



YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE

Joel Bryk, Editor in Chief
Eli Dworetzky, Managing Editor
Glenn Schoenfeld, Editor
Gene Berkovich, Editor
Estie Bryk, Technical Advisor

PRESENTS ON ISRAEL ON-LINE ISRAEL NEWS

Issue 3 - Tishrei 5778

With Red Star on the Uniform, with Star of David in the Heart

By Gene Berkovich



An evening in 1984

It was an ordinary spring evening in 1984. The Soviet Olympic Committee had just announced that it would not be sending its athletes to compete at the upcoming Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. I was sitting with my father in our small two-room apartment next to our old short-wave radio (with an improvised soft wire antenna and a home-made extrinsic power source in

lieu of batteries, which we could not find in stores for the past several months). We were trying to catch one of the broadcasts from the West to hear about the reaction to the expected Russian boycott of the LA Olympics. After all, the memory of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, largely boycotted by the West, was still fresh in our mind.

The first Russian-language broadcast that we came across that evening came not from the West, but from the South. It was the broadcast of the Radio Kol Israel – The Voice of Israel. In fact, it was the first time in my life that I heard their broadcast. We caught a tail end of the interview with a woman from Odessa who made Aliyah with her son 10 months prior – and how she was hoping many listeners would soon be able to do the same (and so did we...). As we were ready to move on to look for a different station, a new program came on the radio, which quickly glued our entire family (which also included my mother and my older sister) to the radio.

The day was May 8, the eve of one of the greatest Soviet holidays (in fact, the only Soviet holiday that my family ever cared for) – Victory Day, celebrated every year on May 9th, marking the anniversary of the victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War. Of note, this day in my old country is very reminiscent of the transition from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'Atzmaut, the combination of sadness and joy, remembering those who fell fighting Nazism and honoring those who are still with us.

That year, May 8 also corresponded to Yom Ha'Atzmaut – Israel Independence Day – the Holiday that I was hearing about for the first time from the radio broadcast. In honor of these two occasions, coinciding that year, the program was dedicated to the

Jews who served in World War II, mostly in the Red Army, but also in the Allied Forces that defeated Hitler.



The 20th century blood libel – Soviet Union style

It is important to know that one of the many modern forms of the blood libel in the former Soviet Union was to accuse the Jews of evading military service and sitting out the war in Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan in Central Asia), thousands of miles from the battlefields. Nothing could be further from the truth, as I will point out shortly, but nevertheless the vicious lies were rather widespread. It was especially hurtful considering that nearly half a million Jews fought in the ranks of the Red Army alone – not to mention over half a million in the allied forces. On a personal level, it was even more painful – as a grandson of a maternal grandfather, a member of the armored corps who lost most of his fingers on both hands in a war, and a paternal grandfather, who paid the ultimate sacrifice (both of whom volunteered for the combat forces despite having legitimate reasons and being encouraged by the government officials not to do so due to their essential

skills for the defense industry and law enforcement, respectively). It was even said that some rather high ranked Soviet military official questioned Jewish service in WWII, compelling none other than the great Marshal Zhukov, one of the architects of the victory in WWII, to reply: “The Jews fought, and very heroically!”

The radio program covered Jewish participation in World War II, both the general statistics and the individual stories of selected Jews. The facts and the stories were very inspiring and uplifting – too bad the anti-Semites could not hear them (though I am not certain it would have made a difference).

“...Thousands of fighting Jews – Russian commanders and soldiers...”

(a quote from the poem “Your Victory” by Margarita Aliger, circa 1946)

The facts and the numbers speak for themselves, and the statistics are widely available all over the Internet, in multiple publications, as well as the dedicated museum exhibits at Yad VaShem and the Armored Corps Museum in Latrun. Nearly one and a half million Jews fought against Nazism, including nearly 501,000 Jews in the Soviet Armed Forces and 562,000 Jews in the US Armed Forces, not to mention the armies of many other nations. Jews in Soviet Armed Forces suffered heavy casualties. It has been estimated that around 200,000-250,000 Soviet Jewish

soldiers were killed in WWII, with another 180,000 wounded (nearly 70,000 of whom suffered severe injuries). A third of Soviet Jewish soldiers, approximately 167,000, served as officers, including 305 in the ranks of general or admiral (including 7 people who rose to the ranks of a three-star general). Nearly 161,000 people were awarded orders and medals for their heroism during the war. Of them, 157 were awarded the highest military honor, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and 12 people became full cavaliers of the Order of Glory, the highest honor specifically designated for soldiers and non-commissioned officers. And this brief information is just a tip of an iceberg – there are many publications and websites where much more detailed and complete information can be found. It also must be added that the Jews in the Soviet Armed Forces faced much greater dangers than their non-Jewish comrades, from facing automatic execution if captured by the enemy to anti-Semitism of some of their fellow servicemen (some of whom even tried to voluntarily surrender to the Nazis and give up their fellow Jewish soldiers to earn good treatment from the Germans). There were also multiple episodes of Jews not being properly recognized for their acts of bravery, whether by being denied promotions to higher military ranks, being nominated for lower class military awards or frequently not being nominated at all, and sometimes giving credit for their

achievements to soldiers with less “Jewish-sounding” names.

After the war, over many years, Israel has become a home to many veterans of that war. Following the war, many Jews from the Allied armies as well as the veterans of the legendary Jewish Brigade fought heroically for Israel’s independence. Many made Israel their home after the establishment of the Medinah. Although I do not know the exact statistics, many of



their stories have been told and documented in various forms, and all of us have many reasons to be proud of their service and their heroism. To write about them would be way beyond the scope of this article. This article instead will concentrate on veterans of the Eastern front who settled in Israel – those who fought in the ranks of the Red Army as well as the partisan formations in the Eastern Europe.

Although I am not certain, I think it is safe to assume that at least some veterans of the Eastern front probably came to Israel as early as the pre-State/early post-

Independence War years. At that time, many holders of pre-war Polish passports, among whom there were many Jews, including some veterans of the partisan movement and Soviet-backed Polish Armia Ludowa, were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Many of these people chose not to return to Poland, but instead traveled to British Mandate Palestine and subsequently Israel. However, the majority of the Soviet WWII veterans probably arrived to Israel with the beginning of the mass Aliyah, beginning with the 1960’s and probably continuing until our times, albeit in much smaller numbers, due to the aging of their population. Some veterans came to Israel driven by their Jewish identity and Zionist and/or religious zeal, while others frequently came following their children and grandchildren. Among them – 6 Heroes of the Soviet Union and 2 Full Cavaliers of the Order of Glory.

I will briefly digress and mention that one of the highest-ranked and most decorated Jewish WWII veterans, Colonel General David Dragunsky, became one of the most outspoken critics of Zionism and Israel and of those who emigrated there and later headed the infamous Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public, an organization that spreads vicious lies and propaganda against Israel (and therefore was likened by many to Judenrats in ghettos). Dragunsky continued to spew his hatred for the Jewish State even after the

Soviet Union reestablished its relationship with Israel and after Israel and the Jews emigrating there ceased to be considered enemies, and the UN rescinded its infamous “Zionism is Racism” resolution.

It is estimated that there are approximately 20,000 World War II veterans from the former Soviet Union in Israel – although I am not sure whether it reflects all the veterans who made Aliyah or only those currently living in Israel – more likely the former. In addition to facing many of the same difficulties experienced by all new Olim, the veterans also faced another very specific challenge – making sure that the story of the Jewish heroism during the war, and their story in particular, lives on and is not forgotten in the collective memory of Israelis and the entire Am Yisrael.

Substantial progress has been made on that front over the years, especially during the past 20-25 years. Getting this special recognition has not been easy, especially considering that in Israel virtually everyone is a war veteran, with the vast majority never seeking any special appreciation or recognition for their service and with much more mention given to those who have fallen rather than to those who have not.

Victory Day in Israel – a (very) brief history

According to the Hebrew article in Wikipedia, celebrations of the 9th of May – one of the official names for the Victory Day in my old country – has been taking place

since the early days of the Medinah. Led largely by the left-wing MK’s who felt particularly close to the Soviet Union, including Meir Vilner, thousands of people gathered in the Red Army Forest at Har HaRuach, near Ma’aleh Hahamisha on a Saturday of the May 9th week, to praise the Soviet Union for its role in the war, sing songs and lay wreaths on the Red Army monument. While the celebrations were greatly reduced after the split within the Communist Party of Israel, followed by severing ties with the USSR, some members of Mapai and Hadash continue with these celebrations to the present.

In 2000, a law was adopted by the Knesset, which established the celebration of the 9th of May as a national holiday, introduced by the Knesset members from the Yisrael Beiteinu and Yisrael ba’Aliyah parties. While the banks, schools and government institutions are open on that day, Victory Day parades and other forms of celebration take place all over Israel – starting with the Capital. In the 90’s, the site of old gray-haired men and women with

medals all over their chest, was rather unusual, especially for Israel, where medals are largely not worn on uniforms. Sadly,



many veterans even felt embarrassed as some young children laughed at them and pointed fingers at the many military awards hanging on their chests. I will never forget a picture from the Jerusalem Report magazine circa late 1990's of an Israeli youth staring with wild wonder at an old man in the Soviet Army officer parade uniform, heavily decorated with military orders and medals. The celebrations have become much more commonplace over the past two decades, and are regularly attended by many Knesset members (and not just the Russian-speaking ones) including Prime Ministers Barak, Sharon, Olmert and Netanyahu. The veterans proudly march on the streets of Jerusalem and Netanya, Tel Aviv and Beer Sheva, wearing their military awards, which they earned with courage and heroism.

Soviet Jewish WWII veterans in Israel – where have they been, where are they going



The main Soviet world veteran organization in Israel is the *Union of the World War II Veterans – Fighters against Nazism*. The

Union organizes various veterans' events, reaches out to youth and other groups of people, sends speakers to schools and universities and publishes several periodicals – to help the veterans and to preserve the memories of their heroic years in the history of the Jewish people. There is also a *Society of Disabled Veterans – Jewish Soldiers, Partisans and Ghetto Fighters*. In addition to the national organizations, regional clubs and veteran councils exist in many Israeli cities, along with numerous World War II museums, many of which are fully or at least partially subsidized by the Government of Israel. World War II monuments have been erected in many places, honoring both the Jewish service in WWII in general and some individuals in particular (for example, the Vaynrub brothers monument in Ashdod). In many Israeli towns, streets named after the WWII veterans from the former Soviet Union can be found. There are also special exhibits about the Soviet Jewish WWII service in national landmark museums, including the Armored Corps Museum in Latrun and Yad VaShem (interestingly, both mentioning, among others, Colonel Yevsey Vaynrub, who has a special connection to the Five Towns community – I will explain below). In Israeli schools and colleges, special lessons are held with the veterans addressing students – despite the lack of adequate Hebrew knowledge by many of them. Due to the efforts of these veterans, the history of WWII, including the Eastern Front events,

are included in Israeli school textbooks. Veterans receive a special stipend from the Ministry of Defense. In addition, beginning in 1995, the Israeli Government honored the service of veterans in WWII by issuing several commemorative medals.

