MORESHET

Journal for the Study
of the Holocaust
and Antisemitism

Claims Conference

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Holocaust Study and Research Center, Givat Haviva

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Antisemitism Research

Documentation and Testimony

Book Reviews

Lea Ganor

"From Rebirth to the Skies": Memories and Meanings in the Life Stories of Holocaust-Survivor Aircrew Members in the Israeli Air Force

I kept my personal story close to my chest, like cards. I didn't share it with anyone…It's known that I'm not the only one who kept quiet. This entire amazing group kept quiet, some more than others. Everyone felt foreign to the Israeli way of life, and everyone made a great effort to forget the past, to be like their friends, and to blend into Israeliness. Some succeeded, and some failed.[1]
Shaya Harsit

Introduction

In the mid-1950s, the approximately 300 aircrew members positioned at key points of decision making within the Israeli Air Force (IAF) included 136 Holocaust survivors. In addition, of the 285 aircrew members who took part in the 1956 Sinai Campaign, some 96 (33%) were Holocaust survivors.[2] During their service in the IAF, most of them remained silent about their experiences during the Holocaust out of a desire to be like their Israeli-born colleagues, even at the price of burying their own personal stories.

During the initial decades of Israeli statehood the IDF was widely admired due, among other things, to the young state's determination to survive and to the Israeli military's central role in building the nation.[3] Israeli Air Force pilots, who assumed a multidimensional role in the national narrative, were viewed as exemplary figures and Zionist heroes. This process intensified after the 1956 Sinai Campaign, in which the IAF played a decisive role, flying jet planes for the first time.[4] Pervasive during this period was the motto "all honor/respect to the IDF" (*kol hakavod letzahal*), reaching a high point during the Six-Day War. In the victory book that was published following the Sinai Campaign, Menachem Talmi referred to the pilots as "conquerors of the skies."[5] During the

same period, Israeli paratroopers and pilots were portrayed as heroes in the daily press,[6] as exemplified in an article in *Davar* by Ruth Bondy:

> We knew the motto "the best join the Air Force" (*hatovim latayis*), and we treated it with forgiveness…What stuff is the Israeli pilot fashioned from? When you meet them and you see how different each one is from the other, you realize that it is not the stuff from which the Israeli pilots are fashioned that is decisive, but rather the spirit within them, which is common to them all. Call it responsibility to the profession, total identification with the job, zealous devotion to the [air] force, or simply, to use a down-home phrase, a sense of purpose.[7]

Both Talmi's and Bondy's articles neglected to mention the fact that approximately one-third of the pilots who took part in the fighting were Holocaust survivors. They, who had come from "there" and had experienced the Holocaust, demonstrated the same zealous devotion to the Air Force and sense of purpose that was characteristic of "Sabras" (native born Israelis).

In this article, I extract the Holocaust-survivor aircrew members from their images as "heroes of the sky" and examine their pasts. These men, who were children during the Holocaust, concealed their troubling biographies in an effort to be part of Israeli society and adapted a Sabra identity in a complex society that was fighting for its existence in the face of numerous waves of mass immigration, wars, and economic hardship.

This article belongs to the field of "oral history,"[8] the main tool of which is the interview.[9] For the sake of this study I interviewed 35 aircrew members, all of whom were born between 1927 and 1942 and experienced the horrors of the Holocaust as toddlers and children. After the war, these individuals embarked upon paths that were ridden with substantial challenges, including difficulties being absorbed into society in their new country. All of them enlisted in the IDF, volunteered for the Air Force, and served as part of its spearhead during the 1950s and 60s.[10] Many members of this group, which is an inseparable part of the legacy of the IAF and the state of Israel, link their decision to be pilots to

their experiences in the Holocaust. One example is Arieh Oz, who survived the Holocaust as a child and could see the Canadian planes from his hiding place in Holland:

> In the fields of the farm beyond the fence, the Canadians placed metal plates that were connected to one another to create a surface for the parking and movement of light planes. Pilots in blue uniforms with sergeant ranks on their sleeves stood beside the planes chatting. I stood by that fence elated, and I dreamed: 'One day, I'll be a pilot too'…Less than 11 years later, on January 5, 1956, Major-General Dan Tolkowsky, who was then the commander of the Air Force, pinned pilot's wings on my chest – wings with a blue Star of David at their center.[11]

The initiative of Sabra (native born Israeli) Eliezer Cohen,[12] which will be expanded upon below, and the changes that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s in the attitude of Israeli society and the IDF to the memory of the Holocaust and the responses of Jews who lived under Nazi occupation, resulted in a change in the attitude of Holocaust-survivor Air Force personnel toward their past.[13] In their 60s and 70s, they began to shed their Sabra identity and set out on a journey through time, to an identity from which they had made such great efforts to distance themselves. As a result, they began sharing memories of their personal experiences during and following the Holocaust. Some members of this group had been killed in Israel's wars, and others had died prematurely as a result of accident or illness.[14]

To understand their transformation from exilic children and Holocaust refugees, the antithesis of the image of the Sabra fighter, into members of the leading elite in the Air Force and the state of Israel, I analyze the major themes that emerged in the memories they shared during their interviews in historical, social, and cultural contexts. This analysis is based on the personal stories of the interviewees and the Israeli national story, both of which are closely interwoven and reflect the Holocaust and the personal and national rebirth of each of the interviewees and their changing consciousness over the years. Like a jigsaw

puzzle, the different stories produce a whole that constitutes a complex account of the phenomenon.[15] The methodological discussion considers a number of questions: What was the fate of these children during and following the Holocaust? How did their experiences during the Holocaust influence their desire to enlist specifically in the Air Force and their motivation to volunteer for pilots' training? What were the factors that contributed to their integration and success in the IAF and in Israeli society?

The article is divided into three sections, the first of which contains a methodological introduction and historical background. The second section analyzes the main themes that emerged in the interviewees' memories from the pre-war period, the war itself, the immediate post-war period, their immigration to Mandate Palestine or the state of Israel, and their absorption into the country. The third section explores the relationship between the interviewees' experiences during the Holocaust and their contribution to the Air Force, as well as the manner in which the Air Force contributed to their individual and national rebirth.

This article presents the first documentary research regarding this group as an entity whose members share a common denominator: their identity and experiences as children who survived the Holocaust and subsequently became IAF aircrew members.[16] It also increases awareness regarding the gap between their difficult pasts both as children during the Holocaust and new immigrants in Israel, and their contribution to the Air Force, and in doing so it helps us better understand the sociohistorical processes that shaped the face of the country. In addition, the article enhances our knowledge regarding the IAF during its establishment and presents it as a warm home that cultivated equal opportunity, ideology, and a sense of purpose and mission even among those who had undergone difficult experiences as children.[17]

As many Holocaust survivors found their place in other branches of the IDF,[18] I maintain that such an exploration should by no means be limited to the Air Force. However, because the enlistment of Holocaust survivors into the other branches of the Israeli military has not yet been sufficiently researched, this article does not attempt to engage in comparative study. My exploration of this issue within the IAF is this article's contribution to the broader scholarship on the subject.

General Background for Research on the "Heritage from Rebirth to the Skies" Initiative

The Project's Beginnings

The idea of researching and documenting the history of Holocaust-survivor Air Force personnel was first proposed by Lieutenant Colonel (Res.) Eliezer Cohen in the 1980s. "When I was an El Al pilot," Cohen explains,

> I was working on writing a book called *The Sky Is Not The Limit*… During flights, I sat beside a number of El Al pilots whose roots were in the Holocaust, and I heard their fascinating story on a number of occasions…One of them, Z.A., regularly recounted things he had never dared to tell anyone except his wife…When I got home…I started a new chapter – pilots who were Holocaust survivors…I collected 22 stories of pilots who were Holocaust survivors, but the editor struck the chapter, and the book was published in 1990 without it…The entire chapter was scrapped, leaving no documentation.[19]

The subject remained on Cohen's mind, and in 2010 he was interviewed by Air Force Museum curator Avi Moshe Segal in relation to his role in Air Force operations for the sake of their commemoration in the museum. This meeting, which was part of the Air Force Museum's "Knights of the Wind" initiative, yielded a new project titled "Heritage from Rebirth to the Skies,"[20] which commemorates the story of the Holocaust survivors who chose to enlist in the Israeli Air Force. Cohen thought the project would involve the pilots he had met personally since writing his book, but he was surprised to learn that there were many more than he had thought. Haim Naveh began directing the project in 2011 but was replaced, after his death in 2012, by Shaya Harsit, who continues to oversee it today.[21]

The Group of Interviewees

In July 2013, at the outset and in the course of this study, 45 people were participating in the "Heritage from Rebirth to the Skies" project, and today

the number stands at more than 60.[22] This increase can be attributed to the project's increased exposure, which motivated more and more Holocaust-survivor Air Force personnel to join the group and reveal their deepest emotions. In the course of this study, as already noted, I interviewed 35 of the 45 Air Force personnel who were registered as participating in the project at the time.

The interviews were semi-open[23] and included an explanation of the topic of the study, its main questions, and the manner in which materials would be utilized and published. During each interview, I judged the process to be open and flexible, requested permission to record and make use of the material for research purposes, and clarified that the interviewees would be referred to by initials only. During certain interviews, I was asked to stop recording when things were said off-the-record, and this information was of course not included in the study.

