HASHOMER

THE FIRST JEWISH WATCH IN PALESTINE

BY

LOTTA LEVENSOHN

Issued by

VAAD BITACHON

111 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

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PIONEERS AS WATCHMEN

Since the Arab outbreaks began in the spring of 1936—just three years ago—large and increasing numbers of the Jewish youth of Palestine have volunteered for the defense of the Yishuv. As special police they patrol the roads in armored cars, mount guard in trenches and behind stockades in the rural areas, escort laborers to and from the fields and plantations, and watch over them while they work. Scores have already fallen at their posts, and each day almost the list lengthens. But the ranks are quickly, one might say automatically, filled up, for the honor no less than the safety of the Yishuv demands that the Jews shall take the largest possible share in their own defense. The young people, the women no less than the men, have shown themselves as resolute and unflinching, as deeply rooted in the soil, as their remote ancestors; indeed, their devotion to the land seems all the stronger because of the long Exile. Only because this is so has it been possible to retain every Jewish point, often in the face of prolonged and ruthless attacks; and, even more, to found fifty new settlements during the disorders, many of them in extremely exposed areas in Galilee and the Jordan Valley.

Yet as recently as thirty years ago the Jewish settlers were dependent upon Arab brigands to guard their property. When a few young Jewish laborers offered their services as watchmen, the settlers, in spite of the sufferings and humiliations to which they were subjected by their so-called employees, rejected the idea as preposterous and even dangerous. But the young men's conviction, on which they were prepared to stake their lives, won the day for them. In 1909, a troop of Jewish watchmen, known as Ha-Shomer (The Watchman) was organized by a small group of farm laborers. Eleven years later, its mission accomplished, Ha-Shomer dissolved into the rural Yishuv. The price paid for its achievements in terms of life, health, and hardships, is incredible. But Ha-Shomer inspired Palestinian youth, perhaps more than any other single factor, with high cour-

age and a superb sense of Jewish patriotism—qualities that have revealed themselves in their heroic stand since 1936.

When the protection of the Yishuv became so vital a matter, it was natural that Ha-Shomer, already more than half forgotten, should be remembered again. But there was little to be found in the written records, and so old Shomrim, their wives, and the widows of the fallen were urged to write down their reminiscences of what was one of the most striking aspects of pre-war pioneering. The result was *Kovetz Ha-Shomer,* a book of surpassing interest, which all who can read Hebrew are urged to possess themselves of.*

The present account of Ha-Shomer, though necessarily condensed, gives the story in its essential features, and attempts to recover something of the mood and atmosphere of the time. Since the men of Ha-Shomer were drawn from the Second Aliyah (the migration of young Russian Jews to Palestine which took place in the last decade before the war), a brief survey of the Second Aliyah is indispensable for an understanding of the idea of the Jewish Watch which led to the formation of Ha-Shomer.

THE SECOND ALIYAH

At the turn of the century the tide of revolution had risen so high in Russia that it threatened to engulf Czarism and all its works. The Little Father sent his Black Hundreds against the Jews of Kishineff, Homel, Zhitomir, and a score of other Russian cities by way of diverting his people's minds from their real grievances. For the first time in the history of the Diaspora, Jewish young men organized self-defense units against hooligans. Passive martyrdom gave way to a new form of heroism that stiffened the Jewish backbone, though it could not avert the shedding of Jewish blood.

The Jewish youth of Russia in those days were divided into two camps: one was concerned with the Russian Jews alone, and believed that the status of the Jews would be completely changed by the Revolution; the second group, which saw the Jewish problem as a world-wide whole, was strongly convinced that the Revolution would not solve it, even in Russia. The first group denied Jewish nationality,

* "Kovetz Ha-Shomer," Archives and Museum of the Labor Federation, Tel Aviv, 1937.

the second affirmed it. The first aimed at equal rights for Jews in a free Russia, the second at a rehabilitated Jewish nation in Eretz Israel.

It was not long before the nationalist Jewish youth began to take stock of their position. They had fought in defense of the Jews as best they could. Now some of their comrades were dead, others were in prison, and the police were hounding the rest. The Zionist goal was no nearer than before. In their perplexity they turned to the Zionist leadership. The time was, however, very inopportune, because the whole movement was then involved in what might have proved a life and death struggle over the Uganda controversy of 1903-1905*. Herzl was dead, his political aims unachieved after eight years of brilliant negotiation. He had urged East Africa upon the Sixth Zionist Congress chiefly for the sake of the Russian Jews. East Africa was not and never could be Zion, he proclaimed; but, though it was only a detour, it could save untold suffering for the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe. To Herzl's urgings the Russian Zionists intransigently replied that the direct road to Zion, however long, was still the shortest way to the Jewish National Home. They had always been committed to "practical work" in Palestine, by which they meant primarily the promotion of agricultural settlement; and they grew increasingly restive when it was made to wait upon political guarantees.

The Russian Zionist youth, eager to serve could not be content with routine organization activities, as the Zionist leadership suggested, while waiting for the political consummation of Zionism. Heart and soul they agreed with their elders that political assets were best created in Palestine itself by practical work. As radicals and Socialists they gave a personal interpretation to practical work in Palestine; they themselves would become the class of farm laborers and working farmers who were needed as the foundation for a normal national community. The land in Palestine lay waste, waiting to be restored to fertility by Jewish hands. Too long waiting might endanger everything. All the Great Powers coveted footholds in Palestine for religious, economic, and political reasons—all summed up in their im-

* The Uganda tract in the British East African Protectorate was offered by the British Foreign Office in 1903 to Dr. Herzl as an autonomous Jewish territory, subject to investigation of its suitability for the purpose.

perialistic aspirations; at any time a Great Power might decide to settle large colonies of its own nationals in the country, and the Jewish opportunity would vanish, perhaps for centuries. By just what methods they would achieve their object, the young people did not clearly know. Once they were in Palestine, they believed, experience would show the way. (The event justified that rather mystical belief, though at a monstrous cost in sickness, toil, and privation.) The impulse to go to Palestine was stimulated by a call issued in the name of the youth of Palestine by Joseph Vitkin, a village school teacher in Galilee. Vitkin called upon the young people of the Diaspora to come and work on the land and eventually to establish villages of working farmers. They might, he informed them, gain no reward for themselves but the martyrdom of the unknown soldier; but they would have rendered a national service of the first magnitude.

In those days there were no youth organizations for Halutzim (the very word was still unknown in its present connotation), no agricultural training centres, no organized facilities for migration to Palestine in Eastern Europe or anywhere else. The young people left their native towns in groups of ten, twenty, or fifty. Some ventured the trip quite alone. In 1907 there were barely three hundred of them in Palestine and at the outbreak of the World War in 1914 no more than two thousand. That was the whole Second Aliyah, which moulded post-war Palestine in so many fundamental respects. The first steps of the Zionist Organization in the direction of practical work coincided with the Second Aliyah, since the Palestine Office was opened at Jaffa in 1908. Indeed, the Second Aliyah had a large share, with their friends in Russia, in directing Zionist policy Palestinewards at the time.

So it appears in perspective, thirty years later. Had we been in the habit of going down to the port of Jaffa now and then in the decade preceding the War, we should have seen only little groups of youthful Russian intelligentsia, with a sprinkling of short-haired girls, stepping down the gangplank in a sort of trance. They were met by other Russian youths and girls, who marched them off to Chaim Boruch's hostelry in Jaffa, which served all the purposes of an immigrant shelter, information bureau, employment office,

social club, and labor headquarters, without being any one of these.

After two or three days of reunions and sight-seeing, the newcomers tramped to Petah Tikva, then as now the largest plantation village in the country, to look for jobs. The settlers were hard to convince. Work with the spade and the mattock was for strong Arab peasants, said they, not for soft-handed, educated young Jews. They could never stand the strain of such hard physical work. Besides, why did they think they had to do it? The question unloosed a flood of strange theories, which made the planters shrug their shoulders as if to say that much book-learning and mooning about Zion had turned the heads of the young intelligentsia. The girls were just as bad as the young men, and came asking for work in the groves. But, asked the settlers, if their convictions bade them do menial work, why not cook and scrub? Digging in the field was no seemly occupation for "Jewish daughters."

Little by little, however, the young men and the girls made their way into the plantations of Petah Tikva, and from there into other Judaean villages. Kibush Ha-Avodah, the "Conquest of Labor," was what they called the process of winning a place for Jewish workers in the Jewish settlements. No long time passed before it was borne in on them that the "Conquest of Labor" necessarily involved taking over the night-watch in the Jewish villages.

Out of that realization Ha-Shomer, the Jewish watchmen's guild, was born.

"BAR GIORA"

The time is Succoth Week, 1907, and the place Ben Zevi's attic in Jaffa. Ten young men sprawl about the room. Some sit astride crude Arab stools, the rest lounge on the floor. All ten faces have a slightly conspiratorial look, but little else in common. Three or four are university-trained intelligentsia. They had come for the same purpose as the swarthy swordsman from Daghestan, the bluff stalwart from Baku, the fair Siberian, and the burly house-painter who is also a renowned hunter of desert game.

An idea has been shaping itself in all their minds for months, and tonight it will be threshed out in strict privacy. The host begins abruptly: "Haverim"!

Ten pairs of eyes are fastened on his face.

"You know why we have gathered here tonight. I take it that you all approve of the idea of a Jewish Watch, and will join it yourselves. The time has come to put the idea into action. Jewish property has been left all too long to the mercies of bandits masquerading as watchmen. They hold the Jewish settlers in contempt; they drag Jewish honor in the dust. The time has come to put a stop to the indignities, extortion, and violence to which the settlers are subjected by their own watchmen. The situation is as intolerable for them as for us, but they fear the Arabs will incite their villages against them if they resist. We shall not let them make us afraid; for it is we who must take over the watch in the Jewish villages. I know you would all prefer to continue to work on the land. Some day, let us hope, we shall go back to it. But now we must take the lead: Jewish land must be guarded as well as worked by Jewish laborers.

"It will not be an easy task to persuade the settlers, but we must find the ways and means. We must overcome their fears, and somehow convince them that we really are able to guard their property against thieves and robbers.

"The men for our troop must be picked one by one. Everyone who joins it must swear to place his duty as a watchman above all personal ties, to leave his nearest and dearest at all times to answer the call of duty. Some of us already know how to ride and shoot. We shall teach the others. Let us begin by organizing ourselves tonight!"

Since all were of one mind, it was a simple matter to choose a name, a slogan, and a goal.

The name chosen for the organizing group was Bar Giora, after the great Galilean patriot who played so important a part in the Jewish revolt against the Romans. Bar Giora was to be a sort of secret society operating within the watchmen's guild and directing it along the lines the organizers wished it to go. The slogan had rather a swashbuckling sound, even when one of the quietest members of the group enunciated it: "By blood and fire Judaea fell; by



Courtesy JNF-Keren Hayesod

Jewish Police on the Lookout, Emek Jezreel (1939)

blood and fire Judaea will arise!" But, as the vicissitudes of the years were to prove, the "blood" they referred to was their own, and the "fire" the flaming devotion that kept them to their stern purpose. Their immediate goal was Galilee. Perhaps that was why they chose a Galilean hero for their symbol.

Why did they choose to begin in Galilee, when most of the Jewish villages were then clustered around Jaffa? Because they proposed to strike out on a new path, and that was more easily accomplished in the sparsely settled parts of the country. They were looking ahead, even before having begun, to the time when other men would take their places in the night-watch and they would be free to settle down in villages shaped to their purpose. Judaea was almost everything that they wanted to break away from or, rather, not become involved in. The settlers of Judaea were orange-growers; they wished to grow grain and vegetables, raise sheep and cattle and do all the other things that make a man an all-round farmer. The Judaean settlers employed labor; they would work with their own hands. The Judaean settlers made a business of farming; they would make it a way of the pioneer life.

The Jewish settlements in Galilee, however, engaged chiefly in grain-farming, and the farmers followed the plough themselves. Given such an environment, Bar Giora could forge ahead. They wanted, too, to make their start in Galilee because it was a frontier province, where a hardy race of frontiersmen could be reared. From such beginnings a true Jewish peasantry could be evolved; without such a peasantry a normal Jewish commonwealth, as they conceived it, could not be created. So, more or less, the young pioneers saw the matter. They were aiming, though still without any very definite sense of direction, toward the collective settlement (Kvutza) and cooperative village (Moshav) of the post-war Third Aliyah, to which they themselves were to give the impetus many years later.

Was not all this a digression from their explicit purpose of organizing a night-watch? Not at all. The Jewish watchman was one type of the new Jew they meant to shape out of themselves and their children. In the rugged Galilean ranges there was ample scope for testing their quality as watchmen; and the broad Galilean valleys would provide ample opportunity for becoming expert grain-farmers and

cattle-breeders. As Ben Gurion was to sum it up many years later: "When we came from the Galuth, Petah Tikva was our symbol for Eretz Israel; but when we came to Galilee, Sejera took its place. Galilee was the Eretz Israel we had always wanted!"

SEJERA IN GALILEE

The plans of Bar Giora were quickly made. Some of the men went up to Galilee, and the others stayed behind in Judaea to look for likely candidates for the night-watch. To begin with, they must get the best possible agricultural training, and fixed on the ICA farm at Sejera in Lower Galilee for their purpose. Israel Giladi, Mendel Portugali, Ezekiel Henkin, Alexander Zeid, and Zevi Becker, all destined to play outstanding parts in the future Ha-Shomer, trooped off to Sejera. There they met several girls, their future wives, but as yet all unbeknown. The manager of the farm, Mr. I. Krause (now director of the agricultural school at Mikveh Israel), was sympathetic to their aims and encouraged them in their ambition to become expert grain-farmers. It was at Sejera, by the way, that girl pioneers first followed the plough and dug ditches for saplings, thanks to the manager's readiness to let them test their own capacities.

Inspired by Manya Shohat, then working on the Sejera farm in the double capacity of bookkeeper and dairy-maid, the Bar Giora group and their friends asked the manager, after a time, to be allowed to cultivate wheat and barley on their own responsibility, as they had a theory of cooperative farming which they wished to put to a practical test. They were given about 250 acres for the experiment, with ten teams of mules, some seed corn, and a little cash for working capital. They came out of the experiment with victory perched on their banners: even their comrades had foretold a deficit. They had none.

