

George Ernest Goodman

Born Haifa 1920 - Died Libya 1941

By Jerry Klinger



"Our first Ace, born in Israel¹"

The Airman's Prayer

If I climb up into heaven, thou art there

If I go down to hell, thou art there also

If I take the wings of the morning

And remain in the uttermost parts of the sea

Even there also shall thy hand lead me

And thy right hand shall hold me²

The young British pilot pulled aggressively on the throttle forcing the last ounce of power from the straining engine. Almost imperceptible, with trained precision, his feet pushed on the ailerons rolling the plane onto its back. His hands urged the stick forward diving his fighter into a steep attack on the enemy planes below. The Luftwaffe Bomber merged into the sights of the Hawker Hurricane. The pilot's thumb squeezed the red firing button. The Hurricane shuddered, shaking hard as it was pushed backwards by the rapid fire of its wing guns. The shells tore into the body of the Bomber. Shards of metal and pieces of flesh tore away from the German plane. The Hurricane's guns found their mark. Smoke, fire, terror, horror, the Bomber turned unsteadily to port then plunged into a spiral of death. The Hurricane pilot scored another victory.

Today it was the German. Tomorrow it might be him.

George Ernest Goodman was born to Sydney and Bida Goodman in the northern port city of Haifa.³ Not much is known about his parents, his youth or his family. Some sources suggest they were members of the British diplomatic service but most simply note that his father was a railway engineer. Goodman had two sisters who were living in Haifa in 1941, when his parents moved to Lagos, Nigeria as his father continued his engineering work.

Haifa, in 1920 when George was born, was a city of 20,000, a mixed city of Jews, Arabs – Muslims and Christians who were largely members of the Greek Orthodox Church. The city was ruled by the British as part of the British Palestine Mandate. Jews and Western Christians born there were generally issued British passports with Palestinian designations. The UN Partition plan of 1947 included Haifa within the new Israeli state's boundaries. Haifa's population was in excess of 145,000 and over 51% Jewish in 1947. Arab irregulars attacked Haifa for months until they were finally defeated securing the city for Israel by mid-1948.

Though still a youngster, George was sent to England to be educated at London's elite Highgate School.⁴

In June 1939 he took a short service commission in the RAF. He was 19.

The War was a bitter unprepared reality for Britain in 1939. The British had chosen to ignore Winston Churchill's warnings about Germany. They preferred to view Churchill as a crazy, chronic war mongering Cassandra. Diplomacy was the British response. Brits cheered Prime Minister Neville Chamberlin's hat doffing, beaming face as he proclaimed "Peace in our time." Chamberlin naively believed Adolph Hitler's peaceful reassurances, as they diplomatically signed the 1938 Munich Agreement ceding part of Czechoslovakia to the Fascists. Hitler quickly broke the treaty and took all of Czechoslovakia. American president Theodore Roosevelt commented once – "Walk softly but carry a big stick." Diplomacy alone had been a fools' delusion.

July 7, 1939 through September 2, 1939 Goodman attended Elementary & Reserve Flying Training School. September 2, 1939 until February 17, 1940 he attended Flying Training School. February 27, 1940 through March 3, 1940 he was assigned to Group Pool 11 then to an Operational Training Unit 6 until May 1, 1940. May 1, 1940 through November 11, 1940 he was assigned to Number 1 Fighter Squadron and sent to France.⁵

Goodman trained to fight flying the Hawker Hurricane MK1 fighter plane.

The Hawker Hurricane is considered by many to be the best all round fighter plane the British produced in World War II. By 1944 the British had produced 14,000 Hurricanes. It was the primary fighter in the Battle of Britain air campaign of 1940.

The Hurricane's engine was a 1,280 hp Rolls-Royce Merlin 12- cylinder V Piston.

At takeoff it weighed 7,300 lbs. It had a wingspan of 40', length of 32'2", and height of 13'1". The Hurricane had a maximum speed of 342 mph at 22,000', a ceiling of 36,500' and a range of 480 miles.

The Hurricane's armaments were twelve 7.7mm wing-mounted machine guns. It carried two 250 lb. or 1,500 lbs. bomb.

World War II began officially September 1, 1939 with the invasion of Poland. Britain shortly afterwards broke diplomatic relations. The British were armed heavily with treaties and words but little else that could help their Polish ally. Poland fell in three weeks to the combined assaults of the Germans from the West and the Russians from the East. Not understood by an uncaring world and led by a disbelieving Jewish leadership, the fate of European Jewry was sealed.

