Since the War of Independence in 1948, Israel has been shaped by the courage and heroism of our soldiers, who elect to place their lives on the line for the State of Israel and the Jewish people. HaMizrachi has chosen just seven stories of bravery, courage and valor from Israel’s early days until today. Stories of Jewish Israeli pride and guts, of average soldiers who just did the right thing.

Midnight Mission in Enemy Territory
June, 1955.

Six IDF soldiers agreed to take part in a top secret mission. The six were taken to an army base in Beer Sheva, where they were shown a map of Sinai and the Straits of Tiran. Without being told, the soldiers knew what had to be done.

In 1955, the Egyptians had blocked the Straits of Tiran, preventing ships from entering or leaving Eilat. An operation was being planned to attack and conquer Sharm-el-Sheikh and from there to reopen the Straits to Israeli passage. The Israelis wanted to send a six-man team deep into enemy lines to check conditions on the ground. Would the topography of a 70km roadless stretch from Eilat to Sharm-el-Sheikh allow an army vehicle to pass?

The team was to arrive in Sinai by boat, but if they had not arrived by 1:00 am, the order was to abort the mission and return. Avoiding a close call with an Egyptian ship, they arrived at 12:30 am. They continued by foot, scouting the desert terrain at night and hiding by day. The information they collected would be critically important to the IDF, but if the Egyptians caught them, their lives would be at stake. They had one chance a night to communicate, when an Israeli plane would fly overhead, low enough to make radio contact.

A few days into their mission, a plane flew overhead with water supplies. As the containers parachuted down, the thirsty team heard them smash on the ground, one by one. Thankfully, the last container landed safely and the parched soldiers drank their fill.

On the final night of the operation, they had important instructions: “Go to the watershed line. We’ll evacuate you from there.”

A group of Egyptian soldiers were rapidly approaching. The Israelis had to leave the area immediately.

They arrived at the pick-up point, where they quickly removed stones and plants so the Israeli plane could land. Half an hour after the team was airlifted out of there, the Egyptians arrived on the scene. Miraculously, the six were saved with their mission accomplished.

Because of the bravery of these six men and the information they gathered, the Israelis were able to plan the attack on Sharm-el-Sheik and successfully lead the Sinai Campaign and Operation Kadesh, freeing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli passage.

Rescue from the Flames
June 7th, 1967.

“Start the truck, there’s a war on!”

That’s how Mordechai Attia, on reserve duty, was woken from a nap.
Mordechai, his wife and two children had fulfilled their lifelong dream and made aliyah only five years earlier from Algeria. Upon arriving in Israel, 24-year-old Mordechai enlisted in the army, where he served for three months before being assigned to the reserves.

On the third day of the Six-Day War, Mordechai was making the rounds between Gaza and Beer Sheva, supplying soldiers with critical equipment. On one of his rides, he saw the truck ahead of him driving straight ahead instead of turning at the junction as it should have. Mordechai honked his horn but it was too late…

The truck had driven over a mine.

Without thinking twice, Mordechai jumped out of his own truck and ran to rescue the soldiers trapped in the blazing vehicle. He dragged the driver’s escort 10 meters to safety, then returned for the driver. His arms were burning and he realized the enemy was now shooting at him.

Mordechai could save himself and take cover, or continue to try and free the driver, whose legs were still stuck under the gas pedal. “I knew I couldn’t leave him there,” said Mordechai.

Pulling with all his might, under heavy fire, Mordechai freed the driver and dragged him to safety, minutes before the truck exploded.

After the war, Mordechai Attia received a decoration for his bravery.

If they raised their heads, the snipers would shoot. Yet they couldn’t stay there without ammunition.

“Get behind me,” Yaakov told his men. Yaakov covered for his fellow soldiers as one by one they rolled back into a ditch behind him.

Yaakov was left alone, with no one to cover for him.

Crawling sideways, he quickly rolled into another ditch.

A ditch he and his team had not cleared of enemy soldiers.

And there, looking into his eyeballs, was a Syrian soldier.

Yaakov shot first, beating his foe by a millisecond. Grabbing his enemy’s gun, Yaakov dashed through the ditch until he reached his comrades. He helped them evacuate the wounded before returning to fight until Tel Faher was under Israeli control.

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Yaakov’s determination and refusal to back down became a symbol of the IDF’s fighting spirit. Through their courageous actions, Yaakov’s team helped pave the way for Israel to liberate the Golan Heights.

The Military Post That Held Back the Syrian Army

On Friday morning, October 6th, Erev Yom Kippur, Second Lieutenant Yossi Gur took charge of Military Post 116 in the southern Golan, replacing the reserve officer who had gone home that morning. Yossi had no idea he would soon be leading Israel’s defense in the Yom Kippur War.

That night, Tzion Ezer, a soldier on guard, heard noises. He climbed to the lookout point and saw what seemed like the entire Syrian Army approaching them in tanks.

The next morning the Syrian tanks began bombarding Post 116. The soldiers stood their ground, and began firing at the tanks. One by one, the Syrian tanks went up in flames.

