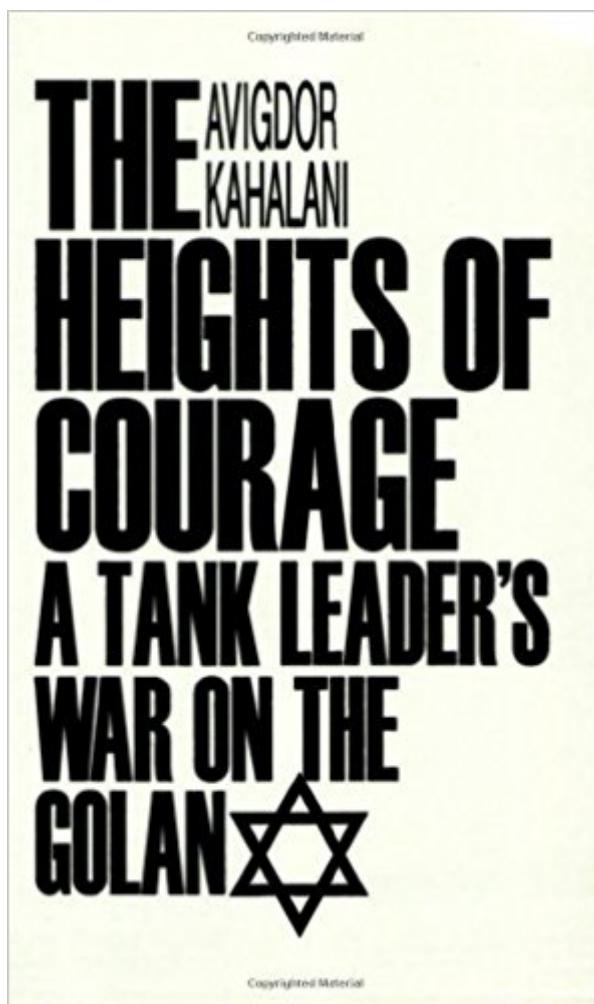


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# The Heights Of Courage: A Tank Leader's War On The Golan



## Synopsis

In October 1973, the State of Israel was invaded by Egyptian and Syrian forces. Despite early losses, Israel managed to outfight its opponents. The brief and bloody Yom Kippur War stands as a unique chapter in modern military history. Fought primarily by tank units, the war became a story not only of battle strategy and tactics, but also one of human discipline, endurance and sacrifice. While many historians have chronicled the events of the Yom Kippur War, few have been seasoned by actual combat. Avigdor Kahalani, commander of a tank battalion on the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War, describes this experience in *The Heights of Courage*. Beginning with a description of the initial Syrian offensive, he recounts the personal endeavors of his men, their fears and their ambitions, as well as their emotional and physical hardships. His stark account traces the efforts of the Israel Armored Corps as they struggle to overcome extreme difficulties and setbacks. The author describes their ultimate penetration into enemy territory and their approach to within forty kilometers of Damascus.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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AVIGDOR KAHALANI, a war hero, commanded the 7th Brigade, an Israeli tank battalion, during the Yom Kippur War. Now retired and serving in the reserve forces, he headed Israel's General Staff College until recently. He now oversees the Amal Network of 93 vocational schools, enrolling

13,000 Israeli youths and adults.