This article is based on qualitative analysis and a content-related approach to the analysis of life stories,[24] yielding a "spoken history."[25] The interviews were coded according to the common subjects they raised. The discussion focuses on the subjects addressed by the semi-open interviews[26] and a few biographies, as no materials could be found in the IDF archive and the Air Force's History Department that shed light on the past lives of the subjects, who, in the course of their service in the IAF, refrained from speaking about their lives during the Holocaust. The qualitative research and the narrative analysis presented here succeed in penetrating the consciousness of the interviewees and the manner in which they interpret their lives. Every life story is an act of interpretation, and every such interpretation is based on the personality of the survivors, their cultural background, and their image of the society in which they operate. [27] These life stories shed light on individual and collective processes of memory.

Below are a number of tables displaying group members' years of birth, countries of origin, years of immigration to Mandate Palestine/Israel, and jobs in the Air Force.

Year of Birth	Number of Group Members Born Each Year
1927	1
1928	1
1931	3
1932	1
1934	2
1935	5
1936	4
1937	5
1938	4
1939	2
1940	3
1941	1
1942	3

Country of Origin	Number of Group Members Born in Each Country
Romania	13
Poland	7
Hungary	4
Bulgaria	2
Lithuania	2
Austria	1
Germany	1
Holland	1
Yugoslavia	1
Spain	1
Czechoslovakia	1
USSR	1

Year of Immigration	Number of Group Members who Immigrated Each Year
1940	1
1944	1
1945	1
1946	3
1947	4
1948	7
1949	9
1950	5
1951	2
1952	1
1959	1

Job in the Air Force	Number of Group Members Who Served in Each Job
Fighter Pilot	17
Navigator	6
Pilot in Light Squadron	4
Helicopter Pilot	2
Airborne Mechanic	2
Machine Gunner	2
Cargo Pilot	1

Methodological Difficulties

This complex topic is located on the disciplinary seam line between history, sociology, and psychology. The article is written from the perspective of social history, in that it examines the relationship between the past experiences of these survivors as they presented them and their decision to enlist in the Air Force, against the background of their personal lives and the social reality in Israel during the period in question.

In the course of the interviews, I noticed that it was difficult for some interviewees to define themselves as a result of the changes they had experienced during their lives. A few had trouble defining themselves as Holocaust survivors because they had not resided in concentration camps but rather had "only" hid, fled, or made their way to countries such as Bulgaria and Romania.

In addition, the harsh dissonance between the chronological ages of the interviewees and the fact that they are Holocaust survivors, on the one hand, and the fields of content that define their consciousness – aviation, militarism, and connections to European culture – sometimes made it difficult for them to recount emotions and experiences from the period of the Holocaust. This dynamic is reflected in the absence of the word "Holocaust" from the name of the project, among other things.[28]

Testimony taken directly from survivors raises the question of the reliability of memories conveyed decades after the events themselves. After all, memory has the potential to disappoint.[29] This study is not aimed at researching the

truth; rather, it is an effort to focus on the memories and views of the survivors.

The interviews were accompanied by fears regarding the opening up of age-old wounds and the concern that perhaps it would be better to leave the past in the past. They also raised many musings: What will those who cannot remember talk about? Do I have the right to annoy those who are not interested in being interviewed? What will someone who was born during the war, whose memories were conveyed to them by others, talk about? How can we distinguish between personal and second-hand memories?[30]

Other challenges resulted from my desire to preserve the uniqueness of each story while at the same time creating a common narrative. For this reason, I decided to present the life stories through a discussion based on the main content questions that were asked in the interview, and to both characterize the main themes and highlight the themes that are exceptional.[31]

1. Historical Background – The Beginning of the Road: Aircrew Members Who Survived the Holocaust

Between July and December 1948, in the midst of Israel's War of Independence, flight training schools were run elsewhere, in countries such as Italy, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa. Israel's first flight training course was conducted in Italy. Enlistees were a need dictated by reality,[32] and in light of the numerous delays in sending participants from Israel to the second flight training course in Italy, the first to be enlisted for the course were local Holocaust survivors,[33] some of whom had numbers tattooed on their forearms, as well as Jews from Israel who at the time were residing in Italy as emissaries.[34] With the change in the Italian government's attitude toward Israel, the theoretical and practical training was accelerated, and both the trainees who successfully met the requirements of the course and those who were found to be unsuitable to be pilots started to be sent to Israel.

On the eve of the establishment of the state, a secret agreement was signed by representatives of the Jewish settlement in Palestine and the Czechoslovakian government, under which a special squadron was set up at the Czechoslovakian Air Force base in Olomouc. This squadron was meant to train pilots for the Israeli Air Force. On July 7, 1948, the third flight-training course at Olomouc

got underway at Neredi airfield.[35] During the course, a number of accidents occurred and planes were damaged. On September 4, after 20 hours of flight time in a C2 aircraft, a Holocaust survivor who had been taking part in the course was transferred to a mechanics course.[36] It was a man who had told his friends about his time at Auschwitz-Birkenau, although no one believed his stories – neither at the time nor decades later. When his instructor mentioned this trainee to the physician on the base, it occurred to him that, unlike the Czech participants in the course, it may have been the case that none of the Holocaust survivors had undergone psychological evaluations. At the time, no one thought to send the Holocaust survivor to complete the required evaluations at the flight medicine institute in Prague, which was the only institution that could determine whether his time in and escape from the concentration camp had left scars that were liable to impair his performance as a pilot. Instead, the staff of the base decided to discontinue his participation in the course, and, as noted, transfer him to the airplane mechanics course, which he completed successfully. Years later, he became a civilian pilot.[37]

The rest of the course participants continued their training. Benjamin Kagan, who was sent to the course by the Intelligence Branch in order to resolve the problem of security in Czechoslovakia, expressed severe criticism of the course, as reflected in his letter of October 14:

> The third flight school consists of local Czech Jews whose standard of living and flying is very low. They are not people who were selected but rather volunteers who were accepted after passing the regular medical tests…Unskilled individuals with no knowledge of the air force, but with good intentions, established schools without the ability or knowledge necessary for selecting pilots.[38]

On November 24, the final day of the course, two Holocaust-survivor course participants were killed in a flight accident. The two men, both Czech natives, were buried in the Jewish cemetery in Olomouc.[39] Seventeen participants completed the course, 15 of whom were sent to Israel to await the completion of their training according to the programs that had been designed by the Air

Force Training Branch.[40] This squadron was referred to as "the squadron that took off from the Holocaust."[41]

2. The Personal Realm: Early Memories of Aircrew Members Who Survived the Holocaust as Children

a. General Background

Prevalent in the Holocaust literature in the initial years following the Holocaust was the assumption that a Holocaust survivor was someone who had spent time in a concentration camp. Over the years, the term Holocaust survivor has also come to be applied to those who survived the war in hiding, fled their home or country, lived under a false identity, or survived the Holocaust in some other way.[42] Child Holocaust survivors are people who were no older than 13 years of age in 1939 when the war broke out and no older than 16 years of age in 1945 when the war came to an end, and who survived in occupied Europe. Children of the Holocaust experienced three traumatic periods: 1) Prior to the outbreak of the war – The period of occupation, during which they were primarily passive participants in the dramatic changes in the life of the family, such as parents being fired from their jobs, the need to move residences, or the disappearance of family members; 2) During the war itself – The period of direct persecution, which disrupted the continuity of their lives. Many people lost family members, friends, homes, and possessions; ceased attending school overnight; and were plagued by a constant fear of death; 3) After the war – A period of sober awakening and realization, during which many children were unable to find their parents and were left alone in a world that had been destroyed. Child survivors experienced great loss, not only of their parents and relatives, but also of their basic sense of trust and justice, security, control, positive self-image, previous beliefs, independence, and autonomy. The loss of childhood made it difficult for many of them to build new lives and identities, and many have carried these issues with them into old age. Their feelings, memories, and mourning for their loved ones never leave them, and their difficult past is inextricably woven into their present and their future.[43]

These hardships have also been the lot of the members of the group discussed in this article, who were children during the Holocaust but nonetheless recorded impressive accomplishments, started families, and built productive lives. In

their old age, they too are living the present alongside the past. At least two interviewees did not want to continue their relationship with me as a result of the difficulties they experienced when revealing their past and their aversion to contending with it. This response is consistent with the research literature on the subject, which indicates that Holocaust survivors may suffer from post traumatic manifestations stemming from experiences during the Holocaust, such as living in hiding or being incarcerated in a concentration camp.[44]

b. Life before the War

Despite their young age and minimal memories from the period preceding the war, interviewees attested to the nature of their childhood homes, including their financial situation, their attitude toward religion and tradition, and their relations with non-Jewish neighbors.