In the "collective" of Sejera, though they did not yet know it, lay the seed of the future Kvutza, or communal farm. Because the project was carried out on their collective responsibility, they set up a common kitchen and put their funds into a common purse. It was as simple as that; but out of those tentative arrangements there evolved a

whole social order which has embraced a large part of the economy of the Homeland. Several years later the Kvutzoth of Deganiya in the Jordan Valley and Merhavya in Emek Jezreel were based on the Sejera experiment.

Just then, however, the next step was to proceed with the plans for the Jewish night-watch. They asked the manager of the Sejera farm to engage one of their number as a night-watchman. Mr. Krause was aghast, though as a rule he was ready to give their bold ideas the benefit of a trial. But this was too dangerous! Did they fancy that the brawny Circassian who held the post would meekly allow himself to be sent away? His dismissal would be taken as a deadly insult by his whole village, to be wiped out in blood. They were willing to risk it, were they? Well, he was not, if only for their own sakes. And suppose they killed a Circassian in self-defense? His village would declare a blood-feud not only against the ICA farm, but also against the whole settlement of Sejera at the foot of the hill. The interview ended on that note.

Silenced, but not convinced, the young men decided to make their own opportunity. They knew that the Circassian watchman was derelict in his duty, and set out to prove it. For several nights running they watched; the man was always absent from his post. In the parlance of the countryside, he had "left his name to watch for him"; that is to say, he thought his reputation as a man of violence sufficient to frighten off would-be robbers, so that there was really no need to go to the trouble of staying up nights. On the fourth consecutive night of his absence, the men quietly opened the stable door and led out a team of mules. Then they gave the alarm. The manager hurried out and whistled for his watchman. Once, twice, three times! No answer. One of the young men suggested helpfully that he might be diverting himself at the cafe in the adjacent Arab village, and offered to look for him there. The manager went with him. Surely enough, there lay the Circassian snoring in a drunken sleep.

The next morning he was sent packing, and Zevi Becker was appointed in his place. Becker's friends organized two-hour shifts and went out every night in pairs to lie under the cactus hedges and in the clefts of the rocks while he patrolled the wall around the farm. On one of the stormiest nights of that rainy winter the Circassian came back for his

revenge. Becker and his aides put up so spirited a defense on that occasion and several others that the night attacks ceased after a few weeks: The "Moscoby" (Russians) had taught the countryside its first lesson in the physical courage of the Jews. In later years a Shomer "captain" was asked by a Beduin sheikh who was paying him a visit: "Who are you?" "We are Jews." "No, we know the Jews. You are different." "You err. We are the same Jews as those you know." The sheikh remained unconvinced. He rose, pointed a finger at his host, and proclaimed solemnly: "Since you do not know who you are, I shall tell you. In olden times there was a tribe here known as the Beni Israel. You are their posterity!"

Their success at the ICA farm emboldened the young men to ask for the watch of Sejera village. But the settlers hesitated, just as the farm manager had hesitated. The young men decided to bide their time. One night a horse was stolen from the village. The animal's owner went to look for his watchman, and found him coming back from the fields, having obviously led the horse away. The next morning the laborers of the ICA farm renewed their offer. This time they were not refused; and Sejera went down in history as the first settlement in Palestine to engage Jewish watchmen.

With the approach of spring, the settlers of Sejera were besieged with new proposals by their watchmen. All the livestock of the village—cows, horses, mules, donkeys, sheep, and goats—was sent out to graze in the hills at night on the succulent grass which springs up after the rains. To watch over the animals is a peculiarly difficult task at that time, and the herdsmen are always accompanied by armed watchmen, some mounted and others on foot. Several Circassians were therefore retained for the night-grazing after their dismissal from their regular posts. The new Jewish watchmen asked to be given complete charge of the night-grazing. The farmers refused peremptorily: They did not know the complicated lay of the land, and the cattle would be stolen from under their noses. The watchmen then suggested that the grazing-watch be divided between themselves and the Circassians. The compromise was accepted. But Hassan, the son of a Circassian sheikh, hated the Jewish watchmen for having supplanted him and his friends. He began jeering at their inexperience, but they soon proved themselves as

competent at this task as at others. Time and again he tried to provoke young Dov Schweiger, his companion on the watch, to a quarrel. Dov refused to be drawn into a fight in spite of constant provocation until, one night, Hassan damned Dov's religion, this being the most potent and contemptuous oath in the whole Moslem vocabulary. The next instant Dov's whip lashed across his cheek. Hassan grappled with him, but Dov threw him to the ground and belabored him with his whip. Hassan's friend Ali came running to his help, but Dov held him off at the point of his gun.

In the morning the village was thrown into a panic by the appearance of a mauled and bloody Dov and an unconscious Hassan carried by his friends. When Hassan recovered, he would surely take vengeance! But the settlers were mistaken in their reckoning. The primitive man in Hassan respected the youngster who had worsted him, and he bore him no ill will. The "Moscoby" had scored another point.

PASSOVER, 1909

In 1909, the year after the Young Turk revolution, the arm of the law, never very powerful in Galilee, barely made itself felt. The countryside became restless, mistaking the promised freedom for license. There were attacks on the roads; fierce quarrels flared up in the villages and Beduin camps. The least incident might set a whole district aflame. The Poale Zion party planned to hold their annual conference at Sejera that year. Haverim and Haveroth footed it from all parts of the country and streamed into Sejera on the eve of Passover. The farm laborers' dormitory, formerly a stable, had been whitewashed and decorated in honor of the guests and the festival. Ploughs, pruning hooks, harrows, hoes, and mattocks were ranged round the sides of the room. The walls were decorated with rifles, pistols, and swords. Wreaths of scarlet anemones, lavender cyclamen, yellow daisies, blue veronica, and heaps of multicolored wild flowers were festooned over the farm implements and the weapons. Pepper and eucalyptus boughs framed the windows and the doorway.

Work was stopped at noon. As each new batch of guests arrived, they were welcomed with Hassidic and Arabic

folksongs. And when young hearts overflowed too much for words, arms were flung around the nearest shoulders, and the Hora was stamped out to a furious rhythm of clapping hands and roaring voices. "Who will restore Galilee?" they chanted. "We will restore Galilee!"

In the midst of the dance a pale young stranger appeared in the doorway and gasped that he and his friend, a photographer, had been attacked near the Christian village of Cana, and their luggage stolen. The Arabs had fired, and the photographer had returned their fire, wounding one. The young men seized their rifles and ran out to investigate. They found a trail of blood on the road, which ended abruptly, showing that the wounded man had been carried off in some kind of conveyance. If he died, Sejera would have a blood-feud on its hands, because the young men were known to have been on their way there. In any event, the photographer was a marked man. They hustled him into women's clothing and sent him on to Tiberias. The next day he sailed for Australia.

A day or two later, while the Poale Zion conference was still in session, the Arab died. Now the fat was in the fire, and trouble might be expected at any moment. The sessions were held as planned, but every man's weapon lay on the table before him and scouts watched from the hilltop for signs of trouble.

All the watchmen went back on duty early in the afternoon instead of the usual hour of dusk. On the last day of Passover, Israel Korngold, a watchman, was accosted by two Arabs standing a little distance off the road. Being new to the country, he knew no Arabic and called to a passing settler to interpret for him. Two minutes later the settler rushed into the village pharmacy, cried out that Korngold was shot, and dropped in a dead faint to the floor. The village bell tolled the alarm, and the settlers hurried out to seize the murderers. As they ran, a second shot was fired from behind a cactus hedge, and Simeon Malmud, a young farmer, fell with a bullet through his heart.

The day after Passover, Korngold the watchman and Malmud the farmer were buried side by side in the graveyard of Sejera.

MESCHA

Once a beginning had been made at Sejera, Bar Giora turned to Mescha, the nearest Jewish village (now called Kfar Tabor). The settlers of Mescha, like those of Sejera, were afraid to dismiss their watchmen, Moroccan Arabs. There, too, an incident paved the way for the Jewish watch. One day a settler of Mescha remonstrated with an Arab watchman about some small matter. The Arab flew into a rage, drew his revolver, and fired. As Fate would have it, the bullet struck a stone, rebounded, and inflicted a mortal wound on the assailant himself. Thereupon his village proclaimed a blood-feud against Mescha, and urged the other villages to join them. All the Arab watchmen were then dismissed from Mescha, and the settlers called upon the Jewish watchmen of Sejera for help. Several men were sent at once, but the situation was so tense that they asked for reinforcements. The young men of Galilee organized a troop, and sent a third of its members to mount guard at Mescha for a week at a time. The nine kilometers of road between Sejera and Mescha were patrolled constantly in order to keep communications open. The authorities did nothing to help the Jewish settlers in their need; but they did not prevent them from organizing their own defense, and even that was something to be grateful for.

When tension subsided, the Mescha settlers asked for four men for their permanent night-watch. Bar Giora agreed, but stipulated that fifteen Jewish farm laborers must be taken on at Mescha and all furnished with firearms. The reason for this demand was that many of the Arab laborers employed in Mescha slept in the village, and either stole themselves or aided and abetted other thieves. The enemy within the gate made armed reserves for the watchmen indipsensable. These conditions were met, and Mescha became the second stronghold of the Jewish Watch.

Not far from Mescha there was a tract of land which Baron de Rothschild had assigned to some of the young farmers of the village. A Beduin tribe had squatted on the land, and insolently refused to leave. "If the Jews want this land," they had defiantly declared to Joshua Hankin, the Baron's representative, "let them come and take it!" It

should be explained that in Palestine payment of purchase money alone does not establish ownership to land unless cultivation by or in behalf of the owner follows. To take up the Beduins' challenge was almost certain to cause trouble; but, on the other hand, the land had been bought and paid for, and the settlers were ready to occupy it.

Hankin turned then to the watchmen of Mescha. "Will you," he asked them, "go out to plough the Baron's land unarmed, but promise to do all the necessary ploughing even if you are attacked?" A delicate proposition! The young men promised to think it over. There were good reasons pro and con. The pros won because it was felt that it would be fatal to yield to the threats of the Beduin: their effrontery would then know no limits, and a piece of valuable Jewish land would be lost. By the exercise of tact, trouble might possibly be avoided. The Beduin had a wholesome respect for the brawn of the "Moscoby".

One bright autumn morning the head watchman of Mescha went out with his men, enjoining the villagers to keep aloof. The ploughs and sacks of seed corn were quietly removed from the farm wagons, and the work began. The Beduin rushed out from their tents. Who were these men who dared to plough "their" land? Scouts were sent to reconnoitre. They reported: The Jewish watchmen of Mescha! "Moscoby!" In full view of the Jews, who went calmly about their work, a council of war was held. "To attack or not to attack?" Opinion was plainly divided. The Jews calmly went on ploughing. At last discretion won the day. The Beduin vanished into their tents without a word to the "invaders". The whole tract was ploughed that day and the watchmen of Mescha were acclaimed heroes by the whole Yishuv.

The Beduin presumed no more after that. The settlers came and occupied their land. Nothing was said either then or afterward.

HA-SHOMER (THE WATCHMAN)

Two villages having been won, the time was ripe for formal organization. Bar Giora called a conference at Mescha for the last day of Passover (April 12) 1909. The Cana-Sejera blood-feud still hung over Lower Galilee. Each man was anxious to return to his post by night-fall. Even while they sat there discussing methods of organization, the double murder was being perpetrated at Sejera. The sessions were brief and hurried. A constitution was adopted, and the conference adjourned. Details could be worked out later.

The constitution of Ha-Shomer, of which copies have been preserved, is the most laconic of documents, with not a word about methods, tactics, or policy. The purpose of Ha-Shomer was defined as the formation of a guild of Jewish watchmen. Any Jew of sound body and mind who had had six months' experience was eligible for membership; but he must agree to place his duty to Ha-Shomer above all personal concerns and ties, and swear to obey orders promptly and without question. The affairs of Ha-Shomer were to be administered by a Vaad (committee) of three, which was authorized to enter into contracts and to assign the men to whatever posts it saw fit. A loan fund was set up for the purchase of mares, weapons, and other apparatus and a guarantee fund to cover losses of property by theft, as required by the settlers.

The first "triumvirate" was composed of Israel Giladi, Mendel Portugali, and Israel Shohat. Giladi was an only son, very delicately reared; but he inured himself to such Spartan habits that, as his friends said of him, he became "a man of iron." He was sternly logical, an efficient administrator, and a born leader. The last thing he (or any of the organizers of Ha-Shomer) wanted was the watchman's vocation. But "Shmira" was an imperative national service, and their personal desire to work on the land had to be subordinated to it. "It will only be for a few years," they consoled themselves. "We shall train a large and responsible troop of watchmen, and then retire to a village of our own as fast as we can be spared." The Ha-Shomer village was their lodestar during many a weary year of wandering from pillar to post. Giladi actually did found that village in Upper Galilee in the last year of the war; but he died while it was in its incipient stage and never dreamed it would be called after him (Kfar Giladi).



Jewish Policemen Searching for Arab Terrorists in the Mountains of the North

Mendel Portugali, too, was a leader of men in his own way. As he rode on his rounds of inspection through the villages he listened to the men's problems, resolved their doubts, stiffened their morale, and instilled them with new confidence. None knew better than he how little the work suited their tastes, though many people at the time did not see beyond their flashy accoutrements and thought them so many young brawlers preening themselves in Arab cloaks on Beduin mares. Portugali knew, however, that they longed, as he did, to follow the plough by day rather than the trail of robbers by night; and he did his best to console them with visions of the Ha-Shomer village where they would all sit under their own vines and fig-trees—tended by themselves!—after they had blazed the trail for Jewish "Shmira" in all parts of Eretz Israel.

The third member of the Vaad, Israel Shohat, went after a time to Constantinople to study law, and served Ha-Shomer as its counsel. Though the men did everything possible to avoid trouble, using their weapons solely for defensive purposes, theirs was a vocation where complications could not be avoided, and Shohat not seldom had to defend them against serious charges brought by Arab villagers.

INITIATION

The requirements for admission to Ha-Shomer were so rigid that after two years the original group of eight had increased to only twenty-six. The membership seems never to have exceeded one hundred, though there were times when as many as three hundred men were employed in order to fulfill the contracts made with village councils in Samaria, Judaea, and Galilee. Many young men aspired to join the organization; but while most were given a trial, few were chosen.

