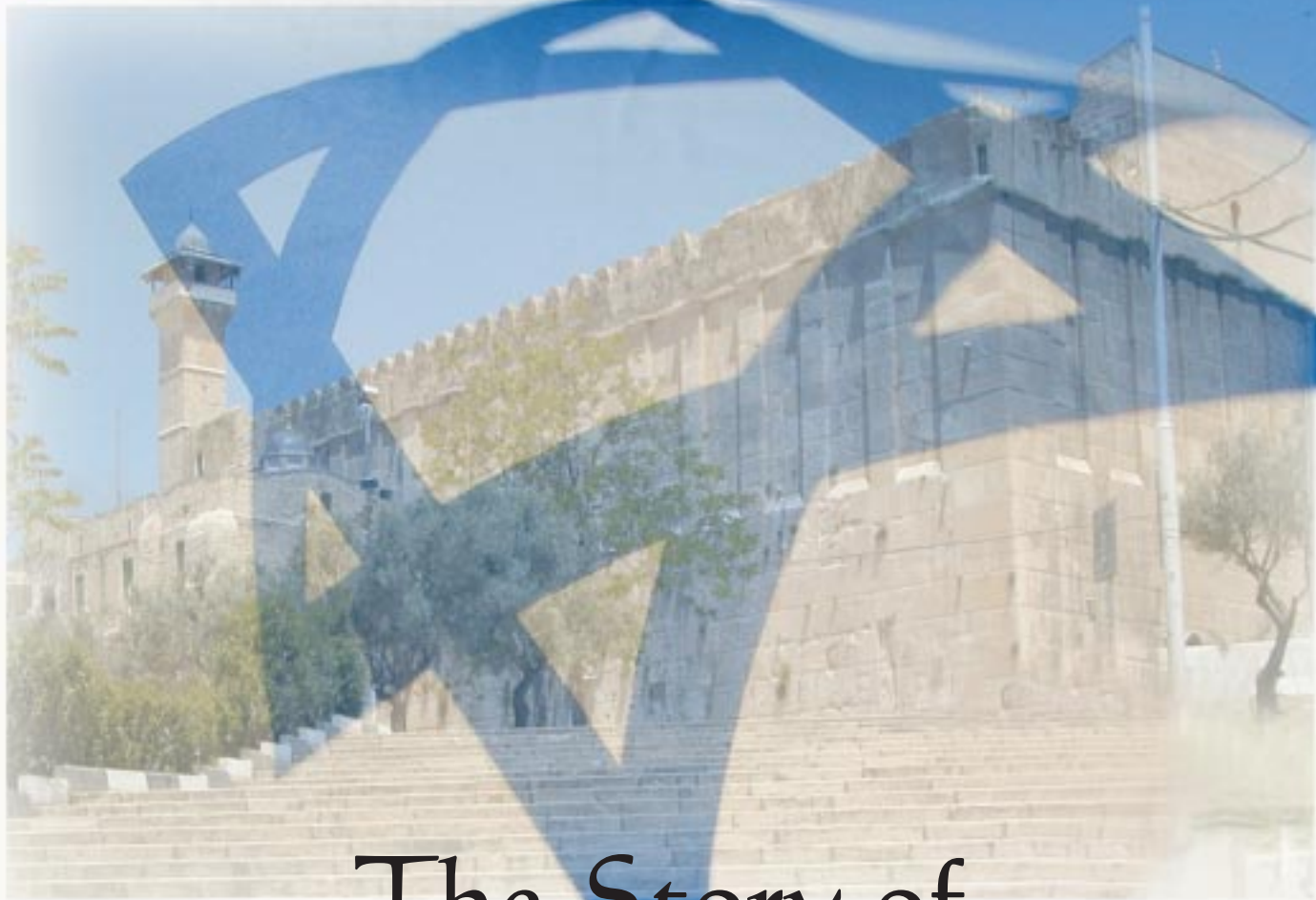


Israel



The Story of
HEBRON:
SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS
FROM TARPAT (5689)

In commemoration of the Hebron Massacre of 1929
BY TOBY KLEIN GREENWALD

An Israeli flag reflected off Me'arat Hamachpelah. All photographs are from the Hebron Community Archives; the Israeli National

A Brief History of Hebron



Circa 1800 BCE:

(Hebrew year: 1948) Avraham is born. He purchases Me'arat Hamachpelah when his wife, Sarah, dies. It becomes the eventual resting place of Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivka and Yaakov and Leah. Adom and Chavah are also buried in the Cave.

Circa 1010-970 BCE:

King David reigns in Hebron for seven-and-a-half years before moving to Jerusalem.

Circa 40 BCE:

(Second Temple Period) Herod builds a majestic structure over Me'arat Hamachpelah.