The Economic Situation

G.B.N. from Warsaw, Poland, shared a memory that offers insight into his parents' economic situation: "My parents came from wealthy families…My clearest memory from that home is the birthday party they threw for me when I turned two or three, when I received a tricycle for a present."[45]

A.E., who was born in Germany, recounted that his parents had not at all been harmed by the measures taken against the Jews:

> My father was very successful there, in Germany…The Nuremberg Law didn't affect my parents. Why?...Because they ran a store and had their own way of life…and they occupied no public position from which they were removed, like attorneys and physicians… People continued to buy from them.[46]

S.H., from Warsaw also described the economic welfare of his family prior to the Holocaust: "I had a German nanny…I was dressed in blue and white sailor suits… We had a great deal of real estate…On the crucial day, none of this helped us."[47]

The Attitude toward Religion

The interviewees' attitude toward religion varied, but the common denominator was a tie to tradition, even in the assimilated families. A.L., from Gorna Jumaya,

Bulgaria,[48] recounted a basic connection to tradition: "I remember that there were religious studies, but Christian…When they, the Christians, would pray, we also needed to be in the classroom…I remember Yom Kippur and Sukkot, and of course Passover. Before the war, we usually celebrated Passover at my grandfather's."[49]

Y.P. from Brașov, Romania[50] spoke of his family's strong religious ties: "We were a religious family. For us, going to synagogue was something that went without saying. Kiddush was recited at Friday night dinner, and there were traditional songs."[51]

Moshe Eran-Erenreich, from Iași, Romania,[52] describes the combination of his family's connection to religion and his secular education: "I attended a school that was mixed with the gentiles, and every day, right after school, I continued studying at a *heder* – Hebrew, Torah, Talmud, and Mishna."[53]

Relations with Neighbors in the Non-Jewish Surroundings

Relations with the non-Jewish neighbors were different in each country. Y.P., from Romania, shared the following negative memory: "Ours was a downtrodden family…I heard that my father went to buy sugar or milk…and at some point someone pointed him out as *zhidan* – Jewish. They beat him up terribly, and he had to leave."[54]

Y.H., from Sibui, Romania,[55] who was born in the Romanian part of Transylvania that was under Romanian rule also during the war, recalled very good relations with non-Jews: "I was born in a rented room…We lived next door to a family of German Christians, and a wonderful friendship developed between us…We also spoke German…They made a prince out of me. They would take me on trips on Sundays." [56]

M.B.I., a native of Iași, Romania, described the mood of the period, which was characterized by Jewish involvement in the surrounding society, as follows: "I was born on October 9, 1931. That year, everyone who was born was named Michael or Michaela. It was the birthday of King Michael, who ruled Romania at the time."[57]

c. The War and the Holocaust

The interviews indicate that memories from the period of the Holocaust were traumatic and had an impact on the identity of many interviewees, whether they survived alone or with their families. Those who remained with their mother or their family during the Holocaust shared difficult memories along with positive

ones. As the interviewees came from different countries that had been under Nazi occupation at different stages of the war, their experiences were the product of Nazi policy in each area in question. Most of the interviewees' memories of the war involved their initial encounter with it; the difficulty of parting with their families in general and their parents in particular; significant mother figures who saved lives and were endowed with ingenuity and extreme courage; and fathers as leadership figures. They also dealt with fear, hunger, and cold; hiding places; the feelings and emotions of a persecuted child; family and individual ingenuity for the sake of survival; and the attempt to lead a normal life.

Initial Memories of the War

Most prominent in their memories was the trauma caused by the brutality of the Nazis and the humiliation that was part and parcel of their treatment of Jews. Giora Bar-Nir, one of the few interviewees who resided in the ghetto, shared the following account:

> The first event of the chapter of my life during the Holocaust was horrifying. The Germans came to my grandmother and grandfather's house and beat my grandfather with a whip…I will never forget that picture, of my grandfather lying on the wooden floor in a pool of blood mixed with jam.[58]
>
> A.E.'s initial memories from the war had to do with his move from Germany to Zeist,[59] the Netherlands, with his mother and sister when he was four years old: "We were thrown out of our house. I was expelled from kindergarten and my sister was expelled from school…And then we found a place with an uncle and aunt, and my mother worked hard to help earn a livelihood."[60]
>
> A.L. from Bulgaria recounted wearing the yellow badge button, the anti-Jewish measures that resulted in his father being sent to a labor camp, the separation of Jewish children from non-Jewish children, and the preparations for the deportation.

The measure which, in my opinion, had the greatest impact, or was regarded as the most serious, was that they did not allow [Jewish] Bulgarians to live

in the capital city and they dispersed the Jews…I started school, and after that there was another measure – that Jewish children could not attend state schools.[61]

The life of A.B. from Dracineti,[62] Romania changed in 1941 when the Russians withdrew from his area of residence. Interwoven into his memories from the beginning of the war are upsetting spectacles that shaped his life during the Holocaust:

> They caught my uncle. I didn't see how they killed him… They spared me…And that's where my cesspool begins – when I become an animal whose only aim was survival and whom nothing disgusted. [I was] a six-year old kid like an animal, and like an animal, the issue remained with me. Stealing, pimping, plundering, lying…everything you can imagine.[63]

Feelings of Fear and Loneliness, Difficulties being Separated from Parents, Survival, and Ingenuity

Fear, loneliness, difficulties being separated from parents, survival, and ingenuity were themes that emerged repeatedly in the interviewees' memories from the period of the war. Y.P. from Yugoslavia, who was only four years old when the war broke out, explained: "I always knew that I needed to be scared, not to talk, and not to say anything."[64] G.B.N. expressed a sense of intense fear, which remains with him to this day: "Up until the beginning of 1943, we moved from place to place within the ghetto, hiding in empty cellars or in places that were prepared for hiding…Footsteps on the stairs were the scariest thing. It's the kind of thing that stays with you until today."[65] S.S., who lived in hiding in Ukraine during the Holocaust, spoke of the fear and hardship of living in hiding, which he remembered in detail:

> There was an external wall there, between the boards. In practice, that was the only light that entered. Of course, we couldn't go outside…We were 13 people in fear, with children, too…As a child, I remember the fear of them searching with pitchforks.[66]

L.Z. from Romania remembered his father's fear: "My father's fear was substantial, and he's the one who is ingrained in my memory."[67]

Despite their fear, the members of the group emphasized their ability to adapt to the new situation, as well as their efforts to survive at any cost. G.B.N. read in order to help him survive in hiding: "I spent most of my time in hiding reading. I read in Polish, anything I could get my hands on: journals, newspapers, and books that were in the room."[68] A.B. adapted a state of apathy in order to survive: "I had a defense, a will to live, and I didn't care. I didn't cry. Even when my mother died I don't remember myself crying…I remained that way until I reached Poland and was accepted into the youth society of the Zionist movement."[69]

For A.E., who lived in hiding in Holland, the events of the war were linked to difficult memories of loneliness: "I remember the bombing of Rotterdam.[70] I can see the picture as if it were today. Plane formations flying by the window…I remember that I was always at home alone, without friends, without anything."[71]

The memories of S.D., from Częstochowa,[72] Poland, who was five years old during the war, highlight hunger and the impact of his separation from his mother during the war. His grandfather had decided to flee with the family to Ukraine in two wagons, but his mother remained in Poland: "We didn't eat bread for three months. The hunger was terrible there, in Siberia…I didn't see my mother for five years, and for three months after we met I called her ma'am. I couldn't call her 'mother'.'"[73] The experience of mother-child separation is also deeply ingrained in the memories of R.P. from Vienna: "I experienced one separation after another – from my mother, from the nuns, from the farmer, from the orphanage, and from my adoptive family. I was a child alone. I had no father, no mother, and nowhere to return to."[74]

Upsetting Spectacles, Coping with Death, Pangs of Conscience, and Shame

Memories of upsetting spectacles, pangs of consciences regarding parents, the humiliation of parents, and the death and loss of parents are issues that were mentioned repeatedly in the interviews and that continued to impact the lives of interviewees for many years to come. Moshe Eran-Erenreich stated explicitly that his life was shaped by the difficulty of losing his father:

> What shaped my life was the death of my father…My father died on the final day of the war. I found him dead in the bread line… I can't forget it… I saw my father dead, lying on the ground in a pool of blood, his face on the road and a large red hole in his back…My childhood ended all at once, and my life as an adult began.[75]

M.B.I. shared difficult memories of the Iași pogrom:

> I remember those corpses, and I wiped it out of my memory for a long time. I didn't remember, and I didn't want to remember. Now it's coming back to me, both because of your questions and due to the fact that the pictures have become clear for me. What I thought as a child, it all came back…As a ten year old boy, I didn't exactly understand why my uncles and aunts were dying there.[76]

M.H., who was born in Warsaw during the war, shared a single memory of guilt regarding the fact that his existence endangered the life of his mother: "One of the memories that I do have from the Holocaust is from when I was almost three years old, and I started to endanger my mother. My father fled to the East and was killed there…I was a circumcised three year old baby."[77]

R.A.H. shared a traumatic memory of men being taken during the war:

> There was great sadness. What remains ingrained in my memory is the day they took the husbands and the fathers to the labor camps by train, and the women started to weep there. As a child, I stood there and asked my mother: 'Why are they crying?' Today, I understand how difficult it was for my mother to raise a child – the responsibility, the illnesses, and such.[78]

The most powerful memory of A.I., who was born in Iași, Romania, was as follows:

> The first and perhaps most powerful sight I remember from the war…was a specific, I would even say traumatic experience. Our

> house was located across from a large hospital…While we were in hiding in some space…the two doors opened up suddenly from a blast…An entire wall of the hospital simply collapsed, and flames shot out…That may be the only experience from the war that remains with me and that I remember today.[79]

D.G., who was born in Siauliai, Lithuania[80] two years prior to the outbreak of the war, remembered the execution by hanging of Jews in the Siauliai ghetto: "They brought everyone out in order to see the hanging, including the children. It was ingrained."[81]

S.L., a native of Lodz, Poland and the sole survivor of a family with 23 members, was 12 years old when the war broke out. He and his family were imprisoned in the Lodz Ghetto at an early stage of the war, and it was then that he stopped attending school and went to work. The traumatic memories remain with him until today: "I remember the wagons of excrement that people pulled, and that horrible smell…I remember standing in line. My father died in the ghetto…How [can people] survive in the freezing cold?"[82] He shared difficult memories of the separation, the journey on the train, and the shock upon arriving at Auschwitz:

> The Jewish police came at night and removed me from the house. My mother and sister remained, and it was a great tragedy. No one knows where people were being taken…In the train, I remember there being only one small window, and that it was packed…There was a bucket of excrement…I don't remember how long we had travelled…And in Auschwitz I remember the selection. It was real, I remember Mengele himself. I remember how he stood. I can draw it, the way he did this with his finger. I remember Barrack 10.[83]

In his interview, S.L. shared particularly troubling memories pertaining to the sense of humiliation he experienced:

> I remember arriving at Auschwitz. We were taken to the showers… They shaved our heads. That is the only situation that was ingrained

> in my memory, that I will never forget…Our hair cut and our clothing. They left me my shoes…the shoes my mother had bought me with a kilogram of rice. The most difficult thing was the shame and the humiliation. I will never forget that moment.[84]

M.A. from Sofia, Bulgaria, who does not classify himself as a Holocaust survivor and even shared positive memories from the period of the war, also recounted traumatic memories from the camp related to the humiliation of his mother:

> I was a four year old boy when we arrived at the camp. We lived in a giant barrack with wooden bunks…*For me, it was an extraordinary experience to live in this manner*, everyone together. There were no showers. They would take us to the Danube to bathe…My mother was not willing to undress in order to bathe. Only later did I realize that they would take women and men separately, but the guards were Bulgarian men, who always wore a smile. They chose the kind that cooperate…The Jewish women were humiliated there. That's the type of trauma that never goes away (emphasis added).