As I mentioned above, in many Israeli towns, parades take place on the 9th of May – the Victory Day, which has become a new Israeli holiday. In fact, Israel is the only country outside Russia that holds these celebrations on that day – for which they have been acknowledged by the Russian media and government officials. This past May, most Russian-language TV channels on the 9th of May have been consistently mentioning celebrations taking place in Israel. Interestingly, while Israeli holidays, including modern ones, are generally observed on their Hebrew calendar dates (except perhaps November 29), the Victory Day is always observed on May 9th in the secular calendar. However, a relatively recent proposition by the Russia-based Euro-Asian Jewish Congress proposes for the holiday to be observed on the 26th of Iyar – according to its date on the Hebrew calendar. While so far it is just an idea and nothing more, according to its authors, many in the religious circle support it – including the former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi, Rav Yisrael Meir Lau and the Shas Party, which at one point was going to introduce this proposition to the Knesset. Its advocates say that their intention is not

to eliminate or replace the May 9th, but rather have two holidays – one to celebrate the rescue of the Jewish People from one of the modern-day Amalekites on the 26th of Iyar, and another on secular May 9th to celebrate the victory in World War II. Whether this proposition ever sees the light of day or not still remains to be seen. But regardless, the Victory Day and the heroism of the Jewish soldiers in World War II, including the veterans of the Soviet Army, are getting at least some of the recognition they deserve.

While it took a lot of time and effort, it can be said that a lot has been accomplished to significantly improve the moral and material well-being of the WWII veterans from the former Soviet Union in Israel. Despite all the problems faced by their day-to-day life, from the general problems faced by every Oleh to specific veteran-related issues (such as relatively low government stipends compared to Holocaust survivors), many, if not most, veterans feel grateful to their new homeland for taking care of them, but more importantly for recognizing their service and contribution. They see themselves as part of the history of the Jewish people and an integral component of Israel's modern day history, even though many, if not most, have never worn Tzahal uniforms. While most of them are very reluctant to talk about their experiences in the war (just like my grandfather, a"ח), many nevertheless try to motivate and

inspire the younger generation, including their own grandchildren and sometimes great-grandchildren, who will be defending Israel – whether with general words of wisdom and inspiration or with specific advice on how to disarm a terrorist or avoid being taken captive by an enemy. Also, while most have spent their lives in the country of religious atheism, many come back to their roots and their Judaism – some doing a little bit at a time, others becoming Torah-observant, with yet another group at least acknowledging the role of Hashem in ruling this world.

As a continuation of the theme from my last article on Russian influence in modern Israeli music, the token song of the day – *Den' Pobedy – Victory Day – Yom Hanitzachon* – has also been translated into Hebrew

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUVHJ1TWaHI>) and Yiddish

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ny8P9T0Nxwk>). As a side note, what is very

unusual is that neither the music nor the lyrics have been written by Jews!

Regardless, the song has become an integral part of the Victory Day celebration in Israel today.

This article would not be complete without looking at individual stories of those who heroically fought Nazism under the Red Banner and later found their new home under the Blue and White. While every story deserves mentioning and every

veteran is a hero in the collective book of Jewish history, I choose to mention several veterans who have been acknowledged for either their war service or their special accomplishments after the war and especially after their Aliyah.

Ion Degen

Ion Lazarevich Degen was an accomplished Soviet and Israeli poet, writer and physician who specialized in trauma and orthopedics. Degen was born in Mohyliv-Podolsk in the Western Ukraine in 1925. In the beginning of WWII, he volunteered for the Red Army service, starting in the infantry and eventually joining the armored corps.

Degen, who was wounded and burned multiple times, with over 20 pieces of shrapnel and bullets in his body, heroically fought on different battlefields until his last serious injury in January 1945, which resulted in an amputated leg. During one of the tank battles, his crew destroyed 12 enemy tanks and 4 self-propelled guns, on top of killing numerous enemy soldiers.

Decorated with multiple Soviet and Polish orders and medals for his military service, Degen was twice nominated for the Hero of the Soviet Union, but was rejected because of his Jewish roots. He finished the war in the rank of guard lieutenant. After the war, Ion Degen had a successful career in orthopedic surgery, starting in the 1950's in my hometown of Kiev and continuing it in Israel after his Aliyah in 1977, for another

two decades. A truly multitalented individual, he published multiple medical works, as well as many non-medical books and poetry works, which were published in many different countries and on three different continents. One of his poems, *My Comrade*, written in 1944, became one of the best-known poetry works of WWII. The poem was praised by one of the giants of Russian and Soviet poetry of the second half of 20th century Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who called the work a stroke of genius. In addition to his passion for poetry and literature, Degen possessed a vast knowledge of the Torah and Tanakh.

Ion Degen was also actively involved in veteran societies. He was the only Soviet veteran of the Armored Corps to be inducted into the Society of Israel tank veterans acknowledged for heroism. During the last years of his life, Ion Degen lived in Givataim. A documentary dedicated to him was shown at Latrun in 2014. He passed away in April 2017. After his death, his life, his heroism and accomplishments were acknowledged by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Rachmiel (Milia) Lazarevich Felsenshteyn

Born in Kharkov, Ukraine in 1924, Felsenshteyn was the first veteran-Hero of the Soviet Union who made Aliyah – in 1974. During the war, Milia Felsenshteyn led a rifle battalion, which, in the fall of 1943, took part in crossing the Kerch

Straight (a 20 mile long straight connecting the Azov and the Black Seas) and in liberating the city of Kerch in the Crimea. As a commander of the battalion, Felsenshteyn inspired his soldiers by personal example and singlehandedly killed over 50 Nazi soldiers despite sustaining severe injuries. For his role and his heroism in this operation, Felsenshteyn was awarded the title of Hero of Soviet Union. After multiple surgeries, Felsenshteyn returned to his unit to participate in liberating the Crimea peninsula in 1944. That same year, he sustained another severe injury in the battle for Sevastopol, which resulted in his honorary discharge from the military and another year of intense treatment.

Felsenshteyn finished his military career in 1945 – due to his disability from severe injuries – in the rank of lieutenant colonel. After the war, he worked as a department head in a textile factory.

Milia Felsenshteyn was the first Hero of Soviet Union who tried to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Israel. At that time, the Soviet authorities revoked his Hero title and forced him to surrender all of his military awards (I remember my grandfather going through the same thing when my family applied for emigration). Furthermore, his information was omitted from the publications about Heroes of Soviet Union. However, justice prevailed in 1992, when the title was restored to Felsenshteyn at an

official ceremony at the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv. In 2005, he was invited to meet President Putin when the latter visited Israel.

In Israel, Felsenshteyn settled in Lod. He worked in Israel Military industries. Later in his life, he was honored to be one of the torchbearers during the Yom Ha'Zikaron-Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebrations. Milia Felsenshteyn died in Lod on Simchat Torah in 2006.

Volfas Leibovich Vilenskis

Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1919, Vilenskis, a graduate of Yavneh academy and ORT school in Kaunas, was planning his Aliyah as early as 1938, before Lithuania became incorporated into the Soviet Union. However, in 1939, Volfas Vilenskis was drafted into the Lithuanian army. When Lithuania was taken over by the USSR, Vilenskis eventually continued military service in the infantry as a member of the Red Army and fought on battlefields during WWII since its early days as a part of 16th Lithuanian rifle division. Of note, Jews comprised 29% of the members of this division (the highest percentage of Jews in any Red Army unit), while Lithuanians and Russians accounted for 36% and 29%, respectively. Twelve members of this division were awarded a title of Hero of the Soviet Union, 4 of whom were Jews (3 of whom eventually made Aliyah). While the official language of the division was

Lithuanian, Russian and Yiddish were also widely used, even for official purposes.

Vilenskis earned his Hero title for his actions in October 1944, when his 249th rifle regiment, as a part of the 16th Lithuanian rifle division, prevented a massive German counterattack despite being heavily outnumbered. In addition to his Gold Star of the Hero of Soviet Union, his service was recognized with other awards.

Vilenskis continued his military career after the war, which he finished in 1972 in the rank of colonel. He made Aliyah in 1983. Similar to the case with Milia Felsenshteyn, his information was also omitted from the publications about Heroes of the Soviet Union. However, in Israel, Volf Vilenskis was awarded the rank of Honorary Colonel of the Israel Defense Forces and became actively involved in veterans' organizations. In his old country, Vilenskis eventually received the recognition of his heroism – his name was etched in stone at Russia's major World War II memorial in Moscow. Volf Vilenskis died in Bat Yam in 1992.

Grigoriy Sauljevich Ushpolis

Grigoriy Ushpolis was born in a small village in Lithuania in 1923. He was another member of the 16th Lithuanian rifle division who was awarded the title of Hero of Soviet Union and made Aliyah. Like Volf Vilenskis, Ushpolis earned his Gold Star for his actions in October 1944, in the same regiment as Vilenskis. During the battle, Ushpolis

moved his cannon into an open position and destroyed two enemy tanks. When the cannon was destroyed and Ushpolis was wounded, he managed to destroy one more tank with an anti-tank grenade.

Grigoriy Ushpolis stayed in the military for a couple of years after the war, retiring in 1947 in the rank of major. His military career was followed by a law degree from the University of Vilnius and a career in the Communist Party of Lithuania. In 1991, Ushpolis made Aliyah and settled in Ashdod. In Israel, he was active in the veterans' movement and published a book titled, *Trevozhnoye Vremya (Troubled Time)*, which was printed in 1997, shortly before his death.

Yakov Tsalevich Forzun

Yakov Forzun was a private in the Red Army. He was born in a little shtetl of Korostyshev in the Kiev District in Ukraine in 1924 and joined the army in 1942. In June 1944, Forzun participated in the liberation of Belarus. Yakov Forzun participated in breaking the enemy defense lines and was the first in his unit to cross the Western Dvina River.