322-638 CE:

The Byzantines rule, and the Jewish settlement in Hebron disappears.

Circa 638 CE:

Muslims capture Hebron, and the Jewish settlement begins to renew itself.

1100 CE:

Crusaders capture the city and expel the Jews.

1260-1517:

The Mamluks—Muslims who expelled the Crusaders from Palestine—make Hebron their capital, and the Jewish settlement is once again restored.



Arabs destroyed the shul during the massacre.

When the tears [of God] fall into the great sea, the sound of the tears falling among the waves reaches Me'arat Hamachpelah and awakens the Forefathers. They rise, surmising that the Almighty wants to destroy the world. Soon a voice is heard: "Do not fear, holy and beloved ones! It is for you that God remembers your children and wants to redeem them" (Zohar Bereishit, III:172:2).

On August 23, 1929, the day before the Hebron Massacre, rumors were circulating about anticipated riots, but of the 700 Jews who lived in Hebron, most did not believe anything bad would happen to them. They considered their relations with their Arab neighbors to be strong, based upon years of friendship and shared experi-

Toby Klein Greenwald is a writer, editor and community theater and film director. She lives in Efrat with her husband and her children. She was a regular "Shabbat volunteer" of the Jewish community in the memshal—the Hebron Military Compound [see timeline]—and lived for a while in Kiryat Arba. She would like to dedicate this article to those who sanctified the name of God with their deaths, and to those who sanctify the name of God, every day, with their lives.

ences. Moreover, the Arab governor of Hebron, Abdullah Kardos, had promised the Jews that they would not be harmed.

According to first-hand accounts recorded in *Sefer Hevron*,¹ the most comprehensive book on the history of Hebron, some Jewish notables in the city—among them Eliezer Dan Slonim, the highly respected manager of the Hebron branch of the Anglo-Palestine Bank, and the son of Rav Yaakov Yosef Slonim, the chief Ashkenazi rabbi of Hebron—met to discuss the situation. When they couldn't resolve their differences of opinion, they went to consult with Rav Meir Franco, the chief Sephardi rabbi of Hebron. Together they decided to bring the Jews who were scattered in outlying areas to homes in the city center, where they thought it would be safer.

As they walked out of the meeting, they were met with a barrage of stones thrown by Arab youths. Yet, shortly after the Arabs finished their Friday prayers, Arab notables came to Slonim to reassure him that no harm would come to the Jews of Hebron.

These notables were either misinformed or misinforming. At 2:30 that Friday afternoon, a young Arab on a bicycle, coming from Jerusalem, called

out to the Arabs of Hebron that the Jews were murdering thousands of Arabs in Jerusalem. Other Arabs in cars followed him, shouting that Jews were attacking Arabs (rather than vice versa, as it was in reality).

According to *The Martyrs of Hebron*, written by Leo Gottesman, who was a student at the Slabodka yeshivah in Hebron but was not present at the time of the massacre,² the author's

The riots were hardly spontaneous.

brother was on his way back to Hebron for Shabbat in a cab filled with Arabs, when he saw them eyeing him and snickering. He realized that something was afoot; when his hat blew out an open window, he used it as an excuse to leave the cab and escape back to Jerusalem.

The riots were hardly spontaneous. The mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, (who would, in the ensuing years, offer to help Hitler) had been

preaching venomously against the Jews. In 1924, the Muslim Wakf instigated a dispute about the Jews' connection to the Kotel; in 1928, the mufti incited the Arabs further by claiming that the Jews were trying to take control of the mosques on the Temple Mount. The Muslims argued that the Kotel was holy to them because Mohammed had tied his horse there before he went up to the Temple Mount. (To this day, in fact, Muslims call the pogroms of 1929, "the pogroms of the horse.")³ On *erev Tishah B'Av* 1929, a week before the Hebron Massacre, the Jews held a large demonstration in the Kotel plaza, in an attempt to affirm the Jewish connection to the holy site.

In the aftermath of the demonstration, the mufti inspired riots around the country. Since the British were blatantly pro-Arab, he was able to stir up the riots unhindered. In Motza (a suburb of Jerusalem), for example, there was the cruel murder of the Makleff family. They were murdered the day before the Hebron Massacre. One of the three children who survived—Mordechai Makleff—became the fourth chief of staff of the Israeli



The Hadassah building, where Arabs were treated free of charge, was broken into, and all the medical equipment and pharmaceutical supplies were destroyed.

1266:

The Muslims decree that Jews are not to enter Me'arat Hamachpelah, and can only go up the first seven steps outside. This decree is strictly enforced until the liberation of Hebron in 1967.

1517-1917:

(Ottoman Rule) At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Jewish population of Hebron grows as some of the Jews expelled from Spain arrive. Some of the most important kabbalists of Tzefat move to Hebron. Kabbalah and asceticism become prevalent in Hebron for three hundred years.

