THE BLOGS

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The Letters of Yoni Netanyahu

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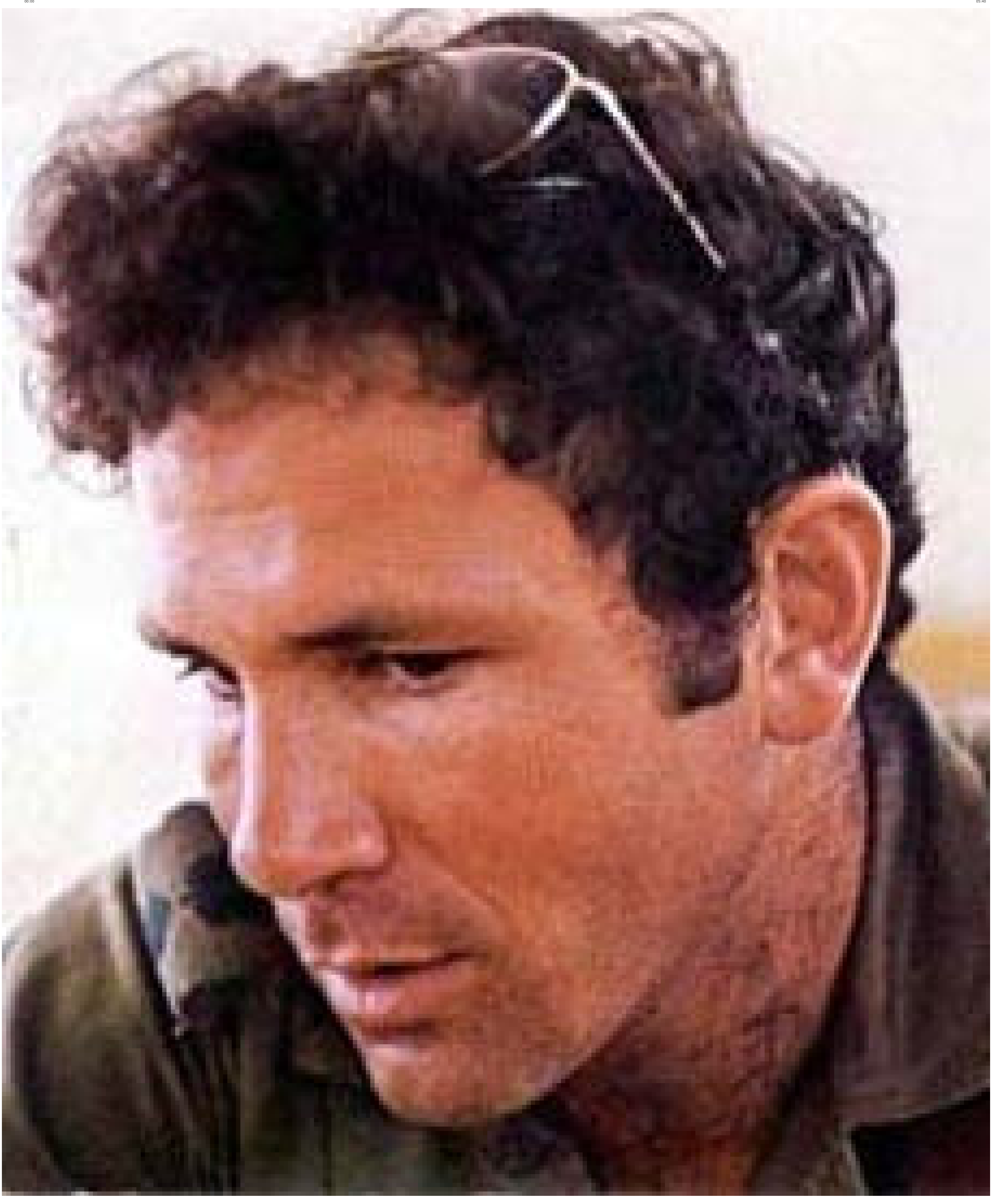

Yoni Netanyahu, in a photograph taken shortly before his death at Entebbe in 1976 (Wikipedia)

I have always been enamored by the fallen hero of the 1976 Entebbe Raid.

Yoni Netanyahu rescued 102 hostages and managed to prevent all but one military fatality; his own. Perhaps one reason I feel connected to Yoni is that he shares both the same name and birth-date as my son.

When people think of a military hero physical prowess and strategical brilliance often come to mind. But when you read Yoni's letters you quickly understand that his expansive soul was just as big, if not bigger, than his ample gifts in those other domains.

