BS"D

"Ad Mo'sai?" - Giyus Banos:

Weekly "Report from the Front" (Parshas Matos-Masei, 5779)

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* The views and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect those of the ownership or management of The Jewish Press.

°° The Silent Crisis:

It bears repeating that there are MANY hundreds of Israeli girls whom are being denied their religious exemptions, often for no good reason - even by standards of Israeli law. Abuse of the legal process is so rampant that no organization can keep up with what had become an undeclared crime-wave against teenage religious girls. The caseload tallies of the multiple organizations dealing with the IDF drafting of girls (including national religious ones, such as Chotam, as well as Chareidi ones, such as Chomosaich) are downright frightening:

The total number of girls - along the breadth of the spectrum of religiosity - encountering problems with the IDF is - literally - in the THOUSANDS.

"Chomosayich" alone is aware of about 1,500 girls in trouble. ("Chotam" has helped about 500 over the past two years.) What's even more shocking is how many are actually enlisting in military service, under threat of arrest and incarceration. (And then there are those "types" of girls who willingly enlist in the military, sometimes with the encouragement of far-left spiritual advisors.)

Torah Law:

According to Jewish Law, Giyus Banos is "yai'horaig ve'al ya'avor." That means that one must give up one's life rather than submit to the drafting of girls and women. This obligation isn't limited to the girls themselves. The Brisker Rov ZT"L generally avoided demonstrations, due to the physical dangers they pose (as a plethora of recent videos demonstrate). Nevertheless, he did demonstrate against Giyus Banos, because it is "yai'horaig ve'al ya'avor."

The "Rayon Dat:"

In many cases, the reason (or pretext of choice) for evading providing girls their religious exemptions is that they failed the "Rayon Das," the "Test of Religiosity." (No, it's not a Saudi import.) This is an Israeli military policy of testing girls - IF the IDF deems their religiosity to be in question. The tests are administered by IDF officials, many of whom share distaste - and often unmitigated contempt - for the religion that they're testing for.

The Hidden Dangers of the Rayon Das:

According to leading Rabbis, girls should avoid submitting to a Rayon Das ("R.D."). In fact, the very rationale commonly offered for submitting to a R.D. is itself the most compelling argument against it. Many girls are allegedly "not strong enough" to stand up the the government's demands that they appear for a R.D. In reality, for that very reason they should be encouraged to avoid a R.D., because if a girl feels insufficient in withstanding the pressure now - from the relative security of her home and regular routine - how much more likely is she to buckle under the carefully designed psychological subterfuges employed by the IDF professionals, seasoned officers bent on fighting for every religious girl they decide upon. Multiple independent accounts of girls who have submitted to R.D. reveal a terrifying picture. The girls must enter the intimidating Draft Office alone, isolated from even close family. Pouncing on any mistake or shortfall in personal conduct, IDF officers will often interrogate and berate the girls, and even accuse them of lying. Another tactic is to make weaker girls feel like hypocrites for infractions of Halacha, and for succumbing to natural human frailties endemic to the pervasive immorality - the latter environment itself officially fostered by the government. How is a 17 year-old girl expected to withstand the well designed techniques of seasoned officers (especially since they often have little idea of what is in store for them)?

Ba'alos Teshuva Under Fire:

The maltreatment of Ba'alos Teshuva is of most acute concern. Some Baalos Teshuva are not yet familiar enough with Jewish Law to answer all the Torah questions properly. However, that is last thing the government can hold against the girls; the reason they're not familiar is clearly because most of the state-run non-religious schools have tragically produced generations of Jews ignorance of all things Jewish.

Secondly, many baalos teshuva, like many converts (e.g. Leah bas Soroh, now suffering incarceration for fleeing kefiyah anti-Datit in the IDF), lack a full family support system. That renders them easy targets for abuse by IDF officials. In such cases, it's incumbent on Bais Din (and the tzibbur) to take up their cause.

Thirdly, some baalos teshuva have been brought up as religious, but had a spiritual decline. Often, the IDF will expend resources to scour social media venues for photos that don't comply with traditional standards of modesty, to "prove" that she's still not fully religious. (It appears that they consider religiosity on par with homosexuality; just like "everyone knows" that one can only become homosexual - but not become the reverse (sic) (the existence of many thousands of ex-gays notwithstanding) - similarly, apparently, one can easily become non-religious, but repentance from periods of spiritual decline is deemed artificial...)

