the Judean Hills.

Hartuv was founded in 1895. The first group, Agudat-Achim³ (the Brothers), included 50 members from different towns in Bulgaria. They were mostly merchants who knew nothing about farming. After the land was bought, they decided to send to Israel 12 families representing the 12 tribes of Israel. They were called the "Twelve Brothers". They were supposed to prepare the land and whatever was necessary for the rest of the group which would arrive later.

The pioneering families were: Yosef Levi—eight people; Israel Giron—eight people; Yehuda Ben-Bassat—five people (all from the town Tatar Pazardzhik); Avaraham Garti—eight people; Rafael Ben-Arova—six people (all from Plibe); Nissim Cohen and his wife, Yitzhak Tzarfati—six people (all from Sofia); Shalom Yehuda Bechar—six people; Shalom Rubissa—four people (all from Plone). The other three families left only a few years after arrival.

The land purchase was in itself an intriguing business. The land changed owners a few times before ending up in Jewish hands. The five thousand dunam (one dunam equals 1000 square meters) which were bought by the Bulgarian group belonged to the Arab village of Artuf situated only 100 meters from the settlement. The land was auctioned by the Turkish government which ruled the area, after the Arab village couldn't pay the sum of 250 Napoleons⁴ to cover their debt of taxes.

Next the land was sold to the Spanish Consul in Jerusalem. Later it was bought by the Anglican Mission,⁵ which permitted some poor Jewish immigrants mainly from Russia and Rumania to settle there while hoping eventually to convert them. This project started in 1885. The Mission built eight two-story houses, a big yard, including sheds, and a tall stone wall with two gates. Nearby there was a smaller yard with buildings, stores, a bakery, a laundry and a big dovecote. All the buildings were bordering the Arab village.

After the Mission's experiment failed, the land and buildings were sold to the Bulgarian Jews, and thus came the twelve pioneering families to a place where there were already homes to live in and sheds for their animals.

Hartuv didn't have a protector or savior, such as the Baron Rothschild, the IKA⁶ or other Zionist institutions. The pioneers themselves had to overcome the difficulties of their new settlement. One of the greatest

problems was the refusal of the Turkish authorities, according to a decree from the government in Kusta (Constantinople), to give the Jews a Kushan (i.e. private ownership of the land) and particularly not on the agricultural area. For this reason the settlers of Hartuv could not divide the land but had to cultivate it together. The crops were shared according to the number of people in each family. The sowing and harvesting were done by Arabs from the village of Artuf, and the crops were divided equally between Jews and Arabs.

In the first years the settlers didn't know how to sow and harvest. The Arabs taught them their agricultural skills by showing them how to harvest the wheat with a sickle and how to thresh it in the barn.

Life for those 50 people on the mountain was very hard. They were surrounded by Arabs who didn't understand their language. Most of the settlers knew Turkish⁷ rather well, but the villagers only spoke Arabic. The lack of a common language caused a lot of misunderstandings. Most difficult were the nights because of thieves, who stole anything they happened to find.

Eventually we found a savior, a Jew from Damascus named Albert Antebi,⁸ who was at that time the principal of the Alliance School⁹ in Jerusalem. He had great influence over the Pasha of Jerusalem. It was Yitzhak Levi, son of Yosef Levi, who made the contact with Antebi. Yitzhak was an ex-student of the Alliance School in Bulgaria and spoke fluent French and Turkish. He became friendly with Albert Antebi and told him about the troubles of the small, isolated settlement. Thanks to him, we found a local landlord named Mussa Kazas Husseini from the famous Husseini family, who had a big farm in the village of Beit-Susin (today Moshav Tarom) and had great influence in the Arab villages of the area. We asked the Efendi (landlord) to take Hartuv under his protection, and he agreed. He told all the Arab villages that from that day on, the people of Hartuv are to be considered equal to any Arab village in the area, and no one dare bother them. Thus we achieved a little quiet and could sleep safely at night.

PIONEERING DIFFICULTIES

Meanwhile the pioneers were sending letters to the rest of the group left in Bulgaria. They explained there was no room for more families in the settlement, as life conditions were harsh. The land was not very fruitful, and the few families could hardly make a living. The rest of the group gave up their rights and remained in Bulgaria.

After that, we tried to find a way to get our Kushan (deed) to the land. Because this money was not available to us we were able to get a 20-year

loan from IKA through the intervention of Yitzhak Levi, Albert Antebi and Chemdah Ben-Yehuda.¹⁰ Blessed be their memory. It also cost us the *bakshish* (bribe) we gave the Turkish functionaries, and we succeeded to get our Kushan. The cost was 5000 Napoleons. Now we had the Kushan, but there was no money left for tools and livestock.

In 1912 we got some relief from the Zionist, Yitzhak Goldenberg, who came to Israel and bought 1000 dunam from Hartuv for five Napoleons per dunam. With this money we purchased some animals, tools, seeds, two goats, a donkey and a camel, which served then as the means of transportation instead of a car or cart.

Then came some prosperity. We began to feel some relief. After years of working in collaboration with the Arabs, some of the farmers were already working on their lands by themselves. As the wheat crops were not enough for supporting the families, which were usually numerous and badly fed, each settler was starting to find alternative ways to make an income.

Israel Giron and his sons were cultivating their land. The Levi brothers started producing hyssop oil.¹¹ After awhile they built a mill, where all the farmers of the area could grind their wheat. They also built a modern olive oil press. This became famous all over the area, and thanks to it, we were becoming friendly with the neighboring Arabs as far as Mount Hebron.

Shalom Bechar and his sons built a dairy, where they produced many sorts of cheese from sheep milk. They even got a prize for their products at the Argicultural Exhibition in Rehovot. At first the milk was obtained from the Arabs of the area, but after awhile we bought a herd of 300 sheep. We also planted grapes and almond groves.

Avraham Gerti and Nissim Franzi established a grocery-general store. Shalom Rubisso (Ben-Shalom) made a business of drying wild flowers and sending them as souvenirs from the Holy Land to America before X-mas. For this work he employed a few Arab women in the high season.

Among the others which dealt with dairy products were also the Giron brothers, the Levi brothers, Nissim Franzi and the Bechar family. The Girones also planted grapes and almond groves. In this way, each of the settlers found a way to make his living, as growing wheat was not profitable enough.

From that period I have a vivid memory of a summer day in the threshing season. Both Jews and Arabs from Artuf were working in the barn. Suddenly a raging bull charged in. Everyone started to run from it. Only my father, Shalom Bechar, stood still. When the bull came towards him, he caught its horns, fought with it, threw it to the ground and straddled it. This incident made a strong impression on the Arabs. From then on, they treated my father with great respect.

Some time later there was another incident which scared our neigh-

bors. An Arab with his herd of goats entered our vineyard. My father fetched a big kitchen knife, went out to the herd and slaughtered ten goats in front of the astonished shepherd.

"If you dare to come here again with your herd, I'll kill twenty," my father warned him. The incident happened before the First World War. Ever since, the Arabs didn't dare provoke my father, who was greatly honored by them.

At the beginning of the war a plague of locusts attacked us. Hartuv's color turned into a shade of gray like the rocks around. The locusts chewed everything. Every piece of green. There remained nothing of the vineyard. In our almond grove there were only some dried branches left. The locusts devastated our entire work.

In all the area there were no roads at that time. There was only a dirt path for donkeys and camels. We were fortunate that when we settled in Hartuv, a Turkish train between Jaffa and Jerusalem¹² was already functioning. At first the train traveled slowly once a day. After awhile, it came twice a day. It had a stop in Hartuv, so we could use this only means of transportation to come to Jerusalem or to the coastal plain.

