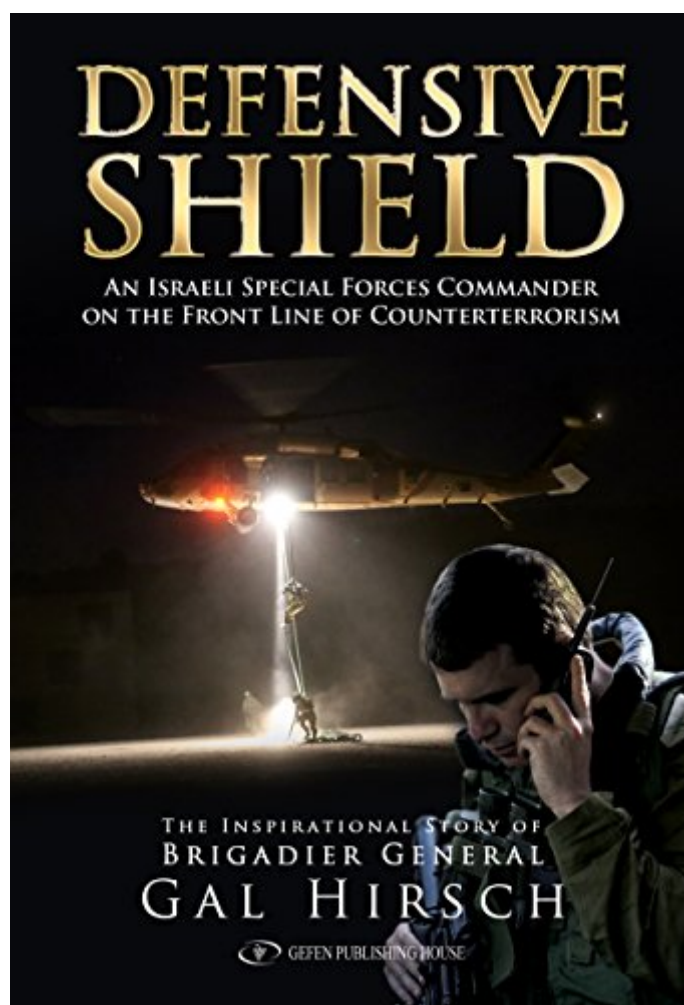


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# Defensive Shield: An Israeli Special Forces Commander On The Front Line Of Counterterrorism



## Synopsis

Israel Defense Force Brigadier General Gal Hirsch has taken part in all of Israel's military confrontations since 1982, leaving a unique signature on a wide scope of strategic thinking owing to his deep understanding of operational art and military planning. In 2009, Hirsch's autobiographical book in Hebrew, *War Story, Love Story*, was published and instantly appeared on the Israeli bestseller list where it stayed for many months. The description of his own personal journey offers deep, open-minded, and critical insights into the most significant milestones in Israel's defense in the past 30 years, in which he played a key role. This new, revised, and reconceived English edition of the book offers international readers a comprehensive, one-of-a-kind, contextual description of Israeli national defense developments, serving as a valuable tool for understanding contemporary security challenges in the Middle East. The book has been praised as a lesson in leadership, bravery, and endurance. It is a remarkable testimony to the bond between the Jewish people and its Bible and land.

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## Customer Reviews

An exceptional story of leadership, illustrating the importance of professionalism, responsibility, accountability, values, culture, command climate, leading change, referential leadership, etc. Hirsch's accounts of the combat actions he led and wars he fought are vivid and relevant, putting into perspective all that should matter to the military leader, within the greater context of Israel's struggle against Terrorism. He also ventures into the operational art, at first slightly over-emphasizing the importance of new words to generate new ideas. However, he quickly moves away from such study of the phenomena to a theory of action in his in-depth account of the 2006 Lebanon War. For example, he presents a compelling account of how Israel's counter-terrorism efforts flatten the levels of war, and thus necessitate systemic thinking and a "communal knowledge" in order to link tactical actions to strategic aims. He also reinforces the need to create friction to expose an elusive enemy and then take the initiative while gaining a position of relative advantage. Ironically, these very failures of strategy and operational art within the higher echelons of the IDF then conspire against Hirsch as 91 Division Commander in the forefront the 2006 War. He is left ostracized by leaders who at times saw the limiting of friendly military casualties as both more important than civilian casualties and as the objective of the war itself. Senior leaders also fail to accept responsibility and accountability, making Hirsch a scapegoat in the Israeli media during the thick of the fight. In this context, perhaps the greatest mistake of Gen Hirsch is his naivens that other senior leaders share his endless loyalty to troops and country. It also challenges as hypocritical the perspective that good officers should "stay in the shadow and be more than what they seem". "Deeds not words" clearly has its limits when a leader requires political support to accomplish the mission.

Gal Hirsch's book reads like a real life thriller as he describes the war in Lebanon and his exploits there. I can fully comprehend the intelligence, confidence and belief in country that was required for a General Officer to operate successfully in his position, which he appears to hold nothing back from. The need to push other thoughts away constantly to concentrate and envision the battlefield where lives depend on your decisions is both an honor and a sacred trust. Gal Hirsch must be equipped with a stronger soul than most to survive the attack on his life and the full physical and mental recovery he went through, the war in Lebanon itself, and finally the opportunistic politicians and leaders who sought to avert public opinion and consequences from themselves onto Gal Hirsch. Gal Hirsch is without a doubt is one of the most resilient people on the planet and someone we can all learn a lot from. This book is much more than a war story, but instead a life story that has been both incredibly blessed and challenged all at the same time.

I liked this book for the technical understanding of the IDF it gave me. I learned about the tough neighborhood Israel is in and how tough the warriors of the IDF have to be to defend their country. I also learned about the love the soldiers of the IDF have for their country and their comrades in arms. And, sadly, I learned of the perfidy of the politicians in and outside the IDF who failed to behave honorably and morally, and who caused so much pain to Gal Hirsh, the IDF and the country of Israel. I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys military writing and particularly military writing about Israel. This book is truly a 5 star effort by BG Hirsh, and I thank him and the IDF comrades who stood up for the truth and for him when it could cost them dearly.

Hirsch's memoir offers the unique perspective of division-level fighting at the front line of 2006 Second Lebanon War (which makes it a must-read, no comparable sources in English). The other book "34 Days" by Harel and Issacharoff is about political and strategical context/decision process, while Hirsch is about the military experience on the ground. There are a lot of finger-pointing and blaming after the war, so it's not a surprise Hirsch takes the opportunity to tell his side of story. If you have some basic knowledge of war, you will see why Hirsch sometimes explains in DETAIL of certain decision or event. But this is of course common in memoirs, this is still a good book overall.

Gal's life - his accomplishments, his trials, his strength in adversity, his love of family, his love of Israel and its armed forces, and his warrior spirit will inspire you. You can't read this book without wishing you were more like Gal. Fabulous book worth every second spent reading it.

Very interesting, but in some places too much detail in the military behind the scenes event - although he did indicate that this was so in the forward. NEEDS MAPS! It was difficult to follow the military progress without them. However, anyone interested in this period of Israeli history should read the book!

Really well written. Interesting insights on how the second war in Lebanon was conducted. Well done to understand politics and military.

Fascinating and informative book by someone who lived it - perfect gift for any military buff, particularly commando/Navy Seal types.

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