

## ARIE GRINBAUM

Arie Grinbaum fell in battle in the Negev. He was only twenty-two when he died.

Arie had two brothers and a sister. But at the end of World War II, he remained the only one in his entire family. During the war years, at a very young age, he was exiled to Germany, where he was transferred from one place to another, from one concentration camp to another. After the war he came to Belgium and set his goal: to immigrate to Israel. That's when I first met him, in the training kibbutz in Belgium. He has always been a key man in the group, and everyone loved him very much. With the immigration of the first group from Belgium to Israel, it was clear to all of us that Arie would be among the first, and indeed, he immigrated to Israel in March 1946.



Arie Grinbaum

Half a year later, when we all arrived in the country, we hardly could recognize Arie. He had already managed to become an "*Eretz-Israeli*". Even then, he asked to enlist in *Palmach*, but we on the face of it did not agree to it, because we needed Arie in the group. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, he was sent to a course of squad commanders, and since then we have only seen him during his short vacations.

Arie was one of the first to enlist in the army. He was always a warrior, and he remained a good soldier until his death. We're sure he fought until the last minute.

All the while he was maintaining close contact with friends, taking an interest in everything that was going on in the field. Lately there has also been a lot of talk about discharge from the military; he really wanted to go home. In his last letter from the Negev, he wrote: "I only left you for weeks, but it seems to me that I was not at home for a year. We had a small party for my birthday, but we will soon drink at home..."

He was sure he would return. He did not believe he would be hurt, none of us believed it and to this day we do not believe that Arie fell.

We will not forget you, brother and dear friend...

Yechezkel

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Anyone who knew Arie loved him. He was always cheerful, always ready to help a friend. I met him three and a half years ago, in a training camp in Belgium. When I

got there, Arie was already an old member, and his place was respectable in the group. In his work for Belgian peasants, he was one of the best workers. He longed to immigrate to Israel. He thought a lot and talked about it and even made plans: here we will all immigrate to Israel, build a new settlement, build a house for ourselves after so many years of wandering. He would always talk about it. To start over, he always wanted to create things that he could say about: "Here, we did it with our own hands."

And really – Arie immigrated to Israel among the first in our group – our "*avant-garde*". This is how Arie began to fulfill his vision. While in Kiryat Anavim, he immediately adapted: he learned the language, worked various jobs and traveled a lot in the area. He seldom wrote to us abroad, because he said, "What shall I write? Come, see by yourself and discuss."

When we arrived in Israel after six months, our "*avant-garde*" joined us, and together we went to Heftziba<sup>1</sup>. There we started our new lives, and once again Arie found his central place in our group. He was diligent in his work in the locksmith's shop and active in all areas of our lives, but one thought continually haunted his rest: to enlist, to go to *Palmach*. He could no longer sit still; his mind went out into action. The argument with him was difficult. We explained to him how important he was to group and how much we would miss him going. He was convinced and stayed. Although he only remained for a short time, during this period we came to know how much the Arie we knew abroad had changed. He was an Israeli. With the desire to live and re-create in it what was once.

I do not know – it is possible that the fact that we did not fulfill one hundred percent our ambitions from the training period, and perhaps other thoughts disturbed Arie's rest. As the situation worsened, he went and enlisted. He was first in a course for class commanders and then was recruited for full service. Very often he would come home, taking advantage of every spare moment to spend time at home. He was interested and asked about this and that, and even told us about his life in his new environment. After a successful operation he would tell us, with his face glowing: "Brother, we knocked them fairly, although there were a few wounded, but not terrible. The main thing – we occupied another place." We wondered about his new and strange style, and when we commented on it, he would answer: "What do you think, war is not a child's play. To win you have to make sacrifices..."

Indeed, he too was one of the necessary sacrifices we made for the liberation of the homeland and for the independence of the people.

Arie fell in the Negev – and now – we have lost our good and loyal friend. We will never forget him.

Ch.

### Words of his battalion comrades

Arie has not – neither a voice nor a dialect<sup>2</sup> – he has not.

I have yet to believe that he is gone. He was good and brave – and why did he fall? I still see him by, walking confidently and courageously. Despite everything, I still hear his encouraging, stimulating voice. Could it be that a lead bullet would kill the courage and purity of the soul, longings, hope, and love of a twenty-year-old?...

Arie knew what was before him, knew the dangers lurking. And yet he came out full of faith in the face of the darkness of the horrors he went through. He went for those who followed him, who followed all his deeds, to lift up their spirits, to encourage them.

I will not forget the last night: we progressed in darkness, we listened to the noise coming from there. We walked, crawled a little, ready to attack. Even in these moments, he found the way to each one, encouraged with a good word and merriment.

The Egyptians camped on a hill, with cactus fences spread here and there. The platoon stormed it, grabbing a bridgehead. Another unit burst into the deep gulch. The attack was carried out in one shock, surprising and breaking the resistance. The position was breached, occupied.

For years we had walked through the communication trench, which we had passed safely only a few seconds earlier, and then there was a burst of gunfire. Arie was wounded by two bullets, one of which pierced his abdomen. After he was injured, he shouted at me: "I was injured", he knelt down, fell, and in the morning...

It's hard to define how we feel. On the face of it, the disaster did not dampen our spirits. We got the verdict. We knew it might come. That there will be no escape for victims. And the thing is coming. And yet it is hard, painful... and the heart will not be comforted.

"Bereavement lived in the valleys of our tents  
In our path, bereavement was like a companion –  
Carrying in his palm to the darkness of our mourning  
A candle of grief, a candle of genius – memorial fire."<sup>3</sup>

Moshe TABENKIN  
member of the battalion.

<sup>1</sup> TN: Kibbutz in Northern Israel, between Afula and Beit Shean.

<sup>2</sup> TN: in reference to Rachel Bluwstein's poem *Silence*: "But life has a voice and a dialect..."

<sup>3</sup> TN: from Moshe Tabenkin's "*Eulogy*" poem, in his book *Bits of Lives*.