

Degani, Nissan (of blessed memory)

Born 1924 in Shumsk, Ukrainia

Joined the Palyam in 1946

Died: 5 January 1999

Written by Nissan two years before his death

This is the Way it Was

I studied in a Tarbut school until I was 11 years old in 1935, when I made Aliya to Palestine, and lived in Rehovoth. When I finished elementary school studies, I went to work as I had no means of financial support. When I was 18 I went to Kibbutz Ein Harod for training. That year I become a member of the Histadrut (National Labor Federation) and a member of the Hagana. At the end of that year I joined Kibbutz Sdot Yam and went to work as a stevedoring member in the port of Haifa. In 1942 the Kibbutz sent me to be a leader in the Noar HaOved youth movement in Jerusalem. At the end of this period I joined Kibbutz Beit Keshet and while there, enlisted in the Palyam in 1946.

I participated in various courses of the Palyam, stole weapons from Tel Litvinsky, and assisted in unloading Ma'apilim. I also accompanied Ma'apilim on several ships. When I returned to Israel in 1948, we were already involved in the War of Independence and, together with my friend Haim Guri, joined the paratroops where we served until the end of the war.

When I was discharged from the IDF at the age of 25, I decided to go back to studying. As I had only had an elementary school education, I studied on my own for a year, after which I gained entrance to the Hebrew University and majored in philosophy and history. After earning a B.A. degree I received a grant to study at the New School for Social Research in New York. There I received a Master's degree and qualified for a PhD.

Upon returning to Israel I taught at Beit Berl. After the Six Day War I consented to the request of Yigal Alon, then Minister of Education, to become publications editor of Pedagogic Secretariat. During 1977-1978 I was a visiting fellow at Harvard University in the U.S. When I returned to Israel I continued working for the Ministry of Education until 1987, when I took early retirement so that I could devote myself to writing. These are the highlights of my life.

When I look back, I have a feeling of satisfaction as to what I did with my life. I am satisfied but not inordinately proud. A man has a right to be satisfied with what he has done, just as the whole generation of 1948 has a right to be proud that they were born in those times; times which allowed them to take part in the War of Independence and in the Return to Zion. If pride is the privilege of those who earned it by their affirmative action, then those that were active have the right to be proud. I am proud of my actions which were also connected with the writing of the book, "Exodus Transmitting", and it's content. I also hope to erect a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust in my home town, Shumsk.

Nissan Degani died on 5th January 1999. He wrote his story several years earlier.