Yakov Forzun made Aliyah in 1991 and settled in Or Akiva. He passed away in 2015 in Netanya.

Kalmanis Maushovich Shuras (Kalman Moushovich Shur)

The third member of the 249th rifle regiment of the 16th Lithuanian division who was awarded the Hero of Soviet Union title and made Aliyah was Kalman Shur. He earned his Gold Star in October 1944 in the same battle as Volf Vilenskis and Grigoriy Ushpolis.

Shuras was born in 1917 in Lithuania to a poor Jewish family. He studied in the Ponevezh Yeshiva, which he was forced to leave prematurely, to help support the family. He was drafted into the Lithuanian army in 1939. In 1940, the unit in which he served was incorporated into the Red Army.

In 1944, the unit in which Shuras was serving was trying to stop the advance of German tanks. With his cannon, private first class Shur destroyed an enemy tank. After the cannon was destroyed and Shur was wounded, he continued to fire at the Germans and singlehandedly killed more than 20 enemy soldiers. For his military service, he was awarded several orders and medals.

After the war, Kalman Shur lived in Vilna, where he worked as a tailor specializing in leather. He made Aliyah in 1979 settling in Rishon Le-Zion. As was the case with the others, his name was also omitted from the publications about the Heroes of Soviet Union in the former USSR. He passed away in 2003.

Grigory Abramovich Bogorad

He was one of the two full cavaliers of the Order of Glory who made Aliyah. He was born in Vitebsk (now Belarus) in 1914 and moved to Birobidzhan, the capital of the Jewish Autonomous District in the Russian Far East, in 1932. Bogorad fought on many battlefields of WWII, from Stalingrad to Austria and Hungary and finished the war in Czechoslovakia. He earned his 3 Orders of Glory: for taking German officer and soldier prisoners during a battle in the Ukraine, for clearing land mines in Moldova and for playing a significant role in helping his unit cross the Tisa River in Romania.

After the war, Bogorad returned to Birobidzhan. After his retirement, he moved to the Ukraine and eventually made Aliyah. He settled in Migdal ha-Emek, where he passed away in 1996. After his death, the city of Birobidzhan, where he spent a significant portion of his life, honored Grigory Bogorad by naming a street after him, declaring him an honorary citizen of Birobidzhan, and etching his name in stone in the Hero Alley.

Boris Naumovich Zamansky

Private first class Boris Zamansky was born in 1918 in Kherson, Ukraine. The war found him in my hometown of Kiev. Zamansky volunteered for service at the start of the war, in June 1941, taking part in actions on the battlefield. While many Soviet soldiers were taken prisoner as the Germans took

Kiev (the numbers estimated in the range of three quarters of a million), Zamansky and several other soldiers managed to escape and avoid being captured. He served in the communications unit and earned his military decorations for restoring communications under heavy enemy fire, despite suffering injuries, first in Poland in 1944 and subsequently on the Oder River in early 1945. He earned his last Order of Glory in April 1945 during the battle of Berlin, by establishing communications numerous times under heavy enemy fire and by enabling the commanders to take charge of the actions on the battlefield.

After finishing army service in 1945 in the rank of Sergeant Major, he returned to Kiev and finished his studies at the Polytechnic Institute, which were originally interrupted by the war, and later had a career as an engineer. He made Aliyah in 1999 with his family and settled in Rishon Le-Zion, where he passed away in 2012.

Yefim Iosifovich Berezin

While to many Russian Jews the name of Yefim Berezin, or better yet his stage name *Shtepsel*, is associated with a particular genre of stand-up comedy, not many realize his service in the war. Born in Odessa, Ukraine in 1919, Yefim Berezin graduated from a very prestigious Theatre Institute in Kiev, where he met his future stage partner, Yuri Timoshenko, with whom he would

have a prolific and successful career on stage, for four decades.

During the war, Berezin and Timoshenko served in the artist troupe of the Southwestern Front and entertained soldiers on the frontlines. He was decorated with many military awards, including the very prestigious Orders of the Red Star and Patriotic War, as well as medals for the defense of Kiev and Stalingrad, liberation of Prague and Warsaw, and the capture of Berlin and Konigsberg.

After the war, Yefim Berezin, along with his friend and comrade Yuri Timoshenko, formed a dynamic comedy duo, named *Shtepsel and Tarapunka* (the stage name of Timoshenko). The duo quickly became a household name and remained one of the most popular comedy acts in the former Soviet Union during the post-war era. The duo performed on stage for nearly four decades, until Timoshenko's death in 1986.

In the late 1990's, Berezin came to visit his daughter in Israel, where he suffered a stroke and settled in Ashdod. He passed away in 2012, in Tel Aviv.

Yevsey Grigoryevich Vaynrub

This history would not be complete without mentioning the Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel of the Armored Corps Yevsey Vaynrub, whose pictures can be seen in Latrun and Yad VaShem, in the exhibits honoring the heroism of Soviet Jewish

soldiers in World War II. Interestingly, his brother, Lieutenant General Matvey Vaynrub, was also awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for his war service.

Yevsey Vaynrub was born in 1909 in Borisov, Minsk Oblast', Belarus. A graduate of Moscow State Industrial University, Vaynrub joined the military in 1937. During WWII, he was a commander of a tank brigade, which defended the city of Mogilev in the early days of the war. During his later years, his tank brigade participated in the liberation of Poland as a part of the legendary Vistula-Oder and Warsaw-Poznan Offensives in 1945 and inflicted heavy casualties upon the enemy. In the final weeks of the War, Vaynrub's 219th Tank Brigade played an integral role in the Battle of Berlin, for which Josef Stalin bestowed upon the Brigade the honorary name of the Berlin Brigade. While in Poland, Vaynrub was offered to assume the command of a Polish tank brigade in the newly formed Armia Ludowa. Cognizant of the anti-Semitic sentiments among Poles, his name would have to be changed to Vaynrubowzki to give it a more Polish feel. Vaynrub declined that honor and replied in a Jewish manner with a question: what will they do about his Jewish-looking face?

In April of 1945, Yevsey Vaynrub was finally awarded the title of Hero of Soviet Union for his successful and effective leadership of his tank brigade. He was nominated for this high honor twice before and denied both

times because of his Jewishness, and was told each time that the Central Command did not want to set a “dangerous precedent” of rewarding Jews, who are generally “cowards.”

Vaynrub continued his career in the military until 1955, at which time he retired in the rank of a colonel. He settled in Minsk, Belarus, where he had a successful career as an engineer. Upon his retirement in 1995, he made Aliyah and settled in Ashdod, where he lived until his death in 2003.

Yevsey Vaynrub is buried in Petakh Tikvah. In 2003, a memorial stone carrying his

name was placed in the Victory Park in Ashdod. In 2013, also in Ashdod, a monument honoring Yevsey Vaynrub and his brother Matvey Vaynrub was erected.

Interestingly, Yevsey Vaynrub has a connection to our Five Towns Jewish community. His granddaughter Yulia, a close friend of mine who helped me to write this article, lives in the Five Towns with her husband and three children, all of whom study at local yeshivot. At the same time, his great-grandsons live in Israel, continuing his tradition of exemplary military service – in the ranks of Tzahal.

* * *

Many Jews from the former Soviet Union fought under the Red Banner, but carried the Star of David in their heart. Their stories inspired many across countries and continents. As their ranks, sadly, decrease every year, it is my hope and prayer that the stories of their courage and heroism are not forgotten, that their message continues to be heard, and that their struggle, faith and determination continue to inspire and motivate younger generations, and especially those who protect the Jewish Homeland under the Blue and White.

*In the writing of this article, I used materials from Wikipedia, websites of different WWII veterans' organizations in Israel, various publications from the Russian and English language media available on the Internet, a book *In the Shadow of the Red Banner* by Yitzchak Arad and personal memories of the family of Yevsey Vaynrub, generously provided by his granddaughter Yulia. I also want to express a special thanks to my friend Robert Douglas for his help in editing and proofreading this article.*

Dry Bones



Interview with Victor Schoenfeld

By: Glenn Schoenfeld

The Israeli wine industry has undergone a widely recognized quality revolution over the last several decades. Ground zero in that revolution is the Golan Heights Winery (“GHW”). Recently I on Israel sat down to talk about wine with Victor Schoenfeld, the winery’s “legendary winemaker” (International Jerusalem Post July 14-20, 2017), and, coincidentally, my youngest and most famous brother. In a wide-ranging interview, we discussed how Victor became a winemaker, the uniqueness of the Golan as a wine-producing region, the history of the winery, GHW’s approach to winemaking, its use of innovative

technology, the wines themselves, the success of the winery in international competitions, and visiting the winery.



Becoming a Winemaker

lol: Let's start at the beginning. You grew up in a suburban home in Southern California. How did you become interested in winemaking?

VS: I initially became interested in agriculture generally through a lifelong interest in food. I was always fascinated with the role of food in family and community, as well as the more technical and aesthetic aspects of food preparation. To this day, cooking is my major hobby. I actually made the decision to become a farmer during my post-high school year in Israel, while living and working on Moshav Mnuchah, a Kurdish Moshav in south-central Israel.



lol: How did you go from aspiring to be a farmer to becoming a winemaker?

VS: After Israel, in 1983, I started college at UC Santa Cruz. The 1980s were a low point in the U.S. food industry. Agriculture was industrialized. Food processing was industrialized. The industry was focused on appearance and shelf-life. No one was talking about flavor. However, flavor is

everything in wine grapes. I already liked wine. From the moment I thought of possibly working in the wine industry, I had a gut feeling that this could be a good fit for me. Wine plays a special role in culture, which I also found interesting.

lol: Did Israel continue to influence your thinking?

VS: I thought there was a real opportunity to work in Israel because, at the time, Israel was making bad wine. Carmel dominated the industry, and no one was trying to make wine that would be recognized for quality at an international level. As it turned out, and unbeknownst to me at the time, one year after I started college, Golan Heights Winery ("GHW") was started with the explicit goal of producing world-class wines.

lol: So how did you train to become a winemaker?

VS: In 1984 I transferred from UC Santa Cruz to UC Davis ("UCD"). I took the '85/'86 academic year off and worked at Tishbi Winery in Israel, managing their vineyards. When I arrived I planned to be a viticulturist (winegrower). But I realized during that year that I would have to become a winemaker if I wanted to have ultimate control over the vineyards. In 1986, when I returned to UCD, I changed my major to fermentation science, which was the name of the major at the time. That was already my fourth year in college so, as you can imagine, our parents were thrilled.

