DEFENSE OF MISHMAR HAYARDEN AND ITS OCCUPATION BY THE SYRIANS

At the beginning of 1948 only seven families remained living in Mishmar Hayarden. A group named "Wedgewood" settled there, made up of Beitar and ETZEL graduates, about 40 women and men. From the beginning of 1948 there were more and more arab attacks against the settlement.

On April 1948 an enlarged section of ETZEL members with it's weapons set out towards Mishmar Hayarden, but was held up by the Hagana near Kibbutz Ginosar, its members were arrested and their weapons taken from them. The argument of the Hagana to this action was the unity of command, a claim which was rejected by the ETZEL command.

A few days later the section succeeded in getting to Mishmar Hayarden and its members, integrated in the defense of the settlement.

From May 17, 1948 the Syrians began attacking Mishmar Hayarden and the settlements in the vicinity with every possible weapon. The defenders were prepared to an all-around defense.

On June 6, the Syrians attacked at dawn, this time with a larger force, consisting of over 1,000 men, with the addition of artillery and other heavy weapons. The Syrians, attacking the settlement from the south, cut off the road between Rosh Pina and Mishmar Hayarden, and even succeeded in occupying a number of the southern positions, where the majority of defenders had been wounded.

Ammunition began running out and the situation was becoming desperate, but the Syrians were also becoming tired and frightened, and the artillery fire descending on them from the direction of Mahanayim resulted in the final breakdown of the attack and the Syrians retreat. Dozens of dead and wounded remained in the field as well as many weapons, which were used later to defend the settlement. At dawn of June 10, the Syrians attacked the Settlement with a force larger than a brigade, including armoured cars, tanks and air support. They Succeeded in penetrating the thin line of the defenders (there were only 28 men left capable of fighting) and occupied the majority of the positions. The remnants of the wounded and the fighters gathered in the cellar of the building which also served as a sick bay, and continued the struggle from there. At noon, when there was no further hope, the defenders surrendered to the Syrian army. The settlement fell and the majority of its buildings were destroyed. 34 men and 8 women went into captivity. 14 fighters from Mishmar Hayarden, the ETZEL and nearby settlements, fell in the battle. The Syrian command was unable to understand how a handful of fighters could ward off their attacks during four days of bloodshedding combat.

On July 1949 the prisoners were sent back to Israel, and afterwards the Moshava was also returned to the State of Israel.