1800s:

Chabad *Chassidim* develop the community. By the late nineteenth century, the Jewish population reaches 1,500.

1917-1948:

(World Wars and British Rule) The flourishing period of the Jewish settlement in Hebron, with 1,700 Jews, comes to an end with the outbreak of World War I. Young men are conscripted into the Turkish army, the channels of financial assistance are blocked, and hunger and plagues afflict the community.

1925:

The Slabodka yeshivah from Lithuania is established under the leadership of Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein. Thanks to 150 Slabodka students, the Jewish population rises to 700 in 1929. (At the time, 18,000 Arabs live in Hebron).

August 24, 1929:

(The 18th day of Av, 5689) Sixty-nine Jews are murdered by their Arab neighbors in a brutal massacre. Among the dead are yeshivah students from New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Memphis, Canada and Lithuania, in addition to those born in the Land of Israel.

1931:

Thirty-five Jewish families resettle Hebron, despite threats from the Arabs and British dissatisfaction.

1936:

Pogroms break out and continue until 1939. Known as “The Arab Revolt,” the pogroms leave more than 600 Jews dead throughout the land. On April 23, 1936, in the middle of the night, British authorities, fearing another Tarpat (the Massacre of 1929/5689), evacuate the Jewish inhabitants of Hebron.

1948:

Israel becomes a state. Hebron falls under Jordanian rule for the next nineteen years.

1967:

The State is attacked, and Hebron is liberated. The local Arabs and the Jordanian authorities have almost entirely destroyed the Hebron Jewish Quarter and the cemetery. The country is in a state of “positive shock,” as Jewish historic locations that were off-limits for so many years are now under Jewish control.

Pesach 1968:

A group of Jews dedicated to resettling Hebron, led by Rabbi Moshe and Miriam Levinger and Rabbi Eliezer and Ruth Waldman, hold a Seder in the Park Hotel in Hebron. Later, they move to the *memshal*, the Hebron Military Compound, on the hill overlooking Hebron. Known as *mitnachalei Hevron*, the settlers are a source of pride to many Israelis and Jews all over the world. Jews from all over Israel make pilgrimages to the Me’arah to pray.

Hebron—one of the locations the Jews were forced to abandon in 1948—becomes one of the first places to which Jews return (along with the Old City of Jerusalem and Kfar Etzion, of the Etzion Bloc).

1971:

A new Jewish neighborhood, Kiryat Arba, is founded on a hill overlooking Hebron proper.

Rosh Hodesh Iyar 1979:

In the middle of the night, a group of women and children from Kiryat Arba, led by Miriam Levinger, move back into the Beit Hadassah building—a building that had known terrible destruction fifty years

Defense Forces (IDF).

According to Aryeh Klein, who has lived in Hebron since 1985 and is currently writing a book about the massacre, the mufti was pragmatic. He wanted the riots carried out in the

Frenzied Arab mobs, with axes, knives and iron bars, screamed, “Kill the Jews!”

mountainous areas such as Jerusalem, Tzefat and Hebron, not in the lowlands near the sea. “The mufti’s intention was to remove the Jews from the mountains. He thought that once that was done, getting them out of the shore area would be easier, as those who dwelled in the mountains were thought to be stronger,” says Klein.

Hebron Jews were particularly vulnerable since they had made the city



Portrait of Benjamin Hurwitz, an American yeshivah student who was killed during the massacre. Photo courtesy of Reuben Rudman



The son of Eliezer Dan Slonim, one-and-a-half-year-old Shlomo Slonim, the sole survivor of his immediate family, photographed here with his aunt.

more modern and economically prosperous. While the Arabs who wanted modernity regarded the Jewish presence as a blessing, those who didn’t despised the Jews and led the rioting.⁴

An angry Arab mob gathered at the home of the deputy police commander of Hebron and took to the streets. At the same time, the elderly Rav Slonim was on his way to the British police commander of Hebron. He was attacked and beaten by the mob. Another British police commander, who stood behind the mob, was approached by a Jewish woman and asked to intervene. “It’s usually the Jews who are to blame in these things,” he said, stirring up the Arab crowd even more.⁵ Rav Slonim turned to an Arab police commander for help, but he shoved the rabbi away with his horse.

It was almost Shabbat. Some Arabs broke into the Slabodka yeshivah—Yeshivas Hevron⁶—which was, merci-

All day we hurried from house to house to gather the dead and the wounded and bring them to the local hospital. We had completed the search in the house of Rabbi Moshe Grodzinski when I was startled to see a path of blood from the steps leading to the roof. I followed the path, and there I found Dov Tebankin; he looked white and was lying in a pool of blood. With the help of friends, I carried him to the hospital. There the Arab doctor declared that Dov was about to die and commanded us to place him in the room with the dead.