UCD has a world-renowned Viticulture and Enology department. Coincidentally, I actually tasted the first wine released by GHW, its 1983 Yarden Sauvignon Blanc (which the New York Times hailed as the first modern quality wine produced in Israel). I first met Shimshon Vellner, the first general manager of GHW, in 1986. He was looking for Jews in the wine industry, with an eye to recruiting them to the winery.

lol: When did you actually start at GHW?

VS: I graduated in 1988. Before moving to Israel, though, I wanted some experience at world-class wineries. So over the next few years I worked at Sonoma Creek Winery, Preston Vineyards, Chateau St. Jean and Robert Mondavi, all in California. I also spent 4 months at a winery in Champagne, France, which was quite a different experience. The wine industry in France and Europe in general is heavily regulated so, for example, the harvest was limited to a maximum of 10 days that particular year. By contrast, harvests in California can last 2 months and more. Throughout this period GHW called from time to time to see if I was ready to come to Israel. In 1991 I felt I was ready, so when they called I accepted their offer. During the last few months of 1991 I worked alongside the then current head winemaker, and took over in January of 1992.

When I came to GHW, I was the 6th Winemaker in 8 years. All my predecessors were California winemakers. There were a number of reasons for that. First, the climates of Israel and California are similar. Second, European winemakers tend to be specialized. GHW was looking for winemakers with broad experience. At the time, that meant California-trained winemakers. That also meant, however, that the early winemakers were only interested in staying for a year or two. The winery initially offered 1 to 2-year contracts. My first contract was for 3 years. Of course, that was 25 years ago.



lol: Before moving on, tell us a bit about your family.

VS: I met my wife, Aviv, in 1999. She is an ophthalmologist. When we met she was serving as a major in the IDF medical corps. We got married in 2000 and have two sons, Shai, 14 and Noam, 11.

The Establishment of Golan Heights

Winery

lol: You mentioned that the winery started in 1983. Who started the Winery? Why then? And why in the Golan Heights?

VS: The genesis of the winery can actually be traced to one of my enology professors

at UCD, Cornelius Ough. In 1972, Professor Ough was on sabbatical in Israel with a UN food mission. He was the one who suggested that the Golan Heights might



have the potential to become a premium grape-growing region. For one thing, the soil is volcanic, which can be good soil for grapes. Second, the high altitude of the Golan Heights means that temperatures are generally cooler than elsewhere in Israel. This is important because in the Northern Hemisphere wine grapes can generally be grown at latitudes between the 30th and 50th parallels. Israel, straddling the 31st to 33rd parallels, while within that band, lies at its warm extreme southern edge.

In 1976, in response to Professor Ough's recommendations, a group of Moshavim and Kibbutzim in the Golan began planting

vineyards. Their first harvests were in 1979. Unfortunately, Carmel was their main customer, and Carmel refused to pay higher prices for premium quality grapes. So in 1983, 4 Moshavim and 4 Kibbutzim (all but one located in the Golan; the other located in the Upper Galil) banded together to form GHW, in order to get better prices for their grapes. But it was also the first Israeli winery founded with the goal of making high quality wine. Carmel actually opposed the creation of the winery and was politically connected enough (at one point Pessi Grooper, then Chairman of the Board of Carmel, was also serving as the Israeli Minister of Agriculture) to impose restrictions on the winery, including that its wines could only be produced for export. Shimshon Vellner, the first general manager of GHW, deserves a lot of the credit for bulldozing the project through and getting it off the ground.

lol: You mentioned the recognition the winery received from the New York Times for its very first release. The winery enjoyed other early successes as well, correct?

VS: That's right. The winery's first Cabernet Sauvignon, the 1983 vintage, was released in 1986. Its second Cabernet, the 1984 vintage, was released in 1987. Unbeknownst to the winery, its UK importer entered the 1984 vintage in the London International Wine and Spirit Competition, one of the world's major wine

competitions. The wine was awarded the Winiarski Trophy for best Cabernet Sauvignon in the world.

The Golan as Premier Grape Growing Region

lol: So was Professor Ough right about the Golan?

VS: Actually, the area is more phenomenal than anyone ever guessed. One reason is the soil, which is incredibly good for growing grapes. It is well drained, but has a high water-holding capacity. The soil structure allows for deep rooting of vines. We have subsequently identified 5 different types of volcanic soil in the Golan, but it is all relatively homogeneous. Homogeneity of soil is a pretty rare phenomenon across a growing region.

Second is the elevation. Our vineyards are located between 1300 feet and 4000 feet elevation, all in a relatively small area. The distance from our southern-most vineyard to our northern-most vineyard is 25 miles.

lol: What does this mean in terms of making premium wines?

VS: Taken together, these factors mean that we can grow a huge number of varieties of premium grapes, which in turn allows us to make a large number of different styles of wine. No other winery in the world that I know of makes such a wide variety of wines at such a high level of quality. The winery has won international

awards for everything from sparkling wines to heavy reds (which are opposites in terms of climate and style).

Winemaking in the rest of Israel

lol: What about the rest of Israel?

VS: I am a huge fan of the Israeli wine industry and am often asked to serve as its spokesman. We lie at the intersection of Europe, Africa and Asia. There are major climactic forces here pulling in different directions. We have some of the southern-most Mediterranean climate in the Northern Hemisphere. We also have the northern-most tropical coral reefs. We have the lowest salt-water lake and fresh-water lake in the world. The Kineret is the second oldest lake on the planet after Lake Baikal, in Russia. 500 million birds migrate twice a year over Israel. In terms of rainfall, Eilat gets 22mm (0.9 inch) per year, while Mount Hermon gets 1600mm (63 inches). Israel is a tiny country, but the range of topography and climate is insane. To give you one concrete example, one of my professors from UCD, when he visited Israel, was stunned to see mangos growing around in the Kineret within miles of our vineyards in the Golan. He said that he knew of no place else on earth with such a diversity of climate and agriculture within such a short distance.

lol: How far back does winemaking go in Israel?

VS: We don't know for sure how old winemaking is in Israel. The oldest winepress discovered here so far could be 6500 years old. (The oldest wine remnants ever discovered were around 7000 years old in the Iran/Georgia/Armenia region.) Ancient winepresses have been discovered from the Negev to the Golan. So Israel was making wine for over 5000 years before the Muslim conquerors arrived in the 600s. Unfortunately, as a result of the Muslim conquest, winemaking quickly dwindled. The ancient varieties of grapes that survived were those more suitable for eating than for winemaking. In fact, Israel is the only country without indigenous wine grapes because of its history. California, for example, never had wine grapes until they were imported. In Israel the wine grapes largely died out because of the Muslim conquest.

lol: Are there any ancient varieties of grapes left?

VS: The problem is that grape vines do not remain true to seed. With uncontrolled pollination, the vines in any area tend to change over time. That is why all commercial grapevines today are grafted. Still, some ancient varieties have been found growing in isolated areas in Israel. One of the biggest concentrations of ancient varieties is in the Golan.

lol: How would you characterize the Israeli wine industry today?

VS: It is thoroughly modern, but with an ancient backdrop. I think the industry really reflects the country; its society, history, geography and climate.

lol: What role does GHW play in the Israeli wine industry at large?

VS: We are a pioneering quality leader. We have grown to become the third largest winery in Israel, but no other Israeli winery comes close to producing the amount of high end wines that we do. As the biggest high end producer in the country we serve as an ambassador for Israeli wine abroad. Our success in various markets has opened those markets to other Israeli wineries as well. Japan is a good example of that. We also sell high quality virus-free vines to other wineries [Ed. note: see discussion of Leaf Roll Virus below]. I am also a member on two committees of the Israeli Standards Institute, to help ensure that regulations are constructive for the industry.

GHW's Approach to Winemaking

lol: Why does GHW make the wine it does?

VS: First of all, you need to understand that the international wine market falls into two rough categories: the commodity market and the premium market. In the commodity market, wine can travel the world in 24,000 liter bags. It is blended and bottled in a different country from the

country in which it was produced. So geographic origin is unimportant.

In contrast, geographic origin is interesting in the premium market. Wines are seen as an expression of a particular place and a particular time (vintage). The Golan's soil, elevation and latitude (which affect day length) are a unique combination. That lends itself to making fine premium wines.

lol: Is there anything unusual about your winemaking approach?

VS: Unlike many wineries, which aim for a distinct style in their winemaking, we want our wines to be organic expressions of the conditions



under which they were made. We want our fruit to be expressive, to have an intensity of unique flavor. As part of that process we work very hard to isolate out fruit that is either underripe or overripe, which tend to give wine a generic flavor. We want our flavor to be concentrated. Our ultimate goal is to produce wines with varietal character (like Cabernet, Merlot, Malbec) but that have something specific to our location. In Israel and the kosher market, our wines are considered ripe, concentrated

and heavy bodied. Outside of those markets our wines are considered a combination of Old World elegance and New World power, which is consonant with the character of Israel itself. This philosophy also guides how we plant our vineyards.

lol: Tell us more about how you plant your vineyards.

VS: The first thing to know is that the Israeli wine industry is currently battling a bad problem with the Leaf Roll Virus, which causes later ripening and lower yields. This lowers the quality of the grapes. Ironically, the problem stems from the failure of an Israeli government lab tasked with testing for the virus. Unfortunately they got a lot of false negatives when conducting their tests for the virus, resulting in the widespread planting of infected vines. Virtually every vineyard planted in Israel prior to 2009 is virused.

lol: How is the industry responding?

VS: We were the first ones to realize how serious the problem was, back in 2007. In 2008 we brought a world-leading expert in the virus from South Africa and organized a symposium for the wine industry. That same year we started a new propagation block and a new nursery, both under contract with the world leader Entav in France. We have two exclusive licenses, one for propagation and one for our nursery. (Vines in the propagation block are raised for either their shoots or their

rootstock, depending on the variety of vine. In the winter, we cut off the dormant shoots and graft them to rootstock, creating dormant grafted vines. These vines then grow out in the nursery.) The propagation block and the nursery are two distinct activities. (Propagation blocks normally sell the dormant shoots to nurseries.) We do both activities. It is extremely unusual for a winery to do this, but we felt we had no choice, in order to be able to ensure to ourselves a supply of high quality, disease free vines for planting.