We didn't have any drinking water, so we had to bring water in jars on our donkeys from the Arab village of Istua (today: Moshav Eshtaol) three kilometers away. For the Arab's praise, it must be said they never charged any money for it. We had a friendly relationship with them. They said the water belongs to Our Holy Father, and all thirsty people are welcome to come and take from it.

After some time the settlers found water at 12 meters below the surface by digging in the valley near the settlement. This water was enough for drinking and watering small vegetable plots.

Many problems needed solutions in those pioneering days. We didn't have a doctor. All our illnesses were treated by home-made medicines—mainly herbs and plants. For belly aches, for example, you were given a glass of arrak,¹³ with a spoon of black pepper, which actually burned your intestines until you forgot the pain. Wounds were treated with a cream cooked of bran, soap and egg. For snake bite the victim would be given a whole bottle of arrak to drink until he lost consciousness. Sometimes it helped! I remember we also saved a few Arabs in this way. Once we even saved one of the animals with a bottle of arrak. Births were an even more serious ordeal. When a woman was about to give birth, we employed a midwife from Jerusalem who lived full-time with the family—sometimes a month or more—until the woman gave birth.

When we became somewhat more prosperous, we started to take our products on donkeys or camels to Jerusalem where we sold hay, rye and sorghum. The journey usually took a whole night. Many times we were attacked by robbers who stole our animals.

After the First World War, we started to grow vegetables which didn't

need watering. Those, together with our milk products, we sold from door to door in Jerusalem. In this way we could make a better profit.

When the British conquered the country up to the Sorek River and Hartuv Station during the First World War, they built a road from Hartuv to Bab-El-Wad (on the main road Jaffa-Jerusalem) in order to get supplies from Hartuv to their troops advancing towards Jerusalem. Thus, Hartuv was then connected by road which helped us transport our products by our own carts without having to pay the railroad for it.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

I was 16 years old when the war started. In those days the Turks were enlisting all the Jewish youth into the army and had them build roads and fortifications. Those who refused could pay a ransom. One evening, Levi, the Muchtar (head) of the village, called me and said, "You must travel to Jerusalem. I'll give you a letter to someone who will pay the ransom for all of us. You bring me the receipt so we can deliver it to the police."

I asked, "How shall I travel?"

He said, "I'll give you my horse."

I disguised myself as a Turkish officer with a Kolpak (special hat worn by Turkish officers), boots, a gun, a whip and a whistle. In the night's darkness I rode towards Jerusalem. In this way I passed the army guards, but at the Castel,¹⁴ I suddenly saw the guards searching for animals in order to confiscate them for the army's needs. I didn't know what to do. Fortunately, one of the men came to me, saluted, and asked if I saw any good animals on my way. I summoned all my courage and answered, "Yes, I saw some animals, but they were rather a long way from here."

The man saluted again and went away. I continued my journey to Jerusalem and was able to bring the receipt back to Hartuv. When I returned home, the policeman who came to take my father and the Levi brothers was sitting there waiting for me.

After some time, I was also called to the army. As it happened, the chief of the Jerusalem police and some cavalry soldiers were out to catch two Arabs from Dar-Egn who deserted. Those two were caught and executed that same day in the barn of their village in front of all the people. After the mission was accomplished and the chief and soldiers were on their way back to Jerusalem, my father and Mr. Levi invited them for dinner. They spent the night with the Levi family.

In the morning, the Chief of Police asked my father, "Who is Avraham Shalom Bechar?"

"He's my son," my father answered.

"Your son has to report for duty," the chief said. "He looks rather

young, but an order is an order."

My father replied: "We are all obedient to His Royal Highness, the Sultan."

After enjoying coffee and sweets, the high ranking officer told my father he would give me a month's leave. Perhaps the war would end in the meantime.

After a month, the war didn't end. I traveled with my father to Jerusalem. He brought with him a nice big round piece of Caskaval¹⁵ cheese which he offered the chief. Because of this, my duty was postponed for two more months. Still the war was not over. Another cavalry soldier came to take me, but with payment of one mageda¹⁶ I could remain at home. After that I was employed in different war work but never sent to the front. For eight months I transported by camel olive wood from the Arab villages to the Hartuv station. The wood was used for firing the engines.

I remember well one great incident which happened just before the war. One day it was announced that the Baron Abraham Benjamin de Rothschild (Edmond de Rothschild)¹⁷ would pass Hartuv on the train to Jerusalem. It was 1914. We gave him a reception with bread and salt¹⁸ and asked him to help in building a school and an infirmary. He agreed and ordered his assistant in Jaffa to send us the necessary sum. Then the war broke out, and the building was postponed until 1920, when it was built according to plan. If one digs today on the southern corner of the school's ruin, he will certainly find the bottle containing a scroll with the entire story of the building.

We had great hopes for the farm built by Goldenberg on the 1000 dunam we sold him, but it was not a success. The manager did not understand much about agriculture and didn't know how to develop the farm. The deficits were growing, and the income was not enough to pay the workers. The war also made it difficult for Goldenberg to renew the organization. Finally he gave up the land on behalf of the Karem Ha-Kayemet L'Israel¹⁹ (The Jewish National Fund).

SUSPECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH NILI

From the period of the First World War, I remember vividly a few events. When the big search for the NILI²⁰ members suspected of espionage began, an Arab officer and a Turkish sergeant with a troop of policemen came to Hartuv. They went directly to Goldenberg's farm, confiscated some of the buildings and imprisoned all the men of the settlement, including the farm manager, Becker; the teacher, Edelson; Gavriel Levi;

Israel Levi; Shlomo Giron; Yehuda Ben-Aroya, Moshe Ben-Aroya and Yehuda Bechar.

Yitzhak Levi was not at home that day. He went to some Arab villages to collect seeds for the government. My father was entertaining the Arab officer, whom he had known previously. As they sat in our house drinking coffee, my father said, "Don't you dare arrest our sons, because they have no connection with espionage."

The presence of the Turkish sergeant prevented the Arab to grant my father's wish. After some discussion, they wanted to arrest my father along with the rest. But as they got drunk, we sent a messenger to Yitzhak Levi to call him back immediately. My task was to go to the Arab village Malha, to the Darvish family, about whom I shall tell later. On the way, I had to pass through the robbers' village Dar-a-Sheik. Those people kept resenting us since we killed one of them. I again wore the officer's uniform and by evening I arrived at Dar-a-Sheik. Luckily, at the station there was a passenger train loaded with dried olive branches on its way to Batir²¹ and further to Jerusalem. Levi was on that train! He had heard about the arrests in Hartuv. I got off at Batir and continued to walk to Malha to the Darvish family. In their yard were assembled Arabs from all over the area. The sheik's brother took me to the loft and offered me coffee. He told me his brother wouldn't return from Jerusalem until after midnight.

When the sheik returned I told him about the arrests in Hartuv and arranged a place for him to meet with Mr. Levi in Jerusalem. The sheik had great influence. He provided me with a letter which enabled me to travel freely and bring food to those arrested. On Friday—so well I remember that day—Mr. Levi and I arrived to Beit-Hakal in Jerusalem. Because we paid a bribe of 39 Napoleons, which was a considerable sum in those days, all the prisoners were freed. They were provided with release papers which defined them as "holy ones" (meaning clergy), who were exempted from army service and above any suspicion. The man we bribed claimed to the prison authorities that he received his orders from Kushta.

Together with the released prisoners we started our journey back to Hartuv through the mountains and arrived home late at night on Shabbat Eve.

On Sunday there was a rumor that the front was coming closer towards Wadi Srar and Hulda.²² It was said that one could even hear the canons. The next day some Arabs from Zar'a came to us and mentioned the battlefield could be seen from one of the nearby hills. As an adventure, Yitzhak and Gavriel Levi, Moshe Ben-Aroya and I went to that hill, because we wanted to see what a war looked like and how one fought. After climbing the hill, we met a Turkish officer with his platoon. He ordered us to raise our hands. We explained why we came, and he let us watch.

