

The Arab-Israeli Wars

by Netanel Lorch

In December 1946 - at the first post-war Zionist Congress in Basle - [David Ben Gurion](#) assumed the defense portfolio, including responsibility for the [Haganah](#), which at the time concentrated on the struggle against the British.

Although British restrictions, searches and detentions made the building of a clandestine force - with armor and artillery, air and sea power - well-nigh impossible, Ben-Gurion decided early on that this was the decisive task: to build up a force in preparation for an assault by the regular armies of the Arab countries, which the *yishuv* would have to face alone, without outside help.

He found the [Haganah](#) woefully ill prepared for such an eventuality and set about energetically to rectify this. Since import and deployment of heavy weapons were not practicable as long as the British held sway over Palestine, it was decided that manpower should be readied in the country and equipment purchased abroad - to be "married" in time to throw back an Arab assault, if not to prevent it; in time for 15 May 1948, the day envisaged for the termination of the [British Mandate](#) and the day after Israel would declare its independence.

The War of Independence (1947-49)

The war was fought along the entire, long border of the country: against Lebanon and Syria in the north; Iraq and Transjordan - renamed Jordan during the war - in the east; Egypt, assisted by contingents from the Sudan - in the south; and Palestinians and volunteers from Arab countries in the interior of the country.

It was the bloodiest of Israel's wars. It cost 6,373 killed in action (from pre-state days until 20 July 1949) almost 1% of the *yishuv* (the Jewish community) - although that figure includes quite a number of new immigrants and some [foreign volunteers](#).

In the First Phase (29 November 1947 - 1 April 1948), it was the Palestinian Arabs who took the offensive, with the help of volunteers from neighboring countries; the *yishuv* had little success in limiting the war - it suffered severe casualties and disruption of passage along most of the major highways.

In the Second Phase (1 April - 15 May) the [Haganah](#) took the initiative, and in six weeks was able to turn the tables - capturing, inter alia, the Arab sections of Tiberias, Haifa and later also Safed and Acre, temporarily opening the road to Jerusalem and gaining control of much of the territory allotted to the Jewish State under the UN Resolution.



 IDF soldiers in abandoned Egyptian trenches (1948)

The Third Phase (15 May - 19 July), considered the critical one, opened with the simultaneous, coordinated assault on the fledgling state by five regular Arab armies from neighboring countries, with an overwhelming superiority of heavy equipment - armor, artillery and airforce.

On 31 May the [Haganah](#) was renamed the "Israel Defence Forces". The IDF suffered initial setbacks, including the loss of the Etzion Bloc in Judea, the area of Mishmar Hayarden in the north and Yad Mordehai in the south, but after three weeks was able to halt the offensive, to stabilize the front and even initiate some local offensive operations.

The Fourth Phase (19 July 1948 - 20 July, 1949) was characterized by Israeli initiatives: Operation Yoav, in October, cleared the road to the Negev, culminating in the capture of Be'er Sheva; Operation Hiram, at the end of October, resulted in the capture of the Upper Galilee; Operation Horev in December 1948 and Operation Uvda in March 1949, completed the capture of the Negev, which had been allotted to the Jewish State by the United Nations.

Simultaneously, the Arab countries signed Armistice Agreements: first came Egypt - 24 February 1949; followed by Lebanon - 23 March; Jordan - 3 April; and Syria - 20 July. Only Iraq did not sign an armistice agreement with Israel. It preferred to withdraw its troops and hand over its sector to the Arab Legion of Jordan.



In the end Israel not only ejected the invading Arab forces - it also



**The flag of Israel
is raised at
Um-Rashrash,
now the city of
Eilat, March
1949**

captured and held some 5,000 km² over and above the areas allocated to it by the United Nations.

In the middle of the War of Independence, the IDF was born, not on 15 May, but two weeks later; for two more weeks Ben-Gurion negotiated with the "dissident" armed organizations, the Etzel and Lehi, convincing them to disband voluntarily before he disbanded them in the Order of the Establishment of the IDF on 31 May 1948. That order provided for only one armed force, subordinate to the constitutional government. There was complete continuity between the Haganah and the IDF: Ya'acov Dori, the Chief of Staff; the members of the General Staff; the commanders from brigade-level downwards - all were automatically confirmed in their appointments.

