

A Special Survey:

# THE IDF'S SOCIAL COMMITMENT

January 2010



**דובר צה"ל**  
**IDF Spokesperson**

This brochure was prepared by the IDF Spokesperson and is based on data provided by the Education and Youth Corps and the IDF Manpower Department and written with their assistance.

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**Production and Graphic Design:** IDF Spokesperson Film Unit

**Photographs:** IDF Spokesperson, "BaMachaneh" Newspaper

# THE SPIRIT OF THE I.D.F



**The Israeli Defense Force** is the army of the State of Israel. Its activities are subject to the authority of the democratic civil government of Israel and to its laws. The purpose of the IDF is to preserve the State of Israel, to protect its independence, and to foil attempts by its enemies to disrupt normal life within it. The soldiers of the IDF are obligated to fight and to devote every effort, even at the risk of their lives, to protect the State of Israel, its citizens and residents. Soldiers of the IDF shall act according to the values of the IDF and its commands, while abiding by the law, upholding human dignity, and respecting the values of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

## Spirit of the IDF-Definition and Sources

**The Spirit of the IDF** defines the value identity of the IDF. It ought to underlie the activities of every IDF soldier throughout his or her regular or reserve service.

**The Spirit of the IDF** and the practical rules derived from it are the ethical code of the IDF. *The Spirit of the IDF* shall direct the IDF, its soldiers, commanders, units and corps in the shaping of their activities. According to *The Spirit of the IDF* they shall conduct, educate, and examine themselves and their fellows.

**The Spirit of the IDF** draws its inspiration from four sources:

- The heritage of the IDF and its combat legacy as Israel's army of defense.
- The heritage of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws, and institutions.
- The heritage of the Jewish people throughout the ages.
- Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of all human beings.

## Fundamental Values

**Defense of the State, its Citizens and its Residents** - The purpose of the IDF is to protect the existence of the State of Israel, its independence, and the security of its citizens and residents.

**Patriotism and Loyalty to the State** - Service in the IDF is based on patriotism and on commitment and devotion to the State of Israel -- a democratic state which is the national home of the Jewish people -- and to its citizens and residents.

**Human Dignity** - The IDF and its soldiers are obligated to preserve human dignity. All human beings are of inherent value regardless of race, creed, nationality, gender, status or role.



## The Values

**Dedication to Mission and the Pursuit of Victory** - The soldier shall fight and act courageously in the face of all dangers and obstacles and shall pursue his mission with determination and good judgment, even risking his life when necessary.

**Responsibility** - The soldier shall see himself as an active participant in the defense of the State of Israel, its citizens and residents. His actions shall be characterized by constant involvement, initiative and diligence, demonstrating good judgment and within the scope of his authority, and he shall be ready to take responsibility for the consequences of his actions.

**Reliability** - The soldier shall present matters truthfully, fully and accurately, in planning, in execution and in reporting. The soldier shall act so that his comrades and commanders will be able to rely on him in the fulfillment of the missions.

**Personal Example** - The soldier shall conduct himself as required, and shall behave in the manner he expects of others, out of the recognition of his ability and responsibility, both within the army and without, to serve as a role-model for others.

**Human Life** - The soldier shall always act with reason and caution, bearing in mind the supreme value of human life. In combat, he will endanger himself and his comrades to the extent necessary for the fulfillment of the mission.

**'Purity of Arms' (Morality in Warfare)** - The soldier shall make use of his weaponry and power only for the fulfillment of the mission and solely to the extent required; he will maintain his humanity even in combat. The soldier shall not employ his weaponry and power in order to harm non-combatants or prisoners of war, and shall do all he can to avoid harming their lives, bodies, honor and property.

**Professionalism** - The soldier shall endeavor to acquire the professional expertise and proficiency required to carry out his role and shall implement them, continuously seeking to improve his own achievements and those of his unit.

**Discipline** - The soldier shall do his utmost to carry out fully and successfully whatever is required of him, according to the letter and the spirit of the orders. The soldier shall issue only lawful orders and shall not obey those which are manifestly unlawful.

**Comradeship** - The soldier shall act out of solidarity and devotion to his fellow-soldiers, and shall always come to their assistance when they are in need or depend upon him, despite all danger and hardship, even at the risk of his life.

**Vocation** - The soldier shall see his military service as a vocation; he shall be willing to contribute all he can to defend the State of Israel, its citizens and residents. The soldier shall consider himself a representative of the IDF, operating on the basis and within the constraints of the authority assigned to him by military orders.

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# Meet the IDF

## IDF Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Avi Benayahu

In essence, the IDF is a combat organization with the main purpose of protecting the citizens of the State of Israel and in this context, its activity and missions are well documented. This review focuses on an important, but lesser known aspect of the army's activity, as part of its basic commitment to Israeli society by virtue of its status as "the people's army" and out of the recognition that society's resilience is a vital component of national security.

Ever since Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion established the IDF and defined its purpose, the IDF has been a major component of Israeli society and a partner in national projects focusing on the connection to Jewish heritage and Zionism, as well as on community endeavors. The IDF was born out of commitment to Israeli society and it is a part of its growth process: service in the IDF is an intermediate stage for Israel's youth which endows them with ideological, educational and occupational tools, and for many of them, this is an opportunity to be introduced to Israel's heritage and complete their education. The IDF is often the "last stop" for Israel's youth on their road to good citizenship and greater involvement.

The IDF's social involvement is three-fold: educating toward values throughout the service under the responsibility of the commanders and with the support of the General Staff and Education Corps; showing commitment to the individual, nurturing the recruits and being attuned to their needs and hardships; and supporting special needs populations

in order to enable each and every young person to serve in the army and make a contribution by initiating specialized service options. The IDF's involvement in the national endeavor is rooted in its inception and continues to inspire the IDF, while adapting to the changing face of Israeli society.

Now, 61 years after its inception – alongside its security-related mission – the IDF is pursuing its tradition as a leading and effective social organization. The spirit of David Ben-Gurion, as timely and relevant as ever, still graces the ranks of the IDF, while the nature of military missions and activity is tailored to suit the changing needs of society.

The policy of Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi on this matter is clear: The IDF will fight for each and every recruit and serve as an army of ideology and education and as a beacon for Israeli society by adhering to the spirit of the IDF and being the "last stop" for many young people on their road to becoming better citizens. The words of Chief of the General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi – namely: "Even if we are allocated a single shekel, we will divert 10 Israeli Agorot toward education" – reflect the spirit of the IDF's senior command.

In this special review, I chose to give you a crash course on the IDF: its capacity to meet the unique needs of diverse populations of recruits, the IDF's significant role in reinforcing Israeli-Jewish identity and democracy, and its basic commitment as a social organization. Accordingly – beyond its role as a military force defending the nation's security – it is one of the largest, most powerful and unwavering social organizations in the State of

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a unique, cursive-like shape.

**Avi Benayahu**, Brigadier General  
**IDF** **Spokesperson**

# Summary

*The IDF will not fulfill its mission if it merely attains supreme combat capacity, even though it is its primary focus; rather, the IDF must make the young aware of its mission and purpose in building the homeland, nurturing the Chosen People and shaping a free Jewish nation.*

(Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, July 5, 1955)

**The IDF's primary aim is to defend the State of Israel and its sovereignty and to combat any threats to the security of its citizens and residents,** however since the State's very early days, the IDF has played a variety of social roles: immigration absorption, language teaching, education, settlement issues, cultural activities, etc. Throughout the years of Israel's existence and development, the nature of the IDF's contribution and social activity has changed. It is important to grasp the differences between the State of Israel at its inception and today's Israel, which still has a way to go, but has been struggling uphill since its establishment.

**The IDF has a large-scale social commitment derived from its development as "the people's army", which is reflected in three key areas:**

- **Education toward values** – soldiers and commanders are required to understand what and whom they are fighting for – familiarity with the combat doctrine and weapon handling skills are no longer sufficient.



**Nowadays, the IDF is running several programs aiming to expose the recruits to the heritage of Israel, as well as contribute to the multiple layers of Israeli society and to the consolidation of an Israeli-Jewish identity.** Of note, for example, is the "Taglit-Birthright Israel" program, designed to strengthen the ties with Diaspora Jewry, the "Sunday Culture Activity," geographic educational series, encouraging community volunteering, "Edim Bemadim" ('Witnesses in Uniform' - Holocaust remembrance visit to Poland), and "Flower for a survivor" to salute Holocaust survivors. **These projects and others help the soldiers do their jobs as well as consolidate their identity as involved, aware citizens contributing to Israeli society.**

- **Commitment to the individual** – by virtue of the mandatory service law, the IDF is responsible for overseeing the physical, financial and personal needs of its recruits, as well as their personal development during their period of service. **By virtue of its being "the people's army", the IDF strives to ensure the basic conditions for all its soldiers by granting them a benefits package,** which includes a great many channels of assistance such as: help for lone soldiers, family payments, assistance for married soldiers and even support for soldiers discharged from military service. **Thus the IDF contributes to making them part of society. Moreover, the IDF is leading several educational and academic study programs ("Talpiot", "Atidim")** with the aim of facilitating the **development of technologically-gifted youth.**
- **Support for special needs populations** – for recruits with educational gaps, the IDF strives to close the gaps and expand the options at their disposal in the civilian workforce. **For this purpose, the IDF runs programs adapted to special needs populations** (improving the level of Hebrew among new immigrants, continuing education and matriculation courses, vocational courses, the "Amir" course for the enhancement of language and learning skills among Ethiopian immigrants, etc.).

**The IDF invests and will continue to invest a great deal of effort in fostering quality personnel, which reinforces the military endeavor and builds up our strength as a society, a nation, and an army, and makes it possible to cope with the challenges of the future.**

For many of the young people being discharged from military service, the IDF is their opportunity to be exposed to and become acquainted with the heritage of Israel, Israeli democracy, the multiculturalism typical of Israeli society, and the values of responsibility, friendship and leadership.

**The IDF's unique military service, all-encompassing approach to education and contribution to society are unparalleled in armies worldwide.** The IDF's definition as an "army of the people" creates a reality wherein the IDF is involved in Israeli society and committed to its citizens. This reality is essential to IDF's fulfilling its main purpose – that of defending the State of Israel, but also an opportunity to contribute to society itself. Israeli society thereby acquires citizens with a stronger sense of belonging and identity. The gifts the soldiers receive during their military service will continue to benefit them in the years following their discharge: The profession they acquired and the values they were raised on and absorbed will guide them in the future as well, thereby enabling them to contribute to Israeli society as a whole.