He was extraordinary.

Here, in his own words, are some excerpts from letters Yoni had written from the film, *Follow Me: The Yoni Netanyahu story.*

(May 23, 1963)

Man does not live forever. He should put the days of his life to the best possible use. How to do this I can't tell you. I only know that I don't want to reach a certain age, look around me and suddenly discover that I've created nothing. I must feel certain that, not only at the moment of my death shall I be able to account for the time I have lived, I ought to be ready at every moment of my life to confront myself and say—this is what I've done.

(July 8, 1964)

When I saw the country from the plane I felt a twinge in my heart. Jerusalem is more beautiful than ever. Perhaps I am a bit sentimental because I haven't seen it for so long. Despite everything that's wrong here, and God knows there are many faults and evils, it's our country, and I love her as I always have.

(October 23, 1965)

Until now, I must admit, I never ***felt*** *the country. Never before had I felt this so powerfully. I knew the country existed, that I was living in it, and that, if the need arose, I would fight for it. But really to feel the place, the soil, the mountains and valleys of Israel—this sensation I have now experienced for the first time.*

(May 28, 1967)

Not one of us wants war, but we all know for certain, we must win.

(July 22, 1968)

We must cling to our country with our bodies and with all of our strength. Only then will they not write in history books that once indeed the Jews held onto our land for two decades, but then were overwhelmed, and became once more homeless wanderers.

(June 15, 1967)

When you see death face-to-face; when you are wounded, and alone, in the midst of a scorched field, surrounded by smoke – with your arm shattered and burning with a terrible pain; then life becomes more precious and craved for than ever. You want to embrace it and go on with it, to escape from all the blood and death, to live.

(March 30, 1970)

I believe with all my heart that it's extremely important to be in the army now. We hear the war slogans of millions of our neighbors desiring to annihilate us, what's to be done?

(June 30, 1970)

How sad that we cannot achieve peace, for that is all we want at the end.

(November 11, 1974)

We're all searching for a different place, a beautiful and glowing place – a place worth waking up in. The world is full of beauty, and the ugliness in it only highlights that beauty.

(March 17, 1969)

On me, on us rests the duty of keeping our country safe. …we are united by something that is above and beyond political outlook. What unites us produces a feeling of brotherhood, of mutual responsibility, a recognition of the value of man and his life, a strong and sincere desire for peace, a readiness to stand in the breach, and much more. I believe in myself, my country, my family and my future. This is a special people, and it's good to belong to it.

The military tacticians of the world point to Israel's operational, communication, and intelligence systems as the best the planet has to offer.

They point to Israel's unique geopolitical situation and the military doctrine that arises from it; "En brera" – No alternative. As a tiny country surrounded by a network of enemies, Israel has no choice: it cannot afford to lose a single battle.

They will state that the Israeli military leaders "lead from the front". That IDF commanders don't spend much time in the office. Instead, they are out in the field supporting, leading, and mentoring their soldiers.

All true. And all true of Yoni Netanyahu

But it is the soul of Yoni, the soul manifested in those letters, the soul that yearned for a safe ancestral and spiritual homeland, that in my opinion, truly makes the Israeli solider remarkable.

On the heels of the near destruction of European Jewry, through the smoke and stench of flesh and blood, came a group of soldiers, erupting with life. Their mission was to prevent the recurrence of "homeless wanderers", as Yoni so eloquently expressed.

In his letters, Yoni's love for his people, is so palpable, so real. As Yoni traversed his ancient land, his soul sang, his heart pulsated. He probed, and he pondered. He was ready to defend his Israel at any cost. And he did.

Our soldiers, the men and women of the IDF have tremendous diligence and foresight in the art of war. But it is breathtaking to grasp that they know, like Yoni did, that their unique mission is so much bigger than that. That they are a part of "special people", a collective of ancient spirits, whose whole, is greater than their parts.

On this day, Yom HaZicharon (the Day of Remembrance), let us honor Yoni, let us honor all his fellow fallen brothers and sisters, and let us honor those who continue his soulful and moving legacy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Wolfers Rapaport Alamayo is an Israeli educator, therapist, writer, and licensed tour guide. She works with leading institutions including the Office of the Prime Minister, Intel, Mobileye, Yad Vashem, and the Mandel Institute. A featured writer for several Jewish websites, Karen is passionate about unifying people across cultures and traditions and creating transformative experiences that connect individuals to one another and to the land and spirit of Israel.

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Am so excited with story of Israel especially on Historical Gospel Stories and heros who sacrify their life for the Love of their Country.

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