Yitzhak Levi, blessed be his memory, who was then the Muchtar of Hartuv, was greatly honored by our Arab neighbors, especially after sav-

ing the sheik of Beit-Natif²³ (today: Kibbutz Netiv Ha-Lamed-He). The Turks suspected the sheik was helping a band of robbers, who stole from the Turkish army. They hanged the sheik from his shoulders on an olive tree until he was almost dead.

Yitzhak Levi was present with some Arab Muchtars. After the hanged sheik appealed to him begging, "Ya Hawaga (Sir) Levi! I'm dying. Please help me!"

Levi spoke to the commander in Turkish, "Let him down. I guarantee with my honor that the shiek is innocent. Please free all his villagers. Keep as a pledge their cattle, sheep, goats and camels, until we catch those robbers, and I do hope we shall catch them."

The commander, his men, and all the Muchtars including Levi rode to the village Malha to the famous Darvish family. The family took upon itself to bring the robbers alive or dead. And so it was. It turned out that the band ran across the Jordan river and hid with a Bedouin tribe. Some policemen in civilian clothes followed and caught them. The leaders were chained, but on the way back they tried to escape and were shot dead.

Yitzhak Levi returned as a victor. All the Muchtars came to thank him for saving the Muchtar of Beit Natif and the other arrested villagers.

THE FRONT IS GETTING NEARER

The battlefield between the Turks and British was getting closer to Hartuv. We could hear the canons. One day, a Turkish high commander with a few other officers came to Hartuv. We bade them welcome and provided their needs which pleased them very much. It so happened the manager of the Hartuv Station had complained that very week to this same commander about three Arabs from Dir-Abn and Istua who had robbed the stores at the station and stolen flour and guns belonging to the government. The thieves were supposed to be sent to Jerusalem. We went out with the soldiers to those two Arab villages and caught the suspects. A third one was not caught, so we brought his parents and the village Muchtar instead.

As a result, the Muchtars from the area came to Yitzhak Levi and asked him to investigate the matter thoroughly. They promised to bring the robber early the next day. The Muchtar of Hartuv agreed and appealed to the Turkish commander to release the imprisoned parents and the village Muchtar, so they could help find the suspect. The commander said suspiciously, "Look, Jew, it's time of war. Those three deserve the death penalty. If tomorrow morning you don't bring the third robber, you will come in his place, Mr. Levi, and nothing will help you."

Levi replied, "So be it, Sir!"

The robber's parents were discharged with Levi's guarantee. He took

upon himself a great responsibility.

That night the commander told us that the front was coming nearer and might arrive the next day to Hartuv. He said, "It would be a good idea to find a big cave where you could hide until everything is over."

We searched the area and found a cave nearby, which could hold all 50 settlers. Because we didn't know how long the fighting would last, we made emergency plans giving each one a task taking care of food and water provisions for a few days.

According to the Turkish army and from the amount of weapons we saw, we supposed it would last a few hours. Nevertheless, a war is a war!

YITZHAK LEVI'S CONTRIVANCE

Coming home at midnight, after checking out the cave, we got a message from the army that the British had changed direction and were advancing towards Bab-el-Wad.²⁴ The high commander was afraid of being surrounded and gave orders to retreat through the mountains towards Jerusalem.

The commander called Yitzhak Levi, the Muchtar, and demanded the Arab suspect for whose delivery he had guaranteed. "I must have him now!" the Turk said impatiently. "I have no time to wait until tomorrow!"

Levi replied, "Sir, I keep my word, and as we agreed, I will deliver him by 10 o'clock tomorrow, or I will come in his stead."

The Turk calmed down and said, "Jew, you are a lucky man. I ate at your table, and because you treated me so well, that stands in your favor. Farewell, and thank you for the honor you bestowed upon me and my soldiers."

Levi was stunned and couldn't believe his ears.

The next day we saw scores of Arabs from Dir-Abn approaching us. We didn't know what it meant. Because there was the confusion of one army leaving and the other approaching, we feared the Arab neighbors were coming to attack us. We were wondering what to do to protect ourselves.

Three Muchtars, together with the families of those two already captured for the robbery at the station, went on their knees in front of Levi, crying and begging.

He asked, "What happened?"

They told him the retreating army had taken the two suspects.

The families begged Levi to do what he could to bring them back, as the suspects were facing sure death. Levi calmed them and promised that *Ish-Allah* (God willing) he would bring them back alive and well. He asked two of their family members to join him and urged the rest to return

to their villages.

So what did Levi do? Riding his noble mare, he took some phone cables left behind by the retreating Turks. He caught up with them on the mountains, around the place where today is the village of Kessalon. Actually he was entering into the battle zone where bombs and rockets were flying overhead.

Through his field glasses the Turkish commander recognized the Jewish Muchtar from Hartuv hurrying towards him, and he sent his sergeant to receive him.

Levi's plan ended successfully. The amazed commander asked him the reason for his crazy action of entering the battle zone.

Levi took the forgotten telephone cables and said, "Sir, you forgot this valuable property at our place. We took the risk in order to bring it back to you, as we thought you might need it for the war effort."

The Turk smiled and said, "Tell me the truth, Jew, and I'll grant your request. I like you."

Levi replied, "Honorable Sir! We are left without any protector, with no police and no army. We are just a few Jews, and all the Arab villages around us might attack us and kill us unless I bring back those two prisoners. Ask whatever you wish from me. I am willing to serve you, but please, don't let me go back without those two Arabs. I'd rather be dead here at the front than see my whole village slaughtered."

The Turkish commander replied, "Very well, it will be as you said!" and he ordered the two prisoners to be delivered.

There was great cheering on Levi's return, as the two happy released prisoners came marching behind his horse. We were all relieved. We knew that after Levi's deed, no Arab would dare touch us.

The next day the first English troops arrived from the direction of Sha'ar Hagai. A British-Jewish soldier suggested that we provide fresh bread, eggs, and other products to the troops at Sha'ar Hagai. And so we did. We earned rather nicely from the British army, and with that came an end to our war troubles.

THE ARAB RIOTS

When the riots of 1921 broke out in Jerusalem, the Muchtar of Dir-Ayub near Sha'ar Hagai came to us and told us he was ready to come with thirty men to protect us from rioters. He promised to return with his men that night, but Levi didn't trust him and telephoned from the Hartuv Station to the Jerusalem police commander, Major Wineright. The Major promised to send a division by train to Hartuv. They arrived on a special train at 8:00 p.m. the same time as the Muchtar and his men from Dir-Ayub. Two Muchtars also came from the village of Tzara in order to pro-

tect us. We and the Arabs assembled in Yitzhak Levi's big house. When the soldiers arrived, they ordered the Arabs to return to their villages. Before they went, Levi fired a red lighting-rocket so they would be able to see their way. He thanked them for their willingness to stand by us, but as the army was there, they could return safely home.

The next morning we heard that Kfar Uria,²⁵ some two hours ride from us, was attacked. With seven British soldiers we went there and were happy to find that no harm was done. The Muchtar of Kfar Uria told us that the Arab Muchtars from the area also came to protect them, so they came to no harm. After a few days the whole area calmed down. Everything returned to normal. The economic situation improved and continued until 1929.

THE TIME OF THE BIG HEBRON MASSACRE²⁶

After the Friday prayers in the mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem the trouble started. The Moslem preachers had incited the heated crowds to riot.

That Friday, I was sitting with my father outside our home, which was half a kilometer away from the village. We saw a few Arabs whom we knew coming back from their prayers. They told us the situation in Jerusalem was getting worse, that riots might break out and spread all over the country. "God help you!" they whispered quietly and hurried away.

