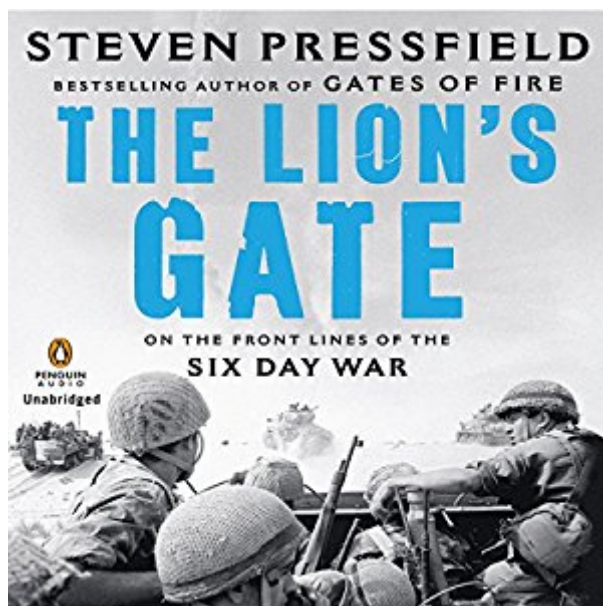


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# The Lion's Gate: On The Front Lines Of The Six Day War



## Synopsis

The best-selling author of *Gates of Fire* and *Killing Rommel* delivers his first work of military nonfiction - an epic narrative of the Six Day War. June 5, 1967: The fearsome, Soviet-equipped Egyptian Army and its 1,000 tanks are massed on Israel's southern border. Meanwhile, the Syrian Army is shelling the much smaller nation from the north. And to the east, Jordan and Iraq are moving brigades and fighter squadrons into position to attack. Egypt's President Nasser has declared that the Arab world's goal is no less than "the destruction of Israel." June 10, 1967: The combined Arab armies are in ruins, their air forces totally destroyed. Israel's citizen-soldiers have seized the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan. The land under Israeli control has tripled. The charismatic, eye-patch wearing Defense Minister Moshe Dayan has barreled through the Lion's Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, meeting up with a gang of paratroopers who have already raised the blue and white flag that frames the Star of David. How on earth did this happen? Only Steven Pressfield could get the real story from the fighter jocks in the air, the tank commanders through the sand, and the infantrymen on the ground. Through more than 300 hours of interviews conducted in Israel, he has written a gripping chronicle of the six days that changed the Middle East forever. He also captures the universal experience of individual soldiers compelled to stare down mortal fear and move headlong into a firestorm. *The Lion's Gate* blends the immediacy of Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down*, the esprit de corps of Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers*, and the soul of James Bradley's *Flags of Our Fathers*. It will join the indispensable canon of military nonfiction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Pressfield serves up another extraordinary story. This time he binds together a collage of first person accounts into an extraordinary narrative. Pressfield tells this story from up and down the Israeli, IDF, and IAF ranks and across the international machinations into the run-up and conduct of the 6-day war. Pressfield sets the stage to zoom into the microscopic society of civilian/soldier kids in combat. The kids are led by surprising and extraordinary civilian/commanders to simply never give an inch. The reason was pretty simple as no less than victory and more, that no battle can be lost in so small a geography and no loss is too great to grant the last man standing a retreat. In typical Pressfield style, the meat of story grows to an unstoppable read. Pressfield explains up front that this is an unapologetically biased portrayal from his perspective. Reviewers that might pan the book as one sided are more than adequately warned. Pressfield has the eyewitnesses named for the skeptic to question. Reading a book delivers a particular experience to the reader. The experience here is the combination of a superb book multiplied by one's own recall of the events and the still central and current global realpolitik. I can recall the UN withdrawal from Sinai at Nasser's demand and we knew it was for the express purpose of clearing the way for the Muslim Nationalist's run at their own final solution. I had forgotten that the US was not Israel's ally. I had forgotten that France, alone, was Israel's only material ally. I mentally moved the French up a few notches of respect. "In '67 the army is too poor to have its own trucks for troop transport. We must use civilian vehicles ..." This is not an easy book for a 'pro-Israel' American to read. It's uncomfortable. Its gut wrenching, actually. My stomach churned at every instance of America's overt abandonment of Israel. Pressfield simply states the facts and the resignation that 'it is what it is' from the kids fighting to survive with the weapons of past generations. Pressfield leaves the reader to ponder the matter. I had so erroneously imagined that the US and Britain did something, anything to help Israel in this war. The US and Britain outrageously abandoned Israel to fate. Just as outrageously, the USSR weaponized the Muslim Nationalists with their very best tech. Israel fought this war against the 'state of the art' military tech, surrounded on three sides, with their backs against the water and outnumbered in all ways by 2, 3, or 4 to 1 with no friends willing to make a stand. Israel triumphed mightily all by themselves to earn the respect that has come to define them as the eternally underestimated underdog. Kudos to Pressfield for writing the book he wanted and I appreciate. It blew the fog out of my own memory to deliver a total experience.

