

**Chaikind Aryeh** (Tokchirov) (of blessed memory)

Born 5 January 1923 in Jerusalem

Joined the British Army in 1941

Joined Ha'Chavura ("The Gang") in Italy in 1945

Joined the "Haportzim" Battalion of the Palmach in 1948

Died in the Battle of Katamon on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1948

Written by: Michal Shemer (his niece)

**This is the Way it Was**

Aryeh was born on 5 January 1923 in Jerusalem to his parents Bat Sheva and Avraham. Even when he was very young Aryeh was very bright and grasped things very quickly and had an excellent memory. He went from grade to grade with very little effort. He completed his elementary education in Kiryat Chaim when he was 12 and was in the first graduating class of the school. He loved to read and when he found something that interested him he immersed himself in it completely. In his spare time he loved to roam the fields in search of birds, butterflies or any insects that aroused his curiosity. He went to study at the technical school connected to the Technion, but when the economic situation in his home became difficult he went to work in the Electric Company. After completing his regular day's work he would go to study in the evenings. He worked at the Electric Company for 5 years until the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

He was then 17 years old and wanted to volunteer but his parents would not allow it. On his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he joined the 544<sup>th</sup> Company of the Royal Engineers and went to train in Egypt. He regarded his job in the army as of great importance and felt that he and his friends there were doing very important and very patriotic work. For him, building the State of Israel was not an empty phrase but a very important goal. When he was sent to Tripoli he was active there in getting weapons and smuggling them to Palestine. At the same time he went to courses for further army training and for a paratrooper's course.

His unit was then transferred to Sicily and Italy as the War progressed and it was in Italy that he first met the remnants of the Holocaust. The effect of their plight upon him was such that he devoted himself to their aid. He wrote home: "I have not written about the refugees until now. Tremendous efforts are being made to help them and I am trying to do my little bit and it would be betrayal to leave them now and go back to my own private affairs".

Arik joined Ha'Chavura ("The Gang") and was used as a radio operator. He reached the shore of Palestine and was immediately off and out again for another trip. He finally returned to Palestine on the "Shabtai Luzinski" which broke through the British siege and landed on the shore of Nitzanim. While still in Egypt a number of his friends decided to found a cooperative settlement in Palestine, Bnei Dror. Once his work in the Aliya effort was over that is where Arik went. However, once again the clouds of war hovered over the country and Arik began to organize the defense of his settlement and the Tel Mond area.

During the day he would do his daily work and in the evening he would organize courses in subjects that he had learned in the British Army. Despite his fondness for the work in the fields and for his friends in the settlement he volunteered for the "Haportzim" Battalion of the Harel Brigade and went with it to Jerusalem in 1948.

Not very many people got to know Arik very well. He was a rather introvert person with a cold and haughty personality. He hated bickering over unimportant issues and would not tolerate it. He wanted to strive for the very best and if he found those whose thoughts and ways were similar to his, then he would be their loyal friend, and others did not interest him. He was tall and handsome and looked a person straight in the eye. He did not exploit his strength against other individuals but used it only for the good of the defense of the country.

While in the "Haportzim" Battalion Arik was stationed at Kiryat Anavim and Jerusalem, and he was a saboteur. He did his job in opening the road to Jerusalem. On the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1948 there was the fierce battle for San Simon in the Katamon. It was Arik's job to blow holes in the wall so that there would be safer passages from enemy fire between the three houses that the Palmach had captured. When he finished his job he went onto the roof of the convent and threw grenades at the Arabs who tried to approach the building. His commander ordered him to come down but he refused because he saw that his grenades were doing a good job. A short time later he was hit by a shell. He was badly wounded and shouted for a medic. The commander, who could not see him, told him to crawl inside under cover and he started to do so. When he crawled into the sight of the commander, he was told to stop immediately, and told that a medic would come soon. The medic tried to bandage the wound and stop the bleeding but it was obvious that his hour had come. He asked to give his regards to his parents. This happened on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1948 when Arik was 25 years old.

He once wrote to his mother: "I understand mother how it must hurt you when our boys fall in battle. This makes us very sorrowful also. But that is the price we must pay for peace. It would not be empty phraseology to say to you that it would be better in a time like this to be a mother to a son that fell in battle, than to be a mother to some weakling who wiggled his way out. It is the way of the world that the mother must bear the brunt of the sorrow".

Arik fell in Jerusalem, the city where he was born. When the family was asked to suggest a passage that could be inscribed below the photo on his memorial page at Kiryat Anavim, we wrote: "He fell like a lion and none but a lion shall raise him up". No doubt that passage suited him and his character, he was a true hero, may his memory be blessed.