

**Freier Shalhevet** (of blessed memory)

Born in 1920 in Germany, made Aliya in 1940

Joined the British Army in 1941, joined Ha'Chavura ("The Gang") in 1945

Nickname: Uri

Died 27 November 1994 in Rehovoth

Written by: Maayan, his sister

### **This is the Way it Was**

Shalhevet Freier was born in 1920 in Germany, to his father Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freier, the Rabbi of the Berlin community and his wife, Rosa Freier the founder of Youth Aliya. In 1937 he was evicted from the Christian secondary school "to the "Gray Monastery" where he was studying, because of his anti-government compositions. He traveled to England and from there made aliya to Palestine in 1940 on the last civilian ship that sailed from England to Haifa. He started to study mathematics at the Hebrew University but joined the British army in 1941 and was assigned to the 462 RASC, where he served until 1946.

Shalhevet wanted to join "The Gang" and his excellent knowledge of English and Italian were a plus for receiving him, even though they were a bit wary because he was a new Oleh, and did not even 'look' like a Jew. He had to pass several tests before he was finally accepted. His job was: being responsible for supplying everything that the vessels of the ma'apilim needed for their voyages to Palestine; fuel, food, equipment, trucks for transportation to the ships, etc. He also prepared the papers needed for the trucks authorizing them to move the ma'apilim. He was commander of all the trucks that moved the ma'apilim to the ships, and for this purpose he posed as a British officer. In this manner he was responsible for loading eight ships of ma'apilim that made their way to Palestine. On the 9<sup>th</sup> trip, at La Spezia in 1946, the Olim were caught en route to the ship and he and Yisrael Libertovsky were imprisoned when they led a convoy of 35 army trucks that carried more than 1000 refugees. Even as a prisoner he managed to see to it that the trucks and drivers disappeared before their license numbers were taken or the identity of the drivers was established.

When he was freed he returned to Palestine at the end of 1946, and returned to study at the university. He set up an evening school for adults at the same time in order to pay for his studies. Several months later he was called by the Hagana to set up a spy ring in the British Army. When the War of Independence broke out he was appointed commander of the "Yerucham" unit in Jerusalem. This was a unit which gathered information about the foreign consulates in Jerusalem. In 1949 this unit was demobilized and Shalhevet was transferred to intelligence posts in several countries, as a member of the staff of the Foreign Office.

In 1951, he resigned his position because of differences with Reuven Shiloach. Sharet, the Foreign Minister refused to receive his resignation but Shalhevet stuck to his decision and resigned. He again went back to his studies and wrote

articles as the Jerusalem correspondent for Middle-Eastern Affairs at the Jerusalem Post. In 1953, Ben Gurion, as Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, suggested to Shalhevet that he take over the Department of Planning and Research of the Ministry of Defense. This later became known as Rafael.

1956, Shimon Peres called him to Paris where his title was science consultant of the Israeli Embassy in France. His job is to develop closer relations between France and Israel in the fields of science and technology. During this period he signed and made various agreements between the French Commission for Atomic Energy and Israel, and helped set up the Atomic Energy Research Base at Dimona. In 1959 he resigned his position and returned to his studies and completed a Master's Degree in mathematics and physics. At the same time, he set up and managed the first Israeli Laboratory for Electronic Music. After he received his Master's Degree and wanted to begin studying for his Doctorate, he was asked by A. de Shalit to become the assistant CEO of the Weitzman Institute. In 1969, when A. de Shalit died, Shalhevet was chosen to be the chairman of the Pugwash group, and he served in this capacity almost to the day he died.

In 1970 he was asked to be director of the Center for Study of the Atom at Nachal Shorek, and about a half year later was asked by the Prime Minister, Golda Meir, to be chairman of the Atomic Energy Committee. In 1976 he returned to the Weitzman Institute where he served in various positions. In 1982 he was asked to return to the Nachal Shorek facility as Director. From 1983 – 1991 at the same time that he served at the Weitzman Institute, he also took on additional tasks for the Government: Chairman of the Committee for Progress in Scientific Education for Youth, Chairman of the of the Academic Committee of the Academy of Music in Jerusalem, Consultant to the Prime Minister in Matters Dealing with Atomic or Nuclear Energy, Chairman of the Israeli Pugwash Group and a member of its International Council.