When we returned in the morning, we found Dov still alive in the room of the dead. The doctor permitted us to bring him to the room of the wounded. There he lay until the wounded were removed to Jerusalem. He was hospitalized for several months. Eventually, he recovered and lived for many years, becoming a well-known rabbi in New Jersey.

[Testimony of Rabbi Yitzchak Toker, in S. Ezrachi, *HaMashgiach* (New York, 2001), 191.]

fully, almost empty; of the 150 students, many were either on summer vacation⁷ or were preparing for Shabbat.⁸ The mob murdered the one student they found there—Shmuel Rosenholtz, a conscientious, young yeshivah *bachur* who had prepared for Shabbat early and had come to the yeshivah to review the *parashah*. As the Arabs made their way back through the streets, an Arab who had participated in the murder of Rosenholtz boasted, “Too bad we went to the yeshivah and found only one boy. Tomorrow the number will be higher.”⁹

A terrified quiet ensued. But the morning hours brought bloody and brutal horror. Frenzied Arab mobs, with axes, knives and iron bars, screamed, “Kill the Jews!” They broke into homes and stabbed and mutilated the Jews they found. The mob that rampaged through the city included respected Arab merchants and “good” neighbors who killed their friends, clients and business associates. Torah scrolls were burned. The Hadassah building,¹⁰ where Arabs were treated free of charge, was broken into, and all the medical equipment and the pharmaceutical supplies were destroyed.

A video database of survivor testimonies appears on the web site of the present-day Hebron community (www.hebron.com). The testimonies (in Hebrew) were compiled by David Wilder, the site’s creator. The following is from that collection:¹¹

Rachel Graziani: *On that same black Shabbat, when Ima took out the cholent, we heard screams, and we looked through the window and saw a mad mob of Arabs, and Father moved us away from the window and pushed something against the door. They didn’t succeed in getting through the door, and*

The mob murdered the one student they found there—a conscientious, young yeshivah bachur who had prepared for Shabbat early.

then—with the belief that they were friends and would do us no harm—he [Father] said, “I’ll open the door if you take anything you want and don’t hurt anyone.” And he opened it. They pulled him outside, and leading the mob was his “friend” from work....[Later] when the British took us away, I saw my father downstairs, murdered. I will not forget that.

I remember my mother [holding] my brother, only a few months old, and an

earlier—in the heart of historic Hebron. For two months no one is allowed in, and anyone who leaves cannot return, while the Begin government—concerned about security and political issues—decides whether or not to allow Jews to live in the heart of Hebron. Soon the women and children are allowed in and out, but no one else is allowed to join them. They live this way for more than a year.

February 1980:

Yehoshua Saloma, a yeshivah student from Kiryat Arba who made *aliyah* from Denmark, is murdered in the vicinity of Beit Hadassah. Subsequently, the Begin government decides, in principle, to allow Jews to live in historic Hebron, but the decision is not implemented.

May 1980:

Six yeshivah men and boys are shot dead by Arab terrorists who were in a building across from Beit Hadassah. Later that week the Israeli government issues official authorization for the renewal of a Jewish community in historic Hebron and allows the renewal to actually begin.

1981:

David Kapulsky is stabbed near Beit Romano. The building is repossessed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and in 1982, Yeshivat Shavei Hevron is established there.

1984:

Jews finally return to the ancient Hebron of Avraham, on a hill overlooking Hebron proper, and establish a small community in Tel Rumeida. (*Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul 1998/5758*—Rav Shlomo Raanan, the grandson of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, is murdered in his home in Tel Rumeida. A yeshivah continues to thrive in his home today.)

1987:

The *intifada* breaks out; life becomes difficult for the Jewish community in Hebron. Nevertheless, it continues to grow.

December 1993:

Mordecai Lapid and his son Shalom are murdered in Kiryat Arba in a drive-by shooting, the first victims of terror following the signing of the Oslo accords. The first doctor to arrive at the scene is Baruch

Goldstein, a close friend of Mordecai who holds him in his arms as he dies.

Purim 1994:

Goldstein kills twenty-nine Arabs in Me'arat Hamachpelah. Before the episode, Brigadier General Shaul Mofaz, then the officer commanding IDF forces in Judea and Samaria, warns the mayor and councilors of Kiryat Arba that Hamas is planning a large-scale terror attack. Goldstein is warned by the IDF medical officer of the regiment in the Hebron area to prepare the emergency clinic in Kiryat Arba for many Jewish casualties. Following the incident, the fact of the impending Hamas attack is widely reported in the press.

January 17, 1997:

Redeployment takes place in Hebron. Israel gives over 80 percent of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority in exchange for "peace."