The way of the novice was strewn with thorns. "Don't be a 'Melamed'!" he would be admonished by his mentor. "Here we are patrolling the village wall in Egyptian darkness, where someone may be lying in wait for us at any point. Yet you drag your feet along and advertise your presence . . . Steady, there! That was only a falling twig. No, that shape to your left is not a Beduin, but a eucalyptus tree!" A few nights later, the novice is sent out to make the rounds alone, as he thinks. Suddenly someone throws a

stone at him, or sets scarecrows in his path, or makes a hullaballoo like an attacking mob. All these are devices to test his mettle in an emergency. Black winter nights, when the rain comes down in sheets, are the favored occasion for these tests.

On such a night a lad is summoned by the head watchman of Yavneel and ordered to start at once for Mitzpah, a distance of many kilometres. All the landmarks are blotted out by the darkness, and he is not certain of the road even by daylight. But the rules admit of no questioning; he picks up his rifle and is off. Hardly has he passed beyond the village when a shot is fired from the side of the road. He drops down flat into the mud and primes his weapon. 'Ho, there!" jeers a familiar voice. "Save your ammunition! You may go back to bed now!"

But more nerve-wracking than any test the instructors could devise was the tension felt while the names of candidates were under consideration by the annual conference of Ha-Shomer. Though rejection did not necessarily reflect either on the candidate's character or his abilities, it was considered a profound disgrace, and there were even one or two cases of suicide by disappointed candidates. The men of Ha-Shomer were horrified, but they did not relax the requirements; they could not.

When a candidate was successful, the trying initiation ceremony still awaited him. He would be called at midnight and ordered to follow his escorts to a clearing in the woods, where all the Shomrim were ranged in a circle under a wide-spreading tree. A veteran led the candidates forward one by one. Giladi, in his quiet, low-pitched voice, inducted them into the organization. "Ha-Shomer, in annual conference assembled, has approved your candidacy," he proclaimed. "The purpose of Ha-Shomer is to raise the banner of Jewish labor in Palestine and to protect the honor of our nation. When you enter its ranks, you will become responsible for your own life and the lives of your comrades whenever you go on duty. Your service to Ha-Shomer must be placed above all personal ties. You will now be allowed ten minutes to decide whether you really wish to shoulder the responsibilities of Ha-Shomer!" Needless to say, the ten

minutes were barely over when the young men again stood before Giladi, reciting the Ha-Shomer oath after him word for word, and putting their signatures to the written text. Shots were fired into the air as the veterans came forward to greet the new recruits with a fraternal kiss on the cheek.

POLICY

If ever the policy of Ha-Shomer was set down in writing, no record of it is available. The men and the circumstances being what they were, their course of action probably seemed too obvious to require formal definition. Feeling ran high at the annual conferences and heated words were not seldom heard, but the differences seem rarely to have arisen over fundamentals, but only over the methods and tactics to be employed in given circumstances.

The watchman's duties in Palestine are performed in circumstances wholly different from those which prevail in most European countries. There theft, robbery, and murder are crimes not only in the sight of the law, but of public opinion, and are regarded as crimes by the lawbreakers themselves. But in Palestine the code of the desert is still extant, whatever legislators may have written into the criminal code. In the eyes of his fellows, the lawbreaker is in many instances not a criminal at all. On the contrary, the bolder the exploit, the greater his prestige. The stealthy chicken-thief is despised; but the cattle-raider who operates in broad daylight and succeeds inspite of the herdsman is celebrated in song and story. A man who commits murder to avenge the death of a kinsman is not a murderer at all according to the code of the desert, which prescribes vengeance as his paramount duty. The kinsman avenged may have been killed while attacking a man on the roads or attempting to make off with his property. No matter! A life for a life, whatever the circumstances! When one man kills another, even in self-defense, he and his family and even his village become involved in a blood-feud.

The Jewish settlements wanted, naturally, nothing better than to be left in peace. But their cattle and crops and other possessions were too tempting to peasants or shepherds who knew no cause why they should not filch what they might. Many of them were employed as farm laborers in the Jewish villages, so that their appetite for spoil was whetted

all the more. Being familiar with all the entrances to the farms of their employers, they knew just where and how to carry out their designs. Village sheikhs offered their protection to the Jewish settlers—at a price. The price was the employment of their sons or followers as watchmen which, apart from the wages, was a symbol of their domination. Oftener than not, as already mentioned, the Arab watchmen bullied and tyrannized over their employers.

The problem of the Jewish watchmen was how to ward off thieves and yet not resort to violence except in extremity. The Arab watchmen had done their duty—to the extent that they were loyal—by making themselves feared by the lesser fry. The Jewish watchmen had the more delicate task of making themselves respected; in other words, of instilling belief in the strength of their good right arm without using it. They worked on the simple principle—which was so complicated in practice—that prevention is better than cure.

Every Shomer had to be a good shot. If he belonged to the mounted troop ,he also had to be a skilled horseman. But presence of mind and coolness in the face of danger were rated quite as high as skill in riding and marksmanship. Weapons were to be used only when mortal danger threatened; mother-wit must always be exercised first, if possible. For every shot fired the watchman had to give an accounting to a jury of his peers. If his story was not satisfactory, suspension from duty or even expulsion from Ha-Shomer might follow.

When conflicting codes meet, nothing eases the impact so much as a neighborly spirit. Desiring peace above all things, the Jewish watchmen set about cultivating friendly relations with Arabs and Beduin wherever they were posted. As a rule this was not difficult because they spoke the Arabic language and their skill with mount and rifle was sufficient to gain the esteem of men well versed in those arts.

Often a band of Jewish watchmen might have been seen riding out on visits of courtesy to sheikhs, who received them with the stately etiquette which Arab hospitality prescribes. Coffee was ground and brewed in the presence of the guests and served in tiny cups. While they were being entertained a sheep was killed and roasted in their honor. At dinner they were seated in the most honorable places and

otherwise made much of. Every detail of the complicated etiquette was carefully noted by the guests, so that they might acquit themselves properly when the visits were returned. In some settlements, the watchmen fitted up reception rooms for the entertainment of Arab guests.

The men kept their ears wide open for stray bits of information about inter-village and inter-tribal relationships. Many a useful hint, too, they gathered from casual conversation about the care of riding mares and of weapons. Defense tactics were often improved as a result of these visits, and no inconsiderable insight gained into folkways and superstitions. And, as men of the Western world, the Shomrim were not insensible to the glamor of the ancient tales and legends which were rehearsed in their presence.

The policy of establishing friendly relations with Arab neighbors succeeded better in some localities than in others; but the men always did whatever they could to make themselves *persona grata.* Conflicts could not always be avoided, and many a Shomer fell at his post; but the policy of promoting neighborly contacts was consistently followed, and revenge for a fallen comrade was never countenanced.

Stolen property could occasionally be recovered by exploiting the good relationship between the Shomrim and the local Beduin. An amusing instance is told about a donkey and a rifle which once vanished from Mescha in broad daylight. To risk a breach with the Beduin over such "trifles" would have been unwise; conversely, however, the matter could not be passed over in silence. On the morning after the theft the head watchman rode out with several of his men to call on the sheikh of the Beduin tribe encamped hard by the village. Coffee was served as usual, and they talked of one thing and another. In the course of the conversation, the head Shomer inquired whether, perchance, the sheikh had heard anything about a donkey and a rifle that had been missed from Mescha? The sheikh raised his eyebrows and uttered an astonished disclaimer. His people could hardly have been guilty of such an act against their good neighbors, but he would make inquiries. The missing objects were returned the same afternoon, but the "finders" claimed a small reward. It was paid, but very unwillingly, blackmail

being blackmail whatever the sum involved. Later in the day a fine bull disappeared from the Beduin herd grazing near Mescha. At daybreak the next morning two Beduin on horseback called to inquire whether a stray bull had been found. No, but it probably would be! In case it were found, a reward (naming the exact sum paid the previous day) would be asked. The men tried to haggle, but the head Shomer laughingly cut them short. "You know well," he admonished them, "that we desire neither your bull nor your money, but such things as you did are not seemly between neighbors. We meant only to teach you a lesson!" The lesson was taken to heart, and for a time nothing more vanished from Mescha village.

Even the best-intentioned of neighbors could not always resist the high-bred Beduin mares of the Jewish watchmen. However, when animals "disappeared", the "Moscoby" were often able to obtain their return without hard feelings or strife thanks to the personal esteem in which they were held. A case in point is the theft of Ezekiel Henkin's magnificent mare while he was posted at Ben Shemen. Henkin assembled his troop of nine mounted men in all their regalia of rifles, ammunition belts, Arab cloaks, and fancy trappings for the mares, and led them up the hill to the compound where the reigning sheikh lived. Henkin, who was vastly respected for his exploits as a hunter of desert game and his knowledge of local ways, was given a cordial welcome. Coffee was served and a sheep killed in honor of the guests. All the while the conversation was of the crops, the weather and the like, without any hint of the real purpose of the visit. After dinner the company sat in a circle on the floor drinking more coffee and smoking narghiles. Soon the talk turned, in all good fellowship, to pedigreed mares, an unfailing topic. Recent sales of mares were referred to, and their points described in detail. Henkin mentioned, as if he had just remembered it, that his own mare had disappeared that afternoon while grazing near his cottage. His story was met with looks of polite astonishment. Somebody has played a practical joke on him, surely! The sheikh looked slightly uncomfortable, hemmed, and remarked that, indeed, some rumor about a stolen mare had reached him. But none of his men, he hoped, could have been involved. He looked around him with a ferocious glance: To think that they

should have put him to shame before his good neighbors, the "Moscoby!" No more was said then, but Henkin rode back eased in his mind. When he rose the next morning, he found his mare grazing just where he had last seen her. By arranging for her return the sheikh showed his profound esteem for the Jewish watchmen. Stalwarts after his own heart!

Oftentimes the canny Shomrim would draw useful inferences from tales told over the coffee cups. There was a robber-sheikh of Galilee, so the story went, whom Allah had blessed with great herds of sheep and cattle and many dunams of fat land. But he was a man of valor as well as of substance, and it was his habit to lie in wait for caravans bound for Egypt. One day the conflict went against him. His sword was broken and the camel-drivers pressed him close. One of the men even seized his mare by her bridle. Then the clever sheikh quickly threw the reins over her head, and she bore him off swiftly to his estate. Zalel the Shomer had reason to be grateful to his memory when he himself was attacked by camel-drivers from whom he claimed compensation for damage done to the fields of Beth Gan by the passage of their caravan. One man seized his mare's bridle, and tried to throw him. But he threw the reins over her head like the robber-sheikh in the story, and she sped like an arrow into the village.

Road encounters did not always end so happily. Zvi Nissanov and Haim Sturman were riding from Mescha to Yavneel one day when several Arab shepherds shot at them from ambush. In her fright Nissanov's mare stumbled and rolled down into a ravine with her master, whose right hand was broken in the fall. He kept on firing with his left until a stone thrown at his head knocked him unconscious. The Arabs seized him then, and Sturman gave himself up voluntarily in order to stand by his friend. The two men were brought into the village and from there to police headquarters at Tiberias, where the Arabs charged them with assault. Flimsy as the charge was, Nissanov and Sturman were sentenced to a year's imprisonment each as the sequel to their adventure.

The bravery of the Jewish watchmen furnished many a theme for current tales recounted by the Arabs among themselves. The stories were elaborately embroidered at every repetition so that the original incidents were almost unrecog-

nizable before long. Romerstein, who was posted in Galilee, became an all but legendary figure owing to an adventure with cattle-thieves whom he pursued down a long defile in the hills to the ford of the Jordan. He recovered the animals there, the Beduin giving them up because they imagined other pursuers would soon appear in a body. Not content with his success, however, Romerstein tried to seize one of the Beduin. Thereupon they fired and killed his mare; but he entrenched himself behind her carcass and assaulted them so fiercely that they fled to the last man.

Meir Hasanowitz's success in certain cases was due as much to his humorous insight as to his bluff courage. One day he found Arab herdsmen calmly pasturing their flock on Jewish land in Emek Jezreel. He rode out to them accompanied by Giladi, whom all the Arabs called the "sheikh of the Moscoby." "Ya, ye shepherds," he shouted, "do you not see that I come with our great sheikh?" The men had been ready to fight, but awe of the 'sheikh" stayed their hands. They wavered. Hasanowitz quickly followed up his advantage. "Where are your manners, O shepherds?" he jibed. "Will ye not render even so much as a ewe to the sheikh?" The ewe was handed over with a shamefaced mien, and the crestfallen men silently drove off their flocks.

HA-SHOMER GROWS AND SPREADS

Sejera and Mescha having been won for the Jewish Watch, all Lower Galilee soon came into the Ha-Shomer fold. Yavneel followed the example of its neighbors. Then came Beth Gan, Delhamia, Sarona, Mitzpah, and Kinnereth. These victories were not gained because the settlers were convinced that Jewish watchmen were a national necessity; more often than not, a particularly unpleasant experience with Arab watchmen was the immediate stimulus; but the fact remained that Ha-Shomer had caught on; Jews were watching over Jewish possessions bravely and loyally, and proving their greater desirability on all practical counts. Very soon Lower Galilee was demanding more men than Ha-Shomer could supply. When that happened, one of the most experienced men would be sent to a village as "captain of the guard" to train helpers from among the local settlers or farm laborers.

By the time Ha-Shomer was two years old the Jewish Watch had gained a foothold in Samaria as well as in Galilee. From there its fame spread to Judaea, and the large plantation villages invited Ha-Shomer to take charge of the watch over their very considerable possessions.

SAMARIA

In 1911 the village council of Hadera invited Ha-Shomer to send a squad of its men. Though the invitation was a high compliment, coming from so important a village, it was charged with heavy responsibilities. Hadera's land extended over thirty thousand dunams of grain fields, orange groves, and eucalyptus forest. Its Beduin neighbors were reputed a very quarrelsome, thieving lot.

When the Jewish watchmen came, their mounts, weapons, and confident bearing did not fail to make an impression on the Beduin, who opened their eyes wide at the sight of the brawny "Moscoby". But that was merely the beginning. The Shomrim imposed a strict curfew on the whole village, and searched the hovels of the Arab laborers for undesirable over-night guests. These measures eased the strain on the watch to some extent; on the other hand, new methods had to be devised to meet the new conditions of Samaria. Hadera was not walled like the villages of Lower Galilee; and the groves presented new problems.