Indeed, at midnight that Shabbat Eve, some rioters came to steal from our sheep-yard where we had about 150 head. The shepherd heard them and cried for help. We took our weapons and started to fire. The intruders escaped. Usually when we had sent for help from the Arabs of Artuf, they came immediately, but this time nobody dared.

The next day one of the sheiks in the area came as a friend to tell us he heard the situation was getting worse. It was rumored the rioters intended to attack Hartuv that Saturday night. He promised to try to persuade whomever he could not to carry out their threat as "the Jews of Hartuv are the people of this land."

Because the many rumors started to worry us, we tried to get organized to protect ourselves. We telephoned an acquaintance, the Chief of Lod Railway Station, who promised he would try to send us some military protection.

After dark the Muchtar of Artuf came and offered to hide us in his village. He stated they have some big well-protected buildings, where they

would shelter us until their last drop of blood. As we didn't have any better solution, we decided to accept his offer and started to walk towards the Arab village, which was no more than 100 meters from us.

Suddenly we heard Mr. Appel, the manager of the Goldenberg farm shouting, "My friends, what are you doing? You are giving yourselves into the hands of the Arabs! It's madness! Come back! Let's retreat to Levi's house, and the men will defend everybody."

And so we did. The men, members of the Hagana,²⁷ began organizing the defense of the massive building where we gathered. During this time a big crowd, singing and shooting, was approaching Hartuv from the Arab village of Dir-Abn. At 8:00 p.m. they arrived at the Goldenberg farm and started looting it and the neighboring houses. Several times they tried to get closer to the Levi's house, but we shot at them and they retreated. That continued some hours, until an Arab shouted Levi's name and said he had some important business with him. He asked us not to open fire. We recognized him. He was the Arab who had saved me from death by the Turks. Three Arabs came up to us saying, "Don't worry. We won't hurt you. We will only loot."

They were trying to convince the heated *shabab* (the crowd) to be satisfied with the looting and then retreat. They tried their best without much success until 3:00 a.m. Then some headlights were seen coming from Sha'ar Hagai. We didn't know if it was the army coming to our aid or some more rioters. When the car came closer we began to fire from ten guns simultaneously, and they sounded like a machine-gun. Then we saw a green lighting-rocket and understood it was the army. They didn't know the way up to our village. We sent a youngster who could talk English down to guide them. There were only two armored cars which came to check whether we had any injured.

We reported, "We are all well, thank God," and they continued on their patrol of the area. They said they had to get to all the other settlements, as the situation was bad everywhere. Before they left, we asked them to fire a few shots from their machine-gun to frighten the Arabs, and they did. The crowd from Dir-Abn retreated. We sent one of our men with the soldiers to try to get to Tel Aviv and call for reinforcement.

THE FIRST DESTRUCTION

After the armored cars disappeared the area was quiet again. We all wondered, "Should we stay and prepare ourselves for whatever might come; or should we evacuate the settlement and go to Tel Aviv?" The majority decided that due to the situation, the only possible way to be saved from being slaughtered was to go to Tel Aviv.

At five o'clock in the morning, we started to leave. The evacuation was made in a hurry, but we were quite organized. Each one was responsible for himself and his family. While one was still packing; the other might already be at the station. Some of the sick we had to take on stretchers. My concern was about the possessions we couldn't take with us. I noticed that all the weapons were left behind, and those on their way to the station were unarmed—a fact in itself dangerous—especially as we saw Arabs approaching on horses from Hebron. I summoned two youngsters, and together we collected all the weapons in a blanket, filled our pockets with bullets, and carried the blanket on our shoulders as if it was the body of a dead person. Thus we arrived at the station. We slid the bolt on the door and locked ourselves inside the building, which was of solid stone, until the train to Tel Aviv arrived. We wouldn't let any Arab approach, even those from Artuf who came to say good-bye. Afraid there might be British troops in it, the riders from Hebron didn't come toward the station. They were waiting under the olive trees in the area until everyone left. After we were all safely inside the train we could see the riders rushing to loot the houses of Hartuv.

From Hartuv to Lod we were full of fear. In Ramla we were afraid the Arabs might see we were Jewish travelers and come to kill us.

Thinking of what might be taking place at that time in deserted Hartuv under the hands of the mob, we were very depressed. The British station manager of Lod was an old friend of ours, and he tried to comfort us.

In Tel Aviv the Hagana people and the young man we had sent the previous night were waiting for us at the station. They took care of us and our needs. Lodged in a school until the riots calmed down, we lived as refugees in Tel Aviv for quite some time.

Some of our Arab neighbors from Artuf came to visit us to see how we were doing. There were also some real friends amongst our neighbors and some rays of light in those darkened days.

One day an Arab from Artuf was walking on a street in Tel Aviv. Suddenly a Jew came towards him and started to hug and kiss him. It turned out that the Arab had saved the man and his family from death. The Jewish family was on holiday near Hebron, and the Arab hid the family and took care of all their needs, until it was possible to deliver them to the British police, who transferred them to Tel Aviv.

It was also known that the people of Kfar Uria were saved from slaughter by friendly Arabs who helped them escape by night to Rehovot.

After the riots ended we were still camping in Tel Aviv, as all of our houses were totally destroyed by the rioters. In order to be able to return, we would have to reconstruct everything from scratch. It was not only a question of money, but also of time. We needed at least one year to rebuild the houses, while we would have to look for alternative means to make a living, even though the Jewish institutions were helping us by do-

nating for our keep.

While still looking for a job in Tel Aviv, I met an acquaintance from Petach Tikvah, Mr. Segal, at whose cow-shed my brother was working. The man was in need of sheep manure for his orange grove. He asked if I could find some and deliver it to him. Now, where did one find sheep manure? In Hebron, of course!

Without much thought I went back to Hartuv and took two Arab friends to help me with the deal. We traveled to Hebron via Jerusalem. I was dressed as an Arab, and on the way, I could hear some Hebronites boast about what they did to the Jews and how they slaughtered them.

As my Arabic was perfect, no one could tell I was not an Arab. During the entire trip my friends didn't say a word, but coming into Hebron, I could feel they were worried. They said I shouldn't have come to Hebron, but what was done was done.

We found a merchant who was prepared to sell us sheep manure. After we agreed about a price, he insisted on making a contract as it involved a rather large sum. I asked for 5000 sacks for the price of 100 grush each.

When the merchant asked for my name, I gave him my real one. He asked if I were a Jew. I told him yes and asked if he minded doing business with me.

He answered, "Not necessarily." He said he suspected I was not an Arab, as my Arabic was too "clean". "I thought you were a Christian from Trans-Jordan," he said.

We signed a contract, and I paid him 200 liras in advance. My two Arab companions stayed overnight in order to collect the stuff the next day and transport it to Petach Tikvah. From then on, we continued for some years to provide manure for the orange groves of Hahotea, the Sharon area and Rishon Le Zion.

As refugees in Tel Aviv we had to stay a whole year until all our houses were again fit to be lived in, and we could go back to our beloved village. Immediately after our return, the Arab neighbors came to us to make a *sulha* (a peace party), but we refused unless they would return the loot. So all those who had stolen our possessions returned them to us and promised they would never do such a thing again. Once more we started to live peacefully with our neighbors.

THE RIOTS OF 1936

In the riots of 1936-39 Hartuv was not touched. At that time I was Muchtar of the village.

This time, no matter what happened, we were determined not to leave

again. We built fortifications, two emergency buildings and a wire fence around the village. I was in permanent contact with the Jewish organizations and received any help we needed. The heads of the Kofer Ha-Ishuv Organization²⁸ were Rabbi Bar-Ilan²⁹ and Israel Rokach, mayor of Tel Aviv—blessed be their memories. Both were very attentive to our needs for protection. The Hagana sent us reinforcements, and the authorities posted a few local policemen. This time we had 50 fighters, plus the 10 policemen stationed at Hartuv Police Headquarters.