March 26, 2001:

Shalhevet Pass, a ten-month-old baby, is murdered by sniper fire while in her carriage. The fire comes from the Abu Sneineh neighborhood on the opposite hill and is aimed directly at her.

Chanukah 2002:

Twelve soldiers and civilians on security duty are murdered in an ambush. They are ambushed while protecting Jewish worshippers making their way home from Me'arat Hamachpelah. Among the dead is Colonel Dror Weinberg, one of the highest-ranking religious officers in the IDF, slated to become the next commander of the paratroopers.

Since the resettling of Hebron in 1968, approximately fifty Jewish citizens and soldiers have been murdered by Arabs in the Hebron/Kiryat Arba area. About thirty of those deaths have occurred in the last four years.

Today there are approximately 850 Jews living in historic Hebron and 6,500 in Kiryat Arba.

**Much of the information is from the Encyclopaedia Judaica; Aryeh Klein, who is writing a book about Hebron, and Noam Arnon, chairman and spokesman of the Hebron Jewish community.*

Arab tried to stab her, and my mother said, "Aren't you afraid of God? He won't forget that you are going to kill a woman and a boy"; and [the Arab] left her [alone]. My grandmother, whom someone had tried to rape—she was beautiful, but she was also strong—also said, "Aren't you afraid of God?" and he left her alone. It



Photo: Reuben Rudman

After the massacre, the dead were buried in five graves, which became known as Kever Achim, Tomb of the Brothers. At some point between 1948 and 1967, when Hebron was under Jordanian rule, Arabs dug up the gravesite and planted a vegetable garden where the graves had been. Pictured here is the Tomb of the Brothers in 1968.



Photo: www.sassontiram.com

After the Six Day War, the Israelis rebuilt the cemetery. Pictured here is the Tomb of the Brothers in 1990.

was a horrifying scene. We went up to the roof and hid there. We heard the screams; we heard everything; we were like terrified rabbits, hiding...

The mob went from house to house. The British and Arab policemen stood by, watching the slaughter. Some of the Arab policemen spurred the rioters on¹² or participated in the riots.¹³ Thinking they would be safer, many people had gathered in the home of Rav Eliezer Dan Slonim. However, in that house alone, twenty-two men—still in prayer shawls—women and children were slaughtered, including Eliezer Dan himself, his wife, Hannah, one of their children and Hannah's parents. Hannah's sister and a yeshivah

Thinking they would be safer, many people had gathered in the home of Eliezer Dan Slonim.

student were miraculously saved because he shoved her into a closet and held her mouth closed so she wouldn't scream when she saw through the crack, her parents being murdered.¹⁴

Many sought refuge with Slonim since he was known to have good connections with both the British and the Arabs; but the mob was specifically

A day before the Hebron Massacre, Moshe Goldshmidt, the Hebron butcher, went to Jerusalem to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchak Schneersohn), who had come to Israel for a visit. After speaking with the venerable sage, Goldshmidt asked the rebbe to bless him that he be zoche (privileged) to see him again. The rebbe blessed him. Goldshmidt left the room but remembered that he had forgotten one of his sefarim (holy books). As he went back in to retrieve the sefer, he again bid the rebbe farewell. Later, on his way back to Hebron, Goldshmidt realized that the rebbe's berachah had already been fulfilled, as he had seen him again. He wanted to go back and get another berachah, but he realized he didn't have the time. He was killed the next day.

[Story told by David Wilder, Hebron spokesman for the foreign press.]

Hebron Liberated

I arrived in Israel in July 1967, one month after the Six Day War. On my third day in the country, I went with several friends to the newly liberated Hebron and noticed something odd as we neared the city. There were white sheets or white pieces of clothing fluttering from every single rooftop. A soldier in the car with us explained that the sheets were "symbols of surrender." The Arabs of Hebron were sure that when a Jewish army returned, the soldiers would pay them back for what they had done during Tarpat (the Massacre of 1929). Hebron, explained the soldier, was liberated without one shot being fired.

What a glorious day it was! To walk freely through the streets of Hebron, filled with smiling Israeli soldiers, surrounded by Arab children—whose fathers or grandfathers may have been among the murderers of Tarpat—chasing after the visitors to sell them sweets or drums made from rust-colored pottery. I remember the soldier who showed us around the city and took us through Me'arat Hamachpelah.

His name was Avraham.
TKG

looking to murder the rich and the connected.¹⁵ In another house, the mob gouged out the eyes of Gershon Ben-Zion, the Hebron pharmacist, and stabbed him over and over again; they cut off his wife's hands and killed her. They also tried to torture his daughter, but she resisted with all her might, and they murdered her "in a strange and cruel way."¹⁶

The survivors remained under the eyes of the British for two days, without food, lying in blood and filth, in deep shock, until they were finally able to pull themselves together and go buy food.