# 1. The IDF as "The People's Army"

## An Historical Review

*Not only was the IDF entrusted with the responsibility for the nation's safety, it was designated as the melting pot for a gathering of the exiles from all over the world and a cradle for a united nation...*

(From David Ben-Gurion's parting address, December 7, 1953)

**From its very inception, the IDF has been "the people's army" – an army reflecting Israeli-Jewish society in the Diaspora, and also coping with its ensuing symptoms and difficulties. Despite the IDF's main objective, security should be viewed at the national level, and not just through "military field glasses" and its specific military components. Over the years, the IDF – as "the people's army" and a pit stop between youth and citizenship – has invested in immigration absorption, education toward values and good citizenship, technological education and the advancement of weak populations, and will continue to strive in this direction in the years to come.**

### **Establishing the State: the IDF as a "Melting Pot" in the Service of the Country**

**These years were marked by major challenges:** building a stable economy, welcoming immigrants from different countries, establishing

Hebrew as the national tongue, a society made up of different groups and backgrounds, a shortage of infrastructures, a shortage of teaching resources and personnel – all against the backdrop of major security threats. **According to the vision of then Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, David Ben-Gurion, the**



A teacher-soldier in elementary school, 1953

**IDF took it upon itself to help the young state establish itself in a wide range of areas, such as education, language acquisition and social absorption. Back then, the IDF was among the few forces capable of fostering a pioneer youth and patching up the rift between the sects and exiles by creating an army building a homeland.** The IDF soldiers set up transit camps and operated them (based on the government's decision in November 1950). IDF teacher- soldiers helped to teach the Hebrew



David Ben-Gurion meeting with youth during cadet corps week, 1950

language and the Fighting Pioneer Youth Corps founded settlements to establish defensible boundaries for the young state. Since the founding of the state to this day, 112 thousand young people have served within the scope of 3,600 settler groups and founded approximately 130 settlements, which became kibbutzim and moshavim that shaped the map of Israel.

The Education and Youth Corps, which was established in 1957, began to coordinate education, culture and advocacy-related issues in the IDF. Over the years, the Corps was assigned additional roles and new and important units such as the military bands, the Galei Tzahal Army Radio and the "BaMachaneh" IDF publication, which aims to impart knowledge, culture and values.

At the same time, the Youth Corps, which served as a bridge between Israel's youth and the IDF, developed further and helped prepare young people for enlistment. As part of its activity, the Youth Corps also reinforced national identity and aided the socialization process of young immigrants.

## **Integrating Special Needs Populations**

In 1978, with Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan's appointment as Chief of the General Staff, the concept of "the people's army" was driven home even further. Lt. Gen. Eitan initiated and furthered a project aiming to integrate soldiers from underprivileged populations into the IDF. In January 1981 the MAKAM (Center for the Advancement of Special Population Groups) recruits were enlisted.

## **Immigration Absorption**

**In April 1981, MAKAM (the Center for the Advancement of Special Population Groups) came under the aegis of the Education and Youth Corps and its purpose and goals were defined as follows:**

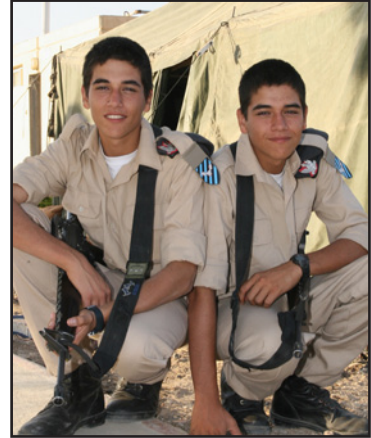
*"To ensure the maximal advancement of all individuals from disadvantaged population groups and their optimal integration within effective military positions and the civilian market. This endeavor will highlight individual benefit, as well as the capacity to move forward and function as a productive member of society".*

(Excerpt from Israeli Government Resolution 165, 1981)



The first MAKAM Company, January 1981

The 90's were marked by **massive waves of immigration**. Over the decade, about a million immigrants came to Israel from the Commonwealth of Independent States and Ethiopia, which led to a **substantial increase in Israel's population as a whole, and in the number of immigrant soldiers in the IDF in particular**.



The IDF met this national challenge head on by vacating some of the facilities for the immigrants and making teacher-soldiers available to assist directly with immigration absorption. The immigrants are placed in the different units and positions based on their abilities and skills, guided throughout their military service and provided with all the assistance and support they require.

The IDF has initiated a comprehensive education and language program for immigrant recruits. Ulpanim have been made available to study the Hebrew language, learn about Israel's heritage and history and become better acquainted with the country, its institutions and Israeli society.

## **Tailoring the IDF's Activity and Involvement to Society's Challenges**

As a result of the changes in Israeli society, the IDF has adjusted its activity and involvement accordingly.

Within this context, the Nahal (Fighting Pioneer Youth), which was identified with the establishment of settlements and agriculture, transferred its headquarters to the development towns. At the same time, the IDF worked on strengthening and anchoring its units' community involvement and defined a volunteering format for soldiers with an emphasis on ongoing endeavor rather than random volunteering, and with a focus on volunteering tailored to the relevant needs and social hardships.

The IDF's involvement in national processes was born of historical necessity and over the years, has become an ideological commitment which guides the IDF to this very day. The IDF continues to serve as a unique – and apparently exclusive – meeting place, which for many, means a last opportunity to be exposed to the deeper aspects of Israeli and Jewish identity and ideological issues. It further affords the soldier the opportunity to complete his education, acquire language skills and enhance his sense of identification with and ties to Israeli society. The IDF is continuing to dedicate itself to immigration absorption, whereby its guiding force today lies in its recognition of and respect for the diverse layers making up society and most of its cultures.

## Summary

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## 2. Meeting the Unique Needs of Diverse Populations of Recruits

*The young people serving in the IDF are at a defining stage in their development as human beings and citizens of the state. As a hierarchical organization with a prolonged and intensive service period, it has the potential to have a significant impact on soldiers during their service.*

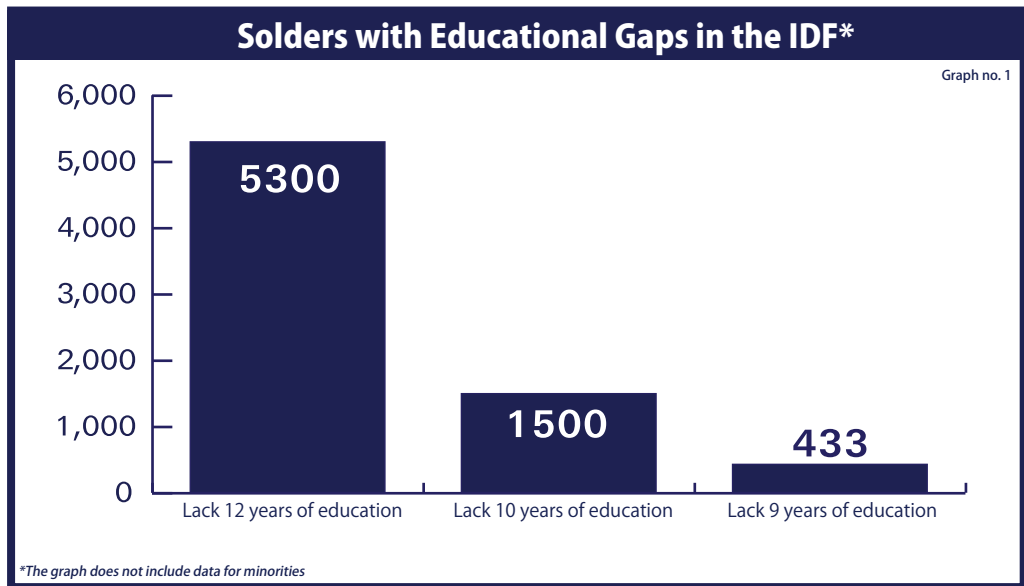
(Extract from the "Uniqueness and Purpose" program document, initiated by former Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. (ret.) Moshe Yaalon, 2004)

**The IDF invests a great many efforts and resources in nurturing its soldiers and meeting the unique needs of the diverse population of recruits.** This chapter will describe the IDF's principal endeavor in the following areas: continuing education programs, furthering and integrating special needs populations, integrating new immigrants, volunteers and haredim.



## Continuing Education in the IDF

In order to provide recruits with a better starting point when joining the ranks of Israeli society, the IDF offers its recruits an opportunity to complete their education. There are currently approximately 7,000 soldiers serving in the IDF who have not completed 12 years of education:



IDF recruits currently have several study tracks to choose from to complete their education and learn Hebrew through the Education and Youth Corps:

### Continuing Education Courses

These courses target soldiers who wish to complete 10 or 12 years of study. The following subjects are taught in the courses: mathematics, citizenship, reading comprehension, history and computers. **In the last three years, about 1,320 soldiers participated in these courses. Open classes have recently been launched for soldiers throughout Israel who do not have the option to serve on a closed base (usually because they have to help maintain their household).**

## Matriculation Completion for Combat Soldiers

This course targets combat and combat support soldiers nearing the end of their service who are lacking up to four matriculation exams to be eligible for a full high school diploma. The course is held at the Givat Haviva College and is taught by both civilian educators and military commanders who teach the soldiers subjects such as English, mathematics and citizenship. **In the last few years, approximately 2,090 combat and support combat soldiers have participated in the "matriculation for combat soldiers" project.** Beyond this project, the various units also offer local continuing education initiatives. Of particular note is the initiative by the Ramon Air Force base where the officers serve as tutors and help the soldiers who enlisted without a full matriculation to complete it.

## Imparting the Hebrew Language

The courses are designed to improve Hebrew language skills among soldiers with a poor Hebrew language level, minorities and new immigrants. The courses teach the soldiers language and syntax, however they also offer the pupils cultural events, current event coverage and tours across the country. **Every year, about 300 soldiers participate in the Hebrew language courses.**

## The "Amir" Course

This is a military course that targets the Ethiopian population and it is held prior to the commencement of military service. The course provides the pupils with tools to help them improve their thinking and learning skills, personal empowerment and enhanced ability to adjust to the military environment. **The course's graduates are assigned positions on an individual basis and have a much greater chance of being placed in a high level position. During the course of 2008, 337 soldiers participated in the "Amir" course and 90 percent of them completed it successfully.** Beyond their military performance, the "Amir" course provides its graduates with better study methods that will also serve them in their personal lives and their workplaces following their discharge from military service.