The eucalyptus trees which lined the streets of Hadera, for instance, were a great trial. The slightest breeze started their leaves rustling so loudly that all other sounds were blurred. One starless night the head watchman had to tap his way from post to post like a blind man. The high wind presaged rain, and the feathery eucalyptus leaves kept up a loud, running murmur. Some living creature was panting heavily close behind him. What could it be? Some animal? A thief? He rested his finger on the trigger of his weapon. The danger, if it was danger, was almost upon him. How was he to identify it without betraying his presence? A flash of forked lightning lit up the scene most opportunely as if in answer to his wish. Beside him stood the Shomer whose post he had been trying to find, ready to shoot, like himself.

"What a black night!" "Like the darkness of Egypt!" So they laughed off the ludicrous situation that, but for their caution, might have ended in tragedy.

In the harvest season the threshing floor of Hadera presented more than the usual problems of protecting the grain against thieves because it lay close to a path which was used by caravans bearing fruit and grain to the little sailboats that waited in the inlet of the beach. The camel-drivers, who were themselves not above suspicion, sang and shouted so loudly that thieves might have come very close under cover of the noise. The Shomrim berricaded the path; the drivers refused to take the road because it was much longer, and blithely passed over the barrier. One night the man on duty conceived a bright idea. He raised no objection when the next caravan disregarded the barrier; but when the last camel had gone over it, he quietly slit a sack of grain in its load with his pocket-knife. Thereafter the caravans took the longer way.

At Hadera, too, there was a tract of Jewish land to be cleared of squatters who refused to leave. These squatters were Circassians who ploughed and sowed and reaped on the tract as though their title to it had been confirmed by the highest courts of the land. Requests to vacate were met with aggressive insolence. This was intolerable to the Jewish watchmen. Settlers who wished to plough the land were accompanied by a contingent of the Shomrim, some mounted and others on foot, who went armed only with truncheons. Several Circassians were ploughing at the moment; the Shomrim drove them off. Their whole village rushed out to repulse the "invaders". "At them, boys!" cried the head Shomer, and his men came to meet the mob with uplifted clubs. Though the Circassians were mighty men of valor themselves, they decided, like the Beduin of Mescha, not to try conclusions with the "Moscoby". The settlers ploughed over the whole tract, the Shomrim standing guard, without further hindrance. The incident gave rise to new legends about the daring of the Jewish watchmen among the Arabs, and sent up their stock in the Jewish camp as well.

Looking back over their experiences at Hadera, the Shomrim used to say that their worst enemy was not the Beduin

or the Circassians, but the virulent malarial fever that rose from the great swamps that encompassed the village in those days. Hardly a man of them escaped infection. At times half the squad was down with chills and fever, and the other men, themselves weakened by repeated attacks of malaria, had to do double duty.

The success of Ha-Shomer at Hadera brought invitations from Karkur, Shfeya, and other points in Samaria for Jewish watchmen trained under its wing.

JUDAEA

For many years the night-watch at Rehovoth, one of the key-settlements in Judaea, was the perquisite of the Beduin tribe encamped hard by. This tribe was famed even among the natives for its exploits of banditry. Setting a thief to catch a thief had proved no more successful in Judaea than in Galilee or Samaria. In 1912 the Beduin had grown so bold that valuable property disappeared in broad daylight almost from under the owner's hands. A certain amount of loss by theft was accepted as practically inevitable; but the losses became so heavy that something drastic had to be done. Rehovoth had watched Hadera's experiment with Jewish watchmen and been impressed. A committee was sent to investigate on the spot. Its report eventuated in an invitation to Ha-Shomer to take over the watch at Rehovoth.

Nothing better could have been wished for by Ha-Shomer than entrance into Judaea by way of the important village of Rehovoth. The agreement provided for a squad of Jewish watchmen, mounted and on foot, to guard 14,300 dunams of grain fields, orchards, and vineyards. Ha-Shomer agreed to compensate the owners for loss of all stolen property not recovered by the men, except in cases where negligence was proved against the owners. The undertaking was guaranteed with a deposit of 1,000 francs. Losses in excess of that sum were to be covered by deductions from the payroll. Ha-Shomer was able to provide a cash guarantee thanks to the Hovevei Zion (popularly known as the Odessa Committee) which provided 7,000 francs for that purpose. The action of the Hovevei Zion was prompted by Mr. M. Ussishkin, who had been quick to encourage the formation of a Jewish Watch.

The squad sent to Rehovoth consisted of picked men headed by Henkin and Portugali. Tales of the exploits of the Shomrim had preceded them, and their spirited bearing, fleet mares and handsome weapons were not lost upon the Beduin.

With the coming of the Shomrim a strict regime was introduced. The Beduin tribe was moved further away from the village. The streets of Rehovoth were declared out of bounds to all Arabs after dark. Caravans were obliged to skirt the village at night instead of passing through it. At first the camel-drivers made a show of truculence, but soon thought better of it and desisted. Many Arab laborers slept in the stables of their employers; these were locked in at night to prevent them from passing out animals to accomplices. Even by day, only a few paths were left open through the vineyards for the Arab laborers going to and from their villages.

The Shomrim struck up an acquaintance with the local sheikhs, as their practice was. Henkin's reputation as a hunter was a great asset and won him the esteem of the Arab notables of the district. His wife, Haya Soreh, fitted up a little reception room for Arab guests in their cottage. In return for her hospitality she was often included in the invitations extended to Henkin. Henkin did not confine his attentions to notables. By feeding Beduin ragamuffins and doing them other good turns occasionally, he ensured himself warnings of projected robberies.

The first few months at Rehovoth passed off so peacefully that some of the men began to complain of "boredom". When spring came and the almonds were ripening in the orchards all such talk ceased. The guard was doubled, and the "captains" took up their abode in improvised huts of matting in the orchards, taking their families with them.

The spring brought other cares as well. At any moment emergency calls might come in from other villages. Runners appeared one morning from Beer Tovya, an isolated settlement in the southern district, pleading for immediate aid. Beduin from Beersheba had brought up their flocks to feed on the ripening grain of an Arab village near Beer Tovya. In the fight which broke out when the peasants tried to

drive them off, a Beduin was killed. The peasants dragged the corpse into one of the fields of Beer Tovya, and told the Beduin that their kinsman had been killed by the Jews. Thereupon a furious mob attacked the little Jewish village. Rehovoth and other settlements promptly sent a hundred and fifty men to the rescue, and Beer Tovya was saved. When the police came the next morning they cleared the Jews of the murder charge, with its concomitant blood-feud.

Every Shomer also had to be ready to respond instantly to calls from headquarters for emergency service in any part of the country. The discipline, though voluntary, was so perfect that all personal ties were disregarded as completely in fact as in theory. The men of Rehovoth were to furnish a classic example of the self-discipline of Ha-Shomer. The annual conference was held that year (this was in 1913) at Rehovoth, in conformity with the rule that these conferences took place in the latest-won locality. When the sessions were over, a triple wedding was celebrated which took on the proportions of a national event. Guests came from as far aways as Galilee on foot, in wagons, and on donkeyback. Long tables were spread in a grove and laden with all the good things of the countryside. A "fantasia" (demonstration of trick-riding in the Arab fashion) by the bridegrooms and their friends preceded the ceremony, which was performed by an elderly settler of Rehovoth "according to the law of Moses and of Israel." All night long the guests sang and danced and fired their rifles into the air. Then, an hour before dawn, a curt order came ordering five mounted Shomrim off to Hadera, where trouble had broken out with the Beduin. Among the five named were two of the bridegrooms. The men rode away at daybreak, and their brides protested no more than they themselves. Their long probatoin as wives in Ha-Shomer had begun under the wedding canopy.

The first year's Shmira at Rehovoth was drawing to a happy close when it was marred by tragedy. One of the men ordered some camel-drivers to stop grazing their animals in a Jewish vineyard. They refused. He grappled with them, but was overpowered and deprived of his weapon. His whistle for help was promptly answered by several comrades on horseback. The caravan made off in such haste

that some of the loads were left scattered on the ground. The Shomrim set off in pursuit in the hope of recovering the stolen weapon, and were joined by others who heard the commotion. They rode toward Zarnuga, the village of the camel-drivers. A horde of peasants emerged from Zarnuga on horseback, shouting, firing, and brandishing naked swords above their heads. The pursuers took up a defensive position on the crest of a hill. The Arabs had the advantage of knowing that the Jews wished to avoid bloodshed at any cost, but pressed them so hard that they were compelled to shoot in self-defense. Several Arabs were wounded. The peasants retreated to Zarnuga, and the Jews went back to Rehovoth rejoicing that they had suffered no casualties. But their relief was short-lived. A Shomer from Rishon-le-Zion, Samuel Friedman, who had tried to come to their help, was surrounded by the Arabs on their retreat and stabbed to death.

The incensed Shomrim urged the settlers of Rehovoth to proceed against Friedman's murderers by invoking the full rigor of the law; they, however, preferred to make a covenant with Zarnuga whereby the blood-feud was held to be wiped out, and continued to employ peasants from Zarnuga on their farms. The Shomrim bitterly resented this pacificatory attitude (which they called by another name). The Zarnuga incident was typical of a fundamental cleavage in the respective viewpoints of the Shomrim and the settlers. The latter preferred peace by compromise, while the Shomrim held that true and lasting peace could be secured only by obtaining the maximum legal penalties against the aggressors and refusing to employ any Arab known to have been implicated in thefts or deeds of violence against Jews.

Barely a month later Ha-Shomer lost another man, David Levitan, at Rehovoth. Levitan had caught a band of thieves in an orchard just as they were about to make off with several sacks of fruit. When they saw him coming, they dropped their booty and shot as they ran, killing him instantly. The Shomrim felt the loss of their two comrades most painfully; but they held as firmly as ever to their purpose. They were fighting on a national front, they said to themselves, and must be prepared for the ultimate sacrifice like other soldiers.

Friedman and Levitan had nothing in common but their tragic fate. Friedman had been a rabbinical student in his

native Lithuania, and for a time attended a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Yet, he had proved himself so competent a watchman that in the vintage season he was stationed where the Gaza road ran past the vineyards and the ripe grapes tempted the camel-drivers to turn their animals loose for free grazing. Levitan had studied art in Paris and came to Palestine to enter the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts. At Port Said his passage money gave out and he tramped across the Sinai desert to Tel Aviv. There he met Mendel Portugali, who enlisted him for his squad at Rehovoth.

The next year Rishon-le-Zion followed the example of its neighbor Rehovoth and engaged Ha-Shomer. Rishon-le-Zion, like so many other settlements, was prompted to turn to Ha-Shomer in time of trouble. A Jewish watchman employed there (not affiliated with Ha-Shomer) had been found one morning with his throat cut. His Arab associate was suspected of the murder.

As the largest wine-growing village in Judaea, Rishon-le-Zion was another feather in the cap of Ha-Shomer. Numerous Arabs and Beduin were employed there who, though well aware of the reputation of the men, showed themselves very impudent. Matters came to a head when Rishon-le-Zion acquired a new tract of land. Previously the Arab laborers had taken a short cut through the tract on their way to and from the settlement. After the land was ploughed and sown, a fence was built around it. The Arabs jumped over the fence and tramped over the crops. When the Jewish watchman barred their way, they attacked him. He whistled for help. The Arabs' friends rushed to the scene at the same time as the Shomrim. A lively clash ensued, and heads were broken on both sides. In the end the Shomrim prevailed. Thereafter the Arabs walked around and not through the sown fields.

Ha-Shomer was also asked to provide men for the two small Judaean settlements of Ben Shemen and Beer Yaakov. That made four squads in Judaea, all subject to a single command, which could be quickly mobilized into an effective unit whenever danger threatened a particular point.

Ha-Shomer was well on its way to cover all Palestine with a network of Jewish squads when war broke out. The



The New Settlement Tirath Zvi in the Beisan Valley,
founded in 1937

peace-loving watchmen became suspect in the eyes of the Turkish authorities. Ha-Shomer was proscribed, and many of the men were imprisoned and exiled. But those who remained carried on resolutely throughout the bitter war years. And it was then, at last, that the dream of a village of Shomrim, that had grown dim behind the exigencies of the work, took on shape and reality.

OPENING UP NEW TERRITORY

When the Bar Giora group founded Ha-Shomer, they also stimulated the organization of the farm laborers of Galilee under the name of Ha-Horesh (The Ploughman).

At that time (1909) there were about a hundred Jewish farm laborers in all Galilee. Little groups used to gather here and there on the Sabbaths to plan their future co-operative villages, where all possible crops would be grown. They objected to the single crop in Galilee as well as in Judaea, but recognized that the grain grown in Galilee was an essential commodity for domestic consumption while the oranges of Judaea were necessarily grown chiefly for export. The main duty of the farmer, as they saw it, was to produce first of all for his own needs; hence their ideal village had a dairy and a poultry run, fields of grain and fodder and vegetables, orchards, flocks, and herds. They wanted to get away as far as possible from the "shame" of Jewish planters and farmers who had to buy their vegetables and dairy produce from the Arab peasants. Self-sufficiency, they held, must be the first law of Jewish agriculture; and that they proposed to achieve by a diversity of crops. On the practical side, they stressed the point that mixed farming necessarily involved fewer risks than the single-crop system, since it avoided staking a whole year's work on a single throw.

While the young people were indulging in all this planning and theorizing, the Zionist Organization was taking its first tentative steps toward agricultural settlement. Dr. Arthur Ruppin, the economist entrusted with the practical work in Palestine, lent a sympathetic ear to the ideas of the young farm laborers. Then he made them an offer. If they were ready to put their theories to the test, they might do so on a tract of 3,000 dunams of National Fund land

in the Jordan Valley by sending up an occupation group which would prepare it for settlement.

The offer was a challenge, and one weighted with heavy responsibilities. A conference was called to discuss it at Beth Gan, to which Ha-Shomer and Ha-Horesh sent delegates. The offer meant that they would have to demonstrate that co-operative farming could be made to pay in a modest way by a group of laborers working without supervision and on their own responsibility. There was not a little heart-searching in the discussions, but the opportunity could not be allowed to slide. And so it was decided to send a group of seven to occupy the Jordan Valley tract, which was then known as Um-il-Juni.

The seven were very carefully picked. Two came from Ha-Shomer, two from Ha-Horesh, and two had been trained at the Zionist farm at Kinnereth. The seventh was a girl.