Only when he became an adult, he maintains, did he ascribe significance to these memories.

The Mother Figure in the Memory of the Holocaust and during the War

Mothers were significant figures in the lives of the interviewees, who described them as dominant and savers of human life, and as the figure that shaped their identities during and after the Holocaust. Descriptions of mother figures during the Holocaust abound with admiration for their attributes, particularly their resourcefulness in caring for their children and their entire family unit in the difficult wartime conditions. For those who survived the war without a mother, this lack intensified the trauma of the Holocaust; and for those who survived with a mother, her presence helped mitigate the trauma.

One traumatic memory that has remained with B.P., a native of Debrecen, Hungary, is of his mother saving him from the Nazis while they were in their

hiding place. His description of her heroic act is particularly prominent against the background of his detailed account of the difficulty of remaining in hiding and the fear of the Hungarians and the Nazis:

> It was a factory in which many Jews hid…It was late at night. We were talking about a shelter that was in the house, downstairs… It was one bed next to another, and what conditions…there were dozens of people…and then those crazy animals, along with Nazis and Hungarians…and the bayonets. They were crazed… They came in…and the fear increased…I don't know what kind of courage or creativity it takes to do it. My mother…grabbed me by the hand and covered me with blankets and held me in her arms, and when they arrived, she screamed at them…And that's what happened – they left. I've carried it with me all these years. I cannot forget it.[85]

Y.P., from Romania, recalled with admiration how his mother had remained on her own with six children, the youngest a newborn and the oldest a 13 year old, after his father was sent to a labor camp and all contact with him was lost: "Despite the hardships of the war…they brought me into the world as a sixth child. There was something dramatic about it…My first memory is from when I was five or six – my mother would put me to sleep and sing me sad Jewish songs."[86]

M.N., a native of Chișinău, Serbia, was an only child and had lost his father. He, too, described his mother's ingenuity with a sense of admiration:

> My mother fled from Kishinev…with a baby – it was the ingenuity of a mother moving from one place to another with a baby, selling jewelry in order to survive…There were periods during which, in order to prevent them from checking to see if I was circumcised or not, she grew my hair out like a girl.[87]

R.A.H. linked his mother's ingenuity with memories of food:

> My mother struck an agreement with a rural Romanian who worked there; in exchange for money, he would steal for us from the bakery at night. And I remember that there was a window that opened, in a wooden frame, and that she put a sack there, which of course could not be seen from the outside. At night, that's where he threw the bread.[88]

I.G. was born in Cluj-Napoca,[89] Hungary, one month before the outbreak of the war and celebrated his fifth birthday in Bergen-Belsen. His memories of his mother also involve food: "During the whole time in Bergen-Belsen, I was with my mother…I remember the bread. *It's really stuck in my head, how my mother had a checkered napkin, and she would measure the bread and cut it. I remember that*"[90] (emphasis added).

R.P., who was an only child, recalled the ingenuity of his mother, who saved his life by throwing him from the hatch of a train. However, his difficulty understanding her actions and the questions that they raised in him shaped his identity and remained with him for years to come:

> My mother managed to escape from the camp when she was 34, with a young boy…And then there was a horrifying moment – a 14 year old girl managed to get through the hatch and to jump from the train. At that chilling moment, she yelled to my mother: "throw R!" My mother picked me up and threw me out the window.[91]

The moment of separation from his mother was also ingrained in the memory of D.G. of Lithuania: "I think my mother cried. I didn't cry because I didn't exactly understand that I was parting with her forever."[92] He viewed the act of his mother as heroic:

> *My mother is a hero. She decided to give me up in order to save me… My aunt is a hero. Two women – a mother and an aunt – who saved their children*…Mother was a strong, smart, and resourceful woman, but, still, she did not survive…Making the decision to give me up was heroic (emphasis added).[93]

M.H. also referred to his mother as a hero: "My mother's heroism is that she managed to survive wisely, through improvisation and luck, and to keep both of us alive."[94]

Bar-Nir emphasized his mother's role in his survival. Being with her softened the experience of the war, he explained, to the point that he remembers it as a positive period: "For me, life in the ghetto was not a nightmare. I had a happy childhood. I went to kindergarten, I had friends, and my mother filled my entire world."[95] He recounted how his mother's jacket had helped save his life:

> One night, an S.S. soldier showed up and threatened to execute us. At the last second, [my uncle's girlfriend] Lilika burst out in Polish – "I have a very valuable fur jacket! Take it and give us life! That's how we were saved. The fur jacket belonged to my mother, who took care to leave it behind. That was her final contribution to saving my life.[96]

For S.L., his mother's heroism and resourcefulness were a wonder. He recalls how she saved his life with a pair of shoes:

> Those shoes remained with me until liberation. In Auschwitz, we walked toward the train between the two camps in threes… Suddenly, we passed by and saw a camp of shaved women…where I saw my mother and my sister. I didn't recognize them. [I recognized them] by the shouts 'S.!'…They were shouts that were impossible [to miss]…My mother asked me: 'Do you have the shoes?'…She knew that the shoes would save my life, because without shoes, it was impossible to survive. They were shoes made of wood…Actually, this was the last time I saw them [my mother and sister].[97]

Harsit spoke of his mother's concern for him and of their strong relationship. He also described how she deloused his body, his hair, and his clothing: "[It was] work that drained her strength. I still remember her, her hands red with blood, still going through my hair, sighing and continuing the delousing by the light of a dim candle."[98]

According to Y.P., his identity was shaped by his mother's ingenuity:

> My mother arranged us falsified documents, and by doing so she saved our lives…During the four years of the war, I didn't see my father and had no father figure. My mother's way of thinking and her path shaped my adult life. My mother is a symbol of heroism for me.[99]

Y.H. explained, with great appreciation, that despite the war, the economic hardship, and living in pig and sheep pens, his mother gave birth to children and radiated a sense of security that eased his fear: "I was scared, but not overly so, because I was with my mother…My mother had all sorts of ways, like the flea market, for example. On Tuesdays and Fridays, she would go to the market and sell her belongings."[100]

Other Formative Figures during the Holocaust

In addition to the mother figure, which was an object of admiration in the eyes of interviewees, the interviews also revealed other figures that significantly influenced them during the Holocaust, such as a father, grandfather, grandmother, or aunt. For example, S.D.'s grandmother smuggled his family to Ukraine, thereby saving their lives. He also described his grandfather as "possessing extraordinary ingenuity."[101]

I.G. admired the ingenuity of his father, whom he regarded as a role-model: "I grew up with a father who took things into his own hands…My father was a hero. He fought in the French commando…At the height of the war, in 1943, we moved to Casablanca. They accepted us because my father was a military man."[102]

M.P.L. expressed admiration for his father, who also rescued Jews who were not members of his family: "Because of the bribe my father paid, there was a fictitious record that Jews went to forced labor camps. In this way, my father rescued Jews…My father carried out acts of heroism…Heroism was not only expressed with weapons."[103] Admiration for a father figure was also expressed in the testimony of S.S.: "My father was a very special person. He was a hero…He was a leader. He also rescued others."[104]

d. The Post-War Period

The hardships and the wandering did not cease when the war came to an end. Members of the group had particularly vivid memories of the day of liberation, and their memories of the period between the end of the war and their immigration to Mandate Palestine or Israel impacted their subsequent choices and absorption in the country. It was a period of many difficulties for the interviewees, such as coping with the reality they encountered, the discovery of loss, the loneliness, and the emptiness. Those who survived with their parents remember their reactions and their behavior when faced with loss during the war and the difficulties of coping with the new reality: on the one hand, freedom, and on the other hand, the immense sadness stemming from the loss, the loneliness, the detachment, the homelessness, and the knowledge that they had no place to return to. Those who survived without parents or family found themselves with no framework and tried to integrate into new ones. The youth movements and Zionist ideology to which they were introduced immediately following the war, they explained, are what influenced their identity and helped them cope with the trauma of the Holocaust.

