

CASE STUDY 24

Yehuda

Yehuda Shaul was brought up in a Jewish Orthodox family in Jerusalem. He says he came from the right of the political map, studying at a yeshiva (Jewish religious school) in a settlement in the West Bank. His uncle and sister are settlers.

He was in 50th Battalion, Nahal Brigade, Israeli Army, during the Second Intifada. He was part of Operation Determined Path in Bethlehem and the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in 2002.

“Most of our missions were driving APCs (armoured personnel carriers) and tanks through the city and imposing curfews.”

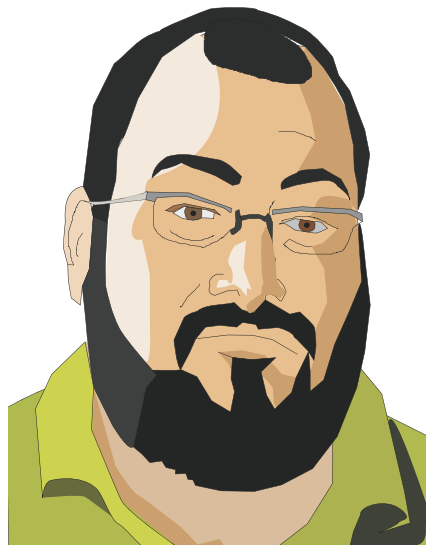
“One day we were driving south to north on the main road in Bethlehem. Past the Dheisheh Refugee Camp, we ran into a group of kids throwing stones. I was sitting inside the APC so I didn’t know what they were doing... with the noise of the engine you hardly even hear the stones landing. My platoon commander decided that we’re getting out and we’re going to catch them. So we get out of the APC and we start firing rubber bullets, tear gas, stun grenades and start chasing them in the alleys of the refugee camp.

“After chasing them for 5–6 minutes, we catch one of the kids. He was about 10–11 years old, barefoot of course. We blindfolded him, cuffed him and started leading him back. The Palestinian boy is on the floor... and my whole squad is standing in a semi-circle.

“When I get there I hear one of the guys teasing him in Hebrew, something to the effect of ‘Grow up! Kids your age are blowing up buses. Why are you still throwing stones?’

“Everybody bursts out laughing. They think it’s hilarious.

“The first thing I do when I get there is say: ‘Guys, what is this carnival?’



Very quickly, I become their target. ‘Shut up you leftist! Go hand out candy at the checkpoints’, etc.

“And my squad commander... says: ‘Yehuda, you feel sorry for him? Don’t you understand that if we don’t treat him this way, he’ll grow up to be a suicide bomber?’”

“I’m thinking to myself, you idiot, it’s just the opposite... Of course I kept quiet. We shoved him in a corner on the floor in the right-side corner of the APC. At the end of the shift, we dropped him at checkpoint 300 on the other side of the city, alone, even though there was a curfew.

“Yehuda also saw settlers being violent towards Palestinians while serving in Hebron. He and other soldiers spoke out. “Now, I see that viewing the settlers as evil, blaming them and criticising them, was an escape, because it meant keeping silent about what we, as soldiers, were doing.”

With other soldiers, Yehuda went on to start Breaking the Silence, a network of former soldiers that publishes the testimonies of Israeli soldiers.

www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=nicbLpOme9k