## Furthering and Integrating Special needs Populations in the IDF

*Special needs populations, by definition, are populations that typically find it difficult to adjust to the military environment. These are usually poor quality recruits who require a support system in order to adjust to their military service and integrate into Israeli society.*

**The IDF attributes supreme importance to integrating all population groups – including special needs populations from a social, security and ideological perspective.**

The leading assumption is that **by integrating them in the IDF, they are also more likely to fit into society.** During their military service, the recruits acquire professions and skills which will continue to serve them following their discharge.



**The MAKAM (Center for the Advancement of Special Population Groups) was established in 1981 at the initiative of the late Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Rafael Eitan, and it is engaged in furthering and nurturing populations defined as "special".** The MAKAM plan made it its priority to focus on the needs of the individual and his advancement during his military service. **The motto guiding the "Havat Hashomer" base where the MAKAM soldiers are trained is "in mankind we trust" – and not for naught.** The command staff at the MAKAM soldiers' disposal provides them with a "protected" environment, with an emphasis on the soldier at the core and individual handling of his personal problems. **The MAKAM service programs grant the soldiers life skills and a**

**sense of personal capacity in order to succeed as soldiers in particular and as citizens contributing to Israeli society in general.**

The MAKAM emblem is a graphic depiction of the give and take system that is the foundation of the mentoring process in which both parties – the commander and the soldier – are dedicated to the MAKAM vision.



**Every year approximately 800 soldiers with adjustment and behaviour problems enlist in the IDF. About 80 percent of them have a criminal file or record, and complete a basic training period of 6 to 10 weeks at the "Havat Hashomer" base, which teaches rifle shooting skills, enhances affinity for the State of Israel and provides tools to cope with the military service. Eighty-five percent of the MAKAM soldiers complete their basic training period and 76 percent of them complete their full military service. To date, over 20 thousand soldiers have participated in the program.** Even after the basic training, the soldiers continue to receive guidance, including vocational training and courses in order to acquire professional training for civilian life.

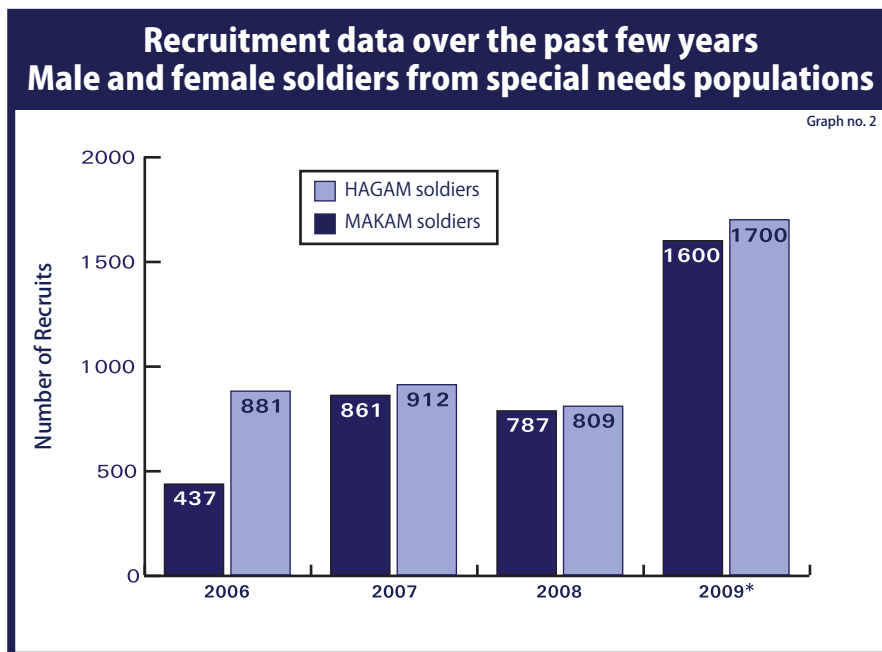
In each unit, an officer or non-commissioned officer is appointed as a MAKAM officer, and he is in charge of handling the integration of this population into the IDF and addressing the difficulties encountered by the soldiers in the process.

**Along with MAKAM, the HAGAM special program for female recruits was launched in 1992.** Over the years, issues pertaining to female soldiers came to the foreground when the center handling special populations began to assign them to vocational courses. **In the last five years, more than 5000 female soldiers were recruited to this unique program.**



**During 2009, the MAKAM population consisted of over 3,300 male and female soldiers - 2.5 percent of whom serve as combat soldiers in the various infantry regiments, routine defense fighters (marine and border guard); 42.8% serve in management positions (clerks and general employees); and 12.8% serve in other positions.**

**These positions will help them acquire a profession in civilian life, such as dog trainers, network administrators, manpower coordinators, electricians, logistic NCOs, car mechanics, etc. In the last two years, there has been a sharp increase of 120 percent in the recruitment of MAKAM soldiers to combat positions. A MAKAM soldier was recently the first one to complete a combat officers' course. The IDF continues to follow-up on its soldiers from special needs populations throughout their military service. In each unit, an officer is appointed to be in charge of the soldiers, attuned to their needs and prepared to address their problems.**



## Workshops for Discharged Soldiers from Special Needs Populations

With the aim of providing discharged soldiers with information regarding employment and study-related opportunities, the IDF runs several workshops prior to their discharge. **The workshops last for five days and aim to provide special needs populations with the tools they need to improve their decision-making, introduce them to the duties and rights of discharged soldiers in the State of Israel and make it easier for them to integrate into Israeli society.** The workshops target the following populations: lone soldiers, immigrants, Ethiopians, Druse, Bedouins and periphery residents. The issues pertaining to each target population are addressed as required.

As of 2009, these workshops are attended by approximately 6,000 soldiers from special needs populations, as per the following distribution:

### IDF Discharge Workshops for Soldiers from Special Needs Populations

Activity	Number of cycles per year	Number of participants
Workshop for discharged recruits recognized as lone soldiers	10 cycles per year	1,500
Workshop for Ethiopian discharged soldiers	7 cycles per year	500
Workshop for Druse discharged soldiers	5 cycles per year	400
Workshop for Bedouin discharged soldiers	2 cycles per year	100
Workshop for discharged soldiers living in the periphery	2 cycles per year	3,500
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,000</b>

**Even after their discharge from the IDF, these soldiers have the privilege of participating in courses in a civilian setting, which grant them a professional diploma (chefs, accountants, office managers, etc.) as well as a ticket to optimal integration into Israeli society. The courses are financed by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, in collaboration with the IDF.**

### **YES, MS. COMMANDER**

A series entitled "Yes, Ms. Commander" was aired in June 2009 and follows MAKAM recruits at the Havat Hashomer military base. The series addressed the stormy, charged encounter between the MAKAM soldiers – who were not able to adapt to any setting – and their immediate commanders.

The series tested the slogan "in mankind we trust" – will the right setting be able to fundamentally change a person? Will those on the fringes of society be able to become a part of society? And the answer provided in the series is a resounding yes. Those who can testify to this are the program's graduates who are currently integrated into society as soldiers and commanders.

## Integrating New Immigrants in the IDF

*"Immigrants" as defined by the IDF: New immigrant – individuals over the age of 16 who immigrated to Israel; veteran immigrants – individuals below the age of 16 who immigrated to Israel; **Ethiopian immigrants** – the definition was broadened for Ethiopian immigrants whereby any person who was born or whose parents were born in Ethiopia is entitled to immigrant status (due to the language and adjustment difficulties Ethiopian immigrants encounter).*

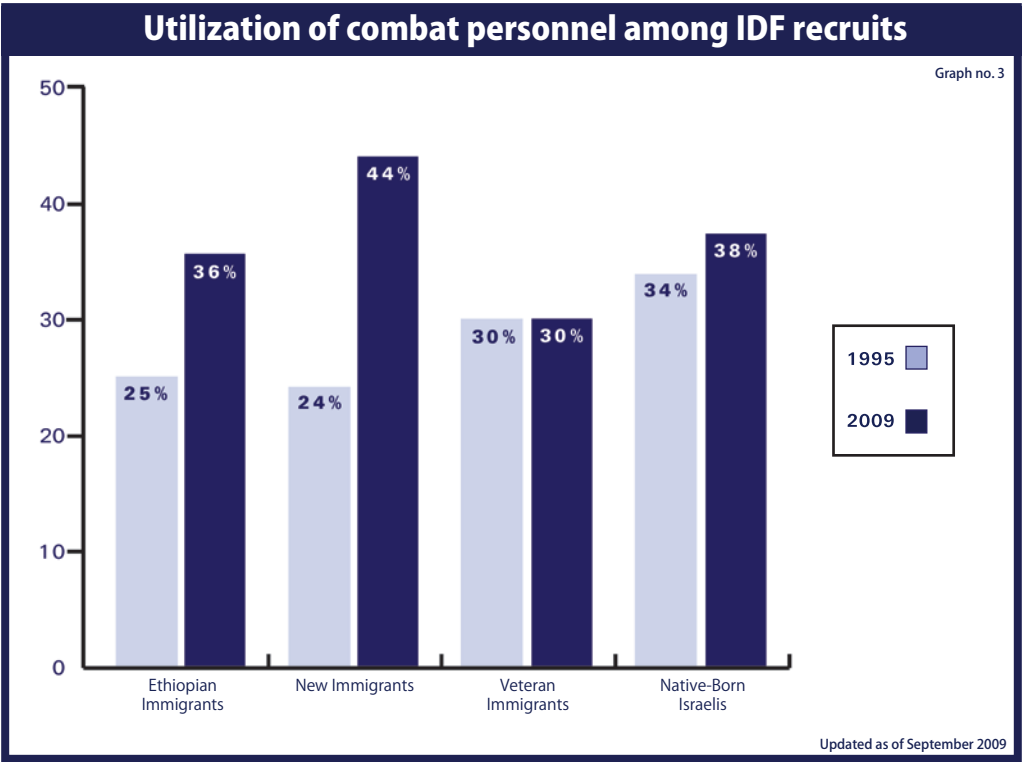
Since the day of its inception, the IDF has played a central role in the absorption of immigrants into Israeli society and in many cases, it ended up being the "melting pot" of Israel. Over the years, the IDF welcomed many of the new immigrants to its ranks, placed them in the various units, taught them Hebrew in military ulpanim and enhanced their knowledge of Israel and Israeli society by teaching them the Israeli-Jewish heritage and history.