A cartoon that appeared sometime after 1929, showing a British officer dining and saying, "All is quiet sir," while Jews are being attacked by Arabs. Illustration: Nahum Gutman, courtesy of Menachem Gutman

Yosef Lazarovski, whose account appears on the above-mentioned web site, recounts the following:¹⁷

I remember the seriousness in my father's eyes as he looked at me and my two sisters... as if he was thinking, "What awaits them? How will I protect them?" The sorrow, the quiet, the hushed tones, and then walking through the night with pots, to the home of Slonim, not far. I remember the walk. We spoke quietly, I didn't understand why; I felt the tension in the air, but I was afraid to ask why. ...And then we went into one of the

rooms [in Slonim's house]...after we put down our pots with our food—our cholent, our soup, our gefilte fish—in the kitchen...From our family there were my grandfather, parents, three children and my brother, a 16-year-old yeshivah bachur. And then, the shouts of the Arabs on the one hand—"Kill the Jews!" "Allah akbar!" [God is great!]-and from the other side, "Shema Yisrael!" And then I remember a brown-skinned Arab with a large mustache breaking through the door. He had a large knife and an ax that he swung



The destruction of the Jewish Quarter in Hebron as seen in 1967.



In September 1929, the Arabs distributed a paper throughout Palestine titled “Scandals of Jewish Propaganda,” where they claimed that “no atrocities [occurred] in Hebron.”

through the doorjamb until he broke through. [He was] full of fury, screaming, “Allah akbar!” and “Itbach al Yahud!” [Slaughter the Jews!] I understood all this; my grandfather tried to hold my hand, then [he tried] to push me aside [and hide me], screaming, “Shema Yisrael” ...and then I remember another Arab... with an ax that he brought down on my grandfather’s neck....

Throughout the hills of Hebron, the screams of the tortured and maimed Jews mixed with the shrieks of the satanic mob, who was “howling like wild animals over their prey.”¹⁸

There were also stories of Arabs who risked their own lives to save Jews. Rivka Slonim Burg—the daughter of Rav Slonim and the sister of Eliezer Dan Slonim—recalls¹⁹ that before the massacre there were good relations with the Arabs in the area. “We were even invited to each other’s *semachot* [joyous occasions].” She was only eight years old when she hid behind Abu Shaker, the Arab neighbor who stood in the doorway of her family’s home in Hebron, protecting her and the rest of her immediate family from the mob. Rav Slonim and his family lived in a

two-family house, and Abu Shaker was their landlord. “When our landlord heard that something was happening in the city, he came and stood in the entrance to the house,” recalls Burg. Abu Shaker told the marauders that they would pass through the door to murder the Jews over his dead body. “We heard what he said [to the mob] while he stood at the entrance. They [the Arab mob] wounded him, but they didn’t go into the house.

“After the massacre, the British took everyone to the police station. But my father, a *rav*, would not ride there on Shabbat,” says Burg. “So we went, and we saw bodies, pieces of limbs and blood along the way.”

Rav Slonim died in 1937, in mourning for his family and his community. Letters reprinted in *Sefer Hevron* reveal that after the massacre Rav Slonim persisted in trying to

**Before 1929,
members of the
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British would pro-
tect them.**

restore a Jewish presence in Hebron. Unfortunately, he was not successful.

Burg, who spent the rest of her childhood in Jerusalem, later married (the late) Minister Yosef Burg of the National Religious Party (Mizrachi). Right after the Six Day War, when Hebron was liberated from Jordan, she returned, with her husband, to visit the city of her youth. There she looked for the family that had saved her. “All the [original] residents of the city had run away during the Six Day War because they were afraid that the Jews would take revenge, but we found one of the sons of Abu Shaker who had stayed to watch over the family’s possessions,” says Burg. (He has since

died.) “We—my husband, my sister and I—all stood around him. Suddenly, he asked, ‘Where is Rivkale?’ He was very emotional.

“Not very much is left of my Hebron,” Burg says. “The Arabs destroyed the home of my married brother, Eliezer Dan Slonim. My school had also been in that area. The Arabs built a shopping area there.”

Burg is the mother of Avrum Burg, who is identified with the more extreme end of Israel’s left-wing Labor Party. Do her children still have some connection to Hebron? “I don’t think so,” says Burg. “I was asked many times if I would go back; but all my [good] memories of growing up took place in Jerusalem. I have only traumatic memories of Hebron.”

Abu Shaker’s compassion was the exception rather than the rule.

While Burg was huddling with her family in the British police station, the family of Benjamin Hurwitz, across the ocean, was not yet aware that their beloved nineteen-year-old son was among the murdered.²⁰

Born on May 4, 1910, in New York City, Hurwitz attended Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Joseph. His father, Rabbi Yekusiel Raphael Hurwitz, who had learned in the Volozhin yeshivah in Europe, was an ardent Zionist who spoke Hebrew with his children.