We also developed our “Plan 2020” to be virus free.

lol: What was involved in the plan?

VS: The idea was to overcome the virus problem by the year 2020. Starting in 2009, we began replanting all 1500 acres of our vineyards (ed note: there are 640 acres in a square mile). We brought in Dr. Phil Freese, a leading viticulturist with a doctorate in biophysics from California and developed a strategy for planting to obtain the highest quality grapes. The Plan led to a lot of changes about how we plant vines, raise them and manage them.

lol: What were some of the changes?

VS: Our ultimate goal with the new vineyards has several components. First, we aim to extend the lives of the vines from 15 years, which is a new normal in Israel, to 30 to 60 or more years. Second, we want

each vine to be as independent as possible. We want the vines to grow in the spring and then stop on their own. This means promoting deep rooting. With access to deeper water, vines are not so dependent on irrigation. Vines that depend on shallow water have big superstructures and limited roots. They are unbalanced, so you have to irrigate them. Our goal is to have a balance of superstructure and roots. Deep water takes more energy to use, so superstructures are smaller. The upside is that independent of human inputs the grapes tend to strongly reflect the uniqueness of the site in which they are raised. So even though yields are smaller, the quality is higher. Our growers get more revenue from 3 tons of dynamite fruit than they would from 4-6 tons of generic fruit.



Technology Leader

lol: GHW has been a leader in adopting new technologies. Why?

VS: Remember that I was the 6th winemaker in 8 years when I arrived. There was no long-term vision. The same grape

varieties were initially planted at every site, because no one knew at the beginning what would work. The winery's success is in part based on the pure luck of how well those early plantings worked out. But to improve we needed to better understand the conditions we were operating in.

lol: How did you do that?

VS: Our first big project, started 20 years ago, was to set up a series of meteorological stations in the Golan. We use 13 stations, 12 owned by the winery. The stations measure a variety of data points including temperature, relative humidity, radiation, leaf wetness, wind speed and direction, among others. Measurements are taken every second at every station. It is stored long-term in averages of 10-minute intervals. We use the data to understand the differences between the sites, to assist in making harvest decisions, to compare seasons and hopefully in the future to build disease models.

Another big project, in 2009, was to conduct a soil survey in the Golan. We identified 5 distinct subtypes of soil, differing in depth, amount of stones. Two of the soils are basalt based, one older and more developed than the other. Another soil is tuff based. And two of the soils are a mixture of basalt and tuff, one formed that way and the other a result of alluvial and/or colluvial movement

lol: Why does this matter?

VS: If we know the grape variety, the specific clone that was used in the graft, the root stock, the climate and the soil, we can better pinpoint the causes of our big successes. Take root stocks, for example. All root stocks now used commercially are from native American grape species. That is because they are resistant to phloxera, a root louse



that can destroy vineyards. The varietal grape vines, like cabernet, merlot and others, are grafted to the native American root stocks. But the root stocks have different characteristics. Some are more invigorating than others. So in a vigorous area, you want to use devigorating root stock as a balance. In non-vigorous areas you want to use more invigorating root stock. With better understanding of each of these factors, including our soils, every year we have a clearer picture of what combinations work best, which leads to better planting decisions and higher quality wine.

We also use two other technologies to better understand our soil. One is a measure of the electroconductivity of the soil ("ECS"). We measure down to a half-meter and a full meter. When you harvest

part of a vineyard at the same time ideally you want to harvest only ripe grapes. In reality, you always get a mix of under-ripe, ripe and over-ripe grapes. Under-ripe and over-ripe grapes produce generic flavors, so you want to minimize them. To get even ripening, you need even growth, which means that you need to plant in similar soil types. ECS helps us understand how the soil varies across our vineyards. We use these measurements to produce soil maps of our vineyards, showing the variations in acidity (pH), soil texture, potassium levels, available water, the water-holding capacity of the soil, etc.

We also use soil moisture probes to measure how deep our irrigation water penetrates. We typically probe at 30cm, 60cm and 90cm depths. Our goal is to discover at what level the roots are active. This helps us promote deeper rooting.

Instead of vineyards, we now think in terms of smaller vineyard “blocks” within each vineyard. The vines in a block are irrigated, monitored and harvested together. As a result of the information we develop from using our various technologies, we are increasingly able to plant each block in soil which is consistent throughout the block. This allows us to achieve more even growth and ripening. Because of the way soils are naturally distributed our blocks are now smaller and irregularly shaped. Our average block size is down to three to four acres, half of the size fifteen years ago.

lol: What about technologies aimed at the vines directly?

VS: One thing we do is monitor how hydrated the vines are. Wine grapes are a strange crop—you actually need a certain amount of water stress to produce good grapes. The vines go through an annual cycle. First, they wake up after dormancy. Then they start to grow. Once the soils begin to dry out, the vines shift from producing shoots and leaves to ripening grapes. Ideally you want the vines focused on the ripening process from about two weeks before the grapes change color from green to red, a process called “veraison”. Too much water stops ripening. Too little water and leaves yellow and drop off, causing the plants to lose their photosynthetic engines. To complicate things further, it turns out that different vineyard blocks need different hydration levels to go into stress leading to optimal fruit production.

lol: Years ago I saw a computer-generated map you created by measuring the sunlight reflecting off grape leaves. What is that?

VS: That is a technology called Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, or “NDVI.” As you said, it measures how much sunlight is reflected by the leaves growing on the vines. These measurements are now done with satellites. We take these measurements two weeks after the midpoint in veraison. It turns out that

sunlight reflectivity is a good proxy for chlorophyll. With NDVI we can see the variation in a vineyard block on an almost vine by vine level. If there is unexpected variation within a block it gives us a chance to correct it, for example by splitting blocks into smaller sub-blocks.

Our newest project, which is starting next year, will measure the metabolic activity of individual vines.

lol: How do you know when to harvest the grapes?

VS: We use a variety of technologies and processes. For example, in addition to NDVI, shortly before harvest we make heavy use of sampling, looking at sugar levels, amount of acids and pH. We also test the variability of ripening by testing 300 individual grapes in each of our over 400 vineyard blocks, measuring the sugar content and ripeness of each grape. Last year we measured the ripeness of over 113,000 individual grapes. We have specific goals for maximum standard deviations of ripeness. Of course, the most important parameter is the flavor of the grapes. During the harvest season, I spend about four hours each day in the vineyards and much of that time is spent tasting the fruit.

lol: What about post-harvest?

VS: One key process is sorting the grapes at the winery, which is our last effort in improving the uniformity of ripening. We

used to use hand sorting. 18 sorters could sort 1-1.5 tons of grapes per hour. The process was slow, and the work was inconsistent. Now, for red grapes, we use computerized optical sorting which enables four people to sort 6-7 tons per hour. Optical sorting requires hand harvesting (so we limit this to grapes used in our highest quality red wines). Then the grapes have to be destemmed. After that, cameras analyze each grape for size, color, shape and reflectivity (raisins and rotten grapes reflect differently). Two years ago 500 out of 6000 tons were sorted optically. Now it is up to 900-1000 tons. Our goal this year is that out of the 6000 tons we expect to harvest, 1,400 will be used for our top "Yarden" wines. So a very high percentage of Yarden red wines use optically sorted grapes.

Another technology we use is phenolic analysis. This allows us to measure the pigment and tannins in the grapes, which are all phenols. Tannins are astringent and bitter, but they give the wine structure. Pigments give the wine color. The amount of color extracted is managed during the fermentation process. Unfortunately, for this type of analysis you can only use your own data, so you need to build a big database for this to be useful. We have been doing this for seven years.

We have also developed our own systems for monitoring cooling.

You may be interested to know that our biggest annual investment is in barrels. We are the largest buyer of new oak in Israel. We place one large order, over \$1 million, before harvest, and a smaller order after harvest. We expect to reach an inventory of 10,500 barrels this year. No other Israeli winery comes close. We use 7 different coopers, one in Italy, 5 in France and one in the US. All use French Oak. The origin of the oak and the way the wood is toasted affects the taste of the wine, so we monitor these factors carefully.

lol: What about the human factor?

VS: I can't stress enough that in the final analysis we rely primarily on our eyes, noses and mouths, which are the basis of everything. Our technology is only an enhancement.

lol: Any other technical issues you want to mention?

VS: We will soon have the first certified sustainable vineyards in Israel. To be certified, we can only use specified pesticides in defined limited amounts, ensuring no long term damage to the environment. We also have to limit our energy usage. And we have to provide a high level of worker training and safety, amongst many other requirements.

Grape Varieties

lol: How many different types of grapes do you produce?

VS: We grow 20 different varieties, 12 reds and 8 whites. We can do that because the Golan is so versatile. We get good expression across a large number of varieties. This is unique to the Golan. And we continue to explore what works well here.

lol: Which do you produce the most of?

VS: Cabernet sauvignon. Some of the varieties are used for our varietal wines. Some are used for varietals and for blends. Cabernet franc is only used for blends until now.

The Wine

lol: Acharon, acharon chaviv. Let's turn to the wine itself. What is your most important wine.



VS: It is definitely Yarden Cabernet Sauvignon. It is considered a benchmark in Israel. We have achieved high quality over a long period of time. It is consistently highly-rated and wins major prizes.

Even though the Yarden Cab is our most important wine, we are flexible about how much we produce. We will produce less if that is what we need to do to maintain the quality level. And we are constantly trying to improve the wine.

lol: Anything else distinctive about the wine?

VS: Ageability. We are known for wines that age very well. For example I recently tasted wines from our 1995 and 1997 vintages and they were great. It is hard to find other Israeli wines that age so well.

lol: We have talked a lot about new techniques and technology. How have they made a difference in the wine?

VS: They have helped us increase the quality of our wines across the board. Perhaps the clearest results can be seen with the wines we produce from our Bar-On vineyard, which we developed in 2009. These include Yarden Syrah 2013 Bar-On Vineyard, Yarden Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Bar-On Vineyard and Yarden Bar-On Vineyard, which is a blend of cabernet, syrah, and petit Verdot grapes in the same percentages as are grown in the vineyard—so the wine really mirrors the vineyard. The results have been phenomenal.

lol: What are a few of your other notable wines?

VS: Yarden Katzrin is an excellent Bordeaux blend. Yarden Rom is an excellent quality blend of cabernet, merlot and syrah. We also produce the major champagne-method sparkling wine in Israel, which has won prestigious international prizes.