A.B. described himself as a "totally undisciplined child" at the end of the war and described the many difficulties he experienced in adapting to the new framework. The change in him occurred during an encounter with the youth movement prior to his immigration to Israel. "There, I suddenly discovered a framework, and I started to like it: dancing, songs about the Land of Israel, emissaries from the Land of Israel."[105] After the war, he began to absorb the Zionist atmosphere and was exposed to the heroic stories of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which he heard from Antek Zuckerman. These stories caused him to refrain from sharing his experiences during the Holocaust with others and to be ashamed of his past in Romania:

> Antek Zuckerman came to visit…and they were talking about the Warsaw Ghetto…I began to feel ashamed of my Romanian story. I was apparently the only Romanian, and I knew how to adapt…I wanted to be a Sabra…The change in my personality was the kibbutz movement. I am in great debt to it.[106]

Youth movements and Zionist ideology were also mentioned by M.P.L. in his memories of the post-war period: "What was interesting after the war was the activity of the Zionist movements, which were extremely strong. My father was a member of the central committee, and as a boy I was very active in Hashomer Hatzair. I was a child of 10 or 11, and I knew politics."[107]

M.A. had positive memories from the period following the war, particularly from his time in Selvino, Italy,[108] which he believes shaped his personality. In 1944, he had already integrated into the Bnei Akiva movement, which provided a framework for Jewish immigration to Palestine. He described his time in the children's home in Selvino during this period as follows:

> [It was] an enchanting place located at 1,200 meters, near the Swiss border…Today it is called Selvino…We didn't talk about the Holocaust there, but one of the most horrible things at night was the screams of someone remembering all sorts of things from the Holocaust.[109]

After the war, S.L. learned that he had lost his family, and he decided to immigrate to Palestine:

> We agreed that we would return to Lodz, which would ultimately not happen. We had talked before that – before I arrived in Auschwitz…I was in Poland for two or three weeks. There, I went straights into a kibbutz group…I didn't find anyone. I hoped someone would be there. I returned to Lodz in '45, registered, and said…I want to go to Palestine.[110]

Y.S. (deceased) emphasized that the period following the war was especially difficult for him due to the widespread hunger: "Hunger appeared after liberation…The food we had stored ran out. There was no hunger during the war because Budapest was functioning, and we had a bit of money. When the city was liberated, all means of supply were halted, resulting in a food problem."[111]

After the war, Harsit and his family also experienced hardship and wandering, taking up residence in a displaced persons camp and coping with the tragic discovery of the death of family members. All of these things shaped his

identity and reinforced his view that it was best to not get attached to anything: "How could we, the children, not have closed ourselves off when stories of the atrocities whirled around us at a dizzying speed…We actually no longer got attached to places, or to belongings or to people."[112]

R.A.H. also experienced significant wandering and separation from his parents. Nonetheless, he spoke of pleasant memories from the period between the end of the war and his immigration to Israel. He was sent to the Ilaniah children's home in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands, along with other children from Romania. There, they were informed of the November 29, 1947 UN decision to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state:

> They assembled all the children in the home. We stood in a u-shape according to [youth] movement, and the *madrichim* [youth counselors] came and explained that there was great celebration. Of course, there was a blue and white flag with a Star of David. They told us that it had been decided to establish the state of Israel and that we needed to prepare ourselves.[113]

From the perspective of A.E., who survived the Holocaust in Holland, the war only ended on May 10: "The mother [of the family that rescued me] did not allow me to go out. She said: 'I protected you for two and a half years, and the last thing I need now is for someone to put a bullet in you. You're staying at home. She only let me leave the house on May 10."[114]

Despite the difficulties with which the members of the group were forced to cope during the period in question, many have positive memories of sights, tastes, and smells that they experienced at the time. S.S., who was a passenger aboard the illegal immigration ship *Moledet*, explained: "Ever since my time on the ship I've liked oranges. I ate them on the ship. The British gave us oranges."[115]

Arriving in Palestine/Israel helped mitigate the sadness. Bar-Nir, who sailed on the immigrant ship *Pan-York*, recalled:

> We sailed for seven days in terrible conditions and horrible crowding…On the morning of the eighth day, we all stood on deck

> facing Mt. Carmel, next to Haifa Port. My heart was pounding with excitement. All the adults broke into Hatikva, and many of them apparently wept.[116]

D.G. recalled longing for the Land of Israel both in Europe, after the war, and on the journey there: "What remained with me the entire time was the intense desire to immigrate to the Land of Israel…Also in Germany after the war, we didn't look for the Holocaust; we looked for how to move forward, we looked for the future."[117]

e. "Memories in a Box": Absorption in Israel and the Kibbutz's Impact on Identity

"I didn't want them to call me a refugee."

The interviewees continued to experience hardship even after they arrived in Israel. Their integration into the country involved numerous difficulties: alienation, a feeling of being foreign, trouble learning the language, loneliness, and difficulty in getting used to new and different frameworks. According to the assessment of professional therapists, the victims were already employing psychological defense mechanisms such as denial during the traumatic events themselves. During the years that followed World War II, the survivors replaced the mechanism of denial with the mechanism of repression – that is, by expunging the past from their consciousness. Repression of the past was manifested in a complete refusal to talk about their history prior to and during the war. The bridge of Israeliness did not run via memories of the Holocaust, and being classified as a "Holocaust survivor" resulted in a social stigma based on the identity that Zionist ideology sought to be rid of. The survivors, therefore, sought to integrate themselves using a new identity.[118]

Here, all the interviewees indicated that the price of integration was repressing the past, adopting a new identity, and starting a new chapter in their lives. Nonetheless, formative events such as the Eichmann Trial brought repressed memories of the past to the surface. M.E. began taking an interest in the past when this public trial got underway: "During the Eichmann Trial, my

mother closed up. She didn't want to hear it. Unlike her, my father and I took a great interest in it. It was a kind of vengeful interest."[119] The Eichmann Trial also stirred up memories for Y.H.: "I followed the Eichmann Trial…During the Holocaust we never imagined that there could be such a thing, from which people did not return. I would ask myself: 'How could such a thing happen, and how did I come out of it?'"[120]

Upon his arrival to the country, Bar-Nir was given a new name, which helped him adopt a new identity. By the time he immigrated to Israel at the age of 12, his name had been changed eight times:

> Actually, I was first introduced to the name Giora during that visit, when I visited Hanan and Tzila, after I immigrated to the country…On the ship, I went by a girl's name – Tzipora. My aunt Stefa and her family changed my original name, George. Hanan Ramberg…changed my name to Giora.[121]

R.P.'s absorption into the country involved difficulties with the language, with contending with a foreign culture, and with isolation: "I registered for first grade in school, and they nicknamed me the refugee…The children did not accept me. I didn't know the language, I didn't fit in, and I didn't receive any help."[122]

A.E. also shared memories of isolation and difficulties being absorbed into his city of residence. Fortunately, he was saved by soccer:

> I remember always being at home alone, without any friends, without anything…I arrived in Tel Aviv, and in seventh grade in Tel Aviv…they picked teams. They didn't pick me…I was excluded from all social realms…And then I went to Maccabi Tel Aviv to play soccer and I became a star…I did everything just to show them…They started to seek me out. I was even in the newspaper.[123]

L.Z. described the price of fitting into Sabra society as follows: "It actually caused me to grow up in a major erasure of the past…and for many years, I did not want to talk about anything."[124] B.P. also coped with his absorption difficulties in Israel by erasing his past: "Throughout my entire adolescence, I

did not want to remember the Holocaust. On the contrary, I wanted to forget it. I integrated into the Scouts in Tel Aviv." The aviation club became his home: "I fit in very well…After *gadna* [the "youth battalions"] I was in the aviation club…Every Saturday, we came to [the airfield at] Sde Dov.[125]

In his book, Harsit estimates that this repression of the past stemmed from "the desire to assimilate into society and to be like everyone else, one of the many bricks building the country."[126] This sentiment was also expressed in the following words of A.N.: "I would do anything to prevent them from saying that I was a refugee…There were many immigrants at school. I was jealous of the Sabras…When I finished the pilots' training course, I felt like I was the king of the world."[127]

S.S. recalls having been identified as a "refugee": "We immigrated to Israel in 1948. We settled in the neighborhood of Bat Galim…We were three immigrants… And we were identified as 'refugees," meaning, that's what they called us."[128]

Z.K., who was raised to love Israel and who had been called names such as "dirty Jew" in the Diaspora, was forced to suffer derogatory name calling in Israel as well: "I was very disappointed when we arrived in the country. Abroad I was a dirty Jew, but when I got to Israel I thought that all Jews were brothers. Now, I realized that there were also dirty Hungarians and dirty Romanians."[129]

The interviews reflect the existence of shared content and values among members of the group that contributed to their integration into Sabra society. These include the aspiration to excellence in school in general and in athletics in particular. Some attributed this aspiration to their parents' homes, and others attributed it to the reality they had experienced. Their aspiration to athletic and academic excellence provided them with a significant advantage in integrating into the kibbutz and in the pilots' training course. Excelling mitigated the refugee stigma and helped them be like Sabras, which they so desired to be.

D.G., who excelled at athletics, listed the following factors as accounting for his integration: "In my class in Ra'anana, we were all three cousins who survived together. We were in the same class…And we were the only Holocaust survivors in that class…I knew Hebrew and I was an athlete, and all of this helped me."[130]

Y.P. held that sports helped him integrate into Sabra society:

> We wanted to be like Sabras, in how we dressed, how we talked, and in our mentality…It wasn't easy to fit in with the Sabras due to the differences in how we spoke and because of our mentality. But because I was good at sports and I could kick a ball, I fit in quickly and became one of the leaders in the class.[131]

The Kibbutz as an Identity Shaping Force

The encounter between Holocaust survivors and Sabras occurred within two primary frameworks: on kibbutzim, to which most "Youth Aliyah" immigrants were directed, and in the army, which sought to expand its ranks.[132] Despite the difficulties of initial absorption and the kibbutz children's ambivalent attitude toward the immigrants, those who successfully contended with them were acclimatized, effectively integrated into the kibbutz, and became Sabras in every way. This was facilitated by a number of factors: the totalistic nature of the kibbutz community, which had a deep influence on the individual at all hours of the day; their adoptive families on the kibbutz, which served many new lone arrivals as a substitute for their biological families; and the Sabra kibbutz children's separation from their parents by means of children houses, which reduced the disparity between immigrants and more veteran residents. The Zionist identity which the young immigrants acquired on kibbutz became a Zionist status symbol.[133] In their testimonies, many of the interviewees repeatedly stated that the kibbutz had provided them with a home. On the kibbutz, they were given the opportunity to shed their exilic traits, and living there strengthened their ties to the country and played a significant role in their integration and subsequent success in the Air Force.