At the end of the war the IDF had over 100,000 full-time men and women in uniform, as compared to the mere handful of full-time soldiers at its beginning. In addition to 12 brigades, mostly infantry, it had several regiments of artillery. The first armored regiments were equipped with light armored vehicles, some captured, some "requisitioned" from the departing British troops; and a few tanks - two Cromwells "bought" from the withdrawing British and some reconstituted from American scrap.

The Navy consisted at first of reconverted illegal immigrant vessels. There were the elements of an Air Force - Spitfires and Messerschmidts, acquired mainly in Czechoslovakia, in addition to the light civilian planes which the Haganah had used for reconnaissance and communications purposes. Some World War II US war surplus bombers were bought as scrap. These carried out their first "strategic attack" on Cairo, en route to Israel, even before reaching their homebase. Armed with a Baedeker tourist guide, one of them bombed and strafed Abdeen Palace: rudimentary, to be sure, but entirely unexpected and, therefore, psychologically effective.

As soon as the armistice agreements were signed and the immediate danger had passed, the IDF - except for a small nucleus - was not only demobilized, but effectively disbanded. The new state had urgent tasks which required all its resources, above all that of absorbing the flood of new immigrants, who at last were able to come "home". An attempt to keep the demobilized soldiers in some sort of reserve framework failed. However, for the time being there was little inclination on the Arab side to renew full-scale fighting. Not that they had come to face reality and recognized Israel - far from it; but they did realize that to fight against Israel required thorough preparation.

In the meantime they found what was considered a perfect tool to show their own people that the war was not over yet and at the same time both to harrass Israel and embarrass her. Palestinian fedayun (suicide troops) infiltrated across the long and ill-protected border - and it should be recalled that no place in Israel was far from the border: infiltrations for the purpose of stealing farm equipment were followed by the laying of mines, the killing of individuals, and wholesale massacres. The fedayun were trained, equipped and paid for by Egyptian Intelligence, although they operated mainly from bases in Jordan, so that Jordan would bear the brunt of Israel's retaliation, which inevitably followed. And each time Israel retaliated, the Security Council condemned it; condemnation of an Arab government had long since become an impossibility, because of the Soviet veto.

The infiltrations - however painful, militarily and diplomatically - were no more than a diversion from the main concern of the IDF: preparations for the second round.

Yigael Yadin, who had taken over from Ya'akov Dori as Chief of the General Staff, devoted his energy to organizing the reserves and streamlining the command structure - elements of which remain in effect to this day. At the same time, particular attention was paid to the development of armor. Israel's numerical inferiority to its neighbors and potential enemies; its realization that because of the lack of strategic depth it was bound to transfer fighting as soon as possible to enemy territory and its proven advantage at swift, often improvised manoeuvres - all pointed to the need for armor. The newly found alliance with France at the time of the Suez crisis provided the unique opportunity to equip a major part of the IDF with French-made tanks. This "miracle" occurred at a moment of desperation, when no other country, East or West, was willing to supply Israel with arms, whereas countries from both East and West rushed to offer their wares to the Arabs. Particularly worrisome was the Czech-Egyptian arms deal, which threatened Israel with a

whole range of state-of-the-art Russian hardware.

The Sinai Campaign of 1956 (Operation Kadesh)

In a swift, sweeping operation of 100 hours, under the leadership of then Chief of the General Staff, Moshe Dayan, the entire Sinai peninsula fell into Israeli hands, at a cost of 231 soldiers killed. Reserve units, about which many misgivings had been uttered before the war, conducted themselves honorably. A reserve brigade, equipped with requisitioned civilian buses, negotiated the difficult desert track and captured Sharm e-Sheikh at the southernmost tip of the Sinai peninsula. The Air Force was still deficient; its development was one of the lessons learned from that war; armor had proven its ability and was there to stay. If 1948 was undoubtedly the War of the Infantry, the uncontested queen of the battlefield in the war of 1956 was Armor.

Once more Israel gained a breathing space of about ten years. Attention now turned to the north, where the Syrians - since 1953 - had been attempting to thwart Israel's National Water Project. Having failed, they undertook to divert the headwaters of the Jordan (originating in Syria), by a manouever designed to leave Israel high and dry. Water is a classical reason for war in the Middle East ; but a brief, resolute employment of artillery and tanks prevailed on the Syrians to refrain from their spiteful exercise.