I should also mention that in the US we sell primarily under three labels. “Yarden” is

our premium line, with classic wines with great ageability. “Gilgal” is a lower-priced line, of classic varietal wines with more immediate approachability but the high quality of the wines is a tremendous value for the price. And our Mount Hermon wines are also great quality and priced for everyday enjoyment.

lol: I notice your wines are not m’vushal. Why?

VS: You are correct that unlike most other Israeli wine producers, none of our wines are m’vushal. That’s because we don’t want to do anything that will harm the quality of our wines. As a result, even though we are one of Israel’s biggest wine exporters, we forego certain markets, like kosher restaurants that require m’vushal and catering and events. Nonetheless we are quite successful in the EU, Japan and the United States, where we are sold in the non-kosher market as well.

International Recognition

lol: The winery has enjoyed consistent success in international competition. Tell us about a few of the awards the winery has received.

VS: There is a list of the top awards we have received under the “Our Wine Experience” tab on our website (www.golanwines.co.il/english), going back to 1987. You can see we have received top prizes in international competitions in all

but a handful of years over the last 30. Among our recent notable awards, in 2011 we were named top winery in the world at the Vinitaly competition. In 2012 Wine Enthusiast Magazine named us New World Winery of the Year. We are the first Israeli winery to win those awards. A few months ago our Yarden Malbec was not only awarded a gold medal, but it was named the best Malbec in the entire competition at the Citadel du Vin, in Bordeaux, France.

Keys to Success

lol: We have talked about the phenomenal capacity of the Golan itself, and have looked at some of the technologies you use. What would you say, at the end of the day, are the keys to the winery's success?

VS: I personally manage the grape growing and winemaking and work with an incredibly qualified team that would be the envy of any winery. I spend a lot of time with the vineyards, because they are the foundation of our success. But we have also built a culture of excellence and innovation. We are never satisfied with what we have done. Our team has a hunger to keep improving.

Visiting the Winery

lol: The winery is located in Katzrin in the Golan. What can visitors do there?

VS: We offer a number of different options for visitors. We have a classic tour, which includes learning about the winemaking

process, visiting the oak barrel cellar and tasting some of our wines.



Premium tours include the standard tour plus additional tastings and can include a gourmet meal. You can take a jeep tour of our vineyards around the Golan, which includes a picnic lunch. You can arrange for a catered meal in our cellars for up to 40 people. Tours can be arranged in advance.

Final Thoughts

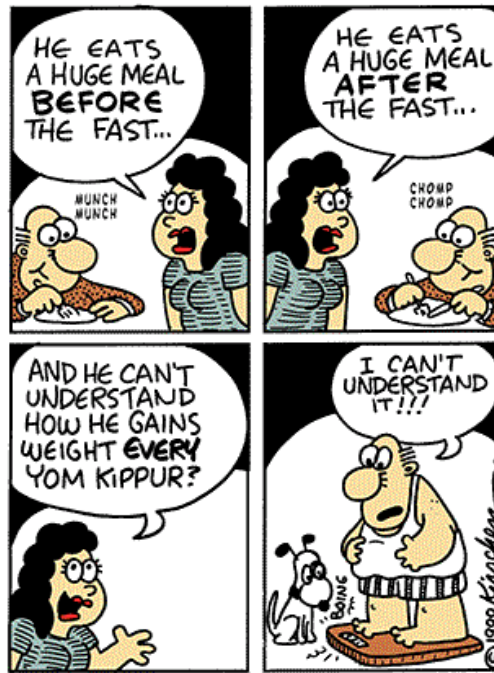
lol: You have been very generous with your time. Any final thoughts?

VS: I came to the winery 26 years ago. It has never been more fun and interesting as it is now. I have never believed more in the Golan as a wine producing region. And the winery is still on the move and evolving. I think wine lovers can rest assured that in addition to our flagship wines, there will be new and innovative premium quality wines produced by Golan Heights Winery for many years to come.

For those of your readers who enjoy our wines, I would personally like to thank them for their support of our efforts. In the end, our wines are made to be enjoyed and to enhance the lives of our customers.

L'chaim!

Dry Bones



Judaism, Zionism and the Land of Israel

IonIsrael is honored to present a portion of the foreword and introduction of the soon to be published book by Rabbi Yotav Eliach. Rabbi Eliach is the principal of Rambam Mesivta in Lawrence.



I was born in the shadow of the Holocaust to Rabbi Dr. David Eliach, a sixth generation Jerusalemite whose family returned to *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) in 1807. Since my

father's family comes from a Chassidic dynasty called Karlin Stolin, and the *Rebbe* (Grand Rabbi who was the leader of the sect) said that it was time to return to *Eretz Yisrael*, the family

did so because of a deep religious sense of obligation.

My mother, Dr. Yaffa Eliach, whose family had lived in Lithuania for generations and whose world was destroyed in September 1941 by the Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators, had to endure over four years of living in ghettos, hiding under a pig sty, hiding in forests, and living with partisans. She watched her mother and two of her brothers murdered, and then walked across part of Europe until she found some sense of stability in a displaced persons camp. Eventually, she was allowed by the British to enter *Eretz Yisrael* in 1946. Seven years later she married my father in *Medinat Yisrael* (the Modern State of Israel). Their two stories have left a powerful impact on my life and world view.

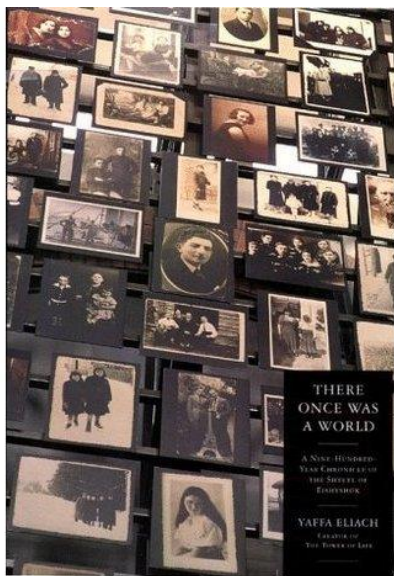
The world I grew up in included many Holocaust survivors who spoke about the *Shoah* (the Holocaust) quite often, and in detail. Their stories were all quite horrible and unbelievable when compared to the world that I lived in. It was very clear to me that all these people, including my mother and many of my

friends' parents, had experienced a form of brutality that is hard to imagine, and that they were abandoned by the world. Being Jewish between 1939-1945 in Europe and parts of North Africa meant you were being hunted and marked for extermination. The yellow *Magen David* (Star of David) these people were forced to wear was a sign of humiliation, and of being marked as a target.

It was also made crystal clear to me that I was exceptionally lucky to be born into a world where the *Magen David* was in the middle of a blue and white flag—the colors of the *talit* (Jewish prayer shawl)—that represented the first sovereign Jewish State since the days of the Maccabees, some 2,000 years past! The miraculous metamorphosis from the *Magen David* being a yellow star of shame to a symbol of a sovereign Jewish State, along with the metamorphosis of the Jewish people from a hunted, murdered, and dazed people to a proud, free, independent people, all occurred during a three-year period, 1945-1948!

This was the most remarkable positive change in the fortunes of the Jewish nation since the Maccabees entered the Second Temple in 165 BCE to cleanse it from the Greek defilement, and the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty.

I have been truly fortunate to be born and live at a time in Jewish history where I get to realize the dream of the return to Zion for which Jews have prayed for nineteen centuries. To me, that is remarkable on a religious and a historical level. There are prayers I get to recite daily (some three times a day) that speak of the return of the Jewish people from all four



corners of the Earth to *Eretz Yisrael*, that speak of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, that speak of a new light shining on Zion, that to past generations were aspirations for the future that for me are affirmations of my present!

The simplest way for me to share what the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty has meant to the Jewish people from my perspective is by telling a story that involves relying on a principle from science fiction, namely, time travel. Imagine that time travel was possible. If it were, I would set my time machine to transport me back in time to the following dates and places: Southern Europe during the years 1095-1099, when the Crusaders were on their way to the Holy Land and killed tens of thousands of Jews; Spain, the summer of 1492, when after centuries of Jews being fully integrated into the country's life, all are expelled; parts of Ukraine (in the Jewish super-ghetto known as the Pale of Settlement) during the years 1882-1903, when horrible, violent riots, known as pogroms—that were either sanctioned by the Russian Government or ignored by it—took place in Jewish towns; finally, September 1939-May 1945, when the countries of Europe and North Africa and parts of Asia watched as the Nazis exterminated Jews in what we now call the Shoah, the Holocaust.

Since I have visited Israel well over fifty times and in total have spent over five very intense years in the country, on this trip I would take along an album of photos I took during my travels, as well as aerial photographs of Israel. At each stop, I would tell the Jews around me that I am from their future, and I

would describe in detail what the sovereign, re-established Jewish State looks like and how many, and what types of, Jews live there. I would show them photographs of the country and its people. I would describe what the Kotel Plaza (Western Wall) looks like, and what it's like on Friday nights when thousands of different types of Jews come there to pray; what it looks like on Sukkot when thousands come to be blessed by the *Kohanim* (the priestly caste), and what it looks like when soldiers from the IDF are sworn in there.

I would tell them about the Knesset, the Israeli flag, and the menorah which is the emblem of the Jewish State. I would tell them about the IDF and a little about what it has accomplished since 1948. I would show them my own swearing-in ceremony when I received my Tanach (Bible) and M16. I would tell them about the millions of Jews in Israel who come from well over one hundred and fifty countries, and how they have all returned to the land of their forefathers.

I would tell them about the many accomplishments of the Jewish State in science, technology, medicine, and its archeological finds that link the Jewish present to the Jewish past. They would see pictures of the green fields of the Hula Valley and the forests that surround Jerusalem, and of some of the thousands of synagogues and *yeshivot* (Jewish religious studies institutes/schools) in Israel.

I can guarantee that at each one of these historical stops the Jews I would be speaking to and showing pictures to would begin to weep with joy, and probably would just want to

touch me as I would seem to represent something holy and unbelievable to them.



Finally, I would not be surprised if some of them would probably ask me to describe the *Mashiach* (the Messiah), since surely, in their minds, he had arrived. I would smile and tell them we are still waiting for him, but that our present is the future they have all been dreaming of. The re-established State of Israel, with all of the problems running a sovereign state entails, is the embodiment of a 2,000-year-old dream!