After graduation, Benjamin Hurwitz went to Eretz Yisrael, where he continued his studies at Yeshivas Hevron. Two days before the massacre, Hurwitz wrote a letter to his father. Some excerpts follow:

...How terrible are the happenings that occur daily in Jerusalem, our holy city in our Holy Land.

There are attacks on the Jews, the [British] government ignores them, ...and the world is quiet. Is this why we have returned to rebuild our desolate land? Have we returned to see our sons killed? We hoped to build our land, and the land has been transformed into a country for the English....

...They appointed a brutal, Jew-hating officer to be in charge of permitting Jews [to enter] the Western Wall. On

Yom Kippur, the holy Day of Atonement, he restricted access. On Lag B’Omer he beat a Jew. Thirty witnesses to the beating came to court, and the presiding judge stated there was insufficient proof to indict him. Can you imagine, thirty witnesses are not enough!... On Shabbat there were many attacks by Arabs on the Jews. One young man was stabbed and died that night. Then on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, there were more attacks on the Jews in various places, and the British did nothing.... Jews are hit, they complain to the British police who ignore them, although at times they incarcerate the Jew who was hit and free the Arab who attacked him.

...The funeral of the boy who was stabbed on Shabbat was held this morning [in Jerusalem]. A large group accompanied the body, and as they passed the main post office and started to head towards the Jaffa Gate, the police started to direct them towards the Damascus Gate. Suddenly, the British officers started to hit the Jews brutally, terribly brutally. Jews, old and young, were hit and started to run. The British are more brutal than the Cossacks. At least twelve people were hospitalized in Hadassah Hospital. Whoever hears this will not believe it.... The Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael is terribly agitated, and, especially in Jerusalem, the condition is bad. And who knows what today will bring?

During the massacre, Hurwitz took refuge in the home of an Arab who had been a friend. It is unclear whether he was killed by the friend or by another Arab. (In memory of their son, the Hurwitzes established the Benjamin Hurwitz Memorial Prize, which is still awarded to outstanding students at Yeshiva University’s Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies.)

When the mob was through, there were sixty-nine dead²¹ and scores wounded; more than twenty²² of the dead were yeshivah students. The surviving Jews were taken to the police headquarters—located in Beit Romano—and from there, the wounded and dead were removed to the gov-

ernment health ministry building. According to *Sefer Hevron*, the survivors remained under the eyes of the British for two days, without food, lying in blood and filth, in deep shock, until they were finally able to pull themselves together and go buy food.

The Arab doctors in the government health ministry building were not interested in helping the wounded. Thirty-six hours after the massacre, a British surgeon with an assistant and two nurses came from Jerusalem to take care of the scores of wounded. Eventually the survivors were taken to Hadassah Hospital, then on Straus Street in Jerusalem, where they were met by hundreds of anguished Jews who came

**In spite of
everything,
the sounds of
Torah and
Jewish life ring
out again
in Hebron.**

to mourn, and to comfort them.²³

On Sunday evening the Jews wanted to start burying their dead in Hebron. Five graves were dug. The graves became known as *Kever Achim* (Tomb of the Brothers).

At some point between 1948 and 1967, when Hebron was under Jordanian rule, Arabs dug up the gravesite and planted a vegetable garden on the site where the graves had been. After the Six Day War, the Israelis rebuilt the cemetery and reconstructed the gravestones.

One week after the massacre, twenty-four Jews were murdered in Tzefat before the British intervened. The Arabs began to burn the Jewish Quarter in Tzefat, but the Jews of Tzefat were stronger and more organized than those in Hebron; when the British brought trucks to take them

away, as they had done with the Jews of Hebron, the Tzefat Jews insisted on staying in their burnt homes.

After the massacre, which came to be known as “*Meoraot Tarpat*” (The Events of 5689—the Hebrew year of the massacre), Rav Franco and Rav Slonim made a list of those Arabs who had helped save Jews during the tragic event. The list is published, along with other documents, in *Sefer Hevron*. Out of a community of 18,000 Arabs, there are nineteen names on that list.

Sefer Hevron also notes that only five Arabs were brought to trial. An Englishman and an Arab served as the judges; a relative of the Jerusalem mufti was the prosecutor. Sheikh Talab Maraka, the leader of the murderous mobs, was given a two-year sentence but sat in jail for only one month. The British used various legal tricks in order to bring as few murderers as possible to trial, but three Arabs were hung in Hebron. These Arabs are considered national heroes by the Palestinians, and during the first *intifada*, which commenced in 1987, Arabs throughout Judea and Samaria held a strike day in their memory. Additionally, a special memorial was held for them in Hebron.²⁴

The British censored all newspapers and did not allow anything to be printed about the events of Tarpat, officially because it “would encourage other pogroms.” However, in an ironic twist, pamphlets and books were not censored, so newspapers circumvented the censorship by producing special pamphlets, such as “*Davar Hayamim Haelah*” (The Word on These Days),²⁵ published by *Davar*.