I had excellent contact with Major Wineright, Chief of the Jerusalem Police, which enabled us to get two machine guns and some bombs, guns and other ammunition. I also asked Major Wineright for a field glass, but he said this I could get from the Jewish Agency.

By 1938 as the riots increased, Major Wineright came to me while we were busy building the fence and said, "I am amazed that so far nothing has happened to you. Every Jewish settlement was hit. And you—such a little place surrounded by Arabs—were never harmed! How can you explain this?"

I answered, "From your question I understand that you intend to take your men away from here."

He assured me it was not so.

We continued our preparation and vigil and avoided going out in the field. Thus we came to no harm. The Arab Muchtars kept their promise and didn't let any rioters near their villages to incite their people. Every day our Arab friends would come to have coffee with us and inform us of the news in the area.

One of our greatest worries in those years was the shortage of water, as the only well was quite far away. Besides our people and the guards, we also had the ten horses of the policemen needing water. We didn't want to risk sending our people on the long dangerous trip to start the pump.

The British sergeant and I went to meet the Muchtar of Istua where the well was situated to try to make an arrangement to send the water downhill, so there would be no need for the pump. The Muchtars agreed only if the water would be transferred to the police station; not to the Jewish settlement, Hartuv, because if they did so, the terrorists might blow up the well. They even put a guard on a hill to make sure the Jews didn't get the water.

When they discovered that someone from Hartuv did use the water for the oil factory, the Muchtars cut off the water supply and told the police headquarters that they would bring them water on their donkeys for the police needs only. At night we would walk to the police station and get a little water for drinking.

When a British army officer in charge of the station came to visit me, I offered him cognac and beer. He asked for a glass of water. I told him, "I can offer you as much cognac and beer as you wish, but unfortunately,

water is too dear." I told him the whole situation. He directed that each household should prepare four buckets, and he would send an army vehicle to distribute water. Finally the water problem was solved.

One day the police sergeant came to inform me that he received a message that a big Arab crowd was on its way to attack Hartuv. I asked him what to do, and he started to swear about his commander not sending him enough men and weapons. Trying to gain my confidence the sergeant said, "I know you have illegal arms. Bring them to the police station, so we can clean them and make sure they are in order."

I played my part and answered that we were law abiders, and according to law, whoever keeps illegal arms was in danger of the death sentence. I suspected his intentions were not all that pure.

He added, "I promise you as an English gentleman that you will come to no harm if, in order to prepare ourselves, you bring out the illegal arms. Should an officer come by, I'll tell him we found the arms in one of the caves."

I had no reason to doubt the man's friendship, so in spite of my suspicions, I decided to trust him. I ordered the Hagana sergeant to bring all the weapons. After half an hour they were all collected. The English sergeant brought eight British policemen and ordered them to check and clean all the arms, including six guns, a few handguns and three hand grenades. The sergeant warned the policemen not to say a word about the whole business, and they all gave their gentleman's word of honor to keep the secret. We hid the arms under a sofa on which the sergeant slept.

He gave the hand grenades back to the Hagana people then told me that in case he would be transferred to another post, he would return all our weapons to us. And, so it was. When he received an order to be transferred a month later, he asked me to send some of our men to get the weapons we had loaned him. Everything was returned to us in perfect condition.

On the other hand, my decision to trust the British sergeant with our weapons was severely criticized, and the Hagana high commander in the area, Yacov Yefet, was asked to judge the matter. I took full responsibility for the deed explaining that under the circumstances I couldn't act otherwise.

Later there was a single unusual incident. The Arabs of Istua whose lands had a common border with the property of the Garti brothers from Hartuv, crossed the border and started to cultivate a plot of 25 dunam thinking we wouldn't dare take any legal action against them: because of the riots.

Since I served then as the Muchtar of the village, I invited the Muchtars of Istua to Hartuv and offered to pay them the cost of their investment of ploughing and sowing and would not start any legal action if they would leave our land. This could avoid any confrontation.

The Muchtars agreed they knew we had all the rights, but they couldn't act against the will of their people or the terrorists. They assured me I could do as I wished. The following day I traveled to Jerusalem to the Jewish Agency and met with Mr. Moshe Sharett³⁰—blessed be his memory—who was the head of the Arab Department then. I explained the situation and expressed my opinion that if we fail to take any action, we would continue to have more problems with our neighbors week after week.

I asked his financial help in hiring a good lawyer, or to provide us legal help from the Jewish Agency lawyer, Dr. Joseph Brander, who was one of the best. I was determined not to let the Arabs have their way and prove to them once and for all that Jewish property is not to be stolen, even though we were a small minority surrounded by a sea of Arab villages.

At that time the majority of the judges were Arabs.

I had no doubt that we could win the case, as we possessed all the legal documents and kushans in perfect order. The Garti brothers were the legal owners, so I didn't hesitate to start the proceedings.

After a few court meetings, we had a decision in our favor, but in view of the riots, the Arabs refused to leave the land.

I appealed to the central police commander residing then in Abu-Gosh asking him for his help, as we had a court decision. However, the officer told us clearly he couldn't act unless there was a serious quarrel between us and the Arabs, and only then could he be asked to interfere.

So we went out with our mules and ploughs and started to plough over the Arab furrows. It was a *political ploy*. I told the police what had happened and asked them to come immediately to the quarrel field.

An hour later an officer arrived with a few Arab policemen and stopped both sides from working those fields.

Meanwhile the Arabs hired a new lawyer from the famous Darvish family—a man who was also a good friend of mine. He found an article in the law which said we had to sue each laborer separately—a fact which would result in 40 law suits.

I contacted the Arab lawyer and explained now that we already had one verdict in our favor, he must go against it and sue us, which he did. He filed an objection to the previous court decision. The judge was Anwar Insbah, the famous Arab judge who was living in East Jerusalem and governor of the Old City in the Jordanian government.

During the hearing the judge told us he would like to postpone the trial for an indefinite period, as in those times of Arab riots he couldn't be objective, especially since one verdict had already been given.

He expressed his wish to see the area in question and asked the Arab Muchtars and me to vouch for his safety. I answered that God would be his guardian if he would give a right judgment.

One day I got the message to come to the fields in question. The place

was about one kilometer from our village. I went there alone with no friends or policemen to show the Arabs I was not afraid, as justice was on my side.

The judge saw the place with his own eyes, investigated the borders then wished to return to Jerusalem. I invited him to have a cup of coffee with us, as was the custom. He thanked me and asked what would the Arab Muchtars say to that. I answered that they, too, would be invited, as there was no hatred between us.

So the judge and the Muchtars came to my home and drank coffee. I also served them breakfast, as that was the custom among us. A week later, the judge asked me to come to Jerusalem and said, "See here, Ya Muchtar, there is no doubt of your right, but I am not able to give this verdict, as we are in the middle of these riots. Can you advise me what to do?"

I heard from the Arab villagers' lawyer, who also asked my opinion. After conferring with me he suggested the judge should put the Muchtar of Artuf and myself in charge of a joint-committee which would decide the matter. This decision would be the final one. I consulted our lawyer and recommended that we accept this suggestion; particularly as I knew the Arabs also wanted to finish the dispute in an honorable way, especially as they were already charged with the trial's expenses and a fine of several hundred lira.

That same day, our lawyer contacted the judge and asked for our legal nomination as arbitrators, which he did. After getting the official document from the court, we invited the Muchtars and the elders from Istua to the house of the Artuf Muchtar, and such was our verdict:

"The Garti brothers give up the right for the trial's expenses and fine. In return the Arabs will evacuate their land and retreat to the former borders." The two sides signed the agreement, and that was the end of this difficult case.