The "Phony War" of 1939-1940, a war of waiting and preparing, was underway. To Hitler's great frustration, his army had been severely hampered by the Polish invasion. His heavy machinery needed three months to repair and his stocks of munitions were largely depleted. He too was unprepared for the next phase – the Battle of France. The winter was a scramble by all sides to rearm, to resupply. The British realizing their own foolish weakness double timed their efforts to prepare but it was too little and too late. British air defenses and aircraft were in terrible condition and very short supply. They had barely enough planes to protect their island homeland. When the French begged for 12 squadrons of fighters to join in the Battle of France, Britain could only spare two. Squadron 1, a fighter squadron of Hawker Hurricanes with its inexperienced aircrews was deployed to northern France during March of 1940.

George Ernest Goodman, a green Hurricane fighter pilot, was attached to Squadron 1. He was nearly 20 years old.

The German Blitzkrieg ignored the neutrality of Holland and Belgium and invaded the Low Countries, May 10, 1940. By June 5, 1940 German forces had brilliantly outflanked the British Expeditionary Force cutting them off and surrounding the Allied units that advanced into Belgium. Belgium surrendered to the German on May 28. In a dramatic sea rescue begun on the same day, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), almost 250,000 men, was rescued from the pocket of land they still held at Dunkirk by the Royal Navy and British volunteered boats and crews. Abandoning their equipment, the BEF was plucked from the mouth of certain extermination. The British land forces in Europe were defeated but British airmen still flew.

Pilot Officer (P/O) George Ernest Goodman was operational from the moment the Germans invaded. May 13, 1940 Goodman scored his first kill, a German He 111. The Heinkel He 111 was a medium bomber designed by Siegfried and Walter Günter in the early 1930s in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. *The world closed its eyes to the direct threat rather than confront the Germans.* The Heinkel became the most numerous and primary Luftwaffe bomber during the early stages of World War II. It is perhaps the most famous symbol of the German bomber force (*Kampfwaffe*) due its distinctive "Greenhouse" nose.⁶ Later that same day, he shared another kill, a German Messerschmitt Bf 110 long range escort fighter. May 14, 1940, Goodman shared another kill of a He 111 bomber. May 14, Rotterdam was being bombed by the Germans. His last

day in France before Squadron 1 was pulled back to England, June 17, 1940, Goodman killed another He 111.

The RMS *Lancastria* was a British Cunard liner sunk on June 17, 1940 with the loss of an estimated 4,000 plus lives. It is the worst single loss of life in British maritime history and the bloodiest single engagement for UK forces (in terms of lives lost) in the whole conflict, claiming more lives than the combined losses on *Titanic* and *Lusitania*. The ship's official capacity was 2,200. She was sunk off the French port of St. Nazaire while taking part in Operation Ariel, the evacuation of British nationals and troops from France, two weeks after the Dunkirk evacuation.⁷

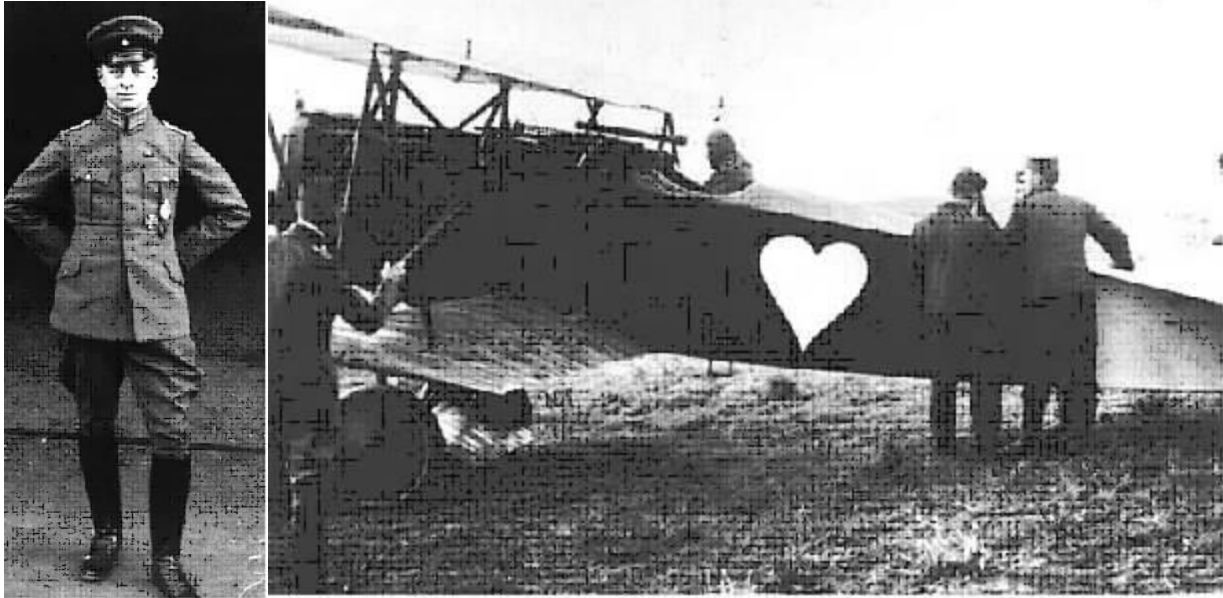
Paris fell to the Germans on June 14. The French Second Army Group surrendered on June 22. France capitulated on June 25. Barely six weeks of war and Western continental Europe belonged to Hitler. It was a spectacular set of victories for the Axis.