Although Israel had been compelled to withdraw from Sinai without any security guarantee, UNEF - the United Nations Emergency Force, was established to guard against a recurrence of past events. As a result the fedayun ceased to exist. On the other hand, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was reorganized and its principal military arm, the Fatah - one of a confusing array of para-military and terrorist organizations - began operations on 1 January 1965, at first from across the Lebanese border. Never an existential threat to Israel, it was a constant nuisance from there on and a temptation to divert attention and energy from the main task, preparations for yet another round.

The Six-Day War (June 1967)

The year 1967 began with confident predictions that it would not bring war. Nasser, it was argued in Israel, had learned the lesson of 1956 and would not start a war unless he was ready. In any case, his relations with Jordan were notoriously bad and a coalition between Nasser and King Hussein was out of the question. In quick succession, events gave the lie to these predictions. A clash in the air, in which Syria - Russia's closest ally in the Middle East - lost 13 planes, provided the opening signal. As a result of Soviet prodding, Nasser mobilized and sent 100,000 troops to Sinai. He demanded that the Secretary General of the United Nations withdraw UNEF forthwith, and - probably to his own surprise - succeeded immediately and the "firemen" departed. Then Nasser announced the closing of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping - a clearcut casus belli. He ended by taunting Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Chief of Staff: "Let him come, I'm waiting." Meanwhile he succeeded in bringing about close coordination with the Syrian army. King Hussein, in an abrupt about-face, flew to Egypt and signed an agreement placing his forces under overall Egyptian comand. It was to cost him half his kingdom.

Israel, its reserves fully mobilized, its nerves taut to the snapping point, waited for three long weeks. The situation seemed the reverse of 1956; Israel was alone, against a powerful Arab coalition. The Big Powers, vague promises notwithstanding, did nothing to reopen the Straits and Israel decided to go it alone.

On 5 June 1967 a cluster of planes flying from Egypt to Israel was seen on King Hussein's radar screen. Convinced by the Egyptians that the planes were theirs, he promptly gave the order to attack - in Jerusalem! In fact the planes were Israel's, returning from their devastating attack against the Egyptian airforce, which surprisingly had been taken by surprise; after taunting Rabin, Egypt was not ready when he came.

Within the brief span of six days, the IDF overran the whole Sinai peninsula, up to the Suez Canal; took the entire West Bank of the River Jordan; and in the last days - without the benefit of surprise - captured a



Israeli tanks moving across the Sinai peninsula (1956)



Egyptian planes destroyed by the Israel Air Force (June 1967)





**The chief Rabbi
of the IDF
blowing the
Shofar at the
Western Wall
(June 1967)**

... certain, and in the last days, without the benefit of surprise, captured a great part of the Golan Heights, including the dominant Mount Hermon - from then on "the eyes and ears of Israel". The culminating event was the capture of the Old City of Jerusalem and the re-encounter with the place most revered by Jews, the Western (Wailing) Wall. The blowing of the shofar at the Western Wall reverberated throughout the world.

776 Israeli soldiers fell in the Six-Day War.

Whilst all branches of the service had performed well, the Air Force had, for the first time, played a decisive role: clearing the skies at the outset made all that followed possible. This was the War of the Air Force.

Diplomatic efforts to bring to an end the by-now 40 years of conflict, which predated the establishment of Israel by more than two decades, came to nought. In November 1967, after months of deliberations, the Security Council unanimously adopted [Resolution 242](#), calling for peace and recognition of the "right of every nation to live free from threat within secure and recognized boundaries", in return for Israel's withdrawal "from territories", not "all the territories", nor "the territories captured in the course of the recent hostilities". However, the Arab League, in its session in the Sudan (1967) adopted a different resolution, the "Three No's" of [Khartoum](#): No peace, No negotiations, No recognition of Israel.

The War of Attrition (1968-70)



**Inside a bunker
of the Bar-Lev
line**

Soon after hostilities came to a halt, President Nasser embarked on what was to be a bloody, lengthy and inconclusive war: the War of Attrition - a static exchange of artillery fire along the entire Bar Lev line on the Suez Canal, which escalated rapidly. The IDF engaged in a number of daring raids - the most spectacular was probably the capture and safe transportation to Israel of a complete Russian-made radar installation in good working order. When the Israel Air Force began its bombing attacks against targets in Egypt's depth, Nasser in desperation turned to the Soviet Union to provide Egypt not only with Russian equipment - but also with Russian air and ground troops. Russia reluctantly agreed. Soon afterwards the US, afraid that Big-Power direct involvement would escalate into nuclear confrontation, agreed with the USSR to put an end to the war under the "cease-fire stand-still" formula of the Security Council (July 1970). 1,424 soldiers were killed in action between 15 June 1967 and 8 August 1970.