DEGANIYA

In December 1909 the seven crossed the Jordan at the foot of the Lake of Galilee with mules, farm implements, a very few personal belongings, and a portable hut. The hut was divided by a partition across the middle. One section served as a stable, and the other as a social room and office. The sleeping quarters were in the tumbledown clay huts left by the former Arab occupants of the land.

They were all alone on the eastern bank of the Jordan but suffered no molestation from the Arabs of the vicinity. Their knowledge of Arabic and local folkways may have been in their favor.

The whole tract was quickly ploughed over, including even those parts which the Arab peasants had left fallow for fear of bandit raids. There were abundant rains that winter, and the grain sprang up tall and full-eared. At harvest time fifteen comrades came to help bring in the crops. When the heavy sheaves lay piled up on the threshing floor, the young harvesters clasped arms across one another's shoulders and danced around them with an emotion for which they could find no words. To them it had been given to bring forth bread from the earth in the waste places of Zion!

When the accounts came to be cast up, there was a tidy profit to show on the year's work. Jewish farm laborers had demonstrated that, on their own responsibility and without the supervision of foremen, they could carry a collective undertaking through to economic success. Now the way was clear for a cooperative workers' settlement.

At Hadera a "commune" of farm laborers had for some time been hoping for an opportunity to settle on the land in a new type of village which they called a Kvutza. The Kvutza would consist of a large farm worked in common by an organized group of experienced laborers. The details remained to be worked out in practice. After the Um-il-Juni experiment had turned out so satisfactorily, the tract was turned over to the Hadera group in the early autumn of 1910. They named their settlement Deganiya for the blue cornflower which abounds in their fields.

For many years past Deganiya has been referred to as the "Mother of the Kvuzoth," just as Petah Tikva is called the "Mother of the Moshavoth" (private settlements).

MERHAVYA

The occupation group of Um-il-Juni was asked to repeat its performance the next year on the Fuleh lands of the National Fund in Emek Jezreel. A plan of cooperative settlement had been submitted by Professor Franz Oppenheimer to the Zionist Congress and approved. The experiment was to be made on the Fuleh tract.

The occupation group was enlarged to twenty men, of whom twelve were Shomrim and eight farm laborers. The land was re-named "Merhavya", which is the Hebrew for "The Wide Spaces of God." The name was apt, for the tract lies in the centre of the great Valley of Jezreel and commands the roads to all parts of the country.

Most of the land had lain fallow for years, and much of it was marshy. Huge thorns and brambles overran acres of it, and deep-rooted weeds sucked up what little fatness remained in the soil. The thorns were burned, the weeds ploughed up, and manure strewn over the fields. The season was well advanced; as much work as possible had to be crowded into the short winter days.

Funds were scarce and living conditions most primitive. But hard work and poor food were the least of the troubles that beset the pioneers. Hostile neighbors and officials were determined to dislodge the Jewish settlers before they could establish themselves in the plain.

The kamaikam at Nazareth unearthed an obsolete law which prohibited non-Ottomans from taking up domicile near the Hedjaz railway. And only two men out of the twenty at Merhavya were Ottoman subjects! Troops were sent from Nazareth to expel them at once. With the greatest difficulty they were persuaded (with the help of a bit of backsheesh) to permit the two Ottoman subjects to remain on the farm.

Joshua Hankin, as the mentor of the group, came to the rescue and arranged for the naturalization of the eighteen non-Ottomans. But the kamaikam gave them no peace even then, sending police every week to scrutinize the men's papers and ask them embarrassing questions. Then he discovered some vestiges of an ancient fortress under the manure which had been accumulated for centuries by the Arab villagers, and which the settlers had begun to remove for fertilizer. The kamaikam claimed that the removal of the manure undermined the foundations of the ruins, and sent officials whose investigations interfered with the work on the farm. Gendarmes appeared at intervals and ordered digging in the manure to stop, though it was sorely needed for the worn-out soil. However, digging proceeded between their visits, and so the fields were fertilized.

If the authorities were a nuisance, they were not at least an ever-present one. But unfriendly neighbors were a different matter. It had all begun with a pretence of neighborliness. Sheikh Mahmud of Shunem, a village famed for its brigands, had called on the very first day. Behind the shows of ceremony, his real purpose was to subject the first Jewish settlement in the Valley of Jezreel to tribute, under guise of employing his followers as watchmen, just as Jewish villages in other parts of the country were subjected. Before he left he offered the newcomers his "protection". He was told with all due civility, but very firmly, that they intended to watch in their fields themselves. This was something new and unheard of. The sheikh did not like it.

Even worse, in the eyes of their neighbors, was the fact that the very presence of the Jews interfered with the

practice of brigandage on the highways. Caravans and stray travellers had always been the legitimate prey of the robber-bands of the villages of Jezreel. With Jewish watchmen patrolling the fields along the highways, hold-ups were not so readily carried out as formerly. Yigael of Merhavya was told by one of the boldest bandits that the district was not large enough to hold them both. His threats went unheeded, but he bided his time. In general, the attitude of the Arab villagers was an odd mixture of antagonism and neighborliness. They would try to plough outlying Jewish fields and then bring their children for treatment to the Jewish nurse. Or they would intersperse attempts at pilfering with invitations to their village festivities. The treatment was always given and the invitations always accepted.

When a few adjustments had been made, the women and children came up to Merhavya. For living quarters there were only dilapidated Arab huts infested with mice, snakes, and fleas. For baking bread there were no facilities other than the smoky Arab ovens, which were heated with thorns. The tables were made of rough planks resting on barrel-tops, the benches of the same kind of planks supported by paraffin tins. Beds and cupboards were similar makeshifts.

The privations were accepted by the women, as by the men, as something incidental to the pioneering life. But at times the hardships were beyond all bearing. Funds were so scanty that the standard of living had to be fixed at the barest minimum; but at the same time the work on the farm exacted every ounce of energy that remained after frequent bouts of malaria. And in the background danger lurked every moment of the day and night.

For their temerity in blazing the Jewish trail in the Emek Jezreel, several of the Shomrim paid with their lives. The first man to fall was Ezekiel Nissanov, a member of the original group. About a month after the occupation of Merhavya Nissanov, accompanied by his friend Nadav, drove to Yavniel for supplies. They had almost reached their destination when several Arabs suddenly appeared in front of them and demanded their mules. Nadav whipped up the team and tried to outdistance them The Arabs fired. Nissanov returned their fire from the back of the wagon and wounded one of the bandits. They fired again as Nadav speeded down the steep hill. He did

not know, until he stopped at Yavniel, that Nissanov lay dead behind him with a bullet in his brain.

The first to espy the dead was his mother, a doughty old woman from Caucasia, who believed in the blood-feud like any Arab. "Did my son kill his murderer?" she demanded. "No? Then his brother Zevi must avenge him." If she knew anything about the non-retaliation policy of Ha-Shomer, she ignored it. There was a good deal of support for her point of view among the men themselves, who had been all the more shocked by Nissanov's death because it came hard upon the murder of two of their comrades at Deganiya. They urged vengeance in the conferences of Ha-Shomer. The leaders set their faces against all and any acts of reprisal on moral and tactical grounds. Heated debates were carried on; the opposition to the official policy became more and more manifest. The leaders had to exert all their great influence to win their point, and to preserve discipline in the troop. But the younger Nissanov was eyed askance for a long time by the settlers of Yavniel, who feared he would yield to his mother's urgings for reprisals in spite of his affiliation with Ha-Shomer.

The high hopes for the first harvest were tempered by apprehension. As the wheat and barley ripened robberies became more frequent. The watch was reinforced both day and night. More determined efforts were made to keep up friendly relations with the Arabs; but the settlers knew that their standards of neighborliness were not shared by the villagers, or their code of morals, for the code of the desert reads simply: "Let him take, who has the power; let him keep, who can!"

One Zaid il Zabi, the most notorious bandit chief of the district, proclaimed himself the "sworn foe of all strangers and the terror of the countryside!" And it was true, as he boasted, that though he was charged with dozens of crimes, the police had neved dared to bring him to book. Zaid il Zabi did his best to provoke a quarrel with the men of Merhavya, they theirs to avoid one. At last he succeeded.

The pretext was the beautiful Beduin filly that belonged to Yigael the Shomer, whom Zaid hated violently. The filly had been bought by Yigael for a song from a poor

Beduin sheikh who could not bear to see her starve. She looked like an ancient and broken-down nag at the time, but Yigael saw her possibilities. After a month's private nursing and coddling in the stable, he produced a mettlesome young mare of high degree, which created a sensation throughout the plain: it was intolerable that such a mount should remain in the possession of an infidel! High prices were bid for her, but Yigael refused to sell. Arab friends warned him that his mare would be stolen. "Not while I have a rifle to defend her with!" he retorted.

One dark night during the spring harvest Yigael was patrolling the fields of Merhavya when three Arab horsemen suddenly surrounded him. A voice ordered him to hand over his mare and weapons. Zaid il Zabi! Yigael leaned over the mare's neck as if to dismount, but used the instant so gained to whip out his revolver. The little mare took the cue, leaped over a ditch, and sped toward Merhavya. The Arabs followed, but Yigael was gaining ground. Now he was at the Afule station and in a few minutes he would be back in the settlement. But the Arabs gained on him, hemmed him in, and finally blocked his way. They could easily have killed him then, but preferred to disgrace him by depriving him of his most prized possessions, a deed which would have rebounded far more to their glory than taking his life. Yigael, at bay, decided to fire. A mare dropped. A second shot wounded one of the riders. At the third another bandit toppled from his horse, not to rise again.

Yigael dashed up the hill to Merhavya. The Arabs would declare a blood-feud at once. Vengeance would be prompt: reprisals might begin that very evening!

All lights were quickly extinguished. The women and children were gathered in a single hut in the middle of the settlement. Each man took up a post, and runners kept up communications between the posts.

While they watched, they saw signals being flashed from Shunem to other Arab villages. Bonfires signifying consent soon blazed on every hill, and mobs came on toward Merhavya from several directions. The procession was led by a band of horsemen who kept up a continuous firing. Behind them the dead bandit was carried by his relatives, who were followed by women keening a weird, ear-splitting lament.



Courtesy of the Archives of the Labor Federation, Tel Aviv

Early Jewish Watchmen in Galilee

On the hill all was silence, darkness, and—anxiety. The defense was undermanned, and there were not weapons enough to go round. The supply of ammunition was scanty, besides. It was decided to refrain from firing until the mob actually started up the hill. Soon a shiekh came bearing a white flag and presented a demand that all the men surrender, promising that the women and children would be spared. "There can be no talk of surrender," they informed him stoutly, "as long as we have a single bullet left!" How they would hold out through the night they did not know; it seemed barely possible. And yet they did hold out, and suffered no losses. To this day they cannot account for the seeming miracle.

When troops and police came from Nazareth in the morning, they found the Arabs reaping in the fields of Merhavya and loading the grain on camels and donkeys. Instead of stopping the pillage and calling the Arabs to account, they listened to their charge of murder against seven of the settlers, including Yigael. All seven were arrested. Some Arabs were taken into custody at the same time, but were almost immediately released. With extreme difficulty the release of three of the Jews was procured, but the other four were taken to the prison at Acco in chains and kept there for almost a year before being brought to trial. All were finally acquitted.

While the men were in prison, Joshua Hankin made a peace covenant with the village of Shunem and wiped out the blood-feud with a considerable sum of money and a promise that Yigael would not return to the Emek. The Shomrim protested at the promise as humiliating and a blow to Jewish prestige; Hankin replied that security must be set above theories. The day after Yigael was acquitted, he was transferred to Hadera.

Some months later the sheikh of Shunem invited the Shomrim of Merhavya to attend the wedding of his son as if to say, "Let bygones be bygones!" Though the demands of etiquette would have been satisfied with the sending of gifts and flowery messages of congratulation, it was decided to pay the sheikh the compliment of attendance in person. The wedding tourney would be a useful opportunity for demonstrating the skill of the Jewish watchmen in the manly arts

of shooting and riding. There was a goodly bit of risk involved because the rules of chivalry which governed the game were soon forgotten in the heat of the fray, and the mock conflicts often degenerated into real battles with killed and wounded.

The clan which had had the blood-feud with Merhavya arrived thirty strong and challenged the Shomrim, as they had expected, to "play" opposite them. Soon each of the Jews was surrounded by two or three Arabs who tried to unhorse him without too strict regard for the rules of the game. The host became concerned for their safety and invited them into the house for refreshments. But they felt that they had to stay in the game a little while longer to avoid the appearance of retreat, and did so without untoward consequences. In taking leave they went through a "fantasia" in honor of the bridegroom, wheeling their mares and shooting in the air in the native fashion in time to the chants of the women. As they filed out of the courtyard, the leader's mare reared on her haunches and held up a foreleg as if in salute, to the intense delight of the wedding guests. (She had been taught the trick as a means of parrying blows from Arab truncheons.) The skill of the Jewish watchmen was the talk of the plain for weeks, and as usual, lost nothing in the telling.

The year rolled around and the crops of the second spring were ripening in the fields of Merhavya. Defiant bands of Beduin brought their herds to graze there, singing, shouting, and firing off their weapons. There were too few men at Merhavya to cope with them during the weeks just before the harvest. Ha-Shomer sent reinforcements from Deganiya and Kinnereth and other settlements. The predatory bands came again and again, no matter how often they were beaten off. It would have been a miracle had the harvest been brought in without bloodshed. The miracle did not happen. In one of the numerous night skirmishes Meir Hasanowitz, reckoned among the bravest and most popular men in Ha-Shomer, was killed by a stray bullet. The shock to his young wife killed their unborn child. His comrades grieved doubly, because "Meirke" left no "name or memorial in Israel." Tova Portugali was nearing her time then, and Mendel wrote her while making his rounds, "If I cannot be with you when the baby comes, will you name it Meir, or Meira, as the case may be? Then our beloved Meirke's

name will not go down into oblivion." The Portugalis' baby was a boy, but little Meir did not survive his promising infancy, like the first children of so many other Shomrim. In conditions that sapped the vitality of strong men, little children could not always win their fight for life.

SHEPHERDS

The leaders of Ha-Shomer never lost sight of their goal of settlement on the land, and worked toward it by every possible means, for the men of Ha-Shomer and their children must become as firmly rooted in the soil of Palestine as their peasant ancestors. When they had shown the way, others would follow: the new Jewish peasantry of their vision would cover the land with Jewish villages where every branch of husbandry would be carried on.

