

BSD

**ERETZ ISRAEL
BULLETIN 200**

**WORLD ALLIANCE FOR THE CORRECTION
OF THE SIN OF THE SPIES
“LIVING IN ERETZ ISRAEL IS THE EQUIVALENT OF ALL THE
MITZVOT OF THE TORAH” (SIFRE, PARASHAT REE)**

LEARN THE LESSON AND DO NOT FOLLOW ON THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SPIES

THE FIRST JEWISH GUARDS IN ERETZ ISRAEL

**FOR MANY YEARS, "SALVATION NIGHT" WAS CELEBRATED
IN JERUSALEM ON THE EIGHTEENTH OF SIVAN**

The history of the Jewish Guard began almost immediately with the arrival of the disciples of the Vilna Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov more than one hundred and fifty years ago. When it became apparent that the Turkish authorities were either unable or unwilling to deal with Arab marauders, these early settlers realized that an armed Jewish defense force was needed to prevent the fledgling Jewish settlement from becoming fair game to the roving bands of Bedouins who plagued the region.

The Guard's headquarters was located in the Old City and it was commanded by some of the most outstanding disciples of the Vilna Gaon. On one of the Guard's missions, the gaon R' Yosef Shick of Ladi was killed. On another occasion, R' Nosson Nota, the son of R' Menachem Mendel of Shklov, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon, was seriously wounded and blinded in one eye. Rabbinic leaders of the yishuv such as R' Yeshayah Bardaky, R' Eliyahu Yehoshua Magid, R' Zev Babis, and R' Hillel Sherlin, were all leaders of the Guard and risked their lives on many dangerous missions to protect the yishuv. Many members of the Sephardic community also joined the ranks of these valiant defenders.

....ONE MORNING in 1820, R' Hillel Rivlin, leader of Jerusalem's Ashkenazic community and the head of its first beis din, was about to leave his home for Shacharis when he was approached by a solitary, letter-bearing Bedouin. The contents of the letter revealed that a party of immigrants had been captured by an Arab gang, and that the gang was demanding a ransom of one thousand napoleons. Failure to deliver the exorbitant sum would result in the direst consequences for the unfortunate captives. There was no doubt as to the letter's authenticity - it was signed by Yosef Luria and Zalman Zeitlin, leaders of the immigrant party. R' Hillel convened an urgent meeting of the community leaders and the Guard. It was decided that two men, ostensibly bearing the ransom money, would accompany the Arab emissary, while all the members of the Guard would secretly follow them to the bandits' campo. The Guard stealthily followed the winding route and finally arrived at the camp where the prisoners were being held, not far from what is today Bnei Brak. In a surprise assault, the Guard members destroyed the camp and freed the prisoners. The bandit chief as well as many of his band were killed and the remaining members barely escaped with their lives. When the victorious Guard returned to Jerusalem together with their rescued captives, they found the community still steeped in fasting and prayer for the success of the mission.

BETWEEN 1820-1822, Jerusalem and its environs were terrorized by a band of marauders led by the robber-chief Ahmed Shukairi. Through patient tracking, Guard

members succeeded in tracing the band to its stronghold in a cave on one of the slopes of Mount Scopus. Guard members launched a surprise attack on the stronghold one night and killed the chief, thereby eliminating this constant threat to Jerusalem. One way or another, the Guard managed to arm itself not only with clubs and knives but also with pistols and rifles. Two Guard leaders, R' Shmaryahu "Shmerel" Luria and his brother-in-law, R' Shmerel Zuckerman, devoted themselves to arming Guard members with pistols. For quite some time afterward, pistols in Jerusalem were popularly known as "shmerelech."

When the new neighborhoods of Nachalat Shiva and Meah Shearim were founded outside the city walls, the Guard assumed new and more dangerous duties. These new settlements were open to attack, especially at night when the city's gates were locked, thereby barring any relief from the city. Guard members stood watch over these neighborhoods day and night, alternating their shifts between guard duty and Torah study. These new duties were in addition to their normal responsibilities of escorting groups of travelers to Jerusalem and guarding the storehouses of food and building materials in the exposed neighbourhoods

Besides the random attacks by roving bandits, the creation of these new neighborhoods gave rise to a more concerted and deliberate harassment by bands of raiders hired by the Arab effendi. These Arab landowners, concerned over the falling rents for their buildings in the Old City as a result of this new expansion, stopped at nothing to try and discourage the exodus from their properties in the Old City...In the summer of 1873, the Old City was terrorized by a powerful gang of Bedouin marauders that called itself jehart-al-harabiah, and attacks on Jewish homes became an almost nightly occurrence. All attempts to enlist the protection of the Turkish police were to no avail. The Turkish governor insisted that it was impossible for the police to patrol every rooftop and every winding alley in the Old City...At an urgent meeting at the home of Jerusalem's Rav, R' Meir Auerbach, it was decided to attack the gang at its hide-out. The night before the planned attack was declared a "watch night," and Jerusalem's citizens gathered in the shuls and battei midrashim to recite Tehillim and pray for the success of the mission. On the night of the eighteenth of Sivan, groups gathered in the shul situated in the R' Yehudah HaChassid Churvah and in the Tiferes Israel shul, to spend the entire night in prayer. At midnight, members of the Guard launched a three-pronged attack on the Jehart-al-harabiah stronghold in the mountains north of the city and inflicted heavy casualties. The bandits were taken so completely by surprise that within half an hour their camp was decimated, with nearly one hundred and fifty of their number dead. The gang was completely neutralized and the citizenry of Jerusalem was able to breathe a deep sigh of relief...For many years, "Salvation Night" was celebrated in Jerusalem on the eighteenth of Sivan

FROM SEFER HA ISH AL HA CHOMA

...The Rabbi of Ostrovtza exclaimed, 'What is going on here?! Hashem sent His holy children to build the Holy Land, and here people condemn them!'" (From Sefer Torat Eretz Yisrael)

PLEASE HASHEM SAVE US FROM THE SIN OF THE SPIES WHO SPOKE LASHON HARA AGAINST ERETZ ISRAEL. LET US CORRECT THE SIN OF "THEY DESPISED THE DESIRABLE LAND" (TEHILLIM 106) FOR IN THIS WAY WE BRING CLOSER THE COMPLETE GEULA WHEN YOUR NAME WILL BE SANCTIFIED IN THE WORLD AND YOUR NATION ISRAEL SHALL BE EXALTED AND YOUR BEIT HA MIKDASH REBUILT MAY THIS BE SOON IN OUR DAYS, AMEN YEHI RATZON