The Battle of France was over, lost. The Battle of Britain was about to begin.

The German army massed on the shores of northern France and the Low Countries in preparation for the invasion of Britain. The German Navy had been severely crippled by the Royal Navy in the Norwegian fighting. It was clearly understood that unless Germany could control the sky over the English Channel the German invasion would be suicidal. It was imperative that the Luftwaffe control the skies. Hitler assigned cocky Field Marshal Goering the job. Hermann Wilhelm Göring (also spelled Goering) (January 12, 1893 – October 15, 1946) was a German politician, military leader and a leading member of the Nazi Party. Among many offices, he was Hitler's designated successor and commander of the *Luftwaffe* (German Air Force). With twenty-two confirmed kills as a fighter pilot, he was a veteran of the First World War and recipient of the coveted *Pour le Mérite*. He was the last commander of Manfred von Richthofen's famous *Jagdgeschwader 1* air squadron.⁸ In 1946 Goering committed suicide in his cell rather than be executed for war crimes by the Allies.

Ironically, Goering was the unit commander of *Jagdstaffel (Squadron) 17* and pilot Willy Rosenstein during WWI. Rosenstein one of Germany's great flying aces and a Jew. Because of a vicious anti-Semitic incident with Goering, Rosenstein was transferred to a different unit where his ability as a fighter pilot became very evident. Goering never abandoned his racism but did acknowledge Rosenstein's flying ability.

Willy Rosenstein



The little that is known about German Jewish World War I flyers is because of one man, Dr. Felix Theilhaber. In Germany, much like in the United States after the American Civil War, Jewish fighting men who had served with honor and distinction for both the Union and the Confederacy were denigrated to obscurity and charges of cowardice. Jews won the Congressional Medal of Honor in greater numbers proportional to their percentage of the American population than their non-Jewish comrades in arms. Even Mark Twain disparaged Jewish bravery and participation until he learned the truth about Jewish courage.⁹

Dr. Theilhaber, a German Jewish doctor who had served Germany with distinction during World War I was disgusted and dismayed by the rising anti-Semitism in Germany denying Jewish bravery and defense of the fatherland. He was particularly disgusted at the charge that Jews were too cowardly to fly. Theilhaber wrote the *Jüdische Flieger im Kriege* (*Jewish Flyers in the War*) and revised it in 1924 as a volume called *Jüdische Flieger im Weltkrieg* (*Jewish Flyers in the World War*), in which he gave accounts of over one hundred Jewish soldiers who flew for Germany. The book was coldly received in Germany, and Theilhaber had a difficult time trying to advertise it or sell it.¹⁰



Dr. Felix Theilhaber

Dr. Theilhaber was arrested by the Nazis in 1933 because of his research into reproductive medicine. Upon his release, he emigrated to Palestine. In Palestine, he founded Kupat Cholim Maccabea Health Services. A wing of the Health Services building is named after him.¹¹

The Battle of Britain commenced July 10, 1940. Its bloody consequences continued until October 31, 1940 when the Luftwaffe's losses were so great that they abandoned their efforts to defeat the RAF over Britain. July 1, the RAF could muster only 1103, mostly inexperienced and untested, fighter pilots to defend England. The Germans had 1450 largely experienced and tested fighter pilots having learned their deadly crafts during the recent fighting and practice on the Spanish during the recent Spanish civil war.¹² The larger advantage for the Germans was that their sheer numbers of aircraft and ability to train pilots was massive. The British needed a vastly superior kill ratio, victory/loss, to simply survive.

P/O Goodman was one of the few "seasoned" pilots in the RAF when the Battle of Britain began. July 25, 1940 Goodman killed a Bf 109. He shared a kill of a Bf 110 on August 11. He killed a He 111 on the 16th, a Bf 110 on the 18th and shared a Do 17 (Dornier light bomber) kill on the 18th of August. September 6, 1940 he killed a Bf 110. His Hurricane was shot down during the same fight by a German fighter. He survived the crash injuring his shoulder. October 8, 1940, he shared in the kill of a Junker 88 bomber and destroyed a Do 17 on the 27th of October.

