



## Educator's Guide

# Pre-IDF Brigades: Haganah, Irgun and Lechi

This video tells the fascinating story of three Jewish militias in pre-State Palestine: Haganah, Irgun and Lechi. Before the groups joined forces to become the IDF in 1948, they had major ideological differences. They were all set on the Zionist ideal of creating a Jewish state, but disagreed about how to achieve this goal. Between Ben-Gurion's diplomatic approach, Begin's pro-active one, and the Stern Gang's radicalism, tensions ran high in the 40's. In this episode, students will consider: What were the key differences between the groups, and how did they put these differences aside to work together? Which of these groups do you identify with most and why?

Link to video:

<https://unpacked.education/video/pre-idf-brigades-haganah-irgun-and-lechi/>

## Further Reading

1. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, Chapter 7
2. Noah Rayman, "Mandatory Palestine: What It Was and Why It Matters"  
<http://time.com/3445003/mandatory-palestine/>
3. The Jewish Agency <http://www.jewishagency.org/peace-and-conflict/content/23707>

## Review – Did the students understand the material?

1. Which one of these was NOT a military group in pre-State Israel?
  - a. Lechi
  - b. Irgun
  - c. Haganah



- d.** Tzahal
- 2.** What was the key difference between Haganah and Irgun?
  - a.** Haganah preferred restraint and diplomacy, while Irgun preferred military force when it believed to be necessary
  - b.** Haganah supported the White Paper, while Irgun opposed it
  - c.** Haganah worked against the British, while Irgun supported them
  - d.** Haganah fought the Arabs, while Irgun fought the British
- 3.** Who led the Irgun?
  - a.** Golda Meir and David Ben-Gurion
  - b.** Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin
  - c.** Abraham Stern
  - d.** Theodor Herzl
- 4.** Why did Golda Meir believe in putting a violent end to Lechi, while David Ben-Gurion did not?
- 5.** Why did the groups decide to bomb the King David hotel, and what were the ramifications of that move?

## **Discussion Questions**

- 1.** From November 1944 to February 1945, the Haganah engaged in “The Saison” or the Hunting Season, in which its leaders suppressed the Irgun’s fighting against the British and even handed over some Irgun members to the British authorities. With the Irgun and Lechi refusing to accept the British denial of Jewish immigration, and the Haganah following the motto of “fighting the war as if there is no white paper, and fighting the White Paper, as if there is no war,” the Haganah decided to turn in its men. Explain where the Haganah was coming from and where the Irgun and Lechi were coming from.
- 2.** What leadership qualities enabled the Haganah, Irgun and Lechi to work out their differences and form a united front?



- 3.** While some believe that all early Zionists were unified in the establishment of the state of Israel, this was not necessarily the case. How do you think these differences of opinions helped shape Zionism?

## Reflection Questions

- 1.** After learning about each group's philosophies and tactics, considering what was at stake in the creation of the state and the atrocities of the Holocaust that were happening at this time, which of these groups do you identify with most and why?
- 2.** When push came to shove, the three militias were able to set aside their differences to work together and unite. This ability to unite despite serious differences and bloodshed between the groups is one of the main reasons Israel was able to become a state. Are there people with whom you have serious differences and would want to unite notwithstanding your areas of disagreement? What can you take from this situation of Tenuat Hameri Ha'Ivri and implement in your own life?