M.H. explained that he was integrated into the kibbutz because of his personality: "I know that I was uncivilized, but on the kibbutz being uncivilized meant being like all the other kibbutz kids, and I fit in on the kibbutz. They were all Sabras, except for me."[134]

According to M.S., the dramatic narrowing of the gap between his childhood, which he described as "unsettling," and his success in the pilots'

training course stemmed from his experiences on the kibbutz: "My experiences on the kibbutz – the difficulties – caused me to want to be a strong soldier, to fight, and to succeed."[135] A.A.N. also linked his successful absorption into the kibbutz to his success in the pilot's training course:

> Right after the war…I was six…I arrived at kibbutz Ramat David. We were three children who came from Atlit, three from the Holocaust...The children's society on the kibbutz was exceptional – we were absorbed immediately, and we learned Hebrew…I didn't feel different at all…At the end of the course, I was named outstanding trainee.[136]

This connection is also highlighted in the testimony of I.G.: "I decided that on the kibbutz, I wanted to be a Sabra like everyone else. This led me to erase my entire history…The kibbutz experience is what shaped me as a fighter, as a Sabra."[137]

I.G.G. also explained how the kibbutz shaped his life: "The period during which I lived on the kibbutz is the period that shaped my life, not the Holocaust. I was not raised by my mother…And the Sabra kids accepted me very nicely thanks to the fact that I was good at sports."[138] A.B. spoke in a similar manner: "The kibbutz gave me the confidence, and that's what's important. I shed the exile, and because I no longer was carrying the exile around with me, I walked tall, but with effort."[139] A.I. defined life in the kibbutz as a formative experience, despite the fact that he was forced to part with his mother: "I had to part with my mother when I went to Kibbutz Gan Shmuel…This experience actually shaped [me]…[it was] a formative experience…I became the goalie of the soccer team."[140]

3. "The Best Join the Air Force": The Air Force's Role in Personal Rebirth

a. The Factors that Prompted Members of the Group to Volunteer for the Flight Training Course

Like the kibbutz, the framework of the military also significantly assisted in the immigrants' absorption. The more military experiences they had, the more

effectively they were integrated and assimilated into the military framework, to the point that many became Sabras in every way and achieved high command positions in the I.D.F.[141]

In 1950s Israel, the Air Force was in need of pilots. The number of people who volunteered on their own initiative was fewer than necessary, and in all their questionnaires, new recruits marked the Paratroopers Brigade as their first, second, and third choices.[142] In 1954, a selection formula was composed for the flight training course. "Until then," explains Nissan Slutzky, the first sociologist of the Israeli Air Force, "everyone who passed the medical tests came to the course, and many were dismissed during the course itself, after the wasting of valuable hours of flight time."[143] The course was long and required effort over an extended period of time. The Air Force sought pilots who were capable of improvising, who were resourceful, and who could cope with high pressure situations. "For that reason, those who completed it experienced a major sense of accomplishment."[144] The motto "the best join the Air Force," coined by Ezer Weizman when he assumed the post of commander of the Air Force in 1958, helped increase the number of volunteers for the flight training course, even though it was perceived as a desire to build an elite – a charge that Weizman never denied – and aroused public controversy.[145]

Many of the children who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust chose to enlist in the Air Force and to volunteer for flight training. Giora Bar-Nir described the difficulties he encountered the second time he met with an Air Force psychologist for evaluation. When he told the psychologist that he had been forced to move into the Warsaw Ghetto at age 4, the psychologist was stunned:

> 'What???' It was exactly the same surprise he had expressed the first time he interviewed me prior to my enlistment. Once again, it seemed, I did not fit the image of a child Holocaust survivor he had conjured up in his imagination…I felt as if they didn't believe me, that I was a liar, and this time a liar in uniform…None of my friends knew anything about my past. In the 1950s, the flight-training course was attended primarily by recruits from the

> countries' collective settlements – the kibbutzim and moshavim. There were few recruits from the city, and I was one of them… Who was I to ruin things with my Holocaust story?[146]

Despite the potholes along the way, Bar-Nir and others like him were determined to volunteer for the flight-training course, and their considerable mathematics, physics, and leadership skills helped them succeed there. They were also successful in their military service, and some even stayed on, serving in the permanent army for many years to come.

Some maintained that the experience of the Holocaust influenced their decision to volunteer. After all, as explained by D.G., this meant "changing from a humiliated child to part of Israel's elite of the elite."[147] S.L. conjectured: "Perhaps out of that shame and humiliation at Auschwitz later sprouted a brigadier general in the Air Force."[148] M.A. linked his enlistment in the Air Force to the loss of his father during the war: "There's a connection between the experience of the war, which had an impact on my personality, and my enlistment in the Air Force and the positions I held."[149]

Others explained that their activity in the aviation club, which represented the sport of aviation in the country and around the world, and their activity in the IDF Youth Battalions influenced their decision to volunteer for the flight-training course. Over the years, the "Air Youth Battalions" (*gadna avir*), which were first established in the 1950s as the Flying Youth Battalions (*gedudei no`ar teufiim*), brought up generations of pilots and enabled Israeli teens to look up at the sky and get to know Israel's air force.[150] M.E. effectively described the impact as follows: "When I was in high school, I joined the Air Youth Battalions, and there I reached the stage at which you fly – that is to say, I flew a plane during the Youth Battalions, and from then on it was clear to me that I would be in the Air Force."[151] A.A. also recounted that his path in the realm of aviation began when he was a teenager: "Already at the age of 13, I was taking an instructors' course for building model airplanes…It helped me learn English, because there were no books on aviation in Hebrew…So, that forced me to study a bit of English, in addition to my studies at school."[152]

Youth movements were another factor that led members of the group in question to volunteer for the flight-training course, as reflected in the testimony of M.P.L.:

> I think that Hashomer Hatzair had a very strong influence on my personality…Hashomer Hatzair and the kibbutz were what shaped my life. The experience of Hashomer hatzair shaped my personality and my view of life, as well as my desire to enlist in the Air Force and to contribute.[153]

Volunteering for the Air Force was also the product of a desire to fulfill a dream. Y.P. recalled wanting to fulfill his dream and to contribute as much as possible.[154] S.S. stressed his yearning for it: "It was burning in my bones. I wanted to be a fighter pilot and to be a fighter squadron commander in a war."[155] M.A. explained: "I always knew that I wanted to be a pilot in the Air Force…I never gave up, and I kept on saying that I wanted to attend the flight training course."[156]

The good of the country and a desire to contribute were major reasons for the decision of most participants to volunteer. S.H. recounted: "I wasn't interested in aviation. What I wanted to do was to go into something that would be the spearhead of defense in Israel. The crowning glory was the Air Force, and that's what brought me to the flight training course."[157] S.S. was also guided by an interest in the good of the country: "The good of the country usually occupied a higher level of importance than the individual."[158]

S.D., who enlisted in 1951, attended the flight training course because "they called me," and because he was trying to be "as Sabra as possible."[159] I.G. testified that the flight training course was indeed an entry ticket into Israeli society: "When I was in the flight training course, what I carried with me was the feeling that I was a Sabra, not my past. In the Air Force, I was already a Sabra. I was considered and judged according to my performance."[160] M.B.I. also carried with him the desire to be like a Sabra. "I began the flight training course with the Sabras and I wanted to fit in," he explained. "Of the 70 who started the course, I was the only new immigrant… Looking back, I understand that they did not want a foreigner, and I was a foreigner."[161]

The factor that motivated I.G.G. to volunteer was his place of residence: "From the age of 12 onward, I knew I would be a pilot. It was clear to me. I lived on Kibbutz Nir David as a teenager. The planes would fly over the valley and do exercises at a very low altitude. I knew it: I would be a pilot."[162]

The desire to succeed in the flight-training course and in their service in the Air Force was something that was possessed by all the interviewees. According to A.E.: "It was important for me that I succeed in the course in a historic manner."[163] M.N. also recalled the aspiration to succeed and how proud he made his mother: "I was assigned to the navigators, and I finished as the course's outstanding trainee. My mother was so proud…What drove me to succeed and to excel was the fact that it was very flattering when I moved forward and completed such a difficult track."[164] S.H. also explained how his behavior was influenced by his desire to succeed: "I took my behavior in the course more to an extreme in the Sabra direction. It was important for me to focus and succeed in the course as much as possible."[165]

b. Looking Back: Personal Rebirth and the Air Force Family

The life stories of the members of this group indicate that their service in the IAF and their contribution to the country resulted in personal rebirth. This was stated by D.G. explicitly: "What contributed to my personal rebirth was the state and the [air] force."[166]

B.P. explained the pride and satisfaction he derived from his service in the Air Force in light of his difficult past: "If I managed to go from a yellow Star of David on my chest to a blue Star of David on my wings…what else does a man need?"[167] Ze'ev Keren recounts how thoughts he had about the Holocaust at the end of the course made him proud: "During that period, I thought a great deal about the fact that – here I am, the exilic kid from the Holocaust, whom they called 'Jew', and who went into hiding, all of a sudden undertaking heroic acts and saving others as a pilot."[168]

All the interviews contained recurring statements along the lines of "the Air Force was like a home and a family to me" and "my personality was shaped in the Air Force." The fundamental values of the Israeli Air Force – which include unit pride, equal opportunity, ideology, adherence to the goal, and a sense of mission – became inseparable parts of their character to the point of total

identification between the individual and the Air Force. This dynamic found expression in statements such as "the Air Force is me" and "I am the Air Force." The fact that, for this group, the Air Force served as a home and a source of comfort for what they lost during their childhood in the Holocaust amplified their desire to contribute even further.