In September 1929, the Secretaries of the Arab Executive distributed a paper throughout Palestine and the world titled “Scandals of Jewish Propaganda,” which stated that “no mutilations” and “no atrocities in Hebron” occurred. It also accused the Jews of publishing lies about the Arabs of Hebron to “deceive public opinion, collect more money and reflect [negatively] on the dignity and honor of the Arabs.”

Tarpat was a landmark in the history of the *yishuv*. Before 1929, members



Soldiers dancing, celebrating Jewish life in Hebron today. Photo: David Wilder.

of the *yishuv* thought that the British would protect them. After Tarpat, the Jews understood that they would have to take care of themselves, and the Haganah, which had been a small organization, began to fulfill a military function for the first time.²⁶

Today there is a small museum in Hebron commemorating the events of Tarpat. It was donated by Rebbetzin Gitl Rosensweig of Toronto in the early 1990s in memory of her husband, Rabbi Feivel Rosensweig. In a cruel twist of irony, Gitl's son-in-law, David Rosenzweig, was murdered by skinheads in Toronto on July 14, 2002. Hatred knows no boundaries.

The story of Hebron, like the story of the Jewish people, is one of contrasts, and there are some things that never change. In Hebron, Jews, with their religious fervor and strong desire for peace, continue to live next to some Muslims who are full of violence and hatred. The kindness of Rivka Burg's Arab landlord notwithstanding, the stories of Benjamin Hurwitz, Yosef Lazarovski and Rachel Graziani were the norm.

Today there is a small but feisty Jewish community in the heart of Hebron, living in homes that were once public²⁷ Jewish property, or in

new homes built on grounds that were once public Jewish property.

Two hundred and fifty yeshivah students study in Yeshivat Shavei Hebron in Beit Romano, where the survivors of Tarpat had once gathered. Seventy of them are *kollel* students who live with their families in Hebron or Kiryat Arba. A little over a year ago, on the fourth of Adar Bet (March 8), Rabbi Eli Horowitz, the most veteran rabbi in Yeshivat Shavei Hebron, and his wife, Dina, a teacher in the Ulpana in Kiryat Arba, were murdered by an Arab terrorist while sitting at their Shabbat table in their home in Kiryat Arba.

In spite of everything, the sounds of Torah and Jewish life ring out again in Hebron, even stronger than they did before the events of Tarpat. The Hebron settlers exhibit extraordinary belief, fervent dedication and loyalty to "Ir HaAvot" (the City of our Patriarchs).

But the Jews of Hebron are besieged daily. They will need the dedication, the moral support and the prayers of world Jewry to withstand the trials in the years ahead. **JA**

Notes

1. Edited by Oded Avisar, (Jerusalem, 1970). The chapter describing the massacre and its aftermath is called "Megillat Hadamim" or "The Scroll of Blood," and is based on

first-hand accounts that were published soon after the massacre in newspapers such as *Ha'aretz*, *Doar Hayom*, *Davar* and *Kol Yisrael*.

2. The book, written in 1930, is available at <http://www.hebron.org.il/pics/tarpat/martyrs.htm>.

3. Aryeh Klein, telephone conversation with Toby Klein Greenwald, 30 March 2004.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Sefer Hevron*, 411.

6. The yeshivah was founded in 1925 by Knesses Yisrael of Slabodka, Lithuania.

7. Klein, interview.

8. *Sefer Hevron*, 411.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Called so because of the doctors and nurses from Hadassah Hospital who worked there.

11. Translation from the Hebrew by Toby Klein Greenwald.

12. *Sefer Hevron*, 412.

13. Klein, interview.

14. Gottesman, *The Martyrs of Hebron*.

15. Klein, interview.

16. *Sefer Hevron*, 413.

17. Translation from the Hebrew by Toby Klein Greenwald.

18. *Sefer Hevron*, 413.

19. Rivka Slonim Burg, telephone conversation with Toby Klein Greenwald, 15 February 2004.

20. Much of the information concerning Benjamin Hurwitz is based on Professor Reuben Rudman's web site (<http://home.adelphi.edu/~rudman/BHPage.html>) and on correspondence between Toby Klein Greenwald and Professor Rudman in February 2004. Had Hurwitz lived, he would have been Rudman's uncle.

21. Some say sixty-seven.

22. Some say twenty-four.

23. *Sefer Hevron*, 419.

24. Klein, interview.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. Some of the Jewish property in Hebron was owned by the Jewish community. This property—which included the whole Hebron Jewish Quarter—had been built with donations from abroad.