



Alone in the Ranks

A History of Lone Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces, 1948–2026

GREGG ROMAN

The third volume of the citizen-volunteer trilogy.

Some funerals were empty. One drew thirty thousand strangers. Between them runs the story of the lone soldier.

In 1948, ace pilot George Beurling died on his way to fight for Israel, and almost no one claimed him. In 2014, thirty thousand strangers climbed Mount Herzl to bury Max Steinberg. Between those two funerals runs the history of the IDF's lone soldiers — the volunteers who leave home to serve, the country that embraces them, and the system that too often fails them. An honest ledger: the glory and the neglect, both counted.

KEY POINTS

- The first comprehensive history of the lone soldier phenomenon in any language — from the Zion Mule Corps and Machal to the post-October 7 generation.
- 6,731 lone soldiers served in the IDF as of August 2024 — and more than four in ten were not immigrant volunteers but Israelis without family support.
- A documentary history with the shadow side kept in — the audits, the bureaucratic failures, the suicide cluster — alongside the crowds at Mount Herzl.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregg Roman is the author of *The Closing Window* and *The Carthage Doctrine*. An IDF veteran who served in Israel's Ministry of Defense and advised its deputy foreign minister, he has taught counterterrorism at West Point and appears in the media hundreds of times a year.

“A lone soldier is the one whose funeral might be empty.”

STATUS

Coming 2027

SERIES

The citizen-volunteer trilogy · third volume

CATEGORIES

History · Jewish interest · Military history

COMPS

Matti Friedman's *Pumpkinflowers* · Micah Goodman readers · Daniel Gordis's histories