November 26, 1940 Goodman was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for meritorious service during the Battle of Britain. George was 20 years old.

The Battle of Britain was over. The British suffered heavy casualties. The Germans suffered even more. For Hitler, Britain was a diversion from his real objective – the attack on and the destruction of the Soviet Union. The German bombers were ordered withdrawn and shifted to the Eastern front for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. Hitler knew, and reasonably calculated, that the British would not be in a position to interfere significantly with his plans and could be finished later. But it would have to be later. Winston Churchill summed up the effect of the battle and the contribution of Fighter Command with the words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."¹³ Britain was saved.

The Royal Air Force's *Battle of Britain Honor Roll* recognizes 2353 British pilots and 574 pilots from overseas who fought during the Battle of Britain. Of the 2927 who fought, nearly 1 in 5, or 544 were killed, between July 10 and October 31, 1940. During the course of the war another 791 of these Battle of Britain veterans were killed raising the killed in action to almost 46%.¹⁴

P/O George Ernest Goodman is recognized by the RAF official rolls as being Palestinian and having flown in the Battle of Britain. In 2005, the Battle of Britain Historical Society¹⁵ erected a large, dignified Monument near the London Eye honoring and recognizing every pilot by name and country of origin engraved around the base. HRH Charles Prince of Wales unveiled the Monument. After extensive debate, it was decided by the Battle of Britain Historical Society that P/O George Ernest Goodman would not be listed as Palestinian but rather as British. They argued because he traveled under a British passport he was British even though he was born in contemporary Israel. Rhodesian pilots, who also traveled under British passports, were listed as Rhodesian.

"At least 32 (probably 43) Jewish airmen took part in the Battle of Britain (just over 1% of participants). Over three-quarters were British Jews, the rest fighting in the American, Belgian, Canadian, Czechoslovak, Polish and South African contingents"¹⁶

Through the war years Jews from different backgrounds volunteered for the RAF to help defeat Nazi Germany. Some went on to fame in later life that obscured their heroic backgrounds. Ken Adam is one.

Ken Adam is best known as the American Academy Award winner and British Academy Film Award winning movie production designer. His name is recognized for his work on the early James Bond movies, *Dr. No* (1962), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965), *You Only Live Twice* (1967) and *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) *Moonraker* (1979). Ken Adams's real name is Klaus Hugo Adam.

Ken Adam was born in Berlin, Germany to a Jewish family. His family moved to England in 1934, when Adam was 13 years old. He attended St. Paul's School in Barnes. Later, he attended University College London, training to be an architect. Although he was still a German national, he served as a pilot for the Royal Air Force during World War II, where he flew the Hawker Typhoon on many missions over NW Europe. This was a brave move: if he had been shot down and captured, instead of being sent to a prisoner of war camp, the Germans would have hung him as a traitor and a Jew. Adam was the only German national to be an RAF fighter pilot. He was later naturalized as a British citizen and was knighted in 2003 by Queen Elizabeth II.

Israel sent a number of her sons to fly and fight for Britain while Israel was still part of the British Mandate.

Amichai Honig was born in Australia in 1919. He along with his family made the choice of Aliyah to Palestine when he was 12. Amichai attended Kadoorie High School on Mt. Tabor's Gallilean slopes. He studied alongside future leaders of Israel such as Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Alon. Amichai volunteered for the RAF in 1940. He was trained as a pilot in Egypt and Iraq.

After a courageous bombing engagement at Solumn, Libya, December of 1941, Honig was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Medal. August, 1943 Honig's plane was shot down in action. His death was mourned across his homeland. He was 24. 1950 Honig's parents went to Greece to try and find their son's remains to bring home. Fortune was with them and they located his burial site. The body of RAF Flight Sergeant Amichai Honig was repatriated to Israel and buried with full military honors at the Hadera cemetery on May 31, 1950. Hundreds of friends and colleagues joined his family in laying him to rest in the soil of Israel.¹⁷

Aharon Remez, 1919-1994, was an Israeli politician and the second commander of the Israeli Air Force. He entered the Haganah in 1936, but just three years later he was sponsored by the Jewish Agency to receive flying lessons in New Jersey and join the Royal Air Force.¹⁸

Dan Tolkovsky was the commander of the Israeli Air Force from May 1953 to July 1958. Tolkovsky entered the military in 1943, when the Royal Air Force sent a Jewish unit from Palestine to train at a flight school in Rhodesia (*present day Zimbabwe*). Tolkovsky was the first in his group to complete the course, and went on to serve as a fighter pilot and later in aircraft reconnaissance in Greece during World War II.¹⁹

Ezer Weizman is the best known of Israel's RAF volunteers. Enlisting in 1942, he was trained as a ground soldier serving in Egypt and Libya. 1943 he joined the RAF and was trained as a combat pilot in aviation school in Rhodesia. He is hailed as the father of the Israel Air Force even flying the first IAF mission during the 1948 War of Independence.

