Nissim Ginni, 10 years old, the youngest fallen soldier of the IDF

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Yom haAtzmaut celebrates the Declaration of Independence of Israel on May 14, 1948. But that declaration of Independence was the beginning of a very painful war that cost the lives of 1% of the Jewish population of Israel … The day after Independence day, all the armies of the Arab countries began to attack the Jewish population of Israel, which at that time consisted of more or less 650,000 souls. The story of Nissim has to do with the attack against the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Yerushalayim, the Roba Yehudi, by the powerful Jordanian Legion. Nissim Ginni was born in Jerusalem in 1937 or 1938. It is possible that he was born in Hanuka, because among Sepharadim it is common to name a baby born on that holiday "Nissim" (miracles, alluding to the miracles of Hanuka). His father was Ytshaq Ginii, an observant Jew that came from Izmir, Turkey. His mother was Miryam Waqnin, from Morocco. Nissim had two brothers, Nathan and Meir z"l, and one sister, Chaya. Nissim studied in the Talmud Tora of the Old City. 1,600 Jews lived there at the time, in constant tension with their Arab neighbors. Jewish children suffered the permanent bullying of Arab children, but they managed very well to defend themselves.

THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

On May 14, 1948, when Nissim was in the 4th grade, hostilities began. The Old City was blocked, and the Jews living there were isolated, with only 200 young soldiers left and very little ammunition to defend the population. The soldiers resisted as much as they could, but many died or were captured

by the enemy. The siege intensified, and there were fewer and fewer Jewish fighters left. The civilians, then, joined the efforts to defend the city. The situation of the Ginni family was not easy. The father, who had a bakery in Mahane Yehuda, was caught outside the Old City when the blockade began and was not able to enter the Jewish quarter. Nissim's mother, blind in both eyes by a terrible illness, was in charge of her four children. Chaya, the older sister, who was 14 years old, volunteered in Bate Mahase, an improvised infirmary where a few nurses and volunteers treated the wounded. Many children, such as Nathan, Nissim's older brother, who was 12 years old, also volunteered to help. The children brought coffee or food to the soldiers and helped as much as they could.

THE MOST COURAGEOUS CHILD

Nissim, nine or ten years old, also volunteered. Probably due to his skills in the game of "hide and seek", Nissim knew perfectly well all the corners, the shortcuts, and the secret passages of the Old City. Nissim was very mature, awake, and especially brave. Nissim helped the soldiers carrying weapons and ammunition from one to the other. But the most important thing that Nissim was doing was to slip away at night, avoid the enemy sight, and identify and inform the Jewish forces of the movements of the Jordanian troops. Eyewitnesses tell that Nissim often ran under a rain of Jordanian bullets to fulfill his mission, risking his life to find the Jordanian snipers. The intelligence brought by this child resulted in them being absolutely critical of the brave Jewish soldiers, and his actions saved many lives. On May 27, 1948, Iyar 19, after helping the Israeli soldiers for hours, Nissim went home to eat a hot meal. But before he could taste his mom's food, a young man came looking for him: *"Your replacement did not arrive"*, he told him, *"we need you at the observation post."*

SHALL I STAY HOME WHILE MY BROTHERS DIE?

When Nissim was about to leave, his mother, frightened by the

sounds of the increasingly closer bullets, said: “Leave him here; outside is getting very dangerous.” Several witnesses remember what Nissim said to his mother at the time: “□□ □□ □□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□□ ,□□□ □□□□” “What do you want, mom, that I stay at home while others die?” And Nissim left. Nissim arrived at the observation post, near the place where Yeshiba Porat Yosef stands today, next to the Kotel. In a tragic moment, Nissim raised his head, and a Jordanian sniper shot him and mortally wounded him. Nissim was taken to the infirmary of Bate Mahase, where he was treated by his own sister Chaya, who desperately tried to stop the blood. But she did not have the appropriate medical equipment to help Nissim, and the next day Nissim Ginni died of his wounds.

THE FALLING OF THE OLD CITY

That day, after resisting heroically for 14 days, the Rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim, Ribbi Benzion Hazan, raised the white flag, and the city surrendered to the Jordanians. The Jordanians took about 500 Jews prisoners, and the rest of the Jews were taken out of the city. The body of Nissim and seven other deceased soldiers remained in the infirmary of Bate Mahase.

THE BURIAL of NISSIM GINNI

In June 1967, the Israeli Army B”H reconquered Yerushalayim. An elderly Arab citizen asked to speak with the highest-ranking officer. The elder took the officer to a corner of the city and said, *“The bodies of a few Jews are buried here. I buried them myself in 1948. The Jordanians wanted to burn the bodies, but I did not allow them.”* The army removed the bodies, but the fighters could not be identified. Except for one: Nissim Ginni, because he still had his baby teeth … The remains of Nissim were taken by order of Rabbi Shelomo Goren to the cemetery of the Mount of Olives, Har HaZetim. After a few years, the Israeli Army recognized Nissim Ginni as the youngest fallen soldier to have served in the Israel Defense

Forces, and a plaque was erected in his memory in the Har Herzl military cemetery. See HERE

