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I was born in Israel, in a place called Or Yehuda halfway between Ben Gurion airport and Tel Aviv. All the planes pass over our house when taking off or landing. My mother is Italian and my father was born in Libya (with English grandparents) and they came to Israel in 1948 when the state had just started. For the first few years they lived in a tent and my elder brother was born in the tent, and then we had the luxury to move into a hut, with corrugated roof and wooden walls. In summer it was boiling hot and when the rain came we had to put all the pots out to collect the water - inside! I was born in the hut in 1953 - our neighbour was a midwife and she delivered me. I have three brothers and two sisters, and I am the second eldest.

My father was a vet and my mother looked after us six children! There was no electricity, washing machine, no refrigeration - I remember that up to my thirteenth birthday when we got electricity, I used to go to collect the ice to put in an ice-box every day, and we used to buy paraffin from a person who used to come to the door with his mule and paraffin tanker. We studied with the oil lamp and sometimes there was a bang as it exploded! We kept chickens for eggs, a goat for milk, and I helped my father deliver new born animals. We travelled by horse and cart  this is how we lived.

I went to Saadia Gaon school in Or Yehuda and our class was the first one to start the trumpet Marching Band, an experiment which went very well. I was chosen to be one of the ten children to blow the trumpet with the band for the raising and lowering of the flag, Holocaust Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day. I remember that in 1963, when I was ten years old, they took a movie film of us (the band) and showed it in the cinema, in black and white. A lot of people saw it and told me to go and see it, so reluctantly I went and I was amazed to see my face covering the whole screen!!

The Head teacher at my school was a Shoah survivor with the number still tattooed on his arm, and I remember every Holocaust memorial day we took the flag down and lit six candles in memory of the six million who died and had a special service outdoors, with children guarding the flag, all day, and we blew the trumpet. This scene has always stayed in my mind. My R.E. teacher was



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also a Shoah survivor, and he, together with my father who was a modern orthodox Jew, imbued me with a love of Judaism deep inside. My father and my uncle were very good teachers - my uncle was the Chief Rabbi of a large town in Israel. He was more like a prophet and also wrote books. He was a very generous man who was greatly admired and I miss him and my father a lot. When I was a child Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur were very holy days for me and my family - we used to stay in the synagogue all day and even sleep there if we had a break of an hour or two. When the service ended I could not wait to ask the Warden if I could try to blow the shofar, and he used to let me try it for a couple of minutes and I managed to get a sound out of it. One year when I was about eleven, during the Rosh Hashana service, the old rabbi said the blessing for the shofar but he could not make a sound. The congregation waited and waited in silence, and eventually the Warden took the shofar from the rabbi and signalled to me! I took it and blew my hardest. The whole room was vibrating and my legs were shaking ...! The rabbi gave me a special blessing and from then on I blew the shofar every single year until I left Israel, and have brought that skill to Bournemouth!

After junior school I went to another school in Or Yehuda, called Betzefer Makeif and I studied there until about a year before I was called up to serve in the Israel Defence Forces at age 18. I was in the Air Force and my job was surveillance and shooting enemy airplanes down.

The 1967 war happened a couple of months before my Bar Mitzvah. I was still at school and our teachers were called up into the army, one by one they left, until there were only the old men and lady teachers in the school. As we were the oldest children we were told that we must look after the younger ones, so we were taught basic first aid, how to evacuate the school, and how to stick tapes over the glass windows. Whilst attending classes I was given permission to listen to the news all the time on a transistor radio. I had it turned on very quietly, but as soon as a news broadcast started with the beeps I would turn it up full volume so that we could all hear what was happening, and sometimes the news contained a coded message to tell people that they had to report immediately to the army base. I remember that in one of the lessons this happened and the teacher left straight away, waved goodbye to everybody and told us to carry on with the lesson - it was chaos, but we enjoyed it!



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One day we saw an El Al plane taking off from the airport nearby with army fighter planes escorting it away from Israel, and when we asked about this we were told it was the Prime Minister going to America to ask for more arms as the Egyptians had closed the Straits of Tiran, so supplies could not get through to Israel by sea. We realised the situation was very serious and the threat of war was getting closer.

We had to practice getting the children into the bomb shelters quietly, which we did for a week or so. The bomb shelter was where we held our woodwork classes, and we used to listen to the radio, trying to get the best possible reception by pushing the antenna through a small window. The sky was full of Mirage and other Israeli fighter planes.

On 5th June, 1967 we heard on the radio that the war had started, so when school was over each day we had to go and work in the fields nearby as the farmers did not have any workers left to pick the crops and the Arab workers were felt to be a security risk. I used to get children from my class to help, and I drove them on a tractor - I was just under 13 years old at the time! When we returned home in the evening we could not put on the lights as a total black-out was in operation, and we had to go to the bomb shelter. However, our house did not have a bomb shelter, we just had a small place about a metre below the ground, with an asbestos roof, 4m square, and four families shared this small space which the chicken and doves had previously occupied! We cleaned it up and put some rugs and mattresses on the floor, and we spent the nights there. We could hear the shooting and bombing and could see flashing lights far away, in Jerusalem. The radio said it was all O.K. and going according to plan, but did not give too much detail. The Hebrew speaking Arab radio broadcasts from Egypt told us they were winning and were going to take over Israel...

We were not very comfortable in the shelter and were worried about our relatives fighting in the war: sometimes in the dark at night you could hear people crying - everyone had someone away in the war. After several long days and nights I was delighted to hear on the radio that Israel had destroyed hundreds of fighter planes and had taken over Jerusalem!!!