I have always believed that when attempting to learn about a conflict or any other significant event, it is best to learn about it from the people who were there. "The Heights of Courage", written by Medal for Valor recipient Brigadier General Avigdor Kahalani, is a book about a tanker's war by one of the greatest tankers ever. It shows beyond a doubt that tankers, especially in the IDF, face an extremely demanding and dangerous job. This book is the story of Israel and the Israeli Defense Force in a way- an outnumbered, outgunned and deeply hated people surmounting odds that men and women not up to the task would call impossible. The IDF has never had an easy time of things, but this battle over the Golan Heights in the Yom Kippur War was even more difficult, since Israel was in a disorganized state and caught with many fewer standing soldiers than would have been desirable. Throughout every war the IDF has fought, especially this one, only the superior skill, dedication, and technology of the IDF made victory possible. Its soldiers have always been well-trained, highly motivated and courageous men and women, utilizing weapons and machines much better than the enemies they have faced. It becomes obvious as one reads through the book that the T-62 and T-54 tanks the Syrians- the primary if not only foe spoken of by Kahalani- liked to use so much cost Syria not only a lot of money after getting blown up, but also a lot of good men. Soviet T-series tanks were and are cheap and simple to use, but they have cost and continue to cost many crews their lives. When the armor is breached, things inside have a tendency to explode. The British Centurion, the primary IDF tank at the time, was more expensive but a much better tank. Its superb design ensured that many Israeli tankers, General Kahalani among them, returned home alive, and that many Syrian tankers were not so fortunate. The end of the war- a crushing defeat for Syria and its allies, proves the skill and bravery of Kahalani and his comrades-in-arms beyond doubt. Combined Syrian, Iraqi, and Egyptian tank losses were estimated at approximately 2,250 tanks destroyed or captured. Israel lost around 600, many of which were returned to service alongside captured enemy vehicles. "The Heights of Courage" is a story of heroism, conviction, and unflagging devotion to duty, providing a superb look into armored warfare directly from a man who has seen the very best and worst of it. "The Heights of Courage" was first published in 1975, is 198 pages long and runs from September 26, 1973 to October 24, 1973. My version, a hardcover printed in 1984 by Greenwood Press, contains a foreword by General Don A. Starry and Major General Israel Tal. It is a fascinating book that I strongly recommend to any who are interested in armored warfare, the Yom Kippur War, or the State of Israel. One day, the iron wall that the IDF's armored corps shields their home with will no longer be needed, and peace will have prevailed at

last. But until then, men like General Kahalani will stand ready to defend Israel every hour of every day, regardless of the price that devotion to duty demands.

The Heights of Courage is the war memoir of Avigdor Kahalani, a tank battalion commander during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. His job was to defend the Golan Heights and Galilee from the Syrian attackers. The Yom Kippur War is the last, truly conventional war that was fought in a more or less "clean" war, and in this case the Arabs nearly won. Their drives into the Sinai and Northern Israel were a clear existential threat. Kahalani and his men are therefore fighting for their very homes and families. His account is an easy to follow story of the defense of Israel and the following counter-attack into Syria. His men are subject to constant artillery fire and at one point have an enemy tank intermixed with the battalion. This leads to a tense showdown-Is the tank ours or theirs? Is it aware of where it is? Can we sneak up on it? An enjoyable enough read.

This book is a page turner. It reads like an adventure novel, but it is a real combat memoir by Lt.-Col. Avigdo Kahalani (later a Brigadier General). He and his men held an important part of the front during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. It is impossible to imagine what modern tank warfare is like, but this book brings it to life. You can get a better picture of how important Kahalani's efforts were if you also read *Duel for the Golan: The 100-Hour Battle That Saved Israel*

I served as an infantry officer in combat in Vietnam four years before the 1973 War. Hence I have little personal knowledge of tank warfare. I found the book extremely interesting. It provided an eye-opening account of one of the greatest tank battles to ever occur. While not of the magnitude of Kursk in WWII, the tank battles that took place in the Golan were surely as important. The lesson for all of us is that while the quality of equipment is of extreme importance success on the battlefield is most often determined by the training and courage of the individual soldier and the unit in which he serves. Audacity and speed in tank warfare is essential. The Israeli Armored Corps has always understood that. I highly recommend the book especially for the student of military history. LTC Robert M. Paul, USAR (RET)

It was difficult to read each page, and difficult to put the book down. I made my teenager read it afterwards. If you think you've lived through difficult circumstances, this will put things into perspective. It also shows how with determination, wit and courage things can turn around. In a way, it's also a book about the futility of war.

The book is an easy (and quick) read. However, the author doesn't take much time to go into detail about equipment or tactics. It's a very basic memoir about the difficulties of moving a tank force around from place to place in order to meet a numerically overwhelming enemy, especially when moving at night with very little in the way of modern western war technology. Impressive book none the less. If you like military history, and are interested in a single person's perspective of a few battles in the Arab-Israeli war, then this would be a good read.

I met general Kahalani in Israel in 2007 and heard him address that years class of incoming IDF recruits as they were introduced to the different branches of service. An amazing story and a true "hero of Israel"

I only recently found this great tank book. I went to the Armor Advanced course with one of the officers in this battalion, albeit years after the battle. Great guy great book.

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