The problems the re-established State of Israel has created—social, religious, economic, political, military—are the types of problems that only nations that govern themselves can experience. By definition, they are part and parcel of the package deal that comes with national sovereignty. If one studies the Tanach, s/he will find it replete with the issues in the ancient Jewish State. These issues were not reasons for the Jewish nation to avoid sovereignty then, and they are not reasons to avoid sovereignty today.

Introduction

From 1948 to 1981 Zionism was something U.S. Jewish teenagers received through osmosis. During those years, American Jewish communities were filled with Holocaust survivors raising children, running *shuls* (synagogues), schools, and Jewish organizations. The DNA of all of us that were brought up between the 1950s and the 1970s was infused with gratitude to the Almighty for the gift of Jewish sovereignty, and pride for the accomplishments of the gritty, tough, Jewish State that made the Tanach (Old Testament/Bible) come alive for us.



The Western media was proud of the spunky “Dosh” (a cartoon character who represented Israel in newspapers from the 1950s to 1970s) who stood up to the legions of Arab despots and dictators who oppressed their own people and kept pointing to Israel to distract their people from their own misery, and continuously spoke of their goal to annihilate the Jewish State to anyone who was willing to listen. Their goal was openly and unabashedly to commit genocide. Everyone who followed events in Middle East knew that.

But since the first Lebanon War in 1982 and the birth of the relentless 24-hour TV news cycle, the image of Israel among American Jews has been tarnished and perverted. Holocaust survivors in leadership positions

were retiring. The Holocaust itself and the 1967 and 1973 Wars were receding from our collective memories. For those born post-1967, Israel was not a miraculous gift, a break from 2,000 years of Diaspora, it was the Jewish community in the Jewish homeland in the far off Middle East, in the land of the Bible, in the Holy Land.

Though very few of us took formal courses on Zionism, its ideals and values were transmitted to us by words and deeds. We didn't Google the 1948 War of Independence, 1967 Six-Day War, the Munich Olympics, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Ma'alot Massacre in 1974, or the IDF Raid on Entebbe in 1976 to know what these events were and what they meant to the Jewish nation. We remember hearing about these events from our parents or experiencing them ourselves. To watch President Nasser of Egypt in late May and early June of 1967 call for the total annihilation of the Jewish State was not something the *New York Times* editorial board needed to interpret for us. Today, it is hard for those who do not know the history to figure out who the good guys and bad guys are.

It was taken for granted that students attending day schools and yeshivot in the '50s and '60s knew what was happening in Israel. There were few formal classes, but many students were exposed to special assemblies and programs about Israel. The assumption was that being in schools offering Israel-associated assemblies, programs, speakers and posters would create an atmosphere of identification and love of Israel, and would foster knowledge and commitment to and

about Israel and Zionism.

Today, there are still few, if any, formal courses in Zionism and Jewish history that connect the dots from the days of Abraham to the present. Instead, most Americans learn about Israel from the instant images in the 1982 war with Lebanon, from media infatuated with the notion of "if it bleeds it leads," (an idea tied to Nielsen ratings), and since the advent of the Internet, to sticky-eye balls and hits. The media focused on the powerful Israeli Goliath putting a siege on Beirut, and the Christian Lebanese massacres of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatilla—for which Israel was blamed. There was no history mentioned, no depth and no context offered to audiences or readers.

During the 1987 Palestinian Intifada, the media broadcast pictures of young Arabs with slingshots facing huge Israeli tanks. Again there was no history or context offered. No one asked why the Palestinians were homeless. No one asked why, in 1947, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem rejected the idea of an Arab State next door to a Jewish one. No one asked why, from 1949 to 1967, the Jordanians never offered a state to the people living on the West Bank of the Jordan River in Judea and Samaria. No one asked who created the Palestinian cause or made Yasir Arafat its leader. Instead, it seemed that because Israel became a democratic state that



could defend itself against mighty armies, her greatest sin was that she was no longer weak and vulnerable.

On the far left and in academic left-wing circles, Israel was tarred and feathered as a colonialist, imperialistic oppressor, and occupier of Palestine and its indigenous Palestinian population. The Jews/Zionists were painted as European colonizers who colonized the free and sovereign State of Palestine, much like the British did in half of Africa and the Indian subcontinent in the 1800s.

Where did this distortion come from and who originated it?

In the last decade of the 20th century, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf sheikdoms began funding endowments for Middle Eastern Department Chairs staffed by students of Edward Said, a Palestinian-American literary theorist who helped found the critical-theory field of post-colonialism. He was an American-Christian Arab born in Jerusalem in 1935 to an Arab mother from Egypt and an American father, and spent much of his childhood in Cairo, where he was sent to elite British and American schools. He earned his BA at Princeton and his Ph.D. in English literature at Harvard. He joined the faculty of Columbia University in 1963 and became a professor of comparative literature in 1991.

Said's great claim to fame was his book, *Orientalism*. The work is based on his knowledge of literature, literary theory and colonialism. In that work he uses the word

Orientalism to describe the West's patronizing attitudes to "the East"—meaning North Africa, Eastern, Middle Eastern and Asian societies. He said these Western attitudes were directly linked to the imperialism of the 18th and 19th centuries, and that the scholarship they produced about these cultures was political, influenced by the power structure and therefore intellectually suspect.

His school of thought was contagious, and had enormous influence in Middle Eastern studies. Not everyone agreed with his theories; his strongest critic and debating partner was Bernard Lewis. Prior to Said's emergence, most people in academia looked to Lewis, the world famous chairman of the Middle East Studies Department at Princeton (now emeritus) and the father of Middle Eastern Studies, as well as a leading expert on Islam. Prof. Lewis speaks and reads English, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Pharsi, and Pashtu, served in the Middle East throughout World War II as a British Army intelligence officer, and spent years researching original documents throughout the Middle East. His insights and data he presented were all apolitical and not fueled by any agenda.

The same could not be said of Said who was a member of the Palestinian National Committee and a friend of Yasir Arafat. Many people believe he developed his agenda before writing *Orientalism* and that he bent and tortured the facts to fit his preconceived narrative. Said claimed that all Middle Eastern historians and experts who did not understand and accept his *Orientalism* were bigoted, prejudiced, anti-Islam and anti-Arab because they were European (or American) with a

Judaeo-Christian frame of reference. In his opinion, European scholars had a “Crusader” view of the Arab and Islamic world and viewed Arabs and Muslims as the “other”—dangerous, savage, wild; in need of taming and being controlled. In addition, the European/Christian view saw the Islamic and Arab world controlling Christianity’s holy sites in the Holy Land when these areas should have been under Christian control, and he accused the West of plundering Middle Eastern natural resources, i.e., oil.

To complete his version of looking at the Middle East, Said “explained” that Israel and Zionism fit into his new overarching view of Middle East Studies when, in the late 19th century, naked, direct imperialism became embarrassing for the Western powers. According to him, they therefore conspired to create a phony “nationalist movement” ostensibly representing an indigenous people who were interested in re-establishing their homeland in the heart of the Arab and Islamic world. That movement, he wrote, was Zionism.⁴

Said said it was the reason the British Empire was pro-Zionist and why the other European powers, as well as the United States, supported it. He said it was a brilliant plan, in essence, to continue Western rule and control of the dangerous Arab and Islamic Middle East through a phony proxy movement.⁵

As Avner Shalit noted,

...Professor Edward Said and his students caused indescribable damage to the ability to think or speak the truth when it comes

to the Arab world. Their wacky intellectual legacy did not permit talking about the region’s residents as anything but victims. The grand Arab nation—with its rich history, profound culture and considerable economic power—was treated like a juvenile who isn’t responsible for his actions. So all the ills of Arab politics were attributed to others—imperialists, colonialists, Zionists. So no real criticism of the Arab world was permitted and no one demanded it mend itself.⁶

Said died in 2003. Rashid Ismail Khalidi, a native New Yorker born to Palestinian parents, and who was educated at Yale and earned his Ph.D. at Oxford, is now the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia and director of the Middle East Institute of Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs. He is also editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Advisory Committee of the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East. He was teaching at the American University in Beirut in 1982 when the war broke out, and was thought to be a spokesman for the PLO, but denies that.

Khalidi shares Said’s view of the colonial influences in Middle Eastern policy. In *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (1997), he places the emergence of Palestinian national identity in the context of Ottoman and British colonialism as well as the early Zionist effort in the Levant, arguing that Arabs living in Palestine began to regard themselves as a distinct people decades before 1948, “and that the struggle against Zionism does not by itself sufficiently explain Palestinian nationalism.”⁷

He is sharply critical of U.S. policies during the Cold War, writing that Cold War policies “formulated to oppose the Soviets, consistently undermined democracy and exacerbated tensions in the Middle East.”⁸ Khalidi has written, “It may seem hard to believe today, but for decades the United States was in fact a major patron, indeed in some respects the major patron, of earlier incarnations” of radical, militant Islam, in order to use all possible resources in waging the Cold War. He adds, “The Cold War was over, but its tragic sequels, its toxic debris, and its unexploded mines continued to cause great harm, in ways largely unrecognized in American discourse.”⁹

Michael Oren, Israel’s former ambassador to the United States and an historian, admitted that “Khalidi is mainstream” because “the stream itself has changed. The criteria for scholarship have become very political.”¹⁰

Said’s disciples now dominate most university Middle Eastern Studies Departments and influence many political science and history professors. They help explain the “compelling images” of Palestinians or Arabs being “brutalized” by the media to their gullible, uninformed students and to the many media outlets who rely on them as their Middle Eastern “experts.”

Sadly, the overwhelming majority of university students, including most Jewish graduates of yeshiva high schools and day schools, do not have the historical or ideological backgrounds to respond or

challenge what have become the mainstream views on many U.S. campuses. They already are the only view in almost all western European universities.

As someone who has been involved in educating Jewish youth formally and informally since 1978—in classrooms, weekend retreats, Israel advocacy training programs and tours to Israel—I can ask the question as to how many Jewish institutions have taken the time and the effort to teach the Jewish historical and religious connection to *Eretz Yisrael*? How many Jewish institutions have taken the time to teach, in detail, the history of modern Zionism to our youth and community since the 1970s? The sad answer, I believe, is very few.

Hence, many Jewish university students are incapable of responding to the outlandish charges made against Israel and Zionism. Many American Jewish teens hear about Israel and they think of occupation, war, conflict, human rights violations, apartheid, check points, etc. Those are the “compelling images” and “terms” they have been watching and hearing about their entire lives, and that’s what their professors of Middle Eastern Studies have taught (or will teach) them, so who can blame them?