Ba'alas-Teshuva Blackmail?

Even more harrowing is that sometimes the IDF actually employs what cannot be described as anything other than genuine blackmail. Please realize that this information is taken from specific real-life accounts, but identifying information is by nature inappropriate here.

The officers will confront the ba'alas teshuva with past photos from her previous secular lifestyle, knowing full well that, if publicized, that would put her to great, unrelenting public shame, given her current religious status. The threat need not even be articulated. Implicit is the ultimatum: "You will either enlist in the military, or contend with inappropriate photos being publicized, to shame you into caving in to our demands. Why even bother resisting, if you won't be able to withstand the tremendous public shame throughout the broader religious community? And how will you ever get a shidduch with all that lashon-horah circulating?" Worse, some (superficially) Chareidi politicians and askonim will sometimes even collaborate with their secularist allies/ patrons in government in besmirching such girls over past shortfalls, R"L.

The almost impossible dilemmas of these girls are a grave kitrug. We dare not tolerate such evil. Such girls need to know that seriously Torah-observant Jews recognize the principle of Teshuva as foundational, and that turning around from a spiritual decline is something to be proud of. Moreover, sacrificing one's reputation like this deserves the highest honor, and undoubtedly will serve as a kapparah in this world for past shortcomings. And of course, if we take Hilchos Lashon Horah seriously, where it applies most, we wouldn't believe the government propaganda besmirching such girls, especially since technology allows photos to be forged easily.

Any girl who felt unable to resist this type of blackmail may nevertheless have recourse. Their parents may contact us for details and a referral. Be aware that this technique is the type the likes of which are employed by human-trafficking perpetrators, and should not be tolerated by anyone, (especially by those who claim the Torah as their mandate).

Remaining Resolute Pays:

On the other hand, girls who do stand strong, limiting their interaction with the government to sending in their religious certification by registered mail, ultimately prevail, as the Vilna Gaon is quoted: "Ak'shon Yatzli'ach" ("the persistent prevail"). And standing strong is what the Torah demands of us. Therefore, whether we believe in ourselves is irrelevant; what counts is that HaShem gives us the power to do His Will. However, on occasion, standing strong may require enduring military prison, possibly under very difficult circumstances, for a limited amount of time.

The More Dangerous Alternative:

Girls struggling with their decision need to realize the broader picture. The IDF is not a safe place to be, especially for a woman.*

*(Girls in doubt may benefit by keeping the following in mind: In recent years, two very religious soldiers, Aharon Benita and Yosef Cohen (a Chareidi orphan), HY"D, were forced into the IDF under duress, and were subsequently killed by terrorists. Not Chas veShalom to judge them,

but if they would have remained resolute in their initial refusal to enlist, they would have suffered in jail, but would probably be alive today.)

For women in the IDF, immoral harassment is perhaps unavoidable. Illicit misconduct is rampant. Furthermore, in any serious armed conflict, women would likely be, tragically, targeted by enemies. Future armed conflicts would likely extend in scope and intensity beyond (perhaps ominously far beyond) what Israelis have become accustomed to. And that could easily introduce unprecedented threats, including the kidnapping of female soldiers. Females are more of a target for several reasons, one of which is that enemies can inflict far more psychological harm by capturing female soldiers. The very assumption that females can be introduced into IDF combat units is predicated on an arrogance that assumes they're going to remain protected, or, alternatively, on an extreme callousness that disregards the dangers inherent in sending women into combat.

Those Who Fall In:

Despite the imperative for women to shun military service, by no means we should abandon those weaker souls who fail to withstand this often exceedingly difficult test. Most of them are simply acting out of great duress, even if wrongly. We should continue to daven for them, and help them from falling prey to the pervasive immoral influences of the IDF, to the extent possible. And any prospects of rescuing them from the military should be pursued, especially if G-d forbid they're abused (a common occurrence in the IDF), when the prospects of breaking free rise significantly.

Religious Girls Imprisoned for Their Faith, in Israel:

In the meantime, religious girls continue to suffer in military prison. As mentioned earlier, the giyores Leah bas Sorah (now married) remains in jail (BE"H until no later than Friday). On the other hand, Mayan Chana bas Ilanit continues her SIXTH sentence, totalling close to three

months (!) in IDF prison. For a girl, that is an immense amount of time. Another petition of hers for an IDF exemption was just denied. What precisely are they trying to do? Break her, terrorize other girls, or both?