Since they themselves were town-bred men who knew little or nothing of agriculture, their first object was to learn all they could. A beginning had been made when they learned how to grow all varieties of grain at the ICA farm in Galilee. The next step was taken when they gained a share in the night-watch over the flocks at the spring grazing. From watching sheep they would go on to tending them; and from tending other men's flocks to raising their own. There was little they could learn about the shepherd's trade from Jewish sources, since the settlers employed Beduin to look after the few flocks they had. Therefore, they must go to the Beduin to learn. Three men were picked for the "course", which meant living for months in a Beduin camp, where the conditions were all but intolerable for the least fastidious of Europeans. But Abrahamson, Fleischer, and Harit were so eager to learn the shepherd's trade that they eagerly embraced the opportunity. Their comrades at Karkur arranged for their training with the semi-savage Turcoman tribe, who were vastly flattered to think that Europeans desired to place themselves under their tutelage.

The process of adjustment was far from easy. Accustomed though the men were to roughing it, the filth and noise of the Beduin camp revolted them beyond words. They could barely bring themselves to swallow the scanty ration of lumpy bread-wafers, curds, and goat's milk; but

ailments brought on by semi-starvation forced them to eat, and before long they were very thankful to the Beduin lasses who slipped them extra portions behind their masters' backs.

The Beduin treated them respectfully and invited them to sleep in the tents with them. Though the spring nights were chilly and their only covering a shabby abbaye (Arab cloak of wool), they preferred to sleep out of doors beside their charges. There were fewer fleas in the open!

Among the tricks of the trade they learned from the Beduin was how to pasture flocks in other people's fields! The Beduin's purpose in life is to obtain as much good pasturage as possible for nothing; the more he succeeds, the better his standing in the tribe. The Jewish tyros of course had their part in these raids, though occasionally they had to steal into Jewish fields guarded by their own comrades. The tactics were quite simple. The Beduin would lead his sheep into a field of grain; while the animals grazed he and his Jewish accomplice lay flat on the ground listening for the approach of the watchman. At the first hint of his coming, the Beduin hustled the flock out of the field and the Jew followed, firing into the air as he went. The watchman returned fire, and when he heard nothing more continued on his rounds, thinking that the would-be thieves had been frightened off. Then, when all was quiet again, the flock was brought back into the field. The sheep sensed the danger and kept as quiet as the men. The lesson in Beduin tactics was not lost upon the Jews, and they remembered it well when they watched again in Jewish fields during the harvest season.

The Jews were greatly amused, when the raids upon other people's crops followed, as they often did, after an evening of devotions so fervent that the worshippers fell into a trance. Religion was one thing it appeared, ethics another. The Beduin considered their conduct perfectly normal, and their Jewish guests did not argue the point.

To their surprise the young men found themselves the objects of much missionary zeal. Wayfarers, detecting at once the European origin of the shepherds under their abbayes, stopped to make conversation and urged them to

adopt the faith of Islam, promising that all the joys of the Moslem paradise would then be theirs. Fleischer relates how a very holy sheikh angled for his soul. The sheikh had come to collect his annual tithe at the harvest festival, one of the great events of the Beduin year. He was received with the respect due his sacred calling, and the Jewish shepherd was exhibited to him with much pride. The sheikh took a great fancy to Fleischer, insisted on his sitting beside him at meals, and fed him the choicest bits of meat from the common bowl. Then, as they sat together in the circle one evening, he suggested that Fleischer accept Islam and enter the tribe. The gain in spiritual values would be supplemented by material rewards, since the convert would receive ten sheep from every tent and the prettiest girl in the tribe for his wife. Fleischer put him off with the explanation that he had come to the tribe to study its customs and religious practices. If he found superior virtue in Islam, he would embrace it without the proffered rewards; but if not, a tent full of gold could not tempt him! The company hailed his words as "sweeter than honey," and the holy sheikh made answer: "None is greater than Allah! If you will faithfully observe our laws and customs, you will learn that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet. Allah akhbar! God is great!"

When the grazing season ended in Samaria, the tribe split up into several bands and sought various pasture grounds. The three comrades were separated then, and their isolation from their own world was complete.

The band with which Fleischer remained made for Emek Jezreel, where the late spring harvest was in progress. Soon he glimpsed Merhavya, and a wave of homesickness for his own kind swept over him. He asked permission to visit his Jewish friends, but the shepherds tried to dissuade him. "It is not meet," they said, "for a man to leave his own tribe. Do you lack anything with us? If you leave us now, you will not return. And how shall we explain your absence to our master?" Fleischer gave his word of honor to rejoin them the next day, and was allowed to go. On the road to Merhavya, he was very much amused when several of his friends passed him by without a sign of recognition; but as he came into the settlement the watchman shouted, "Here's Fleischer, come back from the Beduin!" In the midst of a

tumultuous welcome he stopped to ask, "But why is everything so festive here?" "Have you forgotten that today is Shavuoth, renegade?"

Fleischer went back to the tribe the next day, bearing gifts of tobacco which were accepted with profuse thanks. He remained with the Turcomans while they pastured their flocks in the Emek, and they took it for granted that he would accompany them to the hills of Ephraim for the autumn grazing; but an emissary from Ha-Shomer came to fetch him, saying, "You have learned enough for our purpose, and there is no need for you to suffer any more. We have decided to organize a commune of shepherds. You and the other two men are wanted now to tend some Jewish flocks at Poriya and Beth Gan. Everything has been arranged." When Fleischer reported to his master that he had been called back to his own people, he killed a sheep and held a feast in his honor, where Fleischer was solemnly inducted into the tribe, and assured of a welcome at all times. "Once a Turcoman," they told him, "always a Turcoman!"

When the men took on their new duties, they found that they had been engaged on the same terms as the Beduin shepherds employed in the Jewish settlements. They had to make good all losses and injuries, and a part of their petty wage was held back till the accounting at the end of the year as a guarantee. That left too little money for food, and none at all for clothing. The hungry men went barefoot that winter as they followed their flocks, clothed in little more than their threadbare abbayes. The physical strain of the work was very severe. Often the shepherds, who slept beside their charges, had to sit up all night with a sick animal. Every time an animal wandered out of sight they feared, in their inexperience, that it had been killed or stolen. There was reason enough for their apprehension, however, since their Beduin predecessors had vengefully stabbed several cows to death which they had had, of course, to pay for. This was at Beth Gan. At Mitzpah things were even worse, perhaps because they had hoped to raise a flock of their own from the newborn kids that were promised as part of their wage (the rest was to be paid in flour and ewes' milk). But the parent stock was sickly, and began to pine when the rains set in. All hopes of milk and newborn kids

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vanished, and the flour ration was withheld most of the time. The men were reduced again and again to feeding on edible herbs which they gathered in the fields where their flock grazed.

When the war broke out sheep-raising was abandoned because the Turkish authorities requisitioned most of the livestock they could lay hands on for the use of the army. But the plans of Ha-Roeh, the shepherds' collective, were cherished throughout the war years, and revived when some of the men met again in the Jewish battalion in 1918. No sooner were the Turks expelled from Galilee than a group of shepherds made what turned out to be a reasonably successful experiment with a flock of their own at Sarona in Lower Galilee. Kfar Giladi, the Ha-Shomer settlement (of which more hereafter) took the cue from the Sarona group and went in for sheep-raising on an extensive scale. Other settlements followed suit, and Jewish shepherds became familiar figures in many parts of the country.

TEL ADASHIM: OCCUPATION OR SETTLEMENT?

For two or three years Merhavya was the only outpost of Jewish settlement in the swampy wilds, as they then were, of Emek Jezreel. Then the Tel Adashim tract not far away was acquired, and Merhavya was asked to send ten men to occupy it. Among those assigned to the occupation group were some who had been in the occupation group of Deganiya.

With them went twenty-five men to help in the preliminary work. On the land there was an Arab hamlet, consisting of two rows of mud huts. The Arab tenants of the Syrian effendi from whom the tract was bought stayed on for some time. The Jews took one row of mud huts for their quarters, and the Arabs the other. Thanks to the tact of the Shomrim and their knowledge of native ways, relations were friendly throughout, and unmarred by untoward incidents.

Barracks, stables, and outhouses soon changed the face of Tel Adashim, and when the men's families came to join them, trees and flowers were added to the signs of Jewish occupation. The exhausted soil gratefully absorbed the

fertilizer strewn liberally over the fields, and responded with a plentiful crop.

When the Tel Adashim land was occupied, the men of Ha-Shomer had four or five years' hard service behind them, and the strain of wounds, malaria, and insufficient sleep had weakened many a robust young frame. Even the leaders began to cherish an active dislike for the work, which they regarded as "unproductive", and longed for the quiet, useful life of the tiller of the soil more than ever.

In the first flush of adventurous youth, blooded mares and firearms had not been without their allure, and the "soldiers" (mounted men) were not insensible to the exotic picture they made in their Arab garb, with rifles and swords and high-bred mares. But these trappings had begun to pall long since under the pressure of stern realities. What, asked Portugali, was it all about except to ward off thieves? Nothing constructive was achieved no matter how hard or how long a man worked, he added wistfully as he watched his friends driving, their ploughs over the fields of Tel Adashim. As they sowed, so would they reap. What did a Shomer reap? It was not that they questioned the value of a Jewish Watch at any time, but that they came to feel that no man ought to be expected to devote his entire life to it as a "professional". Service in Ha-Shomer should be required of every able-bodied Jew with the requisite qualifications, but only for a fixed period of years, like a citizen-soldier in other countries. But they had set such high standards, and kept to them so rigidly that the organization grew very slowly; and with so few new recruits the veterans, who longed most keenly to settle down, had to remain in the service year after year.

Most of the men had married, and their irregular way of life produced a whole crop of domestic problems. Willingly as the women accepted their lot at first (in the majority of cases), the coming of their babies forced them to realize that service in Ha-Shomer precluded anything like a normal home life. How could you make a home worthy of the name when you were shifted, in the course of a single year, from Galilee to Samaria, and from Samaria to Judaea, and then back again to Galilee? The temporary "married quarters" of the watchmen were always makeshifts without elementary facilities for housekeeping.

The women were in a constant tremor (though they kept their fears to themselves) that their husbands would be killed in the performance of their duty. And when a child was on its way, the mother lay awake nights brooding: would the baby ever know its father? Once it came into the world, too, all the odds were against its survival or proper development. The family of a watchman lived under such conditions, furthermore, that its primary purpose in coming to Palestine was thwarted. The women felt this for themselves no less than for their husbands and children. They were modern women, with the modern woman's profound need of living her own personal life and functioning as an individual apart from her duties as wife and mother. In their particular case they regarded work on the land as the ultimate expression of their own personalities. Wherever the hut assigned to a Shomer had a patch of ground near it, vegetables and chickens were raised and a cow or two kept. The produce was a welcome and (very necessary) supplement to the Shomer's meagre wage; but the work was done very eagerly by the women in preparation for the great day when Ha-Shomer would build its own village and they would have their share in its creation. But year after year passed, and the men were still shifted about the country every few months. Even the most modest of permanent homes was out of the question in the circumstances. When the women began to complain, for their children's sake, of the eternal wanderings, the Shomrim would beg them to be patient just a little longer. "In a year or two," they promised, "we shall be working on our own land. I shall follow the plough, and you will raise the vegetables and the chickens, and the children will help us both."

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, especially when the delays endanger both husband and child. When Tel Adashim was occupied by a Ha-Shomer contingent, many said: "Why should we wait any longer for our own settlement? Let us stay on at Tel Adashim."

The Ha-Shomer village had been planned so long that it was a combination of all possible—and often contradictory—virtues: it would be situated in a wild and remote region close to the frontiers, where the sternest pioneer qualities would be fostered in parents and children; its soil would be the most fertile, the best watered in Palestine; it would be

situated near a lake or river so that the children would learn to swim and row and fish; it would be encircled by high mountains, so that they would become hardy mountaineers and shepherds; the natives would be of the most primitive sort, so as to bring out heroic qualities in the growing generation.

Some stressed one of these desiderata, some another. One longed for fertile soil that would yield teeming harvests, another for distance from the settled areas. Tel Adashim did not approximate anyone's ideal; but there it was, a present fact. Ha-Shomer needed a common habitation just as the families needed homes, for the men were scattered all over the country, and at times the sense of solidarity and community of purpose appeared to be weakening. The more recent recruits often did not know one another except by name. With a common centre, old intimacies would be revived and new ties fostered.

When Tel Adashim was discussed at the annual conference that year (1914), many of the men and their wives were opposed to settling there. Let Tel Adashim be prepared for settlement by others, urged the "Nays", just as had been done at Deganiya and Merhavya. (The wives were not members of Ha-Shomer as such, the five women members having been chosen for their personal abilities; but all the women took part in the annual conference where the plan was discussed because the matter concerned them so closely.)

The majority favored Tel Adashim as better than no settlement at all. If it did not serve the Ha-Shomer purpose well enough, they could always pull up stakes; and if it was not the ideal Ha-Shomer village, the next one would be an improvement on it; besides, had they not planned a whole series of Ha-Shomer villages, each better than the last?

And so Tel Adashim became the first centre of Ha-Shomer. The families were brought there, but the men could spend little time in the settlement since their duties in the Watch were as arduous as ever. The leaders—Giladi, Portugali and their lieutenants—were mere visitors. Manya Shohat had suggested that Tel Adashim be organized as a "collective," with a common kitchen, mess hall, and nursery, so as to ease the strain on the women and give them more

time for work on the farm. But her idea was rejected as "Utopian", and the women struggled on as best they could.

Because Tel Adashim was accepted as a compromise, it was destined to raise at least as many problems as it solved. Bitter conflicts of opinion arose over fundamental policies until the work came almost to a standstill. Things could not go on as they were; everyone saw that. But neither could a sufficient minimum of agreement be arrived at. Out of the conflict of views the only possible solution was adopted: those who wanted to stay, being united on a plan of action, would stay; the others would leave.

