

Pekudai 5774

BS"D Parashat Pekudai 5774

Torah Study vs. Military Service – Is there a Solution?

It is superfluous to underscore the painful breach that exists within our society, because the debate and emotions are inescapable.

It is the result of “bad blood” which exists between the sides – “bad blood” because the issue is one of life and death, where one side spills its blood while the other does not. I am referring to the matter of military service for Chareidi yeshiva students. The gap between the sides appears to be at this time irreparable. The **learners** cannot concede because in their eyes they are fulfilling Hashem’s will that Jews should learn Torah and that their learning is defending the Medina. The **earners**, on the other hand, cannot perceive that learning Torah in an air-conditioned bet midrash and sleeping every night between two clean sheets is as effective in defending the country as dropping a two-ton bomb from an F-16 in Azza or laying in a mud-filled foxhole on the border in ambush for terrorists who are determined to murder as many Jews as they can.

There is a legitimate call that in view of the precarious military and political situation we are now in, all citizens must share equally in the defense of the country (milchemet mitzva). However, the nation’s leadership knows that the coercive draft of yeshiva students will provoke mass civil disobedience here and acts of chillul Hashem on the part of certain Jews in chutz la’aretz who are enemies of the State.

Wherein lies the solution?

I suggest a program that will both deal with the problem and also contribute to raising the qualitative level of Torah study to fill the needs of our technologically developing society.

The program consists of three stages for every yeshiva that wishes to receive government aid and military deferment for its students:

1- From the age of 16 to 20, the students will be required to complete the entire Shas (Talmud) and to pay tuition to the yeshiva; at the end of which time they will undergo a thorough written and oral test. Those who fail will be excluded from the official recognized yeshiva system and will no longer be deferred from the army, having proven that they were not gifted with the intellect necessary to become a recognized talmid chacham. However, this would not exclude them from being a respected member of the Chareidi community, but rather merely an indication that Hashem is asking them to choose a different path, which of course includes a lifetime of kovaya eeteem la'Torah (Torah study).

2- The second period of study will be 4 years, focusing on the entire Shulchan Aruch. Students will be exempt from military service and will now receive a livable stipend. At the end of the 4 years, when the student will be 24 years old, he will undergo another test. Those who fail will be eligible for limited military or national service and then be free to join the labor market.

3- The third and final stage will be from 5 to 10 years. Participants who have proven to be the most gifted will receive a more generous stipend. Each will have to choose an halachic specialty (i.e., halacha in medicine, industrial Shabbat, electricity and its appliances, domestic affairs, the military).

According to this plan, one who fails the tests will have no

one but himself to blame. It will weed out the students who are not sufficiently gifted to learn Torah full-time and only constitute a burden on the system. Most importantly, it will produce rabbis who are able to resolve halachic problems in particular areas of life, as with medicine where the sheer volume of knowledge forces a doctor to specialize.

Students who fail the rigid tests can still achieve success in Torah study through their private diligence, but not at the expense of unfulfilled civic responsibility that places an unwanted financial burden on the majority of Israelis.

Unfortunately, the question of military and national service goes beyond the matter of how a Chareidi young man should best spend his time – learning Torah or service for the national good. It centers around the basic question of how one relates to the independent Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael after 2000 years of galut.

The national religious outlook states that the Medina is the handiwork of HaShem – the precursor of our final redemption. The Medina is preparing the land to welcome the millions of in-gathering sons and daughters so that the Mashiach will not arrive to a barren desert. The Medina has built an army to be commanded by the Mashiach to bring judgment upon our enemies – it is a religious obligation and a privilege to serve and strengthen the Medina in all ways.

The Chareidi outlook sees the Medina differently.

Reversed Worlds

The Gemara (Pesachim 50a) relates that R. Yosef son of R. Yehoshua ben Levi died and returned to life. When his father asked him what he saw in the next world, he replied that the next world is “hafuch” – the reverse of this one; for those

who are held in low esteem here are honored in the next world, while those who are famous here are held in low esteem there.

The concept of “olam hafuch” – reversed worlds – applies to almost all areas of our lives here, especially our value systems.

The most unexpected distortion of Jewish values in this world, in contrast to what is real in the world of absolute truth, is the relationship that many spiritual leaders have towards the Jewish State. If after 2000 years of praying and suffering in the galut, HaShem opened the gates of the Holy Land for His sons and daughters, when for reasons which have no halachic or logical validity they refuse to enter the Land, then those leaders and their followers are destined to experience again and again more barbarous lessons until they internalize that they must leave the galut.

Today, the news media announced two interesting items: 1- The Knesset will be dealing with the issue of who is the sovereign authority of the Temple Mount – the government of Israel or the Jordanian government? And 2- The Chareidi leadership is planning to hold a mass demonstration (they speak of one million people) against the intention to include all able young men in the national military draft – university students as well as yeshiva students.

For the sake of the Torah and the Jewish nation, I suggest that these two initiatives be combined. That one million Chareidim take to the streets to demand our total and exclusive control over the Temple Mount.

The alternative to our initiatives of aliya for the Jews in the galut and our rebuilding of the Bet HaMikdash on the Temple Mount is to wait for the Mashiach to perform these tasks for us, while we sit as spectators enjoying his performance. That will not happen, because HaShem created this world for the Jewish people to **do** mitzvot, not to be

spectators of our fate.

We should all pray for a leader to arise from within us, who will reset our thought processes to match the truth as it is in the “real world”.

Jews Outside of Israel Cry Out for Israel to Defend Them

Arutz Sheva published an article by Gil Ronen on Tuesday titled Israel, Help Us! The report details an urgent plea from the Director of the Federation of Jewish Organizations in Europe, Rabbi Menahem Margolin, to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon asking them to act urgently and send trained security personnel from Israel to protect Jewish communities in the Ukraine.

Rabbi Margolin reported increasing anti-Semitic behavior including “a fire bomb thrown at a synagogue in Zhprozha, a message telling the **rabbi of Krivoy Rog** that he must leave the city within 72 hours, a graffito on the home of the **rabbi of Blitzkorov** saying “we are already near you,” another graffito near a Jewish building in Kiev saying “you are next,” and other anti-Semitic graffiti.”

Citing the “worrisome trend, in which the acts of violence are focusing increasingly on Jewish targets”, Rabbi Margolin feels attacks could be prevented with a presence of Israeli security in his region of the world.

The God of Israel is calling for the evacuation of His children from Europe.

I can see the day when instead of the “rabbis of Krivoy Rog and Blitzkorov” (in the Ukraine), similar requests for Tzahal’s immediate help will come from the rabbis of Berlin,

London, Paris and Amsterdam.

I can even hear future calls for help coming from the rabbis of Detroit, Cleveland and New York as the rabbis of Krivoy Rog and Blitzkorov are making today.

There is still time to get out ofchutz la'aretz and come home!

This cry for help in a foreign land brings us full-circle to the question of Israeli military service; if Israel were to choose to respond to such calls, would we have enough men trained in our military to both protect the medina and assist Jews in foreign lands who refused to make aliya before they were in distress?

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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