Nov. 1940, Goodman was assigned to fly the ferry route for the Middle East with 73 Squadron. East with 73 Squadron. he stopped at Lagos where his parents were. He saw his mother for the last time (his father was away.) As the Squadron flew out, they did a roll over the Goodman home and then were away. In February 1941 he shot down a CR42 (an Italian fighter) in the Western Desert, and a Me 110 at Tobruk, but he was shot down and crash landed behind the British lines. He then shared an Hs 126 (>German two seater reconnaissance aircraft), destroyed a Ju 87 (Junkers Stuka dive bomber) and shared another. In April he took leave in Haifa, Palestine visiting his two sisters who were living there.

June 14th 1941 he was shot down and killed by flak over Gazala leading his bombing group. He had been promoted to Flight Officer. Goodman is buried in Knightsbridge cemetery, Acroma, Libya, grave 10.C.21²⁰ around 25 miles west of Tobruk. He was 21.



He rests with over three thousand other British dead, some Jewish from South Africa and other places but most are Christian. They share equally a gentle sleeping couch in the shifting sands of Libya. His grave cared for by a local Arab Muslim. The cost of the care is paid for by the British government which recently cut the budget in half. In time, Goodman's grave, like those of many soldiers on many different fields over the centuries, will be forgotten except by God. A unique British project is underway before the sands and time claim the memory of the fallen. The project is to photographically record, for posterity, every single grave of every fallen British soldier. They have promised to photograph Goodman's grave in Libya.²²

Israel does not officially claim him. Some Israeli government sources say he flew as an Israeli yet still suggesting he may or may not have been Jewish.²³ The preponderance of evidence suggest he was. But until a genealogical study is done is cannot be absolutely determined. One fact remains irrefutable, he was the first RAF ace born in British Mandate Palestine – Modern Israel.

Who was P/O Goodman, even after these many years he is still not fully claimed or mourned by Israel as a defender against Nazism. It is still controversial if he was Palestinian/Israeli, Jewish or British. In Israeli military cemeteries, non-Jewish flyers who came to Israel in 1948 as volunteers, are buried. They were members of Machal (Volunteers from outside of Israel). They died so that Israel could be today.²⁴ No one asked if they were Jewish or not. The IDF today has Christians & Muslims serving in its ranks.

Every year in London, on the second Sunday of November a thinning graying rank of marchers make their way through the city. They are the members of AJEX (Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women). Though bent with age and years, they stand tall, straight and proud in their youthful mind's eye as they march to lay memorial wreaths at the Cenotaph memorial, Whitehall. They still remember *all* the young men who sacrificed so much so that we might live and be free.

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www.JASHP.org

¹ Israel Air Force Bulletin 1997

² Prayer from the chapel windows of the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede, England

³ <http://www.ajex.org.uk/> A copy of Goodman's birth certificate in Hebrew from Haifa is on file with Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women in London (AJEX)

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highgate_School

⁵ <http://aces.safarikovi.org/biography/pal/goodman.html>

- ⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinkel_He_111
- ⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Lancastria
- ⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_G%C3%B6ring
- ⁹ <http://www.jewishmag.com/111mag/benjlevy/benjlevy.htm>
- ¹⁰ <http://people.sinclair.edu/thomasmartin/knights/index2.htm>
- ¹¹ http://www.maccabi-health.co.il/english_site/index.html
- ¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain
- ¹³ Speech to the House of Commons on 20 August 1940.
- ¹⁴ <http://www.raf.mod.uk/bob1940/roll.html#top>
- ¹⁵ <http://www.battleofbritain.net/>
- ¹⁶ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/ww2/sugar4.html>
- ¹⁷ http://www.ajn.com.au/news/news_print.asp?pgID=5332
- ¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aharon_Remez
- ¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Tolkovsky
- ²⁰ www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/ww2/sugar4.html
- ²¹ Allan McAlpine. Brega, Libya, North Africa. March 2004
- ²² <http://thewargravesproject.org.uk/>
- ²³ noar.education.gov.il/main/upload/pinkas/jewishf.doc
- ²⁴ http://israelvets.com/pictorialhist_air_force.html