The IDF's efforts at integrating the population of immigrants, coupled with the latter's personal level and strong sense of commitment, has enabled them to achieve success at their positions in the various IDF units. Over the years, there have been more and more success stories involving new immigrants in their military service.

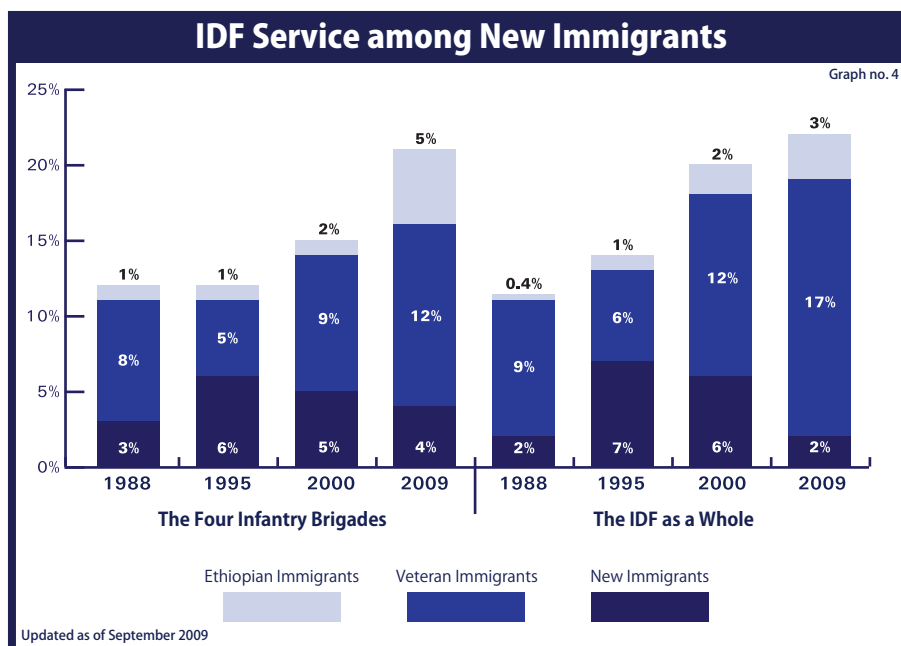
Integrating new immigrants into the IDF is crucial for them to acclimatize in Israel, become familiar with Israeli culture and enhance the IDF's might from the point of view of sheer numbers and quality. Accordingly, the commanders play a decisive role in welcoming immigrants to the army's ranks, by ensuring the immigrants' optimal utilization in the unit and in the army.

The following graph shows the utilization of combat personnel among IDF recruits by new immigrants, veteran immigrants, Ethiopian immigrants and native-born Israelis. There is a discernible rising trend in the percentage of IDF combat soldiers in general, and in the percentage of immigrant combat soldiers in particular.





The following graph depicts the percentage of new immigrants in the IDF as a whole as compared to four infantry brigades (Golani, Givati, Nahal, Paratroopers). The graph shows a gradual and steady rise in the percentage of immigrants in the infantry brigades and in the IDF as a whole. Moreover, the graph indicates a reduction in the number of new immigrants, which stems from the lower immigration rates to Israel.



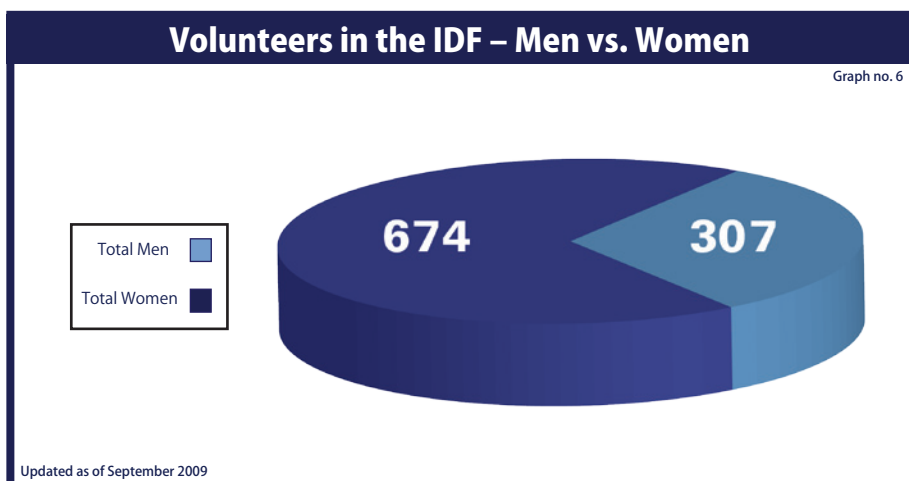
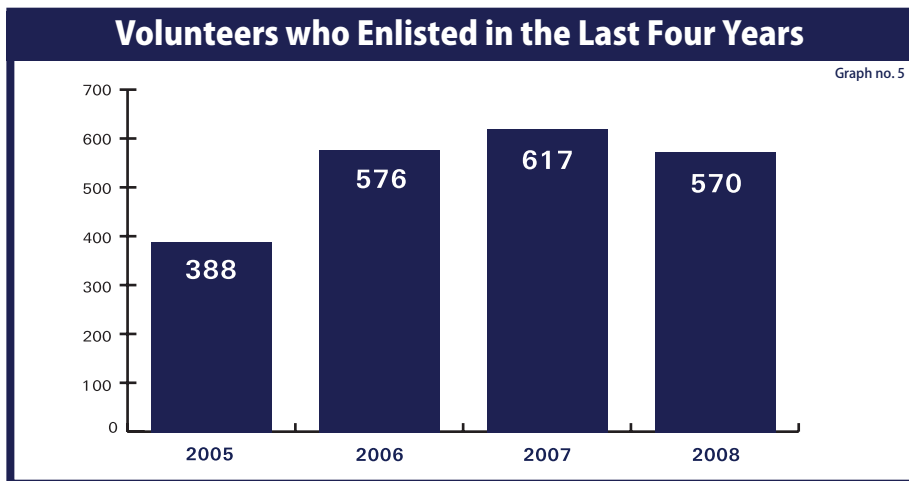
During their service, new immigrants encounter many difficulties, which cause them to drop out of their military service and lead to disciplinary problems, which are reflected in desertion, imprisonment and discharge prior to completion of service. IDF commanders were instructed to be attentive to the unique problems of concern to new immigrants and to do their utmost to help them fit into the IDF environment. The commanders undergo specialized in-service training to help them identify signs of distress and refer the recruits accordingly to seek assistance, enhance awareness of immigration absorption among the commanders, and impart tools to help the commanders integrate the immigrants, etc. New immigrants now have **immigration NCOs** at their disposal, who are in charge of promoting immigration absorption and furthering the immigrants in the unit by teaching them Hebrew and advising the commanders.

## Integrating Volunteers in the IDF

Although the Military Service Law does not compel them to enlist, hundreds of young people choose to volunteer to serve in the IDF and take part in defending the nation. The IDF opens its doors to them and embraces them among their ranks – and their contribution is substantial.

There are two main groups of volunteers: volunteers with a medical exemption and minority group volunteers, who are not required to enlist.

There are currently 986 volunteers serving in the IDF:



## 1. Minority Groups not Required to Enlist in the IDF by Law

Minority group recruits are currently serving in all IDF branches, corps and operations. They serve shoulder to shoulder with all IDF soldiers. Their involvement in the IDF often serves as a "ticket" to their integration into Israeli society and helps them adapt to civilian life quickly and optimally.

There has recently been a substantial rise in the volume of minority groups enlisting in the IDF. In 2008, there was a 60 percent increase in their enlistment and an additional increase is anticipated in the upcoming year. As part of the IDF's values and commitment to enabling all of those serving in its ranks to adhere to their faith and maintain their religious customs and traditions, the IDF has formalized the option for minority group soldiers to practice their religion according to their customs: holidays and religious festivals, prayers, mourning customs and burial ceremonies.

### Christians

Christians are exempt from military service. Nonetheless, there are approximately 290 Christian soldiers currently volunteering and serving in the mandatory military service, and 36 Christian officers and NCOs in the regular service. In the last few years, there has been a substantial increase in the percentage of Christians enlisting in the IDF – from 2000 to 2008, there has been an 86 percent rise in Christian enlistment.

### Bedouins

*"This is the only country we've got, and there is no alternative other than fostering cooperation with the Bedouin community. The IDF will continue to be a pioneer and offer equal opportunity to each and every Bedouin soldier to assume positions in the military."*

(Excerpt from the words of Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi on November 11, 2009, on the occasion of his visit to the home of late Sheikh Uddah as the guest of his son and successor, the head of the Segev Shalom Regional Council, Mr. A'mar Abu A'mar)

The Military Service Law does not presently apply to the Bedouins. However, the IDF is investing a great deal of effort into encouraging them to join its ranks as volunteers. This effort stems from the IDF's desire to both benefit from the Bedouins' combat skills and contribute to and reinforce their integration within society and the state.

The IDF conducts specific campaigns designed to encourage the Bedouins to enlist. The Bedouins have recently been provided with the option to enroll in the military boarding school at the "Reali" School in Haifa, which includes a program for Bedouin youth aiming to guide them toward a meaningful military service and increase the enlistment percentage.

There are currently two main service tracks for Bedouins:

- A two and a half-year regular army service and a service completion period of half a year under regular army terms.
- The "Lahav" track – two years of service with the Desert Patrol Regiment and other combat units, followed by a year of vocational training including Hebrew studies, completion of elementary education and high school final standardized exams.

The efforts invested in promoting enlistment among the Bedouins and integrating them in the IDF have begun to bear fruit and in 2008 enlistment cycles have shown a sharp rise of 71 percent in the rate of Bedouin recruits, most of them in the Desert Patrol Regiment and Bedouin Rescue Unit (Yahav).