The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was at first considered by leaders of the PLO as ideal for armed resistance, i.e. terrorist activities. The terrorist attacks failed, however, to have a significant impact. Arab terrorist organisations therefore transferred their activities abroad: kidnapping and hijacking planes and blowing them up. At first benevolently neglected by the Western Powers - after all, they concerned only Israel - the terror acts increased in number and importance. The terrorists' most spectacular and bloody operation was the massacre of 11 Israeli sportsmen in Munich, at the Olympic Games of 1972.

Meanwhile Egypt, in secret coordination with Syria, prepared for another round. Israel was aware of these preparations, but wed to its concept that President Sadat of Egypt would not embark on war unless he had achieved at least parity, if not superiority in the air, ignored the writing on the wall.

The Yom Kippur War (October 1973)



The war was so called because it started on the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement (October 6, 1973). It came almost as a complete surprise and warning notice was given too late for an orderly call-up of the reserves before zero hour.

The Egyptians and the Syrians made some significant initial gains: the former crossed the Suez Canal and established themselves along its




**Air-ground
 support in Sinai
 (October 1973)**

former crossed the Suez Canal and established themselves along its entire length on the east bank; the latter overran the Golan Heights and came within sight of the Sea of Galilee. However, the wheel turned very quickly. Counterattacking swiftly, sometimes even foolhardily, within a few days the IDF was on the west bank of the Suez Canal, at a distance of 100 kms from the Egyptian capital, Cairo, and within artillery range of the airfields around the Syrian capital, Damascus.

Egypt, which at first had refused a cease-fire, now accepted it avidly, as did Syria. Considering the adverse initial circumstances, the speed and the thoroughness with which the IDF had been able to reverse its fortunes was remarkable. Yet the Yom Kippur War went down in Israel's history as a qualified failure. The surprise rankled; and the cost was heavy: 2,688 soldiers fell.




**Naval craft
 carrying Gabriel
 sea-to-sea
 missiles**

Intelligence was faulted for failing to sound the alarm in time - the Chief of Staff, David (Dado) Elazar and his Chief of Intelligence had to resign. Too many airplanes were lost to Russian-made SAM-missiles. Some experts reached the sweeping conclusion that the tank had seen its day, in view of its vulnerability to Sagger missiles and infantry-operated RPGs. Of 265 Israeli tanks in the first echelon, only 100 survived.

The branch that distinguished itself during the Yom Kippur War was the Navy, which only now came of age: without a single loss of its own, it had sunk 34 enemy vessels; had secured the coasts of the country; and had succeeded in restricting the enemy to his bases. This was indeed the Navy's War.

The IDF deterrent capacity had been weakened as a result of the war. It was, however, partially restored in a spectacular and successful operation: the Entebbe Raid of 1976 - renamed Operation Jonathan, after the young commander of the ground forces who was its only military casualty. The Jewish and Israeli passengers of a hijacked Air France liner - carefully selected by the hijackers - were rescued from the hands of a German group of terrorists, in far-away Uganda. The resourcefulness and daring of the operation - down to transportation by plane of a black Mercedes of the sort used by Uganda's dictator, to confuse the enemy - aroused the imagination of the world.

The Yom Kippur War was followed by a series of Separation-of-Forces Agreements with Egypt and Syria. These envisaged a strip of territory in which no troops would be allowed, backed by another strip, where the presence of troops was carefully restricted.

The [agreement with Syria](#) is still in force and UNDOF, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, is still there to supervise its implementation. The agreement with Egypt has been replaced - after lengthy negotiations which began with the dramatic visit to Jerusalem of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat (November 1977) - by the [Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty](#) of 1979, the first to be signed between Israel and one, the most important, of its Arab neighbors. It was based on the withdrawal of Israel from the whole of the Sinai peninsula and its demilitarization in return for full recognition of Israel by Egypt and establishment of embassies and full trade and tourist relations.