Under Threat of Repeated Incarceration:

Penina bas Sima and Ravit bas Yael, although out of military prison, still lack their exemptions. What was done to both girls was absolutely inexcusable. The IDF should be on the defense in these cases. Perhaps that's precisely why they've been so set on going after these girls - to keep THEM on defense.

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"Making the Data Fake Again"?

On June 16,'19, it was reported (http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/264648) that the IDF itself is faking data on enlistment of religious girls, to project the image of increasing enlistment at a time of decreasing enlistment of national-religious girls. We cannot do much better than the following report itself does:

'IDF using fake data to convince religious women to enlist'

A report says that the IDF estimates that within five years the number of religious girls who enlist will be doubled.

Yehonatan Gottleib, 16/06/19 17:02
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(Photo Credit: "Aluma" Organization)

Amital Bareli, director of the Hotam organization (an NGO whose goal is to secure Judaism's position on the public agenda), criticized an IDF report publicized on *Army Radio* on Sunday morning which claimed that within five years the number of religious girls who enlist in the IDF will be doubled.

According to Bareli, the data presented by the IDF is "laundered." "Not only is this a recycled headline from a year and a half ago, I think there's a new Guinness record here for 2019 in everything related to fake news. Not only is there no increase in the number of religious girls enlisting, but for the first time in five years, there's been a decrease in the trend." {NOTE THAT FACT -B.F.}

"Bareli explained how he claims the system works. "It should be noted that the IDF systematically publishes the data not as a percentage of how many religious girls enlisted but in absolute numbers. The number of girls who enlisted in 2018 is the same as that of girls who enlisted in 2017. That means that the total number of girls did not grow at all, but what did grow is the number of girls in state-religious schools. If you look at the number of girls who enlist from state-religious schools, then you see that there's a slight drop in the percentage of girls enlisting, so these bombastic headlines are unprecedented fake news."

The Knesset Research and Information Center published a report about a year and a half ago that raises serious questions about the data published by the IDF, Bareli says: "The report compared the data that the army published over the years with other data from different frameworks and determined that there was a recycling of the data, that is to say, they laundered the data and changed it according to the needs of the IDF," Bareli asserted. "This is an unequivocal statement by the Knesset Research and Information Center. Simply put, the IDF - instead of providing us with objective data - has become the largest public relations agency in the country, conveniently ignoring data to promote its agendas."

"I will give a very simple example which the Knesset Research and Information Center brings - the manner in which the IDF defines the very simple definition of a religious girl," Bareli says. "In the past, the criterion was very simple, and anyone who was a graduate of a state-religious school fit into the definition of a religious girl. The IDF changed the method and determined that even a girl who is not a graduate of a state-religious school would be categorized as a religious

girl. In other words, even a secular girl who announced during her military service for all kinds of reasons that she was religious, such as she didn't want to train on Jewish fast days, would be categorized as a religious girl."

{in stark contrast to the "Mehadrin leMehadrin" standards the IDF imposes in denying religious exemptions to clearly religious girls - B.F.}

"Despite his harsh criticism of the IDF's conduct, Rabbi Bareli remains optimistic: "It's very difficult to accept that the IDF plays with the data. It seems that its goal is to re-educate the National Religious public. I think that we should give a lot of credit and appreciation to the religious girls who aren't impressed by these ongoing campaigns, in which huge sums have been invested. Ultimately, the IDF sees that the girls vote with their feet ...."

It's important to realize how flexible the IDF is in defining non-observant girls as "religious" to facilitate their own statistical acrobatics -- in contrast with their denial of recognition of the religiosity of genuinely observant girls, for any one of a number of irrelevant reasons, or for no reason at all. The Gaon Rav Shlomo Kluger ZT'L, in a responsa (Tuv Taam VoDaas 3:2:48), writes that a sin of blatant inconsistency (hypocrisy) arouses Divine Wrath well beyond a simple transgression. Falsifying statistics of religious girls enlisted in the IDF in order to encourage more to enlist is bad enough. But, at the same time, to deny clearly religious girls their exemptions because they're not "fully religious" is the zenith of temerity and cruelty. And silence on our part constitutes complicity.

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