I remember one more interesting incident during those times. The commander of the Hartuv Police headquarters (today the Beth Shemesh Police headquarters which was then called the Tigret Building) and the regional high-commander asked me to open a canteen for the convenience of the British policemen. I agreed for political reasons, because I thought it convenient to be in daily touch with the whole staff of the police headquarters, as well as the Regional High Commander and his officers, since they were arriving once a week for a meeting with the Muchtars of the area. Every week, I would know what was taking place between the Muchtars and the British government. That was a very important advantage.

In those years the Jewish factory of Shimshon (Samson) was under construction. A force of Jewish policemen guarded the place. I wanted them to have a warm corner to meet with other policemen and also get good meals. Another point to consider. This, of course, was one of the

main conditions I put to the police headquarters. But, one day I learned that the Jewish policemen came to eat lunch, and the guard on duty was not allowing them in. They were told these were the orders of the British sergeant, while the sergeant himself and the officer on duty were sitting with me in the canteen.

As soon as I heard this, I apologized to the sergeant and the officer saying, "I'm sorry you'll have to leave the canteen now, as I am closing." (Even though my contract stated that I was supposed to remain open until 10:00 p.m.)

The sergeant asked me why I was closing so early, and I answered that the reason was his order to forbid the Jewish policemen to have lunch. They left unwillingly. I closed the canteen and went home.

Half an hour later the sergeant came and begged me to return and open the canteen; otherwise, he would complain to the Jerusalem Police Commander. I said, "Do what you like, because I intend to see the man myself." That was the end of the discussion.

Meanwhile, from my window I saw a police car with an officer and a sergeant in it approaching the police building. The sergeant who was with me said, "Here comes an officer. Let's go down and join them."

I stated that I would follow on foot, which I did. When I arrived at police headquarters, it turned out that the particular officer was a friend of mine and that of a Jewish policeman, by the name of Karl Zinger, who used to visit me.

I went at once to Zinger's flat in the police building, and when the officer saw me he started to hug and kiss me in front of the onlooking sergeant. That officer was the first British policeman who arrived in Har-tuv after the 1929 riots, when there were only two men at the station. When the sergeant saw that scene he was very embarrassed.

Later, the sergeant came to the canteen and said, "I beg your pardon, Muchtar, for the friction between us. From now on whatever you ask me, I'll grant you. Let us be friends."

From that day on, he even wanted to take the Jewish policemen on patrols in the Arab villages, but this I didn't allow, as the Arab villages were full of terrorists.

There were a few more such incidents, but this little booklet would not be able to include them all.

In the 36-39 riots, there happened another interesting and unbelievable episode.

An Arab driver from the village Istua accidentally hit an Arab from Artuf and killed him. The victim was jumping out of his own car without looking and fell under the wheels of the other one. After the accident, the dead man's family wanted to take their revenge—called *ataya*—as customary among Arabs. The Muchtars of the area were assembling and choosing two judges, who had the task of investigating and judging the

case.

One of the judges was the Muchtar of Dir-Abn, a village of more than two thousand people. The second judge was from the village Refat with 500 souls. Both were very honorable and well-known in the area. It seemed that the victim's relatives didn't give them any payment, as they were too poor, while the driver was a member of a large and wealthy family. Every week the two families were having a meeting of stone-throwing, which ended often with casualties. One day the opposite camps met near our house and started fighting. My wife called me and said, "If you won't get involved in this, the fighting will never end, and there will never be peace." This happened at the beginning of the riots. I got myself involved and invited the two Muchtars, as both were my friends, and asked them to give their judgment; otherwise, I would try to make peace. They answered me, "Your word be done."

A week later we met with the two sides in the house of the victim in the little village of Artuf. The police sergeant also came with a few other British policemen and a two-star officer. In this meeting we agreed that the victim's relatives would be paid a ransom of 300 liras, ten sheep, rice and cigarettes.

According to the Arab custom, after the ransom was agreed upon, they started to take from it 90 liras for the British officer, 50 liras for the sergeant and the policemen, 50 liras for the judges, and 50 liras for the guests. There were only 50 liras left for the family. The two parties kissed each other, and food and coffee were served. After the meal they lifted me up and brought me home, while singing and waving white flags, to thank me for ending the conflict. When the British officer saw that, he asked the Arabs how come they accepted a Jewish judge in the middle of the riots? They answered they didn't regard me as a Jew.

But later on when the riots grew, they forgot all about it and the fact that I was willing to put myself in danger for the sake of ending their conflict.

NEW TIMES - THE SHIMSHON FACTORY

Thus we went through the riots of 1936-39 without our being hurt. At the beginning of the Second World War, the big Tigret building was completed in place of the old police station. We resumed our work in the fields while the Jewish policemen stayed in the village and provided for our security as well as the new Tigret police headquarters. At the dedication of the new building in 1941 all the Muchtars and dignitaries from the area including the Jerusalem governor, Mr. Kitrosh, participated. As the Muchtar of Hartuv, I was given the honor of cutting the ribbon at the entrance—a fact which increased the respect of the others towards me. They

all came to shake my hand saying: "This is your day, Ya Muchtar!"

Another source of encouragement came from the cement factory Shimshon (Samson) which was being built nearby. That started a new land dispute with the neighbor village of Artuf, as some of the lands for the factory were kept in joint-ownership between us. We wanted to transfer them to the ownership of the Shimshon company.

During the negotiations the situation was not so easy. The transaction demanded the agreement of all the residents of each village and many Arabs were afraid to deal with the Jews after the riots. My late brother, Yehuda Bechar, was living in Even-Yehuda, and Itzhak Levi was sick. I was the one who had to bring this dispute to an end.

I put all my strength into the affair, and with the help of the lawyer, Mr. Mani, achieved a solution which satisfied all the parties involved. I even overcame the objection of the Tabu chief in Jerusalem—an anti-Semitic Christian Arab—whom I succeeded to convince in the most common way, to help us end the dispute and thus to finish the building of the factory we so much hoped for.

The work was going well, but there were still unfinished bureaucratic matters with the Tabu office in Jerusalem. One day, the Muchtar of Artuf and myself went to the Tabu office for some business. I took with me 250 liras which I gave to the Muchtar, and we agreed to meet the next day at the Tabu office. He spent the night in the Old City and I stayed in Mahane-Yehuda. That night was the big historical night when the UN voted for the partition of the country and the establishment of the Jewish state. The next morning started the fighting which led to the War of Independence. I never again met the Muchtar of Artuf. Luckily I didn't go with him to spend the night in the Old City, as I had done many times before. If I had, I probably never would have survived.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE END OF HARTUV

When I came back to Hartuv the fighting was spreading all over the country. We started to plan and prepare for our defense. Again we were left a tiny village of few score surrounded by many hostile Arab villages.

At that time we had an orphanage in Hartuv where abandoned children from Tel Aviv were sent to us. We called them the *jungle boys*. As soon as possible we had to send these children away. This time we felt that the good luck we had in 1936 wouldn't hold. This time it would be a fight for life or death.

The telephone connection to Tel Aviv was still functioning through

Ramla. Every time I asked the Arab exchange in Ramla to speak to Mr. Rokach in Tel Aviv, he would answer: "Go ahead, Hawagen Muchtar. Mr. Rokach is on the line." And the exchange officer on duty would listen to the conversation.

I asked Mr. Rokach to send an armored bus in order to evacuate the boys in case of emergency. The blockade around us was getting tighter. Our food supplies were dwindling. The only possible way was through Sha'ar Hagai, and this was possible only with the help of the Muchtar of Dir-Rafa, who was my friend.