The Palestinian terrorist organisations again came to the fore. They were able to establish their bases in Lebanon. Not that Lebanon was more hostile to Israel than other Arab countries, on the contrary; but the central government of Lebanon was too weak to prevent the establishment of "a state within a state". After a particularly bloody terrorist raid on two civilian passenger buses travelling on the coastal road near Tel Aviv, which resulted in 37 killed and 76 wounded (March 1978), the IDF undertook a swift operation: Operation Litani (March 1978) against terrorist bases in Lebanon. Its impact, however, did not last very long.

Operation Peace for Galilee (1982)

In June 1982 a Palestinian terrorist group led by Abu Nidal carried out an assassination attempt on Israel's Ambassador to Great Britain, Shlomo Argov (which has left him crippled and hospitalized ever since). In retaliation, the IDF attacked Lebanon once again and succeeded in its original purpose to wipe out terrorist bases in the south of Lebanon. A series of simultaneous, amphibious operations was remarkably successful. Subsequently, however, the mission was enlarged and the

capture of Beirut signalled the transition to a long drawn-out war. It failed to achieve its ultimate purpose. A peace treaty with Lebanon was signed, but not ratified; the Christian government of fragmented Lebanon was too weak to prevail.



For a short period (7 -11 June 1982) the Syrians were involved in the war. not on the Golan Heights where the disengagement agreement was kept to the letter, but in Lebanon itself, where the Syrians had a considerable expeditionary force. The ground fighting against the Syrians did not go well for the IDF and the mission of neutralizing the Syrians and cutting off the Beirut-Damascus highway was accomplished at a high price. Not so the battle for control of the skies: of 19 Syrian batteries - Russian-made SAMs 2, 3 and 6 deployed in Lebanon - 14 were destroyed and four more damaged; the Syrian Air Force, now shorn of its ground support, lost 29 MIG fighter planes in one day, without a single Israeli loss. It was the most intensive, concentrated air battle known to that date: 200 planes from both sides grappling within a "box" of 50x50 kms. This was the result of lessons learned after the Yom Kippur War - a combination of training and equipment, planning and control, surprise and inventiveness, among which secret means of electronic warfare took pride of place. This war, therefore, may be characterized as that of Electronic Warfare.

Meanwhile, daily ambushes against Israeli occupying forces increased, with a corresponding increase in casualties - 1,216 soldiers killed between 5 June 1982 and 31 May 1985. One of its first and most important victims was the national consensus. For the first time in the history of Israel not only was the conduct of war debated - for this there had been ample precedent - but the very justification of the war. The Prime Minister, Menahem Begin, himself provided the watchword: a War of Choice, unlike all previous wars, which were perceived as dire necessities.

The failure of Operation Peace of Galilee to achieve its objective prevailed upon the new national coalition government, which took office in 1984, to withdraw forthwith from Lebanon. A token force was left behind, to help the citizens of south Lebanon to patrol the Security Zone - a narrow strip of territory adjacent to Israel's border, which was an essential tripwire for Israeli settlements, some of which are located next to the border.

The towns and villages along the northern border were on the whole relatively safe - with some notable exceptions. Katyusha attacks concentrated on Kiryat Shmona in July 1993, provoked Israel to undertake Operation *Din Veheshbon*, a major raid into Lebanon, and again in April 1995, to mount Operation Grapes of Wrath. The latter was a "clean" operation, with no Israeli casualties; but its effect was marred by Israeli artillery mistakenly bombarding a camp near a UN base in Kafr Kana, resulting in the death of almost a hundred civilians. Following that operation a Joint Monitoring Machinery was established, including US, French, Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli representatives to watch over the implementation of a number of basic "understandings" - first amongst them the prohibition of unprovoked attacks against civilian populations and utilizing such populations as cover and shield for military units.

Meanwhile, attacks - mainly by members of Hizballah (Party of God), a fanatic Shi'ite sect supported by Iran and tolerated, at least, by Syria - against Israeli and South Lebanese Forces in the Security Zone continue unabated.

In December 1987 Palestinian Arabs embarked on the intifada (literally awakening), which was to keep the IDF occupied for the coming three years. It entailed a great deal of patrolling of Arab population centers; daily clashes with stone-throwing groups of youngsters, often barely in their teens. It did not present a military problem, but a moral one. The IDF was under strict orders to open live fire only in a situation of real danger to life. What was one to do with a mere boy, throwing a stone? It was a most distasteful task for a citizen army trained for warfare and tested the army's morale to the utmost.

