

Juda, Son of Cwi-Zeew Sztajnbrecher (Chatzav¹)



Juda Chatzav

He was born, in the Polish *shtetl* of Żarki in 1927, to his parents Cwi and Chana-Laja. When he was seven, he emigrated with his parents to the Land [of Israel]. He attended the Bilu² School, where he excelled in his studies and, upon completing them, was granted a secondary school scholarship. He was the first in the family to change his surname to a Hebrew one. He devoted himself to agricultural training in the company of youths at [Kibbutz] Sde Eliyahu in the Beit She'an valley.

After three years, he went out to the Masu'ot Yitzhak settlement. Shortly after he settled in that *kibbutz*, he lost his father. He was extremely active in the *Haganah*³. He was as diligent in work as he was in study. He possessed a social awareness and was active in cultural affairs. He came back home [to Tel-Aviv] because his mother was in need of support.

With the outbreak of the War of Independence, he was part of *Mishmar Ha'am*⁴. Once independence was proclaimed, he volunteered for service in the IDF and was made Sergeant of Culture⁵ [of his unit]. He took part in the battles of Jaffo and Sarafand. When, in one of the battles, a good friend of his was terribly wounded, he carried him on his back for a long time until reaching the position. But, before they were able to make it to first aid, the injured [soldier] breathed his last. He took the event hard. Before one of the battles, I said to him, "Juda, remember your sick mother". He replied, "It is my luck to always be in the first rows of combat". One day, before the first ceasefire, when he returned from guard duty, he was sitting with his comrades in the mess hall in Sarafand. Each was casually chatting about how he would be discharged, what his path in life would be and how he would build his future. Juda had more or less concrete plans, for he was soon to marry his sweetheart, for which purpose he had also been promised a prolonged leave.

That same night, the Sarafand camp was attacked from three directions. Juda and his comrades - twelve men - were sent as reinforcements and engaged in face-to-face combat with the enemy. None of the twelve lads came back from that cruel battle - they had determined not to retreat, regardless of the consequences. Shrapnel from a shell hit Juda in the heart. His comrades rushed to his aid, bullets flying over their heads, but they found him fatally wounded. Before returning his soul to his Creator, he managed to utter two words, in his concern that the battle was still underway, "*Azvuni ve'hamshichu*" [Leave me and carry on]. The family awaited his return in vain. His birthday in 1948 was also the day of his death and he was only twenty years of age. He was interred at the Nahalat Yitzchak [Cemetery in Tel-Aviv]. May his soul be bound in the Bond of Life.

Malka

¹ [TN: Both the Yiddish Sztajnbrecher (stone-breaker) and Hebrew Chatzav mean "stonecutter."]

² [TN: "Bilu," aka "Palestine Pioneers," was a movement whose goal was the agricultural settlement of the Land of Israel. The name is an acronym derived from the first four words of Isaiah 2:5 in Hebrew: "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk etc."]

³ [TN: "The Defence"; the main Jewish paramilitary force in Mandatory Palestine, and precursor of the IDF.]

⁴ [TN: "The People's Guard"; a Jewish home guard force made up of volunteers, whose main task in the Tel-Aviv area during the War of Independence was guarding and policing the newly-conquered Arab towns.]

⁵ [TN: סמל תרבות in the original Hebrew; a now obsolete rank which is akin to the Soviet "Politruk," or Political Commissar.]