Still, three of them managed to reach the post.

The first rolled into the gate and straight over a mine; Yossi watched the white powder spill onto the basalt stones but it failed to explode and the Syrians advanced.

Soon Syrian soldiers were jumping out and the cry could be heard, “Syrians in the post!”

Tzion threw a grenade into the Syrian tank as his men attacked the enemy soldiers and managed to clear the post of enemy infiltrators.

They did not yet understand they were at war.

On Sunday at 10 am, 116 received the message that Israel was at war.

Five Syrian tanks approached the post. Yossi felt shrapnel as bullets exploded around him. He aimed, and hit the first Syrian tank. He aimed again, and hit the second. The tanks didn’t explode, but Yossi managed to stop them. Three remaining tanks were advancing as the firing continued.

Yossi was hit in the arm and appointed Tzion to take charge. The Syrians, seeing two of their tanks had been stopped, began to retreat.

The following morning, the Syrians attacked Post 116 again. Tzion heard yelling in Arabic and knew the enemy was right there, in the post. Yossi and two other injured soldiers ran to the bunker, as their comrades once again cleared the post of Syrian soldiers. But Yossi could not sit there while his men were fighting for their lives.

He climbed up and saw the entire valley smoking, realizing the battle was right here on his doorstep. He thought it would take weeks for the IDF to send them supplies but just then, he spotted a jeep driving into the camp. As an Israeli soldier took aim, he yelled, “It’s ours!”

Both Yossi and Tzion received awards for their bravery. Because of their courage and refusal to back down, the small military Post 116 of a handful of soldiers managed to delay the Syrian army from advancing into Israel before backup troops arrived.

Saving His Unit With Shema Yisrael
July 26, 2006.

It was Ro’i Klein’s Hebrew birthday, and Roi, deputy commander of the Golani Brigade’s 51st Battalion, was heavily engaged in the Second Lebanon War. He and his unit were fighting in the Battle of Bint Jbeil, one of the main battles in the war.

Suddenly, Hezbollah terrorists ambushed Ro’i’s unit and threw a hand grenade over the wall near the Israeli soldiers.

Ro’i saw the grenade land, and knew it would explode in a matter of seconds, giving no time for his comrades to take cover.

Ro’i Klein cried out, “Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad!” and
jumped onto the grenade, using his own body to save the lives of his men.

As he lay wounded, Roi ordered medics to first tend to another injured soldier. He knew they couldn’t save him.

Ro’i Klein has become a symbol of heroism, self-sacrifice and Kiddush Hashem. He was awarded the Medal of Courage after his death.

The Heroic Medic

January 8th 2009.

Operation Cast Lead.

On the morning of January 8th, medic Menachem Tzik was in Gaza with his platoon. His deputy commander ordered him to stay behind, as others began to purge the area.

Suddenly, rockets hit the building the soldiers had entered.

“Medic! Medic!”

Menachem rushed into enemy territory, straight into enemy fire.

“Get down!” his deputy commander yelled.

Menachem had no time to get down. He had lives to save.

Realizing he would run faster without it, he dropped his weapon and ran through the bullets whizzing millimeters from him.

To Menachem, it seemed like eternity; he felt as if he were running and running, but not getting there.

When he finally reached the building, he heard his name. “Menachem! Over here!”

Menachem found the wounded soldier, assessed the situation, and realized his hands were already doing what they should.

He helped evacuate the soldier and was soon running back to care for the others.

Keeping Calm

March 8th, 2012.

The Kfir Brigade’s Lavi Battalion received an order to make an arrest in the hostile Arab village of Yata in the South Hebron Hills.

Usually, when there’s an arrest, it takes place at night, and the team receives aerial photos or information the day before, so they can plan ahead.

This time though, it needed to be immediate and during the day.

While the operational team arrested the suspect inside the building, the 14-strong assisting team, including soldier Gal Weingarden, stood guard outside, keeping a safe distance between the building and a mob of about 500 angry Palestinians who had rapidly gathered outside, flinging rocks, Molotov cocktails, iron bars and anything that came to hand at the IDF soldiers.

Suddenly, one of the villagers began walking towards Gal.

Gal ordered him to stop and go back. This was a closed military zone.

To Menachem, it seemed like eternity; he felt as if he were running and running, but not getting there.

Gal ordered him to stop and go back. This was a closed military zone.

The man began to retreat, then ran toward the other soldiers, trying to distract Gal. Suddenly, another Arab jumped Gal with a knife from behind and the first guy came back to grab Gal’s hand.

Gal managed to shake both men off, but not before the knife had cut his throat.

Gal knew he had to stop them before they got lost in the crowd.

He shot four bullets in their direction, managing to hit them both.

Dripping with blood, he staggered to the jeep, collapsing on the floor as another soldier rushed to stop the blood.

Thanks to Gal’s ability to stay calm and act coolly, the two terrorists were arrested and the interrogators exposed a slew of previously unknown terror plots.

In saving his own life, Gal had saved the lives of many others. “Maybe,” he says, “But I don’t think I did anything out of the ordinary.”