The Jewish community has unwittingly given all of Israel’s detractors, defamers, and enemies an open field to play on. This has had a very deleterious effect on Israel’s image and on the views held by a growing number of Jewish high school graduates, including those from yeshiva high schools and day schools.

Footnotes

¹ Norman Podhoretz, *Why Are Jews Liberals?* (NY: Vintage Books, 2010), 1ff. ² Marshall Sklar, *America's Jews* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1971), 3ff. ³ *Ibid.*, 110 ff; Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time For Healing* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1ff. ⁴ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (NY: Vintage Books, 1980), 12-13, 63-70 & 82.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ari Shavit, "The Time Has Come to Open Our Eyes to the Arab Disaster," *Ha'aretz*, Sept. 11, 2015.

<http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.675412?date=1441978762222> ⁷ Evan R. Goldstein, "Rashid Khalidi's Balancing Act: The Middle-East scholar courts controversy with his Palestinian advocacy," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (March 6, 2009) (http://lists.econ.utah.edu/piper_mail/marxism/2009March/045483.html)

⁸ *Ibid.* ⁹ Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: the Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston, MA; Beacon Press, 2009), 34. ¹⁰ *Op.*

Dry Bones

MR. SHULDIG AND HIS DOG, DOOBIE



One Hero Served by Beit Halochem: Capt. Ran Ben Attia



When Captain Ran Ben Attia crossed the Finish Line at the January 2017 Israman “Ironman” competition, he proved that he could succeed in running, swimming and cycling a total of 220 kms. He has come a long way since he was gravely wounded by a sniper’s bullet in July 2014 during Operation Protective Edge while serving in the Nahal Brigade.

He is one of the heroes who defend Israel every day. Since his injury, Capt. Ben Attia has undergone many operations. After release from the hospital, he began coming to Beit Halochem for the rehabilitation services and healing community.

The Beit Halochem (House of the Warrior) centers in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and Beer Sheva serve 51,000 veterans, wounded from as far back as the War of Independence (1948). Friends of Israel Disabled Veterans-Beit Halochem in the

USA raises funds for Beit Halochem and all its programs.

“Today, I am undergoing extensive rehabilitation thanks to the Zahal Disabled Veterans Organization (ZDVO) at Beit Halochem,” Capt. Ben Attia has said. “The amazing staff and volunteers are all helping me, not just with my physical rehabilitation, but also my emotional rehabilitation.”

In August of 2016, despite the severity of his injuries, he began to train to take part in an “Ironman” competition, which involves running, swimming and cycling a total of 220 km. He had no previous cycling or swimming experience, but had run a couple of marathons before his injury.

In January, he completed the 2017 Israman “Ironman,” proving, in his words, “The human spirit is far stronger than any physical disability. I have learned this and now I live this. Thank you Beit Halochem.”

In 2016 he had completed a Triathlon, and also joined the 5-day Courage In Motion bike ride in Israel, alongside 110 overseas riders from Canada and the USA.

Capt. Ben Attia has noted, “During Operation Protective Edge...we could feel the amazing support from Jewish communities around the world...There is nothing that can stand in the way of a person who really wants something.”

He has celebrated other amazing and inspiring achievements in addition to his athletic accomplishments: his marriage just before his injury, and now the birth of his son.

Looking forward to the future, Capt. Ben Attia has been awarded two Academic Scholarships through ZDVO and Beit Halochem. His first was while pursuing an MA in Public Policy at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, and the second while taking an MA in Business Administration at Bar Ilan University.

Capt. Ben Attia’s family and friends have been with him all along. They have pushed him and encouraged him throughout these difficult years all the way to the finish line! He has continued to overcome all obstacles, and accomplish so many goals - unbelievable achievements for anyone, let alone someone who has undergone the physical and mental trials and tribulations that he has been through.



You can read more about Capt. Ben Attia and other “Every Day Heroes” at <https://fidv.org/heroes/>

The primary role of the Friends of Israeli Disabled veterans is the development and operation of the Beit Halochem centers throughout Israel. With four active facilities and a fifth under development, they are all specially designed to accommodate Israeli veterans with a wide range of disabilities. Making the facilities completely accessible to the blind and visually impaired, as well as veterans using wheelchairs, is key to helping these veterans feel comfortable and “at home.”

Severely handicapped members – those who are blind, paraplegics, amputees and others with disabilities requiring specialized care – receive individualized treatments in the rehabilitative therapy wing of each center.

In order to reach wound servicemen and servicewomen as early as possible, Beit

Halochem is in close contact with the hospitals and rehabilitation units where they will be treated. Upon their release, newly disabled veterans are referred to the Beit Halochem nearest their homes to ensure an uninterrupted course of treatment, which is so vital to successful recovery and rehabilitation.

Treatment in the physical therapy institute complements other measures in the ongoing process of rehabilitation. As needed it also serves to help members whose health has deteriorated over the years. A team of skilled physical therapists treats members who have been referred by rehabilitation specialists in hospitals, or by clinics of Israel's Defense Ministry Rehabilitation Division.

Beit Halochem installed heated pools where the water temperature is appropriately gauged for those suffering severe paralysis or orthopedic problems. A hydrotherapeutic health unit is also maintained on the premises, which contains rooms for therapeutic baths, massage, and two well-equipped gyms for medical gymnastics. The unit is staffed by expert hydro-therapists, specifically trained to administer individualized treatments.

Doctors at Beit Halochem may prescribe a combination of physical therapy and fitness treatments for a short or extended period of time. This combination helps improve body function, while reinforcing the existing potential for self-reliance. Treatments are provided on an individual basis by experienced staff, under strict medical supervision.

A critical part of healing is the support of family members. At Beit Halochem in addition to therapeutic activities for the disabled veterans, there are excellent facilities available for the entire family. Young and old can enjoy the congenial atmosphere, and many programs, such as hiking clubs and others group activities, which enrich family life and promote togetherness. For many of them, developing their academic skills and advanced sports training are strong steps to recovery. These scholarships will enable them to obtain an education and provide them with the necessary tools to regain confidence and belief in their own ability to face the challenge of a new life.

The amount of the scholarship (between \$2,000 USD –\$5,000 USD) depends on the disability and financial situation, coupled with the amount he or she has paid. In 2014, 519 academic and arts scholarships were distributed, and 65 scholarships for outstanding athletes and coaches, totaling more than \$655,000 USD.

Spouses of the disabled veterans also need a chance to get away from their cares and concerns. There are numerous classes offered for them to attend including computer training, bridge, alternative medicine, glee clubs, etc., while their husbands or wives participate in sports training or therapy groups. Rehabilitation of the disabled involves the family as a whole. Members' children also get their share of attention at Beit Halochem. Childcare in a well-equipped nursery is provided during

the afternoon hours, leaving parents free for their own activities and therapies.

The **Beit Halochem Tel Aviv** center opened its doors in 1974, after the Yom Kippur War. The 10,000-square-meter complex includes a multipurpose gymnasium, classrooms, treatment rooms, rest accommodations, culture halls, cafeteria, indoors swimming pool, massage and hydrotherapy unit, shooting gallery and 350-seat auditorium. The grounds include outdoor playing fields and an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Beit Halochem Tel Aviv initiates and encourages research on various rehabilitation subjects, such as specialized sports for the disabled, those with spinal injury, and those with brain damage. More than 5,500 Zahal disabled veterans living in Israel's central region are active members in Tel Aviv.

The **Beit Halochem in Jerusalem** opened in 1994, the center, located in the south-western part of Jerusalem, includes 10 acres of landscaped grounds, is situated between the new suburbs of Gilo, Malcha and Givat Masua.



The 6,750 sq. meters Jerusalem stone complex boasts a large multi-functional sports complex including a gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, and hydrotherapy and physiotherapy treatment and training

rooms. In addition to these facilities, Beit Halochem Jerusalem has an auditorium, classrooms, a billiard hall, table tennis room and a shooting range.

Over 3,500 disabled veterans are currently enrolled at Beit Halochem Jerusalem. Together with their families, this center serves some 9,000 people in the greater Jerusalem area.

The **Beit Halochem Haifa** center opened in 1986. Its unusual architectural features make Beit Halochem Haifa one of Israel's more interesting buildings. More than 2,800 disabled veterans who live in the north make up the active membership, with a total of 9,000 participating members, families included.

Situated on the western slopes of the French Carmel, the complex covers about 7,000 square meters. The three-story main building houses a social wing, 180-seat auditorium, multipurpose gymnasium, classrooms, fitness rooms, indoor swimming pool, shooting gallery, cafeteria and offices.

Opened in 2011, the **Beer Sheva Beit Halochem**, sitting on the edge of the Negev Desert, this center provides essential rehabilitation and support services to thousands of wounded veterans, survivors of terror attacks, and their families.

The center offers top-notch facilities within easy reach of veterans who previously had to travel long distances to get services. The center accommodates swimming, therapy, art, and performance facilities. With over 1,500 registered members, it serves a community of more than 3,000 Zahal

Disabled Veterans Organization members and their families residing in Beer Sheva and the Southern District.

Ashdod has been chosen as the site of the fifth Beit Halochem center, after years of research and surveys. Situated on 7.4 acres of land, the new center will be a hub for disabled veterans living in Israel's Southern Coastal Plain.



Collectively there are 6,700 veterans in the area; together with their families, they number over 15,000 people who will directly benefit from the convenient location of Ashdod Beit Halochem. As of December 2015, construction work on Beit Halochem Ashdod is now underway!

The new center will have a full Aquatic Complex (including a children's pool); a Physiotherapy Wing with a hydrotherapy treatment pool; Sports and Exercise Facilities, including a fitness center, Pilates studio, table tennis hall, children's playroom and sports hall; and the main building that will hold offices, class rooms, performing arts and events hall, lounge, and a restaurant. The outside grounds will encompass 2 tennis courts, a children's playground, multi-purpose sports court, an outdoor terrace for performances and events, and a roof garden.

Beit Halochem Ashdod, when completed, will be a healing community, where there is a life-long commitment to help and support disabled veterans and survivors of terror attacks in Israel. It will be a place to go for rehabilitation, therapies, sports training, learning new things, pursuing creative hobbies, making new friends, and relaxing with the family.

The previous article was adapted from information found on the FIDV.org website.



Dry Bones NEW YEAR



All Dry bones cartoons printed with permission of Yaakov Kirschen