The book is one of those that once you begin is hard to put down, the individuals whose lives are being shared come alive in a way that's hard to explain. Living as we do in a dream world here in

the U.S. where our idea of a stressful day is not finding a parking place at the mall can't compare with families born and raised in what is, was, and will continue to be a war zone. I have a much better understanding of the size of Israel and more importantly the spirit of the people who we, Christians, refer to as God's Chosen, the Jews. First book I've read on the Six Day War. Many of the participants names I've heard all my life are fleshed out, warts and all. A worthwhile read.

While I usually do not read war or action stories, my adrenaline was kicking in on overdrive as I sped through *THE LION'S GATE*. I knew many of the details before I had even opened the book, but it was so real and fresh that I felt I was actually there: in the airplanes, helicopters, jeeps, tanks, and trudging along in IDF boots. I remember following the Six Day war as it happened, beginning with Egypt's closure of the Straits of Tiran and the UN leaving the Sinai. I was living in Ohio and all the media reports were talking about all the damage being inflicted on the Israeli military and Israeli cities and civilians. It was frightening. Soon after the end of the war, the real story got out: Against amazing odds, Israel had destroyed the Egyptian air force within a few hours and had captured all of the Sinai, The West Bank, and Golan Heights. Afterwards, I followed media reports and read books about the war. None of them matched the story revealed in Steven Pressfield's *THE LION'S GATE*. Formatted as a chronological oral history, Pressfield presents key segments of the war. He interviewed sixty three military personnel who fought in the Sinai, Jerusalem, and the Golan and lets them tell what they experienced at that critical time. We are there as the plans of attack for Sinai, Jerusalem, and Golan are drawn and redrawn. Through their words, they tell us what was going on in the minds of the Israeli military personnel directly involved. They relate how the IDF operates: Orders from the top are frequently ignored or altered because of the situation on the ground. While there were orders to not attack civilians or religious sites, they had to decide what should be done when they were attacked by civilians or from mosques or schools? We learn what Israel and Jerusalem mean to the Jews and why. IDF members also tell of their experiences with some of the Arab civilians they encounter during the battle and of a meeting with an 80-year-old Jewish grandmother who had to flee her home in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem in 1948. *THE LION'S GATE* tells of the frustration of the military personnel waiting for Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Levi Eshkol to decide to take action. Russia was shipping arms and personnel to Egypt. Eshkol was waiting for the US to intervene. Meanwhile, the Egyptian forces were getting stronger and better prepared which would result in more casualties for the Israelis. Despite assurances from Israel that areas under Jordanian control would be left alone if he stayed out of the battle, we are told why King Hussein got involved,

which resulted in the his loss of The West Bank. Moshe Dayan had died long before the book was written, but he left his own writings and his daughter and wife were interviewed. He was very prescient: He warned that if Israel won, the world would change its characterization of Israel from being David to being Goliath and demand from us retrenchment and retreat. He warned that if the actions of religious extremists were allowed to grow, the results would be catastrophic. Born in Israel, he also spoke of how to allow the Arabs to maintain their pride and what they will do to save face. The books brought out many interesting points, some of which were new to me: In the 1956 War, which was partly a cause of the Six Day War, under Ariel Sharon, Israel captured more Egyptian territory than France and England had planned; Egypt's lies kept the UN from calling a cease fire and the Russians from sending more aid; In 1967, Israel's population was 2.7 million people, many of them recent immigrants who had been evicted from their homes in the Middle East and North Africa. They lacked the skills necessary to defend their new home; many did not yet speak Hebrew. Israel was surrounded by 122 million Arabs; Sharon believed "As long as the Arabs preserve a gleam of hope that they will succeed in getting rid of us, nothing in the world can cause them to relinquish this hope because they are not a rabble but a living people....Only when the extremist groups...lose their influence and only then will their influence be transferred to more moderate groups...[who will be able to] offer suggestions for compromise....so that both people can live together in peace, like good neighbours." Hebrew is notoriously deficient in profanity; While in exile, Jews yearned to return to Israel. The national anthem, Hatikva, speaks of The Hope. Even today, some preferred to deal with the dream rather than the reality; THE LION'S GATE brought out all the involvement of a well-presented documentary. This book was an advanced copy from Goodreads.

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