Shalhevet Freier

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Shalhevet Freier during his service in the British army, 1944

**Shalhevet Freier** ([Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): שלהבת פריאר‎; 16 July 1920 – November 27, 1994) was an Israeli physicist and administrator.

Freier was born in Eschwege, Germany, the son of Rabbi Dr. Moritz (Moshe Yissachar) Freier and [Recha Freier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recha_Freier" \o "Recha Freier), founder of the [Youth Aliyah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_Aliyah) organization. In 1937 his parents were asked to remove him from the Christian school which he attended, because of an essay which he wrote and which was opposed to the Nazi doctrine. At his request, his parents sent him to England to continue attending school there.

In 1940 he emigrated to Palestine (as it then was) and was accepted as a student of Mathematics at the Hebrew University. At the end of the first year of his attendance at the University, and after his mother’s arrival in Palestine and setled in the Katamon district of Jerusalem, he joined the British army in 1941. He served in the Rail and Transport unit 462 in North Africa and Italy. While crossing the sea on his way to Italy, on the steamer “Erinphora” the boat was attacked by the Germans and sunk. Freier was saved. He was active in the group who called themselves “Hachavura” whose aim was to save Jewish Jewish refugees. Hachavura exploited Freier’s immaculate English so that he could play the role of a British officer while transporting the refugees through Italy in British army vehicles. In addition he was also engaged in trying to acquire weapons for the defence of Jewish settlements in Palestine. In one of the convoys transporting refugees he was apprehended and sent to prison. After several weeks in prison, he was set free as there was no evidence of crime. He was discharged from the army in 1946 and returned to Palestine. He returned to the Hebrew University to continue his studies of Mathematics and Physics. He eked out a living by giving private tuition.

In the war of Independence, he was director of the “Rotem” intelligence unit in Jerusalem, and later joined the staff of the Foreign Ministry as an intelligence officer. As a result of a professional difference of opinion with his superiors he left and resumed his studies at the University. At this time he made his living as a journalist writing a column for the “Palestine Post”. After completing his first degree at the Hebrew University, he became director of the “Emet” unit of the Ministry of Defence during the years 1953 and 1954, the unit which ultimately developed into “Raphael” of to-day.

During the years 1956 to 1959, Freier was Scientific councilor to the Israeli embassy in Paris. In this capacity he played a leading role in the scientific co-operation between the French and the Israeli governments in initiating atomic research in Israel. Between the years 1960 – 1966 he continued studying physics at the Weizman Institute and there took his Master’s degree. In 1967 he became Vice-President of the Weizman Institute.

In 1970 Freier was appointed Director of the atomic reactor in Nahal Soreq and a year later Director General of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission. He served in this capacity until 1976. It was, while in this capacity, that he was summoned to the office of Prime Minister Golda Meir by Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, who recommended a show of Israel’s atomic ability, a recommendation that was never accepted.

As of 1981 until his death Freier was the Head of the political department of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission.

In 1971, Freier established the first Scientific Park in Israel, the precincts of the Weizman Institute

Freier chaired the Israeli group of [Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pugwash_Conferences_on_Science_and_World_Affairs) and served on the Pugwash Council.

**Commemoration**

In Freier’s memory, the “Shalhevet Freier center for peace, science and technology” was established at the Nahal Soreq muclear reactor.

The Weizman Institute of Science organizes each year a contest in physics, The “Shalhevet Freier tournier” devoted to the construction of safes locked with use of physical principles. Yhe tournier is open to secondary schools in the whole world. Each team has to build a safe locked by physical principles and has to try and unlock the safe built by other teams.

Freier’s sister-in-law, Miriam Freier, established in Jerusalem in his memory the “Shalhevet home for disabled, “ an apartment house where each physically handicapped can lead an independent existence.

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