According to A.N., the values of the Air Force are what helped him integrate and succeed: "I was a refugee and they didn't make me feel foreign in the Air Force, in school. It helped me get where I got. They gave everyone a chance."[169]

A.A.N. spoke of a feeling of being at home: "My mother didn't manage to recover from the trauma of the war…I regarded the Air Force as a home. My identification with the Air Force was total; I felt I could go to them with any issue."[170] S.L. also regarded the Air Force as a home: "I have no doubt that, in my subconscious, the Holocaust influenced my path in the Air Force. The Air Force was virtually my first family. It was my first home."[171]

For A.A., it was a great privilege to serve in the IAF as a pilot: "I got great satisfaction from being given this privilege. I don't know if it was because of my past, but it wasn't only that. I always had a positive view of the great privilege of being in the Air Force…You can repress it as much as you like, but it's connected."[172]

S.S. highlighted the gap between his experiences in the Holocaust as a passive victim and his active service in the Air Force: "From my perspective, in the Holocaust I was someone who was led everywhere. Here, I felt as if I was doing something. My entire life…I remained in the Air Force because I wanted things. It was burning in me. I wanted to be a fighter pilot at war."[173]

Members of the group were grateful to the Air Force for their personal rebirth, as reflected in the following words of S.H.: "During my 21 years in the Air Force, I served the country with loyalty and dedication, and at the same time, I knew – and I know – that the country and the Air Force gave me much more than what I gave them."[174]

Conclusion

Through a journey to the past of those who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust as children and became some of the first members of the Israeli Air Force, this article debunks the myth that IAF aircrew members who served in

the 1950s and 1960s – when the motto "the best join the Air Force" was born – were Sabras from birth. Until the 1980s, child Holocaust survivors in the Air Force effectively concealed and repressed their past. However, as a result of the changes that occurred in Israeli society and the IDF with regard to the memory of the Holocaust and the reaction of the Jews who had been subject to Nazi occupation, they subsequently began to open up.

Their modes of survival during the war were varied: some survived by assuming a false identity, some fled with their families, and some survived alone in ghettos or in flight; only a minority of them were imprisoned in ghettos and concentration camps. A few did not regard themselves as Holocaust survivors in the traditional sense, as they had not resided in ghettos or camps but rather had fled or had lived in hiding. When they arrived in Mandate Palestine and Israel, they wanted to integrate into society and be like their friends, who were typically kibbutz natives. To this end, they gave up their personal experiences and built new ones. Despite their difficult childhoods, they were instilled with a powerful desire to succeed. Viewed together, they constituted a group of individuals with high learning capabilities in mathematics, physics, and sports that succeeded in closing this gap.

Their successful integration into the IAF can be explained by a number of factors. Kibbutz life, which shaped the identities of those who grew up on kibbutz, helped those in question fit in and succeed in the flight training course. In addition, the desire to contribute to the country was a major reason for their success in the Air Force, and their view of the Air Force as a family increased their willingness to contribute and advanced their successful integration within the Air Force and Israeli society in general. Also central to their success were the new identities they built for themselves and the fact that they refrained from talking about their past. The members of this group successfully transitioned from the role of passive victims during the Holocaust to the role of active combat soldiers in the Air Force. This transition, it appears, was made by possible by their love of the country and their sense of pride in defending the state of Israel and those who built it. The relationship that evolved between these Holocaust survivors and the Air Force was one of warmth and total identification. This, in turn, provided a basis for their subsequent coming together, in old age, as a group wanting to

tell the story of its past. Here, too, the Air Force served as a warm home, with its encouragement of and support for the "Heritage from Renewal to the Skies" project. The members of this group regard the memory of the Holocaust as an important educational value for Israel's entire population, and its youth in particular. Today too, some 70 years after the Holocaust, it remains an inseparable part of their identity as Holocaust survivors, Air Force veterans, and citizens of the state of Israel. Their message for the future is: "We have no other country." S.L., who was an inmate at Auschwitz and remained silent for many years, articulated this message in his interview: "The Holocaust must be a value of the state, because only someone who has lost something knows how to appreciate it."[175]

These life stories, which constitute the essence of important chapters in Jewish history, shed light on processes of individual and collective memory and on the dynamic of loss, wandering, return, and rehabilitation.

Endnotes

1 Shaya Harsit, *A New Sky and A New Land* (Kibbutz Dalia, 2012), pp. 292-293 (Hebrew).

2 These figures are based on data that was provided to the steering committee of the Israeli Air Force's History and Information Department, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Moti Havakuk. For a more extensive discussion on this issue, see Yehudah Manor's book *The Squadron that Took Off from the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 2012) (Hebrew).

3 Gabriela Spector-Mersel, *Sabras Don't Age: Life Stories of Senior Officers from 1948's Israeli Generation* (Jerusalem, 2008), p. 5 (Hebrew).

4 Oz Almog, *The Sabra: A Portrait* (Tel Aviv, 2001), pp. 213-215 (Hebrew).

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ruth Bondy, "Once a Pilot, Always a Pilot," "Davar Hashavu`a," *Davar*, June 30, 1967, pp. 6-8, http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/NLI_heb/sharedpages/SharedView.Page.aspx?sk=EDB4A9F7&href=DAV%2F1967%2F06%2F30&page=20 (Hebrew).

8 Nechama Tec, *Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 2012), pp. 18-20 (Hebrew).

9 Ruthellen Josselson, *Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry: A Relational Approach*, translated by Amia Lieblich (Tel Aviv, 2014/15), p, 15 (Hebrew).

10 Avi Cohen, *The History of the Air Force in the War of Independence* (Tel Aviv, 2004), Vol. I, pp. 1-24 (Hebrew).

11 Arieh Oz, *Hear O Israel* (Tel Aviv, 2011), p. 35 (Hebrew).

12 Eliezer (Cheetah) Cohen was an Israeli fighter pilot, helicopter pilot, air force base commander, and Knesset member for the Yisrael Beiteinu party.

13 For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Lea Ganor, "The Approaches of the IDF Education Corps toward Shaping the Memory of the Holocaust among Soldiers (1987-2004)," doctoral dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, pp. 32-42 (Hebrew).

14 This information was provided by Avi Oren, a member of the steering committee of the "From Rebirth to the Skies" project, and by Lieutenant Colonel Moti Havkuk, head of the Air Force's History and Information Department.

15 Josselson, *Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry*, p. 16.

16 Yehuda Manor wrote about the first flight training course in *The Squadron that Took Off from the Holocaust*. Unlike Manor's account, this article focuses on survivors who were children during the Holocaust and were inducted into the course during the 1950s and 1960s. Their Holocaust survivor instructors participated in the flight training course discussed in Manor's book.

17 The testimonies in this article reflect a deep sense of gratitude to the Air Force and the kibbutz movement, in which some members of this group were educated.

18 Elite groups such as the Palmach were actually more effective at absorbing Holocaust survivors. See Jacob Markovitzky, "Tear Down the Walls of Foreignness: Absorbing the New Immigrants in the IDF in the Independence War," in Dalia Ofer (ed.), *Veterans and New Immigrants during the Mass Immigration, 1948-1953* (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 142-160 (Hebrew). The service of new immigrants in combat units and their involvement in the fighting helped further their cultural absorption within the army during and after the war and made it easier for them to lay down roots in Israeli society.

19 Eliezer Cohen, interviewed by the author, Air Force Soldiers' Home, Herzliya, November 8, 2015.

20 The founders of this project chose not to include the word "Holocaust" in its title and instead to emphasize "rebirth," as they believed that this rebirth is what enabled Holocaust survivors to take off to the sky. Disagreements regarding this question emerged during the interviews themselves.

21 Eliezer Cohen, interviewed by the author, Air Force Soldiers' Home, Herzliya, November 8, 2015.

22 Data provided by Avi Oren and Moti Havakuk.

23 Ibid.

24 Naama Zabar Ben-Yehoshua (ed.), *Tradition and Streams and Qualitative Research* (Or Yehuda, 2005/6), pp. 184-205 (Hebrew).

25 This term was coined by Prof. Amia Lieblich in the context of studies of this kind. See Lieblich, *The Children of Kfar Etzion* (University of Haifa Press, 2008), p. 16 (Hebrew). See also Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, *Tradition and Streams and Qualitative Research*, pp. 174-209.

26 Josselson, *Interviewing for Qualitative Inquiry*, pp. 77-97.

27 Ibid., p. 16.

28 As noted, the name of the project is "Heritage from Rebirth to the Skies."

29 Tec, *Women, Men, and the Holocaust*, pp. 19-20.

30 These questions are based on questions that emerged in Lieblich, *The Children of Kfar Etzion*, p. 37.

31 Spector-Mersel, *Sabras Don't Age*, p. 31.

32 Markovitzky, "Tear Down the Walls of Foreignness," pp. 142-160.

33 Cohen, *The History of the Air Force*, Vol. 3, pp. 143-190.

34 Ibid. p. 146.

35 Ibid., p. 163.

36 Manor, *The Squadron that Took Off from the Holocaust*, p. 201.

37 Ibid., p. 201. No evidence has been found indicating that his story about Auschwitz is what caused him to be transferred to the mechanics course.