When the situation became worse, and there was a life danger for the people of Hartuv, the defense authorities decided to evacuate the place. This came to us as a big surprise. There were some of us who refused to leave. We were sure that our good relationship with our neighbors and even with one of the high officers of the Arab Legion in the Tigret building would help us. We and the Arab Legion were holding jointly the police headquarters since the British evacuated it.

Finally, we decided to send away all the non-fighting persons, who could make it difficult for the armed men to defend the place. This was done by two armored vehicles. We started at four o'clock in the morning. Our hearts were aching as we had to leave our beloved homes, where our roots grew deep. It was difficult to accept that again we would become refugees as in 1929. That night the Hagana sent six people from Jerusalem to help us and guide us through the mountains. The plan was to walk in the dark past the Arab villages of Tzara and Dir-Rafa, to Kfar Uria, where there was a Hagana headquarters. From there we could get to Hulda and further to Rehovot—as all the valley there was in the hands of the Hagana.

Among those evacuated were also some old and sick, whom we carried on stretchers. The sick and the children were given injections to sleep, so they would not be heard. We left the lights on in the village, so it would seem that everything was normal.

Even at that bloody time, when the fire was all over the country, I must confess there were still some Arabs who kept good neighbor relationship. They would bring us vegetables and meat from Ramla which they delivered over the security fences in the darkness of the night.

Also the officer of the Arab Legion from the Tigret building was our friend. He used to invite Gavriel Levi for coffee, and he was personally guarding Levi's sons while they harvested their fields. There were three families who insisted on staying with the armed men. The situation became worse and worse, until there was need to provide them food by parachuting it down from the air. The village was finally abandoned completely by the Hagana order.

I remember that evening when I heard on the Ramalla radio that the Jewish settlement of Hartuv was captured by the Arab forces without any

fight.

Hartuv was destroyed again by its neighbors. This time the destruction was complete. 50 years it stood strong and proud, fighting for its survival in the Judean Hills, insisting to make a living from its hard earth.

This time we didn't come back. The wound is still open!

EXPLANATORY NOTES BY BENJAMIN KATZIR

1. In Hebrew "Hartuv" means Mountain of Plenty/ of Goodness.
2. The Book of Judges, chapters 13-16.
3. Agudat-Achim (The Brothers' Company). The Bulgarian Jewry was deeply involved in the Zionist movement even before its official establishment by Theodore Herzl and Max Nordau. The Brothers' Company, as others, had as its goal to buy land in Palestine. In 1895 the first group of this company came to settle on the purchased land in Hartuv. They were all from well-to-do, middle-class families. This was not the usual scene of the wandering Jews, who left their homes because of poverty or anti-Semitism, but really Zionist idealists, who wished to build the land of Israel. The arrival of these Bulgarian families to Hartuv happened two years before the first Zionist Congress in Basel, in 1897.
4. A Napoleon was a French gold coin used all over the Middle East in those days. The Turkish currency did not evoke much trust, as inflation was high. Ironically the same situation still exists, only that the American dollar took the place of the French currency.
5. In the last century the Anglican Mission was very active all over Palestine and ran a great number of institutions both for Jews and for Arabs. Today, there still exists an institution called "The Evangelical Episcopal Church". Michael Solomon Alexander (Wolfe), their first Bishop in Jerusalem 1841-45, was born as a Jew in Germany.
6. IKA (or ICA) - Jewish Colonization Association. It was a philanthropic society whose goal was to help financially the Jews settling in the land of Israel. It was founded in 1891 by the Baron Maurice de Hirsch.

7. Most of the Bulgarian Jews knew Turkish. Bulgaria, as Palestine, was under Turkish rule in the last century. This ability was of great help to the settlers.
8. Antebi, Albert Avraham (1869-1918), one of the dignitaries of the Jewish population in the land of Israel. He came from a rabbinical family from Damascus: was educated in the Alliance School System and sent to Paris to finish his studies. In 1898 he became headmaster of the Alliance School System in Jerusalem. He was involved in the initiation of the new neighborhoods in Jerusalem outside the walls of the Old City. He later became IKA's representative in Israel and represented the Jews of Palestine on behalf of the Zionist Congress to the Turkish government. He died of typhus on the Anatolian front, as a Turkish soldier in the First World War.
9. Alliance School System - Alliance Israelite Universelle. This was the first chain of Jewish modern schools established in Paris in 1860. Sometime before the official establishment of the Zionist Organization. The chain expanded its activity all over the world. In 1870 in Israel, they built the first agricultural school MIKVE-ISRAEL which was also the first in the middle-east. It was headed by Karl Netter. In 1882 they opened a primary school in Jerusalem. Today as a memorial only its gate remains on Jaffa Street.
10. Chemda Ben-Yehudah (1873-1951): wife of Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, founder of the modern Hebrew: writer on her own merit. Her sister, Dvora, was the first wife of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. After her death in 1892, Chemda came to Jerusalem from Lithuania to take care of her little nephews and eventually married her brother-in-law. She was helping her husband with his literary and journalistic work and the completion of the first modern Hebrew dictionary. After his death in 1922, she continued his work on the dictionary and wrote his biography.
11. Hyssop-oil (*Hyssop-Majorana syriaca*). It is a small wild plant, growing amongst rocks. It was used in the Temple for the cleansing of lepers. The Samaritans use it with their Passover sacrifice, commemorating the exodus from Egypt, as it is believed to be used together with the sacrificial blood, to be smeared on every Jewish door-post. The oil produced of the leaves is used for cosmetics.
12. The railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem was built by Yoseph Navon, grandfather of the previous president of Israel Yitzhak Navon, who received the concession from the Turkish government in 1880. It was

- officially opened in 1892. Navon-bev (last name being a Turkish title of honor) was educated in France. He died there in 1934.
13. Arrak (also Arrack) is an Arab liquor made of anise seeds. It has an alcohol content between 40 and 85 percent. When mixed with water it becomes the color of milk. It resembles the French Pernod and the Greek Ouzo.
 14. Castel - the name of a mountain 808 meters above sea level on the way to Jerusalem. Its name comes from the old Roman castle built on its top, later renewed by the Crusaders. In 1948 during Israel's War of Independence, Jews and Arabs fought bitterly for it, as holding the place meant command over the way to Jerusalem from the coastal plain of Israel.
 15. Cascaval cheese is one of the most famous kinds of Balcan yellow cheeses. It is highly popular in Israel, where there are over 700,000 Jews of Balcan origin.
 16. Mageda is a Turkish coin of a high value.
 17. Baron Avraham Edmond Benjamin de Rothschild (1845-1934) renowned philanthropist who greatly helped the Jewish settlement through its difficult beginnings. He visited the land of Israel in 1887, 1893, 1899, 1914 and 1925. He and his wife are both buried in a special memorial place called Ramat Ha-Nadiv (the benefactor's hill) near Zichron-Yacov—the town named after his father.
 18. According to Jewish tradition bread and salt are part of the customary welcome of first-time guests.
 19. Keren Kayemet Le-Israel - the Israel Revival Fund. It was established by the Zionist Congress as a means to raise money for the purchase of land in Israel. Today it takes charge of foresting and other needs for the land's cultivation.
 20. NILI - Jewish underground in Palestine active in the years of the First World War for the British against the Turks. They believed that a British rule in Palestine would ensure the establishment of an independent Jewish State. NILI members were providing the British troops in Egypt with information about the Turks, who were then allied with the Germans.
 21. Batir - Arab village believed to be the old Jewish Betar, where the

Jews defended themselves against the Romans under the leadership of Bar-Kockba who died there. The Jaffa-Jerusalem railway passed through the village.

