From Meah Shearim to the IDF

THE WAR CONTINUES

I began writing these lines in Yerushalayim. In Israel's capital, the war is not immediately evident, except in the reduced number of tourists visible on the streets or in restaurants. However, the pain of families losing loved ones is felt across Israel. Friends, acquaintances, or acquaintances of acquaintances. Israel is one big family, and the pain of one is the pain of all.

The army is currently fighting on two fronts: first, Gaza. The plan is for Israel to fully clear the northern part of Gaza and relocate Palestinians to a humanitarian camp in the south. The northern zone, which includes Gaza City, J'abalia, Bet Lahia, and Bet Hanun, would come under strict Israeli control. This would prevent, among other things, terrorists from attacking or invading Israeli territory as they did on October 7, 2023. To achieve this, some towns and cities still need to be conquered. So far, Israel has had much success in the war, B"H. In the northern region, only about 200,000 Gazans remain, and the plan is for the humanitarian aid entering Gaza daily—about 350 trucks per day—to be distributed exclusively in the south, encouraging all who need it to move there.

The second active military front is in Lebanon, which currently demands the majority of the Israeli army's attention. Hezbollah's weapons are much more advanced than those of Hamas. Hezbollah has massive tunnels in southern Lebanon, some reaching depths of 80 meters, designed to infiltrate Israel and carry out mass killings of thousands of Israelis. The war in Lebanon has only just begun, and we must continue praying for God to protect our brave and heroic young soldiers.

MORE SOLDIERS NEEDED

One of Israel's most pressing challenges is a lack of human resources in the army. More soldiers are urgently needed, and one possible solution is recruiting Haredi soldiers—those Jews who study Tora full-time and are legally exempt from military service. I remember in my youth, for instance, that Argentina's law exempted Christian or Jewish seminarians from the mandatory military service. The original Israeli law, established by Ben Gurion, was implemented when Medinat Israel had a negligible Haredi population. Today, however, B"H, the Haredi population numbers approximately 1 million people, representing 15% of the total Jewish population, and it continues to grow. In these critical times, Israel urgently needs more soldiers to fight and protect its borders.

ARMY AND RELIGION

Until now, there was only one combat unit for Haredim, Netzach Yehuda, which has existed for some time. The good news is that the Jewish army is organizing a new brigade to accommodate Haredi soldiers, called "Hashmonayim," which strictly aligns with the Haredi lifestyle. Hundreds or even thousands of young Jaredim are enlisting voluntarily, and this trend will only grow. The integration of Jaredi soldiers will give the Israeli army a much stronger Jewish identity.

Consider the case of the Zionist religious Jews, Dati Leumi, who have always served in the army and are known for their high combat spirit and sense of responsibility. Their service reflects the Tora's mitzvot regarding assisting, saving, and being ready to sacrifice for another Jew. All these mitzvot come to life when a Jewish soldier is on the battlefield. Jaredi soldiers will contribute not only as human resources but also spiritually, with Boré Olam, the Creator, as the commander-in-chief of the Israeli army.

MENDEL AND NAHSHON BEN AMINADAV

This is a very important and historic video. The protagonist is a 33-year-old Jaredi man, Mendel Roth, a direct descendant of the Baal Shem Tov from Mea Shearim, who is set to begin his service in the army in one month.

The message speaks volumes: the idea that Haredim do not serve in the army seems like something from a past generation. Now, in this new unit he will join, Hashmonayim, it is possible to combine these two worlds—his commitment to the Tora and his responsibility toward Am Israel.

Roth hopes to be an example and inspiration for others, showing that there is no contradiction between religious devotion and serving the nation.

Mendel explains that this decision not only brings him personally closer to God and the redemption of the Jewish people but also represents an act of unity aimed at healing one of the main fractures within the people of Israel. In his words, his example will change the perception of those who believe there are Jews who do not contribute enough to the country, making this a great Kiddush HaShem.

In the army, Mendel will not settle for an administrative or desk role; he has decided to join KRAVI service, meaning he will fight and risk his life for his people. Mendel speaks about how this decision marks a historic change in the country.

He emphasizes that the most critical factor for him was that this new brigade, Hashmonayim, is fully adapted to the Haredi lifestyle, maintaining a religious environment that ensures soldiers can complete their service without compromising their commitment to Judaism—something that was previously difficult to guarantee within the military context.

Mendel is paving the way for a trend destined to grow. His

courage and decision serve as an inspiring example for all young people who, like him, wish to serve Israel without giving up their religious identity.

It is crucial to listen to his words in full, as his message represents a significant group of young Haredim eager to participate in the army and assist in defending Israel.

This article was published a few days ago in the Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom, with more details about the Hashmonayim Brigade.

המהפכה החרדית של צה”ל: כך תיראה חטיבת חשמונאיםבתי מדרש בכל פלוגה, לימוד גמרא
כתנאי להכשרת לוחם, וחליפה ומגבעת בשבת • הגיוס הראשון יתקיים בנר ראשון של חנוכה •
עשרות מיליוני שקלים הושקעו בבא”ח מכבים, שם יעברו החיילים את כל ההכשרות –
מטירונות ועד קורס מ”כים • בצה”ל מבהירים: “אין כוונה להפוך אותם לציונים – רק להגן
על המדינה”

The Haredi Revolution in the Israeli Defense Forces: This Is How the Hasmonean Brigade Will LookA Bet Midrash in every company. Talmud study as a prerequisite for combat training. Suits and hats for Shabbat. The first recruitment in this unit will take place on the first night of Chanukah. Tens of millions of shekels have been invested in the Makabim Training Base, where Jaredi soldiers will receive all their training, from basic training to the commanders’ course.

Read the full article here:

Israel Hayom Article

SHABBAT SHALOM

Rabbi Yosef Bitton