38 Cohen, *The History of the Air Force*, Vol. 3, p. 165.

39 Ibid., p. 167.

40 Ibid., p. 168.

41 Manor, *The Squadron that Took Off from the Holocaust*, p. 242.

42 Sonia Letzter-Pouw, "Invasive Memories and Avoidance of Memories in Coping with the Holocaust: A Critical Literature Survey," *Gerontology: A Journal on Issues of Ageing* 34(3) (1997/8), pp. 99-110 (Hebrew). See also Zeev Harel, "Ageing and Holocaust Survivors," *Gerontology: A Journal on Issues of Ageing* 34(3) (1997/8), pp. 72-73 (Hebrew).

43 Nathan Dorset, "Emotional Treatment of Child Holocaust Survivors," *Sichot: The Israeli Journal of Psychotherapy* 23(1) (2008), pp. 25-35 (Hebrew). See also Nathan Dorset and Sima Weiss, Treating Elderly Holocaust Survivors," *Gerontology: A Journal on Issues of Ageing* 67 (1994), pp. 30-37 (Hebrew).

44 Letzter-Pouw, "Invasive Memories and Avoidance of Memories," p. 107.

45 Interview with G.B.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 18, 2013.

46 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

47 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 21, 2013.

48 Gorna Jumaya was a city in Bulgaria whose name was changed to Blagoevgrad. On the eve of World War II, it was home to 40 Jewish families (approximately 150 people). All of them survived the Holocaust. See: http://www.thebulgarianjews.org.il/?CategoryID=172&ArticleID=100.

49 Interview with A.L., conducted at his home by the author, February 21, 2014.

50 Braşov is a county administrative center located at a crossroads between Transylvania and Walachia. See Jean Ancel and Theodor Lavie (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Romania*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 291-294 (Hebrew).

51 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 18, 2013.

52 Iaşi is a county administrative center in northeastern Romania. On June 29, 1941, 4,330 Jews from this city boarded a freight train bound for various camps. Most died in transit. See: http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201356.pdf.

53 Moshe Eran-Erenreich, *This is My Life: From Exile to Redemption, from a Dream to Actualization – A Biography* (Israel, no date of publication), p. 7 (Hebrew).

54 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 18, 2013.

55 Sibui is one of the largest cities in the Transylvania region. Until 1918, it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. See Ancel and Lavie, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Romania*, vol. 1, pp. 327-329.

56 Interview with Y.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, April 20, 2014.

57 Interview with M.B.I., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

58 Giora Bar-Nir, *The Green Light* (Israel, 2015), p. 21 (Hebrew). This book is a privately published biography given to me by the author personally.

59 In 1941, the city contained 284 Jews, representing less than one percent of the population. During the war, a large number of refugees (approximately 114) made their way to the city to hide from the Nazis. See Jozeph Michman, Hartog Beem, and Dan Michman (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: The Netherlands* (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 162-168 (Hebrew).

60 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

61 Interview with A.L., conducted at his home by the author, February 21, 2014.

62 Dracineti had no organized Jewish community. Its Jewish residents, who engaged primarily in trade, were appended to the village of Stanestii. In 1940, the village was annexed by the Soviet Union, and in July 1941, it was returned to Romanian control. Romanian soldiers, assisted by Ukrainians, murdered 120 of the village's Jewish residents, and those who remained were sent to Transylvania. Some 80% of the Jews of the village died. See Ancel and Lavie, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Romania*, Vol. 2, p. 458.

63 Interview with A.B., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, September 12, 2013.

64 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

65 Interview with G.B.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 18, 2013.

66 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

67 Interview with L.Z., conducted at his home by the author, September 26, 2013.

68 Interview with G.B.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 18, 2013.

69 Interview with A.B., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, September 12, 2013.

70 The city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, was built on both banks of the Nieuwe Maas River at one of its bends, not far from where it flows into the North Sea. See Michman, Beem, and Michman, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: The Netherlands*, pp. 388-404.

71 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

72 Częstochowa was located in the Kielce Voivodeship. See Abraham Wein, Aharon Weiss, and Shmuel Spector, *Pinkas Hakehillot: Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities: Poland*, Vol. 7 (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 422-461 (Hebrew).

73 Interview with S.D., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, January 22, 2014.

74 Interview with R.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

75 Eran-Erenreich, *This is My Life*, p. 12.

76 Interview with M.B.I., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

77 Interview with M.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 30, 2013.

78 Interview with R.A.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, February 20, 2014.

79 Interview with A.I. at his place of employment, conducted by the author, November 20, 2013.

80 Siauliai is the largest city in northwest Lthuania. See: http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201597.pdf.

81 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

82 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Interview with B.P., conducted at his home by the author, September 22, 2013.

86 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 18, 2013.

87 Interview with M.N. conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldier´s House in Herzliya, October 18, 2013.

88 Interview with R.A.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, February 20, 2014.

89 Between 1940 and 1944, the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca was incorporated into Hungarian territory along with all of northern Transylvania. See: http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201422.pdf (Hebrew).

90 Interview with I.G.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 29, 2013.

91 Interview with R.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

92 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

93 Ibid.

94 Interview with M.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 30, 2013.

95 Bar-Nir, *The Green Light*, p. 45.

96 Ibid.

97 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

98 Harsit, *A New Sky and A New Land*, p. 32.

99 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

100 Interview with Y.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, April 20, 2014.

101 Interview with S.D., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, January 22, 2014.

102 Interview with I.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

103 Interview with M.P.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

104 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

105 Interview with A.B., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, September 12, 2013.

106 Ibid.

107 Interview with M.P.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

108 For a period of three years, Jewish soldiers from Mandate Palestine administered a dormitory-style educational children's home in the town of Selvino in northern Italy. See: http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/he/exhibitions/dp_camps_italy/index.asp (Hebrew).

109 Interview with M.E., conducted at his home by the author, July 31, 2013.

110 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

111 Interview with Y.S. at his place of employment, conducted by the author, July 28, 2013.

112 Harsit, *A New Sky and A New Land*, p. 61.

113 Interview with R.A.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, February 20, 2014.

114 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

115 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

116 Bar-Nir, *The Green Light*, pp. 107-108.

117 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

118 Dan Baron, *Between Fear and Hope* (Tel Aviv, 1993/94), p. 26 (Hebrew).

119 Interview with M.A., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, January 1, 2014.

120 Interview with Y.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, April 20, 2014.

121 Bar-Nir, *The Green Light*, p. 117.

122 Interview with R.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

123 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

124 Interview with L.Z., conducted at his home by the author, September 26, 2013.

125 Interview with B.P., conducted at his home by the author, September 22, 2013.

126 Harsit, *A New Sky and A New Land*, pp. 127-129.

127 Interview with A.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 8, 2013.

128 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

129 Interview with Z.K., conducted at his home by the author, September 24, 2013.

130 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

131 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 18, 2013.

132 Almog, *The Sabra*, p. 145.

133 Ibid., p. 146.

134 Interview with M.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 30, 2013.

135 Interview with M.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 29, 2013.

136 Interview with A.A.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 8, 2013.

137 Interview with I.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

138 Interview with I.G.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 29, 2013.

139 Interview with A.B., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, September 12, 2013.

140 Interview with A.I. at his place of employment, conducted by the author, November 20, 2013.

141 Almog, *The Sabra*, p. 147.

142 Rona Tamir and Hila Sharon, "The Bold and the Beautiful" (undated), http://www.iaf.org.il/975-16632-he/IAF.aspx .

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Ze'ev Lachish and Meir Amitai (eds.), *A Non-Peaceful Decade: Chapters in the History of the Air Force, 1956-1967* (Tel Aviv, 1995), pp. 43-48 (Hebrew).

146 Giora Bar-Nir, *The Green Light*, p. 124. On July 11, 1957, Bar-Nir was issued navigator's wings, and one week later he began a new chapter in his life as a navigator of Dakota and Nord cargo plane in the 103rd Squadron. See p. 135.

147 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

148 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

149 Interview with M.A., conducted at his home by the author, July 31, 2013.

150 May Resh, "Air Youth Battalions Return in a New Format" (undated), http://www.iaf.org.il/4392-40417-he/IAF.aspx (Hebrew).

151 Interview with M.A., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, January 1, 2014.

152 Interview with A.A., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 30, 2013.

153 Interview with M.P.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

154 Interview with Y.P., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 4, 2013.

155 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

156 Interview with M.A., conducted at his home by the author, July 31, 2013.

157 Interview with S.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 21, 2013.

158 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

159 Interview with S.D., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, January 22, 2014.

160 Interview with I.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

161 Interview with M.B.I., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 24, 2013.

162 Interview with I.G.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 29, 2013.

163 Interview with A.E., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, December 11, 2014.

164 Interview with M.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, February 25, 2014.

165 Interview with S.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 21, 2013.

166 Interview with D.G., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 29, 2013.

167 Interview with B.P., conducted at his home by the author, September 22, 2013.

168 Ibid.

169 Interview with A.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 8, 2013.

170 Interview with A.A.N., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 8, 2013.

171 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.

172 Interview with A.A., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, July 30, 2013.

173 Interview with S.S., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, October 6, 2013.

174 Interview with S.H., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, August 21, 2013.

175 Interview with S.L., conducted by the author at the Air Force Soldiers' Home in Herzliya, November 13, 2013.