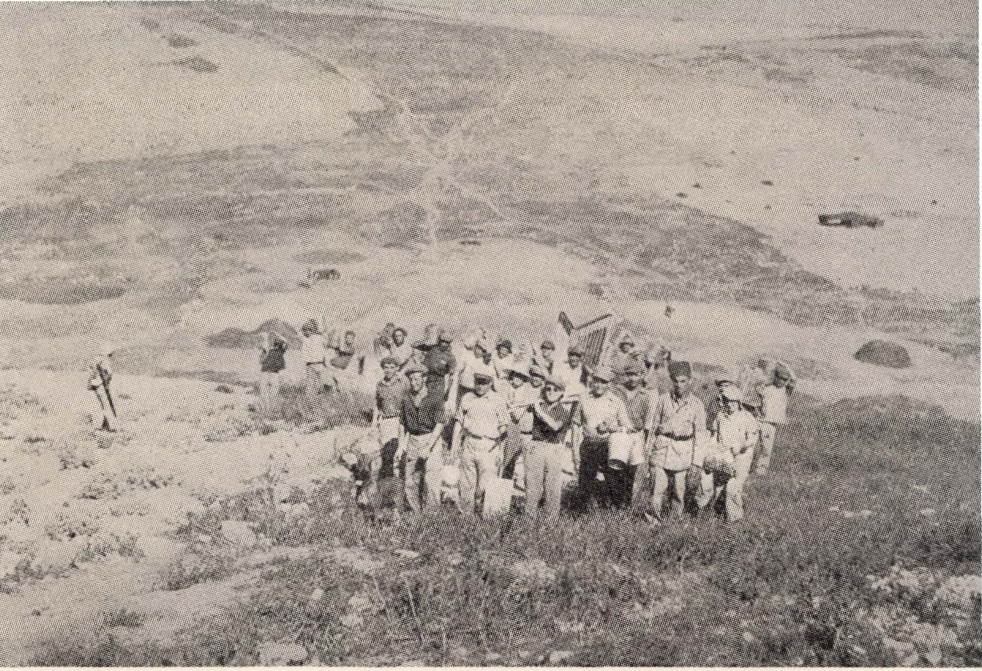
Giladi headed the opposing faction, and led his group to Galilee.

HA-SHOMER IN WARTIME

By 1914 Ha-Shomer had trained a troop of disciplined watchmen who formed an unofficial rural Jewish constabulary. In less than six years the young visionaries of Bar Giora had blazed a trail which had led from the little farm at Sejera in Galilee through the broad fields of Hadera in Samaria to the vineyards of Rehovoth in Judaea.

The natural scepticism of the settlers had long since been dissipated by the men's skill, courage, and restraint. The Shomrim had released them from the tyranny of the brigands they had been forced to employ as watchmen. The Arabs no longer flouted the Jews as "children of death" (cowards), and eyed the Jewish watchmen with marked respect in spite of their resentment. They were puzzled that men who could shoot so well should be so careful to avoid entrance into quarrels and so averse from inflicting injury even when attacked; yet, certainly, their restraint could not be set down to cowardice. For the Jewish youth Ha-Shomer became the living symbol of heroism, and many pressed for admission into its ranks. If relatively few were admitted, it was because the standards were never relaxed, even when the demand for trained men exceeded the supply, as it often did in the last year or two before the war.

Had not the war broken out when it did, Ha-Shomer would have had its men posted in every Jewish village in the



American settlers climbing the hill to their new home at Ein Hashofet, ("The Eye of the Judge"), a new colony in the "Emek," (Valley of Esdraelon) named after Mr. Justice Brandeis

land by the end of its first decade. But Palestine was involved in the war as a Turkish province, and became, as so many times in its long history, a bone of contention between rival empires. This rivalry, as always, brought fateful consequences upon the Jews.

The impact of the war was felt in Palestine from the very first, though there was no actual fighting until 1917. Those years were one long ordeal by famine and pestilence, arrests and expulsions.

The notorious Beha ad-Din, kamaikam of the Jaffa district, promptly proclaimed the Zionists a disloyal element, for whom there was "no room in Palestine." It appears to have been essential for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire that the Jewish villages of his district should be deprived of the few firearms in their possession. The headmen of the villages were ordered to turn over all firearms on pain of bastinado. The watchmen of Rishon-le-Zion urged that the demand be refused: otherwise there would be no end to the kamaikam's exactions. As for the bastinado, several of the men volunteered to take the punishment in the mukhtar's place. The settlers, however, thought it wise not only to surrender the few arms they had, but to require the Shomrim to do likewise. The men refused to be deprived of their only reliance in wartime. The settlers still insisted. The Shomrim packed up their weapons secretly and sent them to Tel Adashim for safekeeping.

In an attempt to force their hand, Manya Shohat, a leading figure in Ha-Shomer, was denounced to the police. After being imprisoned for months, she was sent to Damascus for court-martial; but the whereabouts of the weapons remained a close secret. The prediction of the Shomrim that compliance with the kamaikam's orders would lead to further exactions came true almost immediately. Rusty old weapons had to be bought up in the Arab villages at unconscionable prices, time and again, in order to appease him.

The Rishon-le-Zion incident was a mere straw indicating the direction of the oncoming hurricane. All the men of Ha-Shomer were of an age for military service; and the exercise of their vocation had been very good training for the army. Only Ottoman subjects were liable to the draft; but, on the other hand, non-Ottomans were liable to expulsion from the country. (Naturalization was offered as a boon to all the Jewish residents, even those who were subjects of enemy countries.)

The situation created an acute dilemma for Ha-Shomer. If the men were drafted into the army, they would have to leave their posts just at the time when, in the troubled state of the country, they were most needed there. For the men themselves, even if they were not sent to the front, life in the local barracks would be a nightmare of hunger and disease. Exemption from military service could be obtained in one of two ways: payment of a sum of 1,000 francs per capita, or service in the army labor corps. Exemption by money was out of the question, since Ha-Shomer could not raise anything like the required sums. Enlistment in the labor corps was not too intolerable an alternative, but the effect upon the security of the settlements would be the same. Many of the men did accept this alternative for lack of a better, and were set at road-building, wood-chopping, transport of wounded and supplies, and the like. Occasionally they were able to render these services while living in or near their homes. One of the men, a skilled mechanic by trade, thought himself lucky when he was assigned to the railway workshop at Afule, near Merhavya; but only a few months later he found himself heading a labor gang in the desert of Transjordan, which was sent to repair the trains, tracks, and bridges dynamited by Lawrence and his Beduin along the Hedjaz railway.

If Ha-Shomer was not to cease to function altogether, some of the men had to evade army service of any kind. When the police searched for "slackers", however, they had to run away from their posts. The safest refuge at such times was an army labor corps. There was always a comrade there who could smuggle a man in; and once in, he worked so well that no suspicion attached to him.

But all the tribulations of the first three years were to seem as nothing in the light of the lurid events of the fourth. The British forces were then advancing up from Egypt. The Turks believed that military secrets were being revealed to the enemy. All the Jewish young men became suspect over night. Several were arrested on charges of espionage and tortured. The storm soon burst over Ha-Shomer, which was accused of furthering subversive political activities. Twenty-seven of the men were denounced by name as spies in the service of the British.

In Galilee and the Emek Jezreel the settlements were surrounded by Turkish soldiery who demanded the surrender of

the Jewish watchmen. Two Ha-Shomer leaders, Hefter and Paz, gave themselves up at Tel Adashim in order to save the settlement. Abrahamson did the same at Kinnereth. Others hid in the clefts of the Galilean mountains. The friends who brought them food and water reported that settlers were being tortured and imprisoned because they would not (or could not) reveal the whereabouts of the "spies". All the men who could be reached were called to a secret meeting in Galilee to decide on a course of action.

The policy of Ha-Shomer had been clearly defined from the beginning of the war. Though the Turkish regime was corrupt to the core and would be a good riddance, Ha-Shomer was not ready to fight it in underhand ways. When the hour struck for open revolt, Ha-Shomer would take the lead. Until then, it consistently refused to have anything to do with espionage, no matter how important the political considerations urged in its favor. Ha-Shomer shared the traditional Jewish dislike for "informers" on ethical grounds; and, from the "practical" point of view, there was the consideration that Jews who aided the British intelligence service thereby involved the whole Yishuv in very serious dangers.

At the secret session of the fugitives, who were all wanted by the police on espionage charges, the policy of Ha-Shomer was once more reviewed and confirmed. Giladi urged that all the men who were being looked for by name should give themselves up, and so save themselves and others much suffering. Once before a court, they would have no difficulty in establishing their innocence. Some of the men objected that they would be tortured to death in prison before ever being brought to trial. None there feared death, having faced it every night of their lives for long years; but the disgrace of torture and hanging as spies did not bear thinking of. The majority sided with Giladi. Even in that hour, the famous Ha-Shomer discipline held firm. The dissenters gave themselves up with the rest.

One of the dissenters, Zevi Nadav, has told (in "Kovetz Ha-Shomer") the story of his own experiences following his arrest. He and his friends were taken in chains to the prison at Nazareth, and there tortured by Hassan Bey, a high official notorious for his cruelties, during the preliminary examination. From Nazareth, since he would not "confess", he was sent to Damascus for court-martial; there he was acquitted. Instead of release came further imprisonment on

the implicit charge of evading army service. After weeks of confinement in unspeakably filthy jails at Homs and other Syrian towns, he was sent to barracks at Constantinople and there drilled for a short time. Nadav and twenty-eight other Palestinian Jews were then sent from Constantinople to Trebizond and Erzerum for military service. On their way they passed through territory where the Turks had massacred Armenians by thousands. Unburied corpses and ruined villages testified to the ferocity and wide extent of the butcheries. One member of the party, Nissanov, knew both Turkish and Russian, and had a way with him where minor officials were concerned. Thanks to his diplomatic exertions, the men were taken into labor gangs instead of being sent into the ranks. From thence they escaped in one and twos, trekking back to Palestine on foot after the Armistice.

During the summer of 1918 Galilee and Samaria were cut off from Judaea by the advance of the British as far as Kfar Saba in the Plain of Sharon. There was then no possibility of communication between the Shomrim in the north and those behind the British lines in the south. Each group therefore acted on its own initiative. In Judaea the Shomrim began to agitate for a Jewish battalion like those raised in other countries for service in the British army. The leaders of the Yishuv and the Zionist Commission in Jerusalem were won for the plan. The British naturally accepted the proffered assistance. The whole Yishuv rejoiced on the day when the Palestinian "Gedud" marched through the streets of Tel Aviv to entrain for Egypt, where the men were to be drilled. That day saw the Zionist flag and the banner of Ha-Shomer proudly displayed in public after four years of proscription. The men worked very hard in the hope of being able to serve in the final campaign that was to roll up the Turco-German front in Galilee. To their great disappointment they were set to guard the new water supply line that had been laid across the Sinai desert when the British troops advanced into Palestine. But the other Jewish battalions had an active share in the final drive against the Turks in Transjordan. That was some consolation.

In the meantime, the Shomrim in Galilee were very anxious for the safety of the Jewish settlements behind the Turkish lines in the north. Galilee was wild country at best, and lawlessness prevailed there even in peaceful times. When the Turkish troops made their last stand against the British, they would hardly be able, even if they wished, to concern themselves much about the law-abiding civilian

population. There was good reason to suspect that the Arabs were planning to attack the Jewish villages during the military operations. A certain sheikh of Transjordan was known to have laid all his plans for the onslaught, even to the division of the women and the spoils. Jemal Pasha, the Turkish military governor, was threatening a general expulsion of all Jews from Palestine.

The Shomrim of Galilee organized the rural laborers for the defense of the settlements. Fortunately the British forces swept through Galilee so rapidly that neither Jemal Pasha nor the Arabs had any opportunity to carry out whatever designs they might have been cherishing. In less than a fortnight after the advance began in September 1918 the Turkish hold on Palestine was broken completely. Palestine had been an Ottoman province for just 402 years.

No sooner had the fighting ceased than a full conference of Ha-Shomer was called at Tiberias. Many of the men had not met their best friends even once during the war years. Ambitious plans were made for the future of Ha-Shomer, and when the conference adjourned the men marched in a body to Kinnereth to take part in a conference of agricultural workers. At their head rode Giladi, carrying the banner of Ha-Shomer with the motto adopted just eleven years earlier: "In blood and fire Judaea fell; in fire and blood Judaea will arise!"

KFAR GILADI

That the dissenting group at Tel Adashim should have been headed by Giladi was natural enough, since he had always been one of those who was most determined to push into the wilds—the nearer a frontier the better.

The war had been on for two years. The Turks were hostile, the Arabs restless. Some Ha-Shomer leaders had been exiled; the ranks were depleted by death and illness and forced labor. Worst of all, dissension was rife at Tel Adashim, the only home Ha-Shomer had ever made for itself.

Eight years of extreme hardship had not dampened the pioneering zest of Giladi and his adherents. The women as well as the men had set their hearts on building an "eagle's nest" on a high hill in the furthest reaches of Upper Galilee, with the semi-savage tribes of the border country for their neighbors. In such a place they wished to rear their Palestinian-born children.

Riding up and down Galilee on his errands for Ha-Shomer, Giladi discovered an ideal spot for the "eagle's nest," a situation wild and lonely enough to test the mettle of any man. This was the tract known as Hamara. It lay north of the great Plain of Hule, in the hills of Naphtali. The nearest Jewish village, Metula, backed on the Syrian border.

The Hamara land belonged to the ICA. Giladi asked Haim Kalvarisky, agent for the ICA in Galilee, to allot the Hamara land and the neighboring tract of Talha to two groups of laborers who wished to found cooperative settlements. The proposals received a sympathetic hearing and the land was turned over to them with a small sum for livestock and equipment. Then Giladi went to the Zionist Organization and "Kappai" (a fund set up by the organized workers) and obtained additional small loans for the initial needs of the two Kvutzoth.

While the preliminary work was being done at Hamara, the Shomrim and their families went to live in Metula. The men had to rise two hours before dawn in order to reach Hamara in time to begin the day's ploughing at a proper hour, and returned long after dark. The village council of Metula was persuaded to engage two of the Shomrim for its night-watch. This was the first time the brigands of the north had an opportunity to encounter the "Moscoby" of whom they had heard so much.

That first winter life was sustained on a minimum of food, clothing, and warmth, with the barest necessities often lacking. Naturally enough, there was a good deal of sickness. They held on grimly, however, for they were at last building the Ha-Shomer village where they wanted it and as they had always meant it to be. (When the farm was complete, with fields and orchards teeming with the gifts of the earth of Eretz Israel and flocks grazing in the hills round about, all the early privations and heartaches would be forgotten.) Otherwise life on the northern frontier was peaceful enough. Good relations with the Beduin and villages were skillfully fostered, and the tumults of war had not yet touched Galilee.