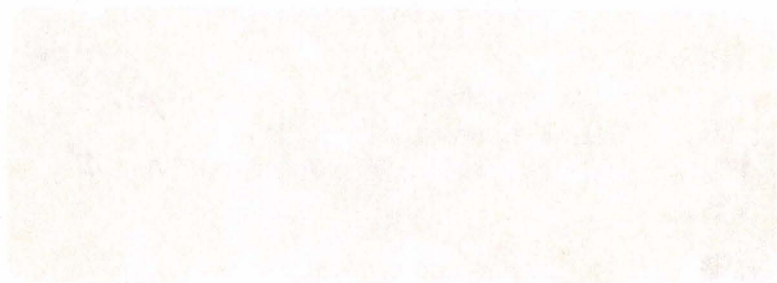
22. Kibbutz Hulda: 12 km. south-east of Rehovot. It was established in 1909 on the land bought by the Keren-Kayemet two years before. At first it was a training camp. The isolated settlement was attacked by the Arabs in the riots of 1929. The 24 settlers there succeeded in defending themselves in spite of everything, until they were evacuated by the British police. The place was rebuilt a little further to the west in 1930 by a group of the Gordonia Youth Movement. In spite of many difficulties, including shortage of water, the kibbutz developed its agriculture and improved its conditions until the War of Independence. In 1948, Hulda became one of the Israeli forces' headquarters and the base of the troops fighting over the way to Jerusalem. The name Hulda is in itself historical; a place with this name appears in Christian guides of the Holy Land from the 6th century. Hulda was also the name of a woman-prophet in Judea (II Kings 22:14-20).
23. Kibbutz Netiv Ha-Lamed-He (Beit Nativ) - was established by a youth group in 1949 and was then an outpost in an isolated area. In the fifties the whole Adulam area was massively built as a means of defending the narrow way between two Jordanian borders from north and south leading to Jerusalem (known then as the Jerusalem Corridor). The kibbutz name commemorates the 35 Hagana-soldiers, who were slaughtered by Arabs at that place in 1948 as they were on their way to help the Jewish settlement of Gush-Etzion, south of Jerusalem. The kibbutz overlooks the Ella Valley, scene of the fight between David and Goliath.
24. Sha'ar Hagai (in Arabic - Bab-El-Wad), meaning the gate to the valley. It is near the town of Beth Shemesh where the main road from Jerusalem to the coastal plain leaves the mountains.
25. Kfar Uria - 10 km northwest of Beth Shemesh. It was established as a moshav in 1912 by a workers' group. In 1948 another group of Bulgarian Jews settled there.
26. The massacre of Hebron in 1929: In the riots, the Arabs succeeded slaughtering almost the entire Jewish population of Hebron, who didn't have any defense force or organization in town. The British forces hardly interfered. The synagogue was burned. Two years later 35 families tried to settle again in Hebron, but they were evacuated by the British before the riots of 1936. Only a single Jew lived there

until 1947. Between 1948-67 Hebron was under Jordanian rule. Immediately after the Six Days War, the Jews returned to Hebron, where they had lived since the time of the kings of Judea.

27. Hagana - one of the Jewish underground movements fighting for a Jewish independent state in Eretz Israel. It was founded in 1920. In 1948 it joined with all the rest of the independent movements and became The Israeli Defense Forces.
28. Kofer-Ha-Ishuv - an organization whose goal was to collect money for the providing of defense means to save Jewish life in the land of Israel. It was established in 1929 after the massacre of Hebron.
29. Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan (formerly Berliner) 1880-1949. Leader of the Religious Zionist Movement later called "The National Religious Party".
30. Moshe Sharett (formerly Shertok 1894-1965). One of the leaders of the Zionist Movement before the establishment of the State: later, the first foreign minister of Israel, and its second prime-minister. In his childhood he lived with his family in the Arab village of Ein-Sinia near Ramalla. This fact provided him with a good insight into the Arab-Jewish relationship and made him one of the architects of possible peace negotiations. He met many times with King Abdalla, the previous Jordanian king, but unfortunately with not much success.

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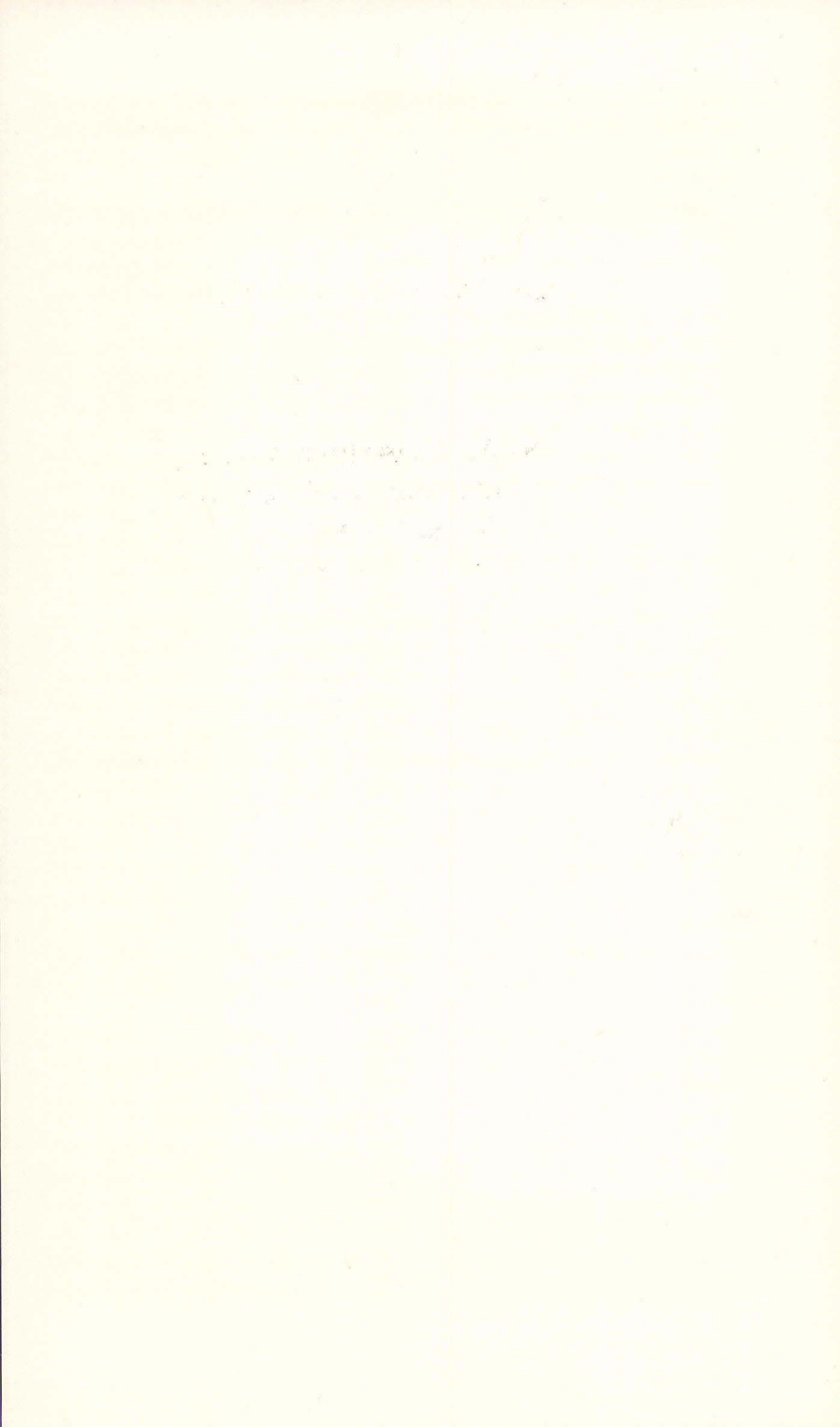
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FOUNDATION
c/o Zvi Givati
24 Mahal Street
Jerusalem 97763, ISRAEL

Published in the United States
of America by
The Afikomen Company
1503 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21231