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They Loved Life So MuchA/4  
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In the room of Nechama and Yosef Yisraeli, two memorial candles burn side by side, and above them are the pictures of their two sons, Ephraim and David. Both were members of the armoured corps who fought and died on the southern front. Both of them, along with their childhood friend Yaakov Berg, were at the parents' home on Rosh Hashanah. They promised to return on Yom Kippur to fast with all of the family. But they did not return.

*"We're in favor of large families, in order to be ready for whatever is demanded of us in this country. We went through all sorts of incidents and through wars, and we knew that Israel needed men", says the father. "We have two daughters on the kibbutz. Another daughter is married and lives on the religious kibbutz Sa'ad. The boys wanted to return to the kibbutz, for they were very much a part of the group. They loved life, and always laughed and clowning around together.*

*"The boys didn't like the army, but they fulfilled their military obligations responsibly and seriously. They were intimately acquainted with the way things are here, such as with the army. They chose to live the quiet life of the farm."*

In the closet are hundreds of letters written by the boys, and on the table is a picture album showing them as children and then young men amidst the family and in groups, and then as tank commanders. Ephraim was an outstanding student in all of the military courses. In the album is a picture of ex-Chief of Staff David Elazar pointing to Ephraim's insignia of rank. In the album is also the last postcard that Ephraim sent to his girlfriend, and a letter from David (who was always called Dadi) to his brother Ephraim before he knew of his death. He wrote about friends who had died, and he said that Ephraim would weep to see it just as he himself now wept. He expressed the hope *"that this damn war will end soon and that we'll be able to go home."*

Ephraim was close to 23 and was about to complete his service as a lieutenant in the armoured corps. He fought for two weeks, until his tank was hit some-

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where between the Bitter Lake and the Canal on October 18. On the 22nd of October he was buried in Be'eri, and after two days it was reported to the parents.

Dadi was a little over twenty at his death. He graduated from the school for armoured warfare and went down south on Yom Kippur Eve. On October 7 two missiles struck his tank in the wharf area. Two were killed, and he and the driver were wounded. David was badly burned. He was treated in the Ichilov hospital, but internal complications set in, and on November 11 he, too, died and was buried at Kibbutz Dovrat.

Nechama Yisraeli, the mother, tells: *"Ephraim also graduated from the tank commanders' course. I hugged him and kissed him until my daughter insisted I stop, out of fear what people would say. But Ephraim answered: 'My reputation won't be ruined because Mother hugs and kisses me. On the contrary: let them see that officers in the Israeli army are different than officers in other armies of the world.' "*

Before I left the parents, the mother said to me: *"I was comforted by the fact that the older one didn't suffer. He still was conscious of victory. But the younger one lost that consciousness. Dadi's face said it all. Only two sons. Two lovely daughters-in-law will no longer be mine."*

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