For me, Jerusalem is a dream... I came from a religious family who used to say "Next year in Jerusalem", meaning the old city of Jerusalem. At home we had



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an old picture of the Kotel (Western Wall) and my father told me we would be able to pray at the Wall only when the Messiah comes. When I heard that we had captured Jerusalem and the Kotel was in our hands.. I heard the blowing of the shofar on the radio it seemed like a dream come true!

After the war I had my Bar Mitzvah and I was one of the first boys to hold the ceremony at the Kotel, despite the dust and rubble from the fighting. In 1971 I joined the DX' and did the necessary training like everyone else, and I volunteered for front line duty, because I knew I had to serve for three years, and wanted to contribute the maximum I could during this period. I was based in the Sinai desert most of the time.

Just before the Yom Kippur war we always had sirens going, non-stop and because we were in the front line, every time a fighter plane took off in Egypt or somewhere near the border we were 'on alert'. My unit was just under a mile from the Suez Canal. We were on duty seven days and three nights a week ? lying on our stomachs in the sand, with sandstorms leaving us looking like ghosts. We had a strong sense of fellowship despite the awful conditions in which we lived with mosquitoes, malaria, snakes and rats. Off duty we slept underground in bunkers, with these companions.

On Yom Kippur in 1973 I was observing the fast with the unit which was on high alert. We had to keep our gas masks, battle rations and ammunition with us at all times. As I left the army briefing I saw an Egyptian MIG overhead, dropping bombs all around me. I fell to the ground, and when I looked up the surgery, water tower and ammunition store had disappeared and I was surrounded by fires and the cries of trapped soldiers. With a friend I grabbed the first command car we could find to take fire extinguishers to try to save the soldiers who were trapped. We drove over bomb craters where the road had been, avoiding unexploded bombs and slowly lifted the bunker roof, making a hole big enough to crawl through. Some soldiers were dead and others were injured. As we tried to get them out we were showered with more bombs and bullets from French Mirage fighters which had been sold to Libya. The dead and injured were taken by helicopter to a field hospital and soon Israeli Skyhawks and Phantoms flew overhead, crossed the air space over the Suez Canal and attacked the Russian SAM anti-aircraft missiles on the Egyptian side



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of the canal.

At the end of the day (Yom Kippur) the only food not destroyed or covered in sand were cases of apples, so we broke our fast on the apples. I wanted to know what was happening in the rest of Israel, so I turned on my radio, but the Egyptians tried to block the air waves with a broadcast in Hebrew on a nearby waveband, telling us that Israel had lost the war and we should surrender. I almost believed it! However, thank God our reinforcements soon arrived and we could retaliate. After three days a telephone line to Israel was restored and about ten of us ran to queue for the telephone, just to make quick contact with home. Each man returned to the bunker when his turn ended, and I was the last in the queue. My family knew I was in the front line but had not heard from me for three days. I assured my parents that I was fine, although the siren sounded as I spoke, followed by a bomb attack. When I came out of the bunker a few seconds later I could not find my friends ❖ they had all taken a direct hit. Once again I tried to get them out, some were dead, some injured, and they were also taken by helicopter to the field hospital.

On the fourth day I was injured when a bomb landed close to me, throwing me into the air. I had shrapnel wounds in the head and neck, right leg and left hand. I then spent some time in hospital... On recovery I completed my military service and then studied to become an Accountant, but I did not like the work, so I tried something different. My Israeli girl friend wanted to get married, but I was only 22 years old and not ready for marriage yet. I wanted to travel, so I left Israel in 1975 and went to visit my family in Rome. I spent nearly six months there, the family were fantastic and I love Rome but I felt this was not the place I wanted to settle in. I had heard that the Dutch people were very supportive of Israel in the '73 war and previous wars, so I wanted to go to Holland and meet the people. I travelled from Italy via France and England. I had a friend in London, and I visited him. I walked around London and saw the people and the city, and noticed the policeman walking with no gun! Instead of going on to Holland I stayed on in London and after a few months I met Michelle and we became good friends, so I have not yet visited Holland!

I was working in a hotel and saw an advert in a newspaper for a fish and chip shop for sale in Bournemouth, so I decided to go and have a look at the place, and Michelle agreed to come with me. We took a train to Bournemouth and a



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taxi to Moordown to look at the business, which I liked. I asked the owner if I could come and work for one week, free of charge, to see how the business was run. He agreed, and I worked with the man for a week, watching and helping and I knew I could do it, so we agreed a price and about a month later we completed, and this is how we started. We ran that business for four years and quadrupled the turnover, then we sold it and took two years off. We travelled, bought a house in Bournemouth and then bought another business which we ran for about four years, and then our son, David was born. This was the happiest day of my life and soon after I decided to sell one of the businesses and to spend more time with the family. When David was 18 months old I decided to change direction and do more Hebrew teaching.

I joined the synagogue about fifteen years ago (before David was born) and have gradually become more and more involved, teaching in the cheder and more recently as Head Teacher. I hope that next year we shall be able to celebrate David's Bar Mitzvah in our Synagogue and at the Kotel in Jerusalem, as I did. At the cheder I try to teach the children based on my own experience. I switch my mind from Head Teacher to child, putting myself in their place. I always try to encourage the students and draw out their talents, so there are no failures. I work with the other teachers, assistants, madrichim and madrichot as a team. We have a good relationship with our hardworking PTA and the parents. The children respond to our teaching and I am very proud of the progress we have made. Long may it continue!