The intifada, however troublesome, was never allowed to divert attention from the main task: preparing for another round. Peace with Egypt was relatively secure - a "cold peace", but peace all the same. Jordan was anxious, for very good reasons of its own, to maintain quiet along the border with Israel, the longest between Israel and any of its

neighbors. Syria was considered the most hostile, and the IDF had to prepare for the day it would achieve "strategic parity" with Israel.

But then the eight-year long Iraq-Iran War ended and Saddam Hussein openly declared his readiness, even his eagerness, to put his forces at the disposal of the Palestinian cause. This would automatically guarantee Iraq leadership of the Arab world. Although it had no common border with Israel, Iraq had participated in most of the wars against the Jewish state.

Even before the war with Iran ended, the IAF - in one more spectacular and precise raid - Operation Tamuz - took out the Iraqi nuclear plant Osirak, which, established with French assistance, had come close to the production of a nuclear device. Israel was condemned by the Security Council.

The Gulf War (1991)

After the end of his war with Iran, Saddam Hussein had a huge, battlewise army sitting idle and his threats to "burn half of Israel" had to be taken seriously. The IDF was concerned at the availability to Saddam Hussein of considerable quantities of Russian-made Scud missiles with a range of 600 kms., against which no effective countermeasure was as yet in Israel's arsenal; particularly if those missiles were to be equipped with chemical warheads, which Saddam was reputed to have perfected with the help of German companies.



A "safe" room during a Scud attack

At the urging of the US, which was concerned that it might be deserted by its Arab coalition partners, Israel refrained from active participation in the war.

In view of the unprecedented danger to the civilian rear, special attention was paid to its organization: the IDF was responsible for the procurement and distribution of gas masks to the entire population; it readied the medical aid network; and instructed the population in preparing "safe rooms" for use in case the alarm was sounded.

For Israel, this war was characterized as the War of the Civilian Rear, and the Gadna, the Youth Battalions, once more had a useful role to play, which they faithfully carried out.

Conclusions

1947-49; 1956; 1967; 1973; 1982; 1991: at almost regular intervals the IDF has been faced with a major, violent outburst. Will this continue into the indefinite future? "Shall the sword devour for ever?" (Samuel II, 2:23).

The price was enormous for a small country. A total of 20,093 soldiers fell in action up to the end of March 1997.

The outlook is not entirely bleak. Slowly but surely, the world has come to recognise Israel's right to exist: in November 1917 it was one lonely power - Great Britain - which issued the [Balfour Declaration](#); in November 1947, after an interval of thirty years, a large majority of the United Nations voted in favor of the [Partition Resolution](#), but not one Arab or Moslem country among them; and in November 1977, after another thirty years, President Sadat of Egypt came to Jerusalem and from the rostrum of the Knesset declared that his country was willing to live in peace with Israel.

On 30 October 1991 a [Peace Conference](#), co-sponsored by the US and the USSR, was convened in Madrid. It was followed - after two years of secret negotiations - by the signing of a [Declaration of Principles](#) between Israel and the PLO, marking a significant step towards conciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. Next came the [Gaza-Jericho Agreement](#) of May 1994 and subsequent agreements detailing the gradual handing-over to the Palestinian Authority of more territory and more responsibilities.

The Madrid Conference also opened the way to negotiations culminating in the [Treaty of Peace](#) with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, signed by prime ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Abdul Salam Majali on 26 October 1994. Israel also established relations - primarily commercial relations - with several Arab countries in the Persian Gulf

and North Africa.

Thus the peace process has progressed over the years; but as long as some countries - and not only Israel's immediate neighbors - refuse to recognize its rightful existence, the possibility of war cannot be ignored and the IDF - Israel's guardian and shield - "shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalms 121:4).

Netanel Lorch, Ph. D., Lt.Col.(Res), Ambassador and former Secretary-General of the Knesset, is the founder of the IDF Historical Division, author of the *Edge of the Sword* (Putnam's 1961, reprinted in *Military History Classics*, Easton Press 1991), *One Long War* (Keter 1976), *Shield of Zion* (Howell Press 1992), and *Major Knesset Debates* (UPA and JCPA 1993).