Just when Hamara was beginning to take shape, in the summer of 1918, a stunning blow fell on the little group of frontiersmen. It was then that Ha-Shomer was denounced as an armed body preparing to rise against the Turkish regime, and that many of its veterans were accused of espionage in favor of the British. All the men of Hamara were then arrested. The ICA sent Arab watchmen to guard the fields

in their absence. Giladi was soon back at Hamara, but found things in a shocking state. The watchmen had made off with much of the equipment, and left the cattle to starve.

The families left Metula then, and built themselves a large wooden hut which they shared with the livestock. One of the two rooms was divided up into a stable, a byre, and a granary, the other into a kitchen, mess hall, and nursery. For sleeping quarters they used tents.

A new crop was sown in the fields of Hamara, and a eucalyptus grove planted. Cows, chickens, and sheep were bought with the proceeds of additional loans secured by Giladi.

After the Turks left Galilee, Giladi called the first post-war conference of Ha-Shomer at Tiberias and then went on with his men to a Labor conference at Kinnereth. He left Kinnereth a very sick man; his overstrained heart collapsed before an attack of influenza a few days later.

Of those tragic days Kaila Giladi writes: "When the news of Israel's death reached the hill (Hamara), all the people were lying ill. They were left without funds or support or leadership, and did not know which way to turn. I wrote to them out of the depths of my grief that I was coming back; and that all of us together would carry on the work Giladi had not lived to complete."

Giladi's friend Zeid took up the burden of leadership at Hamara. It was then that they gave Hamara its Hebrew name: Kfar Giladi.

TEL HAI

When the terms of peace were fixed, France received a mandate for Syria, thus thwarting the plans of the Arab Nationalists, who had proclaimed an independent kingdom with Damascus as its capital. When the French asserted their authority, the Arabs rose against them, but with the result that Emir Feisal (later king of Iraq), who had been crowned at Damascus, was ejected unceremoniously. During these disturbances Upper Galilee, owing to its proximity to Syria, was a kind of no man's land. Hordes of incited Beduin, heavily armed by the Arab Committee of Damascus, swarmed over northern Palestine. The British troops of occupation had been transferred to Egypt. Small detachments of French troops were sent to protect the pro-French Christian villages, but were outnumbered and routed by the Beduin, who proceeded to kill, burn, and pillage without

hindrance except for such resistance as the villagers themselves could put up.

Though the Beduin declared that they had no quarrel with the Jews, Kfar Giladi and its neighbor Tel Hai knew themselves to be in a parlous position. Even while the Beduin protested friendship, Jews were attacked on the roads and Jewish property was stolen right and left. When two Christian villages were razed to the ground in their immediate vicinity, they knew their turn would not be long in coming. From the centres of the Yishuv it was suggested that the two Kvutzoth be evacuated for a time; they replied with a request for arms and reinforcements. Comrades from the Emek and Lower Galilee straggled up in threes and fours, bringing such supplies as they could spare.

One night in December 1919 Tel Hai was sniped at from all sides. The enemy were repulsed, but one of the men, Saposnik, received a mortal wound. Early in February two men of Tel Hai were ploughing in their fields under the guard of an armed comrade when some Arabs tried to seize their mules. When they resisted, the Arabs fired. At the sound of shooting, a dozen comrades came running to their assistance. Aaron Sher, who was in the lead, fell with two bullets in his chest.

On January 1, 1920, Joseph Trumpeldor, founder of the "Hehalutz" organization and a captain of the Zion Mule Corps at Gallipoli, came up to Tel Hai to take charge of the defense. After Sher's death, the vital issue of going or staying was discussed again. As Trumpeldor wrote in his diary, it was decided to stay and defend the two outposts to the last gasp.

The families were sent away and all plans made for eventualities. In the meantime work went on as usual. For a few weeks all was quiet. It began to look as if the trouble was over. The watch was not relaxed, but spirits rose.

Then, on the first of March, three weeks after Sher's death, several desultory attacks culminated in a siege of Tel Hai. Kemal Effendi and four other Arab officers from Halsa, an adjacent village, came to ask admittance in order to search for French soldiers. Since such searches had been made before, they were admitted without question, and Trumpeldor conducted them through the rooms. When Trumpeldor was called away for a moment, the officers signalled from the roof to a mob of Beduin assembled outside

the farmyard. The Beduin attempted to crash the gate of the high stone enclosure. Trumpeldor went toward the gate to parley with them, but they fired and wounded him slightly.

He returned to the house, gave orders to fire, and went out again to parley with the Beduin. Before he reached the gate he fell mortally wounded with a bullet in his abdomen. Toker hurried to his aid, but fell dead with five bullets in his body. A third man went out and kept the officers on the roof at bay with his rifle while he dragged Trumpeldor along the lee of the wall and so into the house.

Trumpeldor turned over the command to a lieutenant, and calmly superintended the dressing of his wound. The assault became more violent; the defense stiffened. For some time no sound had been heard from the post in the attic. During a few moments' lull in the fighting, while the Beduin were carrying off their dead and wounded, an attempt was made to reach the attic by the outside staircase, the only means of access. Just then the Beduin returned and suggested a truce. When the leader of the defense approached to negotiate with them, they fired treacherously and wounded him. At the same time a blazing mat was thrown on the roof of the house, but two bombs thrown at the Beduin from the stable-loft sent them flying in confusion.

They would come back presently, but in the meantime advantage was taken of the respite to bore a hole in the ceiling of the room under the attic, where an alarming silence still prevailed. Behind a barricade of tables and benches they found Munter, Sarah Czizik, Deborah Drachler, and Sharf rigid in death. A feeble moan from under a blanket revealed a severely wounded comrade, the only one left alive.

In the late afternoon Trumpeldor ordered three men to get through to Kfar Giladi at all costs. They accomplished the mission safely by crawling the whole way on their hands and knees, and found fifteen men on the point of starting for Tel Hai.

They arrived after dark, when the Beduin had withdrawn, probably to return in the morning. The wounded were laid on stretchers and the dead taken away in a farm wagon for burial at Kfar Giladi.

Trumpeldor died on the way. He was conscious almost to the last moment. "It is good to have a country of one's own to die for," he said at the last.

At two o'clock the next morning two graves were dug near the threshing floor of Kfar Giladi. In one they laid Trum-

peldor, Toker, Munter and Scharf, in the other Sarah and Deborah.

The rest of the night was spent in feverish preparations for the defense. At dawn the first shots were fired at the large hut which had been built when the families first came to Kfar Giladi. The attacks continued intermittently all day long, but the Beduin were driven off every time. At dark the shooting ceased.

That evening the defenders again sat in council. The Beduin would undoubtedly return at daybreak, perhaps in greater force. Again the vital question had to be decided, this time under threat of immediate disaster. Opinion was almost evenly divided: Twenty-seven men voted for a retreat and twenty-six for further defense, the latter agreeing to retreat in case the Beduin came back with cannon.

They came again as soon as it was light, and opened fire from a ridge about fifty yards away. The fighting went on for hours. Then the Beduin withdrew to bring up reinforcements. Down in the plain signal shots were fired. A multitude of Beduin on horseback and on foot surged forward. Then a cannon shot was heard. The mob turned in the direction of Kfar Giladi.

While they were approaching, the defenders slipped out to the gully behind their hill, and made for Ayeleth Hashahar, the nearest Jewish settlement. On their way they passed through Adaissa and Taibe, friendly Arab villages. At Taibe the Beg asked, "Where are the rest of your men?" "There are no more." "Do you expect me to believe," gasped the Beg, "that less than three score men held off a horde before which the French troops fled?" "Just so," they replied, "at Kfar Giladi there were only those whom you see."

All through the summer the fields lay untended. But in September, when it would soon be time to plough the land for the winter crops, the settlers of Kfar Giladi went back to their "eagle's nest."

The roof was off the hut, and most of the walls were down. The farm machinery had been damaged beyond repair. Not a tree had been left standing in the young eucalyptus grove.

But it was not long before the hut was as good as new again. All the fields were ploughed for the winter wheat and barley. The eucalyptus grove was replanted, and fruit trees set out where they would grow best. A snug fold was built for the sheep so that they would not have to shiver in caves when the rains came.

When the settlers of Kfar Giladi returned to their hill, they did not come alone. Their old comrades from Tel Adashim had joined forces with them again. But not all. The others had gone in one and twos into the new settlements in the Emek and elsewhere: for the Second Aliyah was the leaven in the lump of the Third.

BEHIND THE LINES WITH THE WOMEN OF HA-SHOMER

Manya Wilbuschewitz Shohat, a leader in the counsels of Ha-Shomer, offers three reasons for the magnificent steadfastness with which the plan of the troop was carried through from the time a handful of men made their experiment at Sejera until, a dozen years later, Ha-Shomer was dissolved because the trail had been blazed for the new generation of pioneers and the old Shomrim were free to throw themselves with fresh zeal into the new era of pioneering on the land.

The first reason, says Manya, was that the men consecrated themselves to their purpose without any thought of self, having been ready to lay down their lives for it at any moment. The second reason was the skill with which a daring scheme conceived in youthful exaltation was carried out through thick and thin as a sober, practical undertaking. The third reason was the women of Ha-Shomer, those wives who were as single-minded about the purpose as their men, and who insisted on sharing the dangers of the life even to mounting guard on dark nights or helping to repulse attacks with rifles in hand.

What were those young women like? The conventional figure of the drab pioneer wife drudging away sullenly at hated tasks in a wilderness to which she has been dragged by her husband, has not a single point in common with them. They had come to Palestine as young girls, impelled by the same ideals and striving toward the same goal as their husbands; but their way was even harder because, as women, they had more prejudices to break down. When they married a Shomer, they chose a way of life for themselves and their children whose difficulties and dangers far outweighed those of their friends who married farm laborers. For years they never lived for more than a few months in one place, changing from an old hut in one village to a tool-shed in the next. Night after night they lay listening to the signals passed by the night-watch, suppressing the ever-present fear that they might be widowed before morning. When a child was to be born, the mother wondered if the father would live to hold it in his arms. After it was born, it had to fight for

its little life against the same privations as its parents. All too often that fight was lost in a few weeks or months.

From reminiscences written down in their middle years, one can readily gather what the women of Ha-Shomer were like in those early days. They learned to ride and to shoot, partly out of pride in proving that women could, but chiefly because their mode of life was of the sort where such "accomplishments" were very useful . . .

When Kaila Giladi hears firing at the guard posts one evening, she drops her baby into another woman's lap, and rushes off, Browning in hand, to her husband's side beyond the village wall. When Giladi is arrested on espionage charges, she is nearing her time. But a message must be taken to the ICA representative at Tiberias, and Kaila must carry it. She sets out alone and on horseback. On the way her horse shies and throws her. She picks herself up heavily, remounts, and gets to Tiberias safely.

When Giladi comes back to Hamara and begins his rounds again, her anxieties are not at an end. Though he is only in his early thirties, his heart has been enfeebled by strain and privations. But she does not try to dissuade him from his duty, knowing how heavy are the responsibilities which rest on his shoulders. She is taking her sick baby to Rosh Pina when she is met by a Shomer riding her husband's mare who has come to tell her that Giladi is lying ill at Tiberias. She leaves the baby with the doctor and dashes on. At the hospital they inform her that she has come just half an hour too late.

In the spring of 1913 Henkin is head watchman at Rehovoth. It is the harvest season in the almond groves. He must be on duty day and night, and so Haye Soreh and the three children are lodged in a booth in the groves. Word comes one evening that a Jewish watchman has been murdered at Rishon-le-Zion. Henkin rides off with a squad of his men. Haye Soreh puts the children to sleep on the roof of the hut, draws the ladder up after her, and sits watching through the night, revolver in hand.

Concerning those frequent shifts when the head of the family is assigned to a new post, Tova Portugali gives us a vivid picture or two. Mendel has been transferred from Beth Gan to Karkur. The few planks and paraffin tins that make up their "furniture" are piled into a farm wagon, Tova and the baby perch on top of the load, and Mendel takes the reins. When they reach Wady Ara, a narrow, precipitous gorge between Lower Galilee and the Plain of Sharon, the

gloomy winter afternoon has drawn to a close. It is too dangerous to drive on in the dark (the wagon may be upset), and they decide to camp in the Wady overnight. Rain begins to fall. They spread a blanket tentwise and sit under it till morning, hoping the baby will not take cold. On another trek Tova's new baby arrives barely an hour after they reach their destination. Mendel admits now that this sort of thing really cannot go on. Tova and the children settle down at Tel Adashim, but Mendel's duties in Ha-Shomer still keep him constantly in the saddle.

When the war takes the men away from Tel Adashim, the women carry on unquestioningly, doing double duty, and enduring greater privations than ever. But it never occurs to them to abandon the farm and withdraw to the more settled parts of the Yishuv.

Early in the war, as we have seen, Manya Shohat braved death rather than reveal the whereabouts of the weapons cached against the day when they might prove a last hope. Toward the end of the war Rahel Yanaith is found organizing the Jewish battalion for service in the final drive of the British against the Turks.

One woman reveals the inmost convictions of her Shomer husband in a letter to her daughters. Esther Becker writes: "I came to Sejera on the first night of the Jewish Watch in Galilee. A tall young man with a curly black beard came into the room. He had a rifle slung over his shoulder. 'I'm no fierce brigand', he assured me smilingly. 'See, I have wreathed my weapon with anemones.' Later my sister told me: 'That is the first Jewish watchman in Palestine. His name is Zevi Becker.'

"Your father always wanted to live quietly on the land, working beside his family. But his sense of duty to his people kept him on the front line. That is why he rode a Beduin mare when he wanted to follow oxen yoked to the plough, and wielded a rifle instead of a mattock. There was nothing he would not have given to have met Arabs as fellow-peasants; instead he had to encounter them as thieves in the night. Those flowers on his rifle showed what he wanted most. But it was not to be."

When a Shomer fell at his post or died of some illness brought on by his hardships, the widow was free to stay or to go as she thought best. Almost always she stayed on so that she might rear her children in the spirit of their father: to defend the Jewish land with their blood and to till it in the sweat of their brow.



Courtesy JNF-Keren Hayesod

Jewish Police Watching Beside the Yarkon River (1939)

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