

YONI

What Courage Can Teach Us



A discussion guide for the book
Entebbe: The Jonathan Netanyahu Story
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OVERVIEW

The famous raid on Entebbe, a military operation undertaken by the Israel Defense Forces, freed over 100 hostages taken by hijackers in late June, 1976. The success of the startling operation stunned the world, and continues to inspire in the aftermath of the Al-Qaida attacks on the United States in 2001, as counter-terrorism operations unfold around the globe.

“Operation Jonathan,” named for the commander of the assault team given the responsibility for overcoming the hijackers at a remote African airport, is perhaps the most inspiring story of modern times for people caught off-guard by the audacity and ambition of ruthless terrorists.

On a warm night in July, a week after the hostages were taken, a group of IDF commandos, under cover of darkness, landed at Uganda’s Entebbe Airport. Less than five minutes after the first planeload of troops landed, the Palestinian and German terrorists had been eliminated.

Entebbe: The Jonathan Netanyahu Story, is a riveting account of this daring action, and details, both strategically and in terms of human interest, a blueprint for dealing with the menace of terrorism.

This discussion guide is meant to stimulate thoughtful reflection by small groups, individuals, and organizations, religious and non-religious, concerning the ways courage, planning, and long-term resolve can defeat the scourge of terrorism in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 1

"Like a mouse in a cat's paws"

Read the introduction and chapter 1. Look for details of this situation. Who are the principle characters?

1. The decade of the 70's saw the popularization among terror groups (such as the Palestine Liberation Organization) of airline hijacking. What was the agenda for these groups? _____

2. From what location did the flight originate, and what destination was chosen by the hijackers? Which specific groups took part in the hijacking? _____

3. What was the name of the Israeli commando unit that made up the Entebbe assault force? _____

4. What has been Israel's traditional view of terrorism? What overriding strategy has been used by the Jewish state in dealing with terrorists, and how has this philosophy impacted other western nations? _____

5. How many passengers were originally hijacked? _____

6. Which Israeli Air Force pilot initiated early planning after learning of the hijacking? _____

7. List some of the options available to the Israeli government, upon hearing of the plane landing at Entebbe. _____

8. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, after listening to several military options, worried that the whole operation could end in disaster. Which failed military operation did he mention to his staff? _____

9. Who was the Israeli chief of staff during the Entebbe crisis? _____

10. How did Israel obtain key information about the terrorists? _____

CHAPTER 2

"A final decision"

1. Yoni had wide-ranging interests. For a period, he was out of the army and studying at the Hebrew University. What did he then contemplate doing? _____

2. The author learns something about his brother's character during an exercise near the ancient fortress of Masada. What did he learn? _____

3. What campaign does the author and Yoni take part in during 1971? _____

CHAPTER 3

"Very far"

1. The Israelis have dealt with terrorism for a long time. What were the circumstances surrounding two attacks in the 1970's? _____

2. What was Yoni's view of his own role in the rescue attempt? _____

3. Where specifically were the hostages kept at Entebbe airport? _____

4. Discuss the various missions of the teams assigned to the raid. _____

5. Why was it important to take along a Mercedes? _____

6. What location was chosen as a demonstration of the landing techniques of the Hercules pilots, for the benefit of Gur? _____

7. List three concerns that some of the officers who took part had as the hours ticked away. _____

CHAPTER 4

"They'd run into him"

1. It is the time of the Yom Kippur war, and Yoni's force has been assigned the defense of Nafah, on the Golan Heights. As they engage a group of Syrian commandos, describe the leadership qualities that Yoni exhibited. _____

2. How did Yoni's philosophy of life and death influence his approach to dangerous missions? _____

3. Where did Yoni feel that he had been "formed"? _____

4. Yoni identified with an ancient Jewish commander, Elazar Ben-Yair. Why? _____

CHAPTER 5

"With his soul"

1. The control tower presented a special problem to the unit. What was this problem, and what decision did Yoni make concerning it? _____

2. The book Yoni was reading as the unit prepared for Entebbe was Alister Maclean's *The Way to Dusty Death*. Given the irony of the title, do you believe in foreshadowing? _____

3. By noon on July 3, final orders were issued, and Yoni briefly discussed the landing with lead pilot Joshua Shani. How does Shani describe the commander of the unit?

4. At 1:20 on the afternoon of the 3rd, the Hercules planes took off from Lod (now Ben-Gurion) airport. How much time would it take to get to Entebbe? _____

5. Dan Shomron addressed the troops just before departure and compared Entebbe, in context, to the Holocaust. What did he tell the men about their challenge? _____

CHAPTER 6

"This good earth"

1. Discuss the seeming dichotomy between Yoni the warrior, and Yoni in those moments when poetry moved him. _____

2. Discuss Yoni's recollection of a close call he had while driving, and how he viewed life and death.

CHAPTER 7

"Bukhris glanced at his watch"

1. Why did the pilots fly so low to the waters of the Red Sea? _____

2. Discuss Yoni's reasons for eliminating Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, if he could find him at Entebbe. What was his rationale for killing Amin? _____

3. As the plane approached Lake Victoria, Yoni was completely calm, as his men remember him. Discuss the reasons he might have projected this demeanor. _____

4. How much time did it take for the assault team to get out of the plane and to the old terminal?

5. Where was Yoni when he was hit? Why didn't his men stop for him? _____

6. What happened to hostage Dora Bloch, who was in a nearby hospital? _____

7. When did the rescue planes depart Entebbe? _____

CHAPTER 8

"Africa"

1. Two brothers travel to the spot where the third brother fell. Discuss what they must have been feeling as their plane touched down at Entebbe. _____

2. What did a Ugandan pilot tell the author and his brother happened at Entebbe, in the aftermath of the raid? _____

3. How does the author feel Yoni's sacrifice will be remembered? _____

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