

## 'על כן יאמר בספר מלחמות ה

I would like to try to explain 3 things here:

1. The true, essential reasons as to why Charedim oppose joining the IDF
2. The reason why the above are very much hidden behind other popular reasons
3. The meta-reason that underlies and unbudgingly-anchors all of the above

Not that anyone in such discussions ever expects to really change the viewpoint of the other side, and to the contrary--hearing disheartening arguments may just enhance the heartache from the whole ordeal; my intent though in elaborating on these ideas here is with the hope that a) it will add clarity/yishuv hadaas as to what the real issues are and what they are not, b) it will enhance the quality and efficiency of future discussions on this ever-sensitive topic.

### 1. The true, essential reason/s: **fear of spiritual danger/s of joining forces with the IDF**

- a. The Halachic danger--the myriads of issues that are dealt with in war/army situations, on and off the battlefield, will inevitably be frequently subject to Halachic principles that are to dictate how they are handled. This is relevant to numerous areas of Halacha, and most significantly, to the issues and guidelines regarding *pikuach nefesh*/life-endangerment. To give just one example: prioritizing protecting the lives of Jewish soldiers vs. those of Gazan citizens. All of these issues are of course not decided here by any Rabbanim but rather by the IDF's secular higher-ups, and thus it is highly likely, if not virtually a *vadai*, that by joining their ranks and being required to follow their instructions, soldiers will be violating serious Torah prohibitions, even those of *pikuach nefesh* level. Even if we were to say that it is not a fully definite *vadai* that such transgressions will occur (which is debatable), **there is a logical/intuitive sevara that runs deep in the mind/soul of those 'who tremble for the Word of Hashem' which declares as a vadai that joining forces with the IDF is simply a non-existent possibility in the Eyes of Hashem.**
- b. The Hashkafic/cultural/spiritual dangers--while theoretical *hesderim*/arrangements do/can potentially exist, the argument (which I believe can be made strongly, if all of the relevant far-reaching ramifications are carefully considered) is that although on the one side we are dealing now with a serious *pikuch nefesh* concern from Hamas-culture on the physical level, this is nonetheless outweighed by the serious *pikuach nefesh* concern from (*le'havdil*) IDF-culture on the spiritual level. And this argument can be extended to call for a '*lu plug*'/blanket rule, banning even those who would not be in a position of much spiritual danger--e.g. older, more mature men who are steady in their Torah beliefs and Fear of Heaven--**for the fear that this would lead sooner or later to many other weaker individuals following suit and chas ve'Shalom**

**coming out severely spiritually harmed** (again: I believe that the deep and broad potential ramifications here lend much weight to this '*frum chashash*').

To clarify: this collective fear-of-spiritual-danger-factor, on its own, would fully acknowledge the facts on the ground that we are in a situation of national danger, and that this fully qualifies as a *Milchemes Mitzva* [certainly according to the strong '*pashtus*'-implication from the Rambam, who makes no mention of the *Urim Vetumim* being a prerequisite by obligatory 'Mitzva Wars'--among which he lists 'saving the Jewish People from an attacking enemy'--or even a prerequisite of a having a *Melech*; the Ramban in his list of *Mitzvos Aseh* which the Rambam omitted from the Sefer HaMitvos is even more clear on these points]. All this notwithstanding, ***the spiritual fear/s render the notion of joining forces with the IDF a non-starter, a non-existent option, leaving the Charedi society with no practical choice other than to sit passively and simply seek Divine Mercy*** (had the forces at play 75-80 years ago not created this secular institution of the IDF, the Charedi world would have then/now been faced with the challenge of forming their own army, but that is of course a theoretical figment from fantasy-land, because the entire state of our existence here, and the existence of our State here, would look entirely different in that sort of situation, where the secular forces would not have grabbed hold of the reins. Perhaps 'could-have/would have/should-have', but once things developed they way they did, it is certainly not a practical possibility now for the Frum world to go and create their own independent army).

## 2. Why other reasons are often given

- a. The other popular reason/s that frequently emerge from Charedi leaders and individuals, emphasizing the ultra-importance of the merit of their Torah learning, along with a blanket-status of '*Shevet Levi*' which they allege exempts one from even a *Milchemes Mitzvah* according to the Rambam, are in my opinion not truly essential elements of the Charedi draft-opposition, at least not at its fundamental roots.

Rather, I believe, Charedi leadership--which is ever concerned with the protection and purity of its impressionable youth--*has chosen to build up this other narrative as the primary factor behind their opposition to the IDF, as it much better serves their paramount goal of inspiring their bnei-Yeshiva charges to stay safe and strong spiritually*, on both sides of the coin: this way, their self-worth and the importance of their Torah learning are raised high up on the pedestal, whereas stressing the dangers 'across the fence' would arouse their curiosity to 'take a peek' or 'check it out' for themselves. Such a tactic definitely has some pedagogical merit: instead of preaching 'Don't look at the forbidden place over there!', the message is 'Look at how great you are!'. Of course, in order for such a tactic to be effective, the message needs to be promulgated at all levels of the Charedi society, not only by the Roshei Yeshiva & Cheder Rebbes. This means that even adults, and even Talmidei Chachamim,

can easily go their entire life with this messaging being fully engrained in their minds and hearts as the full truth.

3. The meta-reason, unbudgingly-anchoring all of the above against any argument

- a. In the heart of hearts of the Charedi world lies a fundamental intuitive knowledge--even if often only subconscious--that being 'open-minded' and 'sensible/practical' regarding matters of joining with secular/non-Charedi forces *is a matter of spiritual life-and-death, for the entire Charedi Tzibur--and for that matter: for the entire Am Hashem and world.* To put it simply and frankly: as soon as the Charedi world would start to 'play around' and be flexible with such matters, the very existence of the Charedi world would begin to self-combust; it's defining Walls would crumble and erode and the Charedi world would ultimately be no longer (this self-erosion is something which I actually believe is more or less inevitable--due to the nature of it's inherent mission statements and the dynamics of how the society is structured--not just my assertion of what Charedi leadership believes). There is therefore no room to even entertain a *hava amina* of getting involved in such endeavors which pose significant spiritual concern to significant portions of the society.

(I believe that these are essentially the same dynamics that are at play with the issue of staying in Kollel for as long as possible vs. entering the general society to get higher education and higher paying jobs. להאריך מקומו כאן ואין)

Does this approach result in major distortions of Emes? Yes. Are there serious problems that result from that? Yes. (Are the realities of those problems further distorted? Yes. Does that further exacerbate the problems? Yes.) But there is no price that is not worth paying when the spiritual well-being of large parts of the society (perhaps all of it, considering all the wide and long ripple-effects) is seriously at stake. That's the way it's been since the destruction of the Batei HaMikdash, and that's the way it will necessarily be until the Final Beis HaMikdash and Geula shine out the Truth of Hashem for all to see. It's a *shverre galus* and there is just no other way.

*Azay zugt* the Charedi Establishment, i.e. the establishment of Toras-HaGalus throughout our millennia of exiles.