**There are currently approximately 1,100 Bedouins serving in the IDF – about half of them in mandatory service.**



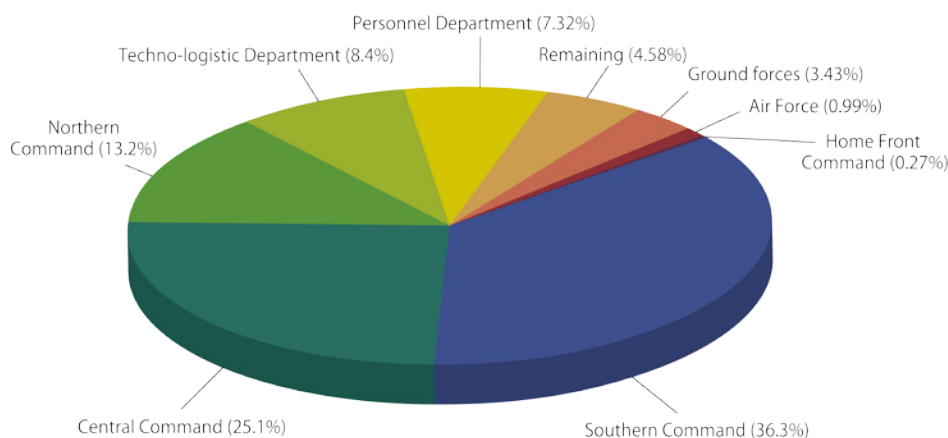
Bedouin soldier in combat

Regimental drill, Bedouin Patrol Regiment, September 2009

## Bedouins in Mandatory and Career Service

Classified according to Branches and Direcorates

Graph no. 7



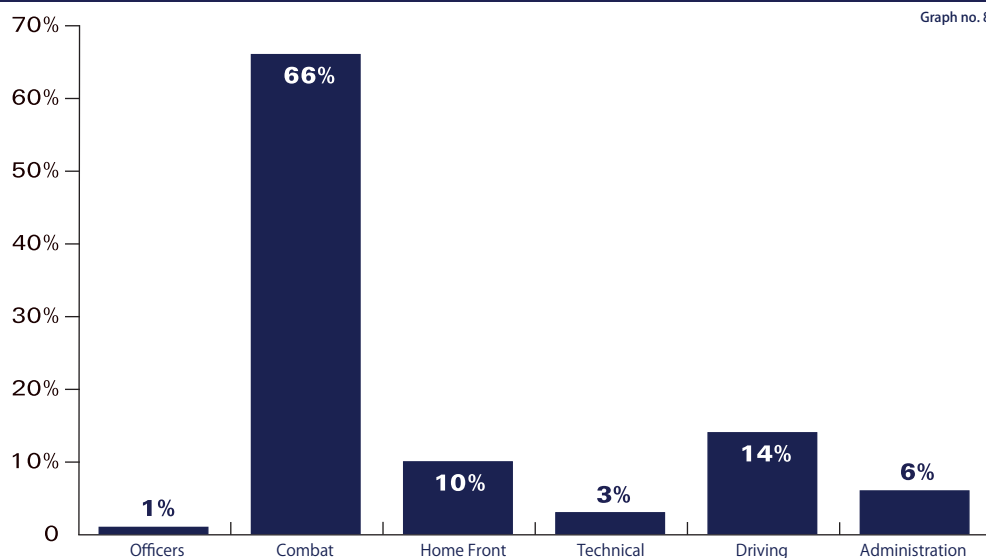
\* Distribution by sector and arm – percentage of Bedouin soldiers, in mandatory and regular service, per sector/arm, out of the total number of Bedouin soldiers serving in the IDF.

Updated as of September 2009

66 percent of the Bedouin soldiers in mandatory service currently serve in combat positions, most of them as infantry soldiers and trackers:

## Bedouins in the IDF by service sector\*

Graph no. 8



\*Discharge prior to service completion date – new immigrants who are discharged prior to the date of their discharge.



## 2. Volunteers with a Medical Exemption from Service

The first mobilization order for each military service candidate specifies an appropriate medical profile. The profile defines the individual's degree of suitability and medical fitness to serve in various IDF units and positions. The profile score ranges from 21 (exemption from IDF service on medical grounds) and 97, which is the highest medical profile awarded.

**From among those who are granted an exemption from military service on medical grounds, there are hundreds who choose to volunteer and serve in the IDF, despite their physical limitations. The force motivating these young people is the desire to contribute to the defense of their country and be part of the national endeavor. In order to welcome them to their ranks, the IDF has designated specialized personnel to address volunteering issues and respond to the volunteers' unique medical needs. Today there are about one thousand volunteers with a medical exemption serving in the army.**

### Token of Honor from the "Friends of AKIM Association"

The steps taken for the advancement of mentally challenged youth has earned the IDF a token of honor from the managers and volunteers of AKIM, one of the most important associations in Israel promoting the rights of the mentally challenged. The ceremony was held in February 2009 in the presence of Israel's President, Shimon Peres.



In the photograph: The Head of the Human Resources Directorate, Brigadier General Avi Zamir, is being awarded – on behalf of the IDF – the Friends of AKIM Association Token of Honor for 2009 and granting a certificate of merit to private Shimrit

Kroitov who is afflicted with Down's Syndrome. Kroitov has been serving for the past half a year as a terms of service coordinator at the General Staff base.

**In this context, it is important to mention the Shiluv Menatzeach ("winning combination") project.** This is a joint JDC, Etgarim and government ministry project promoting the recruitment of severely handicapped individuals. **Out of the volunteers for this project, over 150 mentally challenged and Down's syndrome youth enlisted in the IDF.** In the past year, the IDF initiated a joint project with AKIM with the aim of recruiting the youth belonging to this association: the young people undergo training at AKIM, which prepares them for their recruitment, and then enlist for a six-month trial service period within the scope of the "Sar-El" military project. **The aim of the project is to integrate these young people in the IDF as part of their integration process within Israeli society. The duration of their army service varies from one to two years.**

Soldiers who serve in units alongside their severely disabled counterparts have said that it is the first time in their lives that they have connected to disabled people of their age – thereby exposing them both to the difficulties and disabilities involved as well as to the young people's abilities and strength.



Swearing in ceremony – Completion of volunteer basic training

### **Officers' Course for the Physically Challenged**

An IDF officers' course for the physically challenged was launched for the first time in 2003, with the aim of enabling each and every soldier to realize his full potential. At the end of the course, the officers are placed in the various IDF units in command and staff positions. To date, about 360 officers were trained in this course.

## Integrating Haredim in the IDF

As part of the joint IDF-Government Ministry program designed to expand the IDF's reservoir of recruits and facilitate the integration of Haredim (ultra-Orthodox) in the Israeli economy, there are currently two main programs aiming to involve Haredim in the IDF: recruitment with the scope of the **Shiluv program, which combines religious study with military service and enlistment to "Netzah Yehuda", the Haredi Nahal Battalion. These programs ensure the recruits that alongside their military service and contribution to the defense of the nation, they will be able to preserve their unique Orthodox way of life throughout:** service separated from women, glatt kosher food, prayers as an integral part of the daily routine, Torah study days and classes, commanders equipped to cope with the unique needs of Haredi soldiers and the ongoing guidance of rabbis and educators at the disposal of the command staff and soldiers.

Within the scope of these programs, the State of Israel wishes to make it easier for the Haredim who chose to leave their yeshiva to fit into society and the workforce. To this end, they are already offered continuing education and vocational training courses during their service in order to prepare for life after the military.

### Netzah Yehuda

The Netzah Yehuda Battalion, which is currently part of the Kfir Brigade, was the first IDF track for the ultra-Orthodox. The battalion was founded in 1999 and it targets Haredim who are not in a yeshiva environment to enlist in a unique unit that suits their way of life from the point of view of Jewish religious law. In the first two years, the soldiers undergo combat training geared to qualify them as skilled, professional infantry soldiers at the defense action center. During the third year of their service, the soldiers follow a **"life preparation"** program which features vocational-employment



counseling, as well as the opportunity to complete their 12-year course of study, finish their matriculation exams, acquire professional training, etc.

Haredi rabbis are appointed to make sure that the battalion soldiers' unique way of life is observed. **Hundreds of soldiers enlist in the Netzah Yehuda Battalion every year.** Over 2500 soldiers have served in the Battalion in the last 10 years. Following their discharge, the soldiers also perform their reserve duty within the Battalion. **The reserve battalion is an environment in which they can continue to contribute to the defense of the state following their discharge from regular army service.**

Following several years during which the Netzah Yehuda Battalion proved that it is possible to combine military service and an Orthodox way of life, the path was laid for other options for Haredi recruitment to the IDF.

### **The Shahr (Hebrew acronym for Haredi Service) Program**

Within the scope of the program aiming to incorporate Haredim in the military, the recruits are offered several meaningful positions, which enable them to contribute to the nation's defense while continuing to lead a religious life: "Blue Dawn" (service in the Air Force's technology track); "Binah Beyarok" ("Intelligence in Green") – developing prestigious software projects and placing the recruits in core positions in the Intelligence Corps); "Shahr Atal (acronym for technology and logistics department)" – service in logistic centers and command armament units); "Shahr Software" – software testing and programming positions in the Computer Services Directorate; "Shahr in the Navy" – service in the techno-logistic department).



Shahr soldiers on their base

As stated above, the Haredi soldiers serving in these tracks benefit from service terms suited to their needs: prayer times, Badatz-approved kosher food, an adjacent work environment separated from women and subordination to male commanders throughout their training and service. The Haredim serving in these tracks acquire vocational training and skills during their military service, which help them to optimally fit into Israeli society following their discharge. Since the project's inception to date, approximately 630 Haredim have served in the Shahar programs.

### **Blue Dawn**

**The project began operating in November 2007, as a social endeavor aiming to integrate young men from the Haredi yeshivot into military service in the Air Force. In the first recruitment cycle, 38 Haredim enlisted in the service in the Air Force's technical division.**

The project stems from the Air Force's need for professional personnel in its technical division. The Haredim are placed in four tracks: technicians course level 1, technicians course level 2, programmers course and electronics technician course.

The project is the fruit of the successful cooperation between the Air Force, the JDC and the Israeli government. In addition to the soldiers' contribution during their military service, the project serves as a social "bridge" between the secular and the Haredi populations and it boasts a high added value. To date, about 290 Haredi soldiers have enlisted within the scope of the Blue Dawn project and now serve in the various Air Force divisions.

### **Intelligence in Green**

**It was in 2009 that Haredim first started to be recruited for core positions in the Intelligence Corps and since then, dozens of Haredim have been placed in software and technology positions within the Corps. (Approximately 70 Haredim were conscripted to the first course of the program and about 100 additional young men are expected to enlist in the second course scheduled to begin shortly).**

The recruits to the Intelligence in Green program will ensure the quality of the projects aimed at producing an allsource intelligence picture; as such, they are shouldering a heavy responsibility. Upon their release, the program's graduates have the option to work in hi-tech companies or in the technology industry.

### 3. Reinforcing Israeli-Jewish Identity and Democracy

*When habits are deeply entrenched in our national, cultural and ideological heritage, the hand bearing the weapon takes on a different kind of force. Israel's security and the Zionist ethos are founded on the Israeli-Jewish heritage, identity and culture which have been interconnected since the inception of Zionism.*

(Excerpt from Chief Education Officer Brig. Gen. Eli Shermeister's address on the subject of Israeli-Jewish identity, April 2008)

As an army in a Jewish, democratic state, and an agent with a substantial impact on the molding of Israeli society, the IDF sees itself as a partner in shaping Israeli identity and reinforcing the values embraced by the State.

**Over the years, the IDF's involvement in national processes, which was born of historical necessity, has become an ideological commitment which guides the IDF to this very day.** The IDF operates on several levels in order to reinforce the soldiers' ties with the community and Israeli society: community volunteering, Zionist projects, Holocaust commemoration programs, love of the homeland, etc. **This endeavor highlights the value of the mutual commitment between the IDF and Israeli society by – on the one hand – driving home the recruits' values and enabling them to grasp the essence of their role and carry it out to the best of their ability and – on the other hand – reinforcing the IDF as an army in a democratic state contributing to Israeli society as a whole.**



The IDF makes use of various events, traditions and symbols from the Jewish and Israeli heritage to consolidate its recruits' national recognition of the state and its values as well as their Israeli identity. The IDF instills the values on which the State of Israel is founded to its soldiers



## IDF Projects Geared to Reinforce Israeli-Jewish Identity

There are several projects currently being conducted in the IDF that expose the commanders and soldiers to the units' various aspects, in such a way that gives them a sense of closeness, belonging and identification.

### The Nativ Course

The course was born of the desire to enable those serving in the IDF and contributing to the nation's defense to reinforce their Jewish identity and – should they so choose – to make the process of converting to Judaism and being recognized as a Jew according to Jewish law easier on them. The aim is to enhance the immigrant soldiers' ties to the State of Israel and the Jewish people and to help them integrate into society.

#### The Story of Yulia, a graduate of the Nativ Course

Yulia, a fourth-generation Holocaust survivor, immigrated to Israel from Russia about 10 years ago with her parents and grandmother. When she found out about the Nativ course, which enables recruits to convert while in the army, she decided to enlist. Yulia explains: "The course is much more than just conversion – I learned a lot about my history, my country and my identity as a Jew. **Now I am Jewish from the point of view of secular and Jewish law, only thanks to the course, I really feel it now**".

For soldiers who so choose, the course is also a step in the conversion process. The Nativ course was launched in September 2001 under the tutelage of the Education and Youth Corps, and it offers immigrant soldiers the opportunity to enhance their Jewish-Zionist identity, reinforce their sense of identification with and belonging to the people and the country, and thereby contribute greatly to their integration into the IDF and Israeli society. The curriculum includes courses on Judaism and history, lectures on the history of the State, trips to familiarize the students with Israel's various landscapes and sites, as well as other hands-on activities.

To date, over 10,000 soldiers have participated in the Nativ course and many of the course's graduates have expressed a desire to pursue the conversion process. From the project's inception to date, approximately 3,870 soldiers have converted to Judaism. The Nativ course is taught by some of the top teachers and lecturers from the Jewish Agency's Jewish Studies Institute, in collaboration with professional military staff.

## Garin Tzabar

This unique project, which was launched in 1991, offers a practical-educational setting for Israeli youth who have been living with their families in the United States or in Canada for many years. Upon completion of their high school studies, the Garin youth choose to come to Israel and volunteer for a full term of military service. Upon their arrival to Israel, the Garin members are accommodated on a kibbutz that serves as their home away from home, undergo an IDF screening and orientation process, study in an ulpan (an intensive Hebrew language course), and tour and learn about Israel, its history and its heritage. In 2009, Tzabar's trainees were welcomed in nine



kibbutzim throughout Israel: Ortal, Malchia, Sasa, Yaron, Yizrael, Degania, Tirat Tzvi, Ein Hashofet and Lavi.

The aim of the project is to fully integrate the Garin members into Israeli society, including after their military service. Since the Garin's inception to date, 1,068 young people have participated in the program and the participation rate is on a steady rise. In 2009, 180 young people took part in the program.

## **IDF Educational Leadership Program**

The unit was established in 2007 with the aim of enhancing the command-educational identity of IDF commanders and providing them with the tools that will serve them in their positions, throughout the existential challenges of the State of Israel as a Jewish, democratic State. In-service training sessions for the IDF educational leadership program are attended by commanders, combat soldiers and combat supporters from all IDF corps, arms and commands, in both regular army and reserves. The training targets senior officers (including lieutenant colonels and colonels). The main in-service training topics are: Israeli-Jewish identity, IDF spiritual values, the concept of uniqueness and purpose, Israeli society and the commander as educator. As of June 2009, 2,718 officers attended 82 in-service training sessions.



## **"In the Footsteps of the 1948 Combatants"**

This is a unique project initiated by Brig. Gen. (Res.) Avigdor Kahalani, which was meant to enhance motivation among youth to serve in the IDF by focusing on battle legacy in the Golan Heights, love of the homeland and exposure to the different IDF corps. The project targets 12th graders who visit battle legacy sites in the Golan Heights, take part in a corps and weapons exhibition and observe a live ammunition drill. The students are accompanied by military sources who tell them tales of battles and bravery as well as personal stories of combatants. Approximately 200 thousand young people have participated in the program in the last five years.

Flag for the Fallen – a project commemorating the heritage of the fallen

Every year, on Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's War, the Chief of General staff launches the "Flag for the Fallen" project, during which IDF officers and soldiers visit the graves of the fallen in the cemeteries and military burial grounds throughout Israel and place the flag of Israel



with a black stripe on them. This is a quiet way of honoring the memory of the combatants who paid for the defense of the State of Israel with their lives. A great many young people join the officers and soldiers at the gravesite of the fallen. This is a way of strengthening the ties between the IDF and youth, between the stories of heroism and battle legacy and the duty to continue to foster the might of the IDF. Approximately 600 soldiers participate in the project every year.



## Education Dedicated to Commemorating the Holocaust and Heroism

**Education aimed at commemorating the Holocaust and heroism is a main component in the overall education that the IDF offers its commanders and soldiers and serves as a means of reinforcing the soldiers' sense of belonging to the Jewish people, the State of Israel and the IDF.** The task of commemorating the Holocaust and heroism in the IDF tests the uniqueness of the IDF's status as an army in a Jewish-sovereign, democratic state and of man as a soldier. The main purpose of the educational programs is to make the soldier a better and more involved citizen and person.

### **"Edim Bemadim" (Witnesses in Uniform)**

As part of the task of commemorating the Holocaust and heroism in the army, officers from all IDF units take a one-week journey to Poland during which they visit extermination camps, concentration camps, and memorials in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. The groups of officers are also joined by Holocaust survivors, wounded soldiers and members of bereaved families. **The program has been operating since 2001, whereby on a cumulative basis, 22 thousand commanders have participated in the program. In 2009, approximately 3,600 commanders from all IDF units took part in the program.** The "witnesses in uniform" program offers a different perspective to those who were born in the State of Israel and take it for granted. **The journey is a major part of the efforts to commemorate the Holocaust and heroism in the IDF, serves as an infrastructure for expanding the officer's command and ideological identity, and reinforces the sense of mission toward the state and the army.**





*"We, soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, the emissaries of a country and a nation, stand here today in IDF uniform, proudly bearing the flag of the State of Israel, on behalf of tens of thousands of IDF fighters and their commanders, witnesses in uniform, who consider themselves as fulfilling the will, the prayer and the silent dream of our six million Jewish brothers and sisters whose existence was brutally expunged by the Nazi oppressor."*

(Excerpt from the IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi's address at the March of the Living ceremony, May 1, 2008.)



## "Flower for a Survivor"

The aim of the "Flower for a survivor" project is to recognize the triumphs and personal and national contributions of Holocaust survivors and to involve IDF soldiers in the unique, moving and difficult story of the rebirth of the Holocaust survivors in Israel. The soldiers participating in the project visit the homes of Holocaust survivors, listen to their personal stories and the trials they endured during the war, and award them a certificate of merit for their contribution to the rebirth of Israel. **The soldiers – some of whom are third-generation Holocaust survivors – understand that if the survivors' life stories are not heard today, they may never be heard.**

The special, moving encounter between IDF soldiers and Holocaust survivors offers the soldiers a different perspective on their contribution to



**"To establish the State of Israel here. The nation's rebirth is your true victory"** - Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi upon awarding the certificate of merit to Holocaust survivor, Mrs. Carolina Yehudit Brenner, April 20, 2009

Israeli society as a whole, and on their military service in particular. In the last two years, about 12 thousand Holocaust survivors met with over 8,000 IDF commanders and soldiers and were awarded certificates of merit, and the plan is to increase the number of participants next year. The project is run in collaboration with The Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel and The Ghetto Fighters' House.

## **Tours and projects geared to commemorate the Holocaust**

Seminars commemorating the Holocaust and heroism are held every year for IDF soldiers in the various institutions: Yad Vashem, Beit Vohlin, Massuah, The Ghetto Fighters' House and Yad Mordechai.

The task of commemorating the Holocaust and heroism is a substantial component in the training of IDF soldiers and commanders. In the last three years, approximately 340 thousand soldiers and commanders visited the various institutes and museums dedicated to commemorating the Holocaust and heroism.

Moreover, the IDF actively takes part in the commemoration task by holding memorial ceremonies and erecting commemorative markers. Holocaust education activities are held for soldiers and memorial ceremonies are held in the various units. Furthermore, ahead of Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day, the General Staff forum assembles for a special meeting on the subject.

## Participation in Zionist Projects

Alongside the projects led and initiated by the IDF, the army also participates in national Zionist projects, out of a commitment to the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish-democratic state.

### Taglit-Birthright Israel

This is a Zionist project that was founded with the aim to strengthen the bond between young people in the Diaspora and Israel. The Birthright Israel program was founded in 2000, as a unique concept shared by Jewish philanthropists, the Israeli government, and Jewish communities worldwide. **The program enables any Jewish young adults who have never visited Israel to come to the Holy Land for a 10-day educational trip during which the participants visit key historical sites:** The Old City, the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, the Knesset, a visit to kibbutzim, Masada, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, etc. **As of 2009, approximately 200 thousand students from over 50 countries, joined by over 40 thousand soldiers, visited Israel within the scope of the Taglit program.** In October 2009, Brandeis University published a comprehensive study demonstrating that **the Birthright Israel program has a significant long-term impact on all matters pertaining to Jewish identity, the connection between young people of the Diaspora and Israel and the potential for advocacy on its behalf.**



### Gvanim

The program is run in collaboration with The Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco and the Hartman Institute. It facilitates an in-depth discussion of the timely questions pertaining to Israeli-Jewish identity among IDF commanders, through an encounter with a wide range of Jewish identities in Israel and abroad. Moreover, a new project called "Mahut" has recently been launched and targets the small group that immigrated from the CIS.

## Army-Community Activities

**Based on the perception of the IDF as "the people's army", not only is it entrusted with physically protecting the residents of Israel, but it must also strive to reinforce Israeli society.** The IDF currently offers a wide range of community assistance programs: teacher-soldiers helping students from the periphery, aid for the needy, support for Holocaust survivors, help for the disabled, etc.

### The Nahal – Then and Now

The Nahal (Fighting Pioneer Youth) was founded upon the creation of the State and the establishment of the IDF. Its main role consisted of furthering Jewish settlement throughout Israel. The Nahal was primarily identified by its settlements, which were meant to delineate the boundaries of the young state and were established along its borders. Since the establishment of the state to date, a total of approximately 112 thousand youth have served in the Nahal, as part of 3,600 settlers' groups, and founded about 130 settlements, which became kibbutzim and moshavim, thereby determining the map of Israel.



The Nahal Emblem

Over the years, the missions of Nahal soldiers have changed and were adjusted to the new Israeli reality. In the 90s, the Nahal shifted its focus from establishing settlements to settler group activities in different civilian communities: community youth projects, immigration absorption, preparation for the IDF, formal and informal education in schools and the community, etc.

Along with the demographic changes that occurred in Israel, the IDF adopted a policy of reinforcing and formalizing the involvement of its units in the community and defined a format for the soldiers' volunteer work, according to social needs and hardships.

As a result, the Nahal – which was identified with settlements and agriculture – has recently shifted its center of activity to the development towns.

In the year 2009, there were approximately 340 Nahal soldiers in about 100 high schools. The Nahal soldiers work with teenagers from grades 7 to 12 and their activity focuses on conveying ideological-educational content, forming leadership groups, preparing the students for their military service (in grades 11 and 12), assisting student councils, helping with studies in order to prevent school dropouts, etc.

## **Gadna**

The Gadna program, which was founded in 1940, serves as a bridge between Israel's youth and the IDF. Its main role is to prepare young people for enlistment. The Gadna further contributes by providing assistance to underprivileged populations, reinforcing the national-social identity, enhancing the sense of belonging to the State of Israel and Israeli society and integrating immigrant youth. The core event in this endeavor is Gadna week, for which thousands of young people gear up for.



The aim of Gadna week is to enhance the young people's sense of capability and motivation for a meaningful and beneficial term of service in the IDF, through first-hand experience in a military environment.

In 2009, over 24,100 high school students participated in Gadna week at the various Gadna bases (Tzalmon, Juara and Sde Boker).

Recently, in the wake of the increasing demand of schools, educators and students, Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi gave instructions to expand the activity of Gadna facilities. As a result, a facility designated for Gadna activity was opened at the Hatzetim Air Force Base and an additional facility was inaugurated at the Technical School in Haifa. The IDF further plans to expand the activity of Gadna counselors in the schools and the community, at the request of mayors and school principals.

## **Mibereshit Israeli Journey**

This is a program aiming to consolidate and reinforce Israeli-Jewish Zionist identity through a meaningful and moving journey across Israel's landscapes. This week-long journey is a collaboration with the Mibereshit Foundation. The program targets junior command echelons, from company commander course trainees to pilot training/sailors course trainees and Tactical Command College students. The program offers a unique setting for young people to acquire more in-depth knowledge of Israel and the Jewish culture. The journey consists of: ground patrols, challenges, workshops and enrichment activities, and ends with a deeply enriching Sabbath experience in Jerusalem.

## **THE IDF – At One with its Nation**

Over the last three years, the IDF has held over 2,000 regular volunteer activities in various organizations and institutions (at a frequency ranging between seven times a year and once a week). The different IDF units volunteer on a nationwide basis, from the north to the south, in golden age homes, clubs for the mentally challenged, hospitals, centers for the advancement of youth at risk, etc. An emphasis is placed on volunteering beyond office hours; accordingly, those involved in volunteering do so of their own free will and out of personal commitment. The IDF strives to provide a framework and guidance for this activity, out of a sense of identification with the concept of commitment and dedication to society.

Moreover, the IDF volunteers with the Latet Organization (help with packing and handing out food to needy families), charitable organizations across the country (the Meshulchan Leshulchan - "Table-to-Table" Project, the Cochav Association, the Garin-Mercatz Chesed Association, the Pitchon Lev Association, etc.), as well as on beach and stream clean-up projects throughout Israel. Many of the soldiers who took part in projects of this type have confirmed that contributing to society and the community actually benefited them as well, both as soldiers and as private people.



## Examples of volunteer activities held by IDF units in the past year:

<b>Volunteering unit</b>	<b>Organization where the volunteer activity is held</b>	<b>Type of activity</b>
<b>Soldiers of the Navy's "Dvora" squadron</b>	<b>Haifa Shiluvim Center</b> – an Ethiopian community assistance center	The unit participates in the center's community activity and promotes recruitment to the IDF
<b>The Navy's missile boat course</b>	<b>The Oncology Department</b> – Rambam Hospital	Once a week and during the holidays, the soldiers visit the department and hold activities there
<b>The Navy's "Techni-Coast" Course</b>	<b>Children's Home</b> – Givat Ada	The soldiers provide educational and social assistance to children from dysfunctional environments
<b>Soldiers of C4I Corps' elite battalion</b>	<b>The Achva School for mentally challenged children</b>	The soldiers provide tutoring, as well as sports and arts and crafts activities
<b>Soldiers of the Ephraim territorial brigade in Judea and Samaria</b>	<b>The "Be'Zchutam" Association</b> – assistance for Holocaust survivors	The soldiers meet with Holocaust survivors in order to help them exhaust their rights as survivors
<b>General Staff Reconnaissance Unit</b>	<b>The Rothschild Center for drug abuse victims</b> – Tel Aviv	The soldiers hold sports and social activities, discourses and information sessions, while promoting recruitment to the IDF

<b>Volunteering unit</b>	<b>Organization where the volunteer activity is held</b>	<b>Type of activity</b>
<b>Soldiers of the Intelligence Corps' contractual division</b>	<b>The Halil Project –</b> Soldiers for the sake of children	Assistance for children who have trouble with their studies and whose parents find it hard to bear the financial burden
<b>The Directorate of Military Intelligence's Technology Unit</b>	<b>"Beit Noam" – for adults with severe physical and mental impairment</b>	The soldiers participate by working in the classrooms and forming contacts with the home's residents
<b>The Directorate of Military Intelligence's Central Warning System</b>	<b>The "Yachdav" Project - Nitzana Youth Village</b>	The soldiers help to further students from underprivileged backgrounds ahead of their matriculation exams
<b>The Logistic Equipment Center of the Technology and Logistics Division</b>	<b>The "Tzeva" Youth Building a Future Organization</b>	The Center's soldiers help with food packages for the holidays for the needy
<b>The Combat Equipment Center of the Technology and Logistics Division</b>	<b>The "Milbat" Organization</b>	The soldiers help to create engineering solutions for the physically impaired
<b>The Air Force's Intelligence Decryption Unit</b>	<b>Ben Shem Youth Village</b>	The soldiers conduct social, ideological and sports activities for the youth

Volunteering unit	Organization where the volunteer activity is held	Type of activity
<b>The Air Force's Flight School</b>	<b>The "Kdam Atidim" Project for the promotion of excellence in education in Israel's periphery</b>	The soldiers familiarize the students with the prestigious pilot training course, instill <b>in them</b> a desire to <b>strive for excellence, a sense of leadership and contribution to society.</b>
<b>The Air Force's Intelligence Decryption Unit</b>	<b>The Schneider Children's Medical Center</b>	The unit adopted the hospital; its soldiers pay frequent visits and hold activities for the children, with an emphasis on Israel's holidays.
<b>The Talpiot Plan</b>	<b>WIZO shelters</b>	The soldiers offer classes and activities for children.

## Teacher-soldiers

Their role is to assist with Ministry of Education teaching assignments in civilian environments, with an emphasis on Israel's periphery. The teacher-soldiers work with children and teenagers from grades 1 to 12 and offer them advice, support and an attentive ear in the after-school hours. **There are currently about 270 teacher-soldiers scattered throughout the high schools and over 600 teacher-soldiers working with elementary school students.**



## Community assistance in emergency situations

In a time of crisis or during emergency situations, the IDF expands its community support efforts within Education Corps and Home Front Command settings.

The Home Front Command trains volunteer organizations nationwide to help local authorities support the community in emergency situations. The volunteers lend their support by running information centers; helping with search and rescue operations; keeping children busy in shelters; responding to special needs populations and assisting the homeless.

During "Operation Cast Lead", the IDF – led by the Home Front Command – supported the inhabitants of Israel's south through training, help with preparing shelters, offering protection options, providing personal protective equipment, offering back-up for support centers during times of stress and emotional distress and supporting special needs populations.



## Culture and Education

**Based on the prevalent perception in the IDF, in order to optimally fulfill his task, the soldier must be familiar with his country and his culture. The infantryman will attack with greater resolve, the armored corpsman and the pilot will complete their missions more successfully and the mechanic and the programmer will pay closer attention once they know what they are fighting about and get to know the country they are defending day and night.** Accordingly, the IDF is spearheading a program aiming to expose its recruits to the Israeli culture and enhance their knowledge of and identification with the deeper levels of Israeli identity, whereby the emotional component is an essential part of this identity. In the last few years, there has been a rising awareness and desire to take part in educational activities among IDF soldiers and commanders, which expose the soldiers to artists and various forms of art and broaden their horizons. This is often the soldier's first encounter with a play, concert or museum exhibition.

### Geographic education series

The Education and Youth Corps currently operates three public relations units: in Tzfat, in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter and in Sde Boker. **The Public relations units offer the soldiers — with an emphasis on the combat aspect — an education series aiming to grant a meaningful educational experience while imparting the values of love of the homeland and the legacy of the people and the army.** The education series exposes the soldiers to the geographic regions, its main sites, the various religions in the region, the history of Jewish settlement and the battle legacy.

**Many of the young people will testify to the need for these series. During the past three years, over 31 thousand soldiers and commanders participated in the education series in the different public relations units and about 37 percent of them visited the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem.**

## "Sunday Culture"

Every Sunday, the Education and Youth Corps organizes tours throughout Israel for thousands of soldiers, involving a wide range of shows and theater performances, film, dance and art. The soldiers start their week with a cultural event and then pursue their military activity.

**During the last two years, about 70 thousand soldiers were exposed to cultural events, plays and films in Israel's large cultural centers. Moreover, in the last two years, about 330 thousand soldiers and commanders visited heritage sites, nature reserves and national parks.**

## The Education and Youth Corps' "Choosing Life" project

The "Choosing Life" project was launched in order to minimize the number of instances in which soldiers are injured while training, during routine activities or on holiday due to life threatening or risky social behavior.

The aim of the project is to provide an educational response to soldiers in the key areas where their risky behavior is apparent: road accidents, drug and alcohol use, suicidal tendencies, misuse of weapons and violence. The project also strives to enhance the awareness of IDF commanders regarding the tremendous responsibility they bear toward the soldiers serving under them. The program stresses the value of human life, responsibility and mutual commitment as central motifs of the educational endeavor, which is meant to have an impact on the conduct of IDF soldiers both on duty and on holiday.

It is in this context that the Education Corps places a wide range of tools at the disposal of commanders and soldiers designed to raise awareness to topics such as: cultural activities (e.g. plays and performances), public relations tools (lectures, classes, etc.) as well as routine unit activities that combine information on the topic with daily action.



## 4. The IDF's Commitment to the Individual

*The IDF must strive to create equal opportunities, to the extent that it is possible, for those joining its ranks, even when it means paying special attention to some of them in order to enable them to optimally integrate within the IDF in particular and Israeli society in general.*

(Excerpt from the "Uniqueness and Purpose" program document, initiated by former Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. (ret.) Moshe Yaalon, 2004)

**The IDF is the army of Israeli society and as such, its units and bases feature officers and soldiers from all walks of society:** soldiers from well-off families alongside soldiers coping with daily financial hardship, lone soldiers who only recently immigrated to Israel alone, leaving their families behind, with the aim to enlist and serve their country, married soldiers, soldiers with families, and so forth.

The global economic crisis, which also affected the Israeli economy, has exacerbated hardships, heightened problems and given rise to difficulties, which were reflected in an increase in the number of recruits seeking assistance and support.

The IDF, as the people's army, is connected to Israeli society and forms an integral part of it, is familiar with and aware of its many challenges and difficulties and perceives itself as committed to all its recruits. **This commitment is part and parcel of mandatory service and it highlights the commanders' responsibility for the recruits' physical, financial and personal needs, as well as for their personal growth during their service.**

## Terms of Service in the IDF

By virtue of the mandatory service law, soldiers with a difficult personal and financial background also serve in the IDF. **The IDF strives to ensure the basic conditions for all its soldiers, with an emphasis on the combat division, and grants them a supportive benefits package**, which includes help channels for soldiers with financial difficulties, help for lone soldiers, family payments, help for married soldiers, special holidays and even financial bonuses for discharged soldiers. The distinction between the assistance granted to combat soldiers and granted to home front soldiers stems from the desire to promote **recruitment to combat positions** and compensate those serving in the combat division, but mostly from **the different nature of combat service, which makes it difficult to obtain work permits and earn a salary for the duration of the military service.**

**The IDF's individual care package starts with the enlistment to the army and continues throughout, prior to – and even following – discharge.**

### Help Channels for a Soldier who Encounters Financial Difficulties

In 2009, the IDF invested about 300 million NIS in the grants, payments and financial aid awarded to soldiers in mandatory service. In order to lighten the burden of its recruits, the IDF currently offers several help channels aiming to meet the needs of the soldier and his family. In 2009, about 30 thousand soldiers in mandatory service were awarded grants, purchase vouchers, payments and financial aid.

### Help for Lone Soldiers

"Lone soldiers" are soldiers who lack a family unit, either in Israel and/or altogether, who can offer them emotional and financial support or a

suitable housing arrangement. **There are approximately 5,000 soldiers defined as 'lone soldiers' currently serving in the IDF, about half of whom are in combat units.**

**Although each and every one of them experiences coping issues and misses his family – which is often overseas – these soldiers are prime examples of Zionism, motivation and the desire to contribute and give.**

**Many of the soldiers have left their homes and their families and have in fact given up on the idea of a comfortable existence in their country of origin. Instead, they have chosen to confront language and adjustment difficulties and to immigrate to Israel in order to enlist in the IDF and serve the State of Israel – the country of the Jewish people.** Many of the commanders even "adopt" lone soldiers and serve as their families and make sure that the remaining soldiers are "adopted" by other organizations (such as the Kibbutz Movement).

Along with "adoption" issues, the IDF also handles the material needs of lone soldiers. **These soldiers receive financial aid through various channels in the total amount of over 20 thousand NIS per year for each soldier.** Lone soldiers who serve in combat units are awarded financial aid of up to 30 thousand NIS per year, combat support soldiers receive aid amounting to up to 26 thousand NIS per year, while the remaining lone soldiers are awarded up to 21 thousand NIS per year. Every year, the lone soldiers benefit from R&R days and festive meals on holidays (such as the central Passover Seder), in collaboration with The Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers and the Libi Fund.

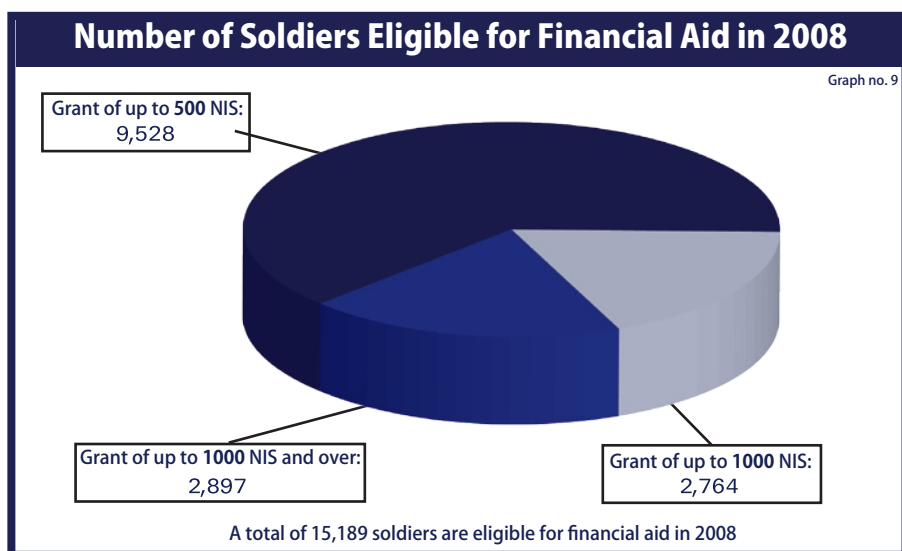
### **Eligibility for Family Payments**

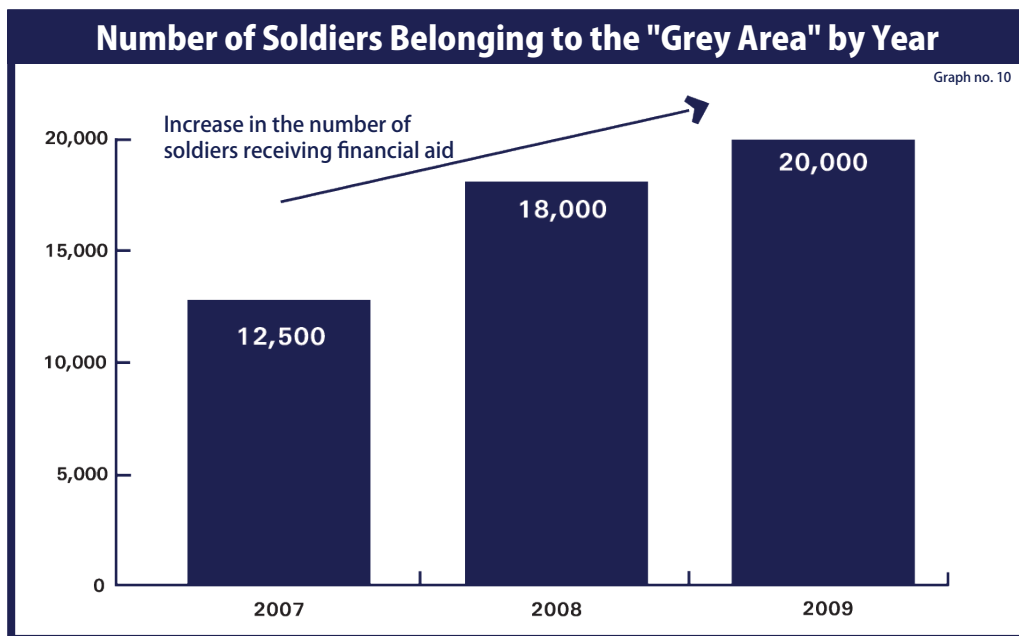
The IDF provides financial support for soldiers whose families substantially depend on them for their livelihood. **The IDF deals with the challenge of personnel retention on a daily basis – for a soldier who is coping with financial difficulties and the need to support his family, it is difficult for him to concentrate on doing his job, especially on a closed base.** The payment is forwarded to the parents of the soldier, his/her spouse and/

or children in order to ensure the family's minimum subsistence. **About 4,500 soldiers currently serving in the IDF are eligible for family payments, approximately 30% of whom are serving in combat units.**

### Financial Assistance for the "Grey Area"

Those who belong to the "grey area" are soldiers who encounter financial difficulties, but do not meet the formal criteria for family payment eligibility or recognition as lone soldiers. These soldiers are supported by the army through one-time financial assistance such as: grants, loans, a help fund (electrical appliances and furniture) or purchase vouchers. **In 2009, approximately 20 thousand soldiers received financial assistance** (see graph no. 9 for a more detailed breakdown). **Moreover, about 4,200 soldiers received food packages in the amount of 120 NIS. In the past year, there has been a significant rise in the number of soldiers getting financial assistance** (see graph no. 10 for a more detailed breakdown). This trend is primarily the result of **the soldiers' increased awareness of the option to seek financial assistance and support from the IDF, but also of the global crisis** (more and more families experience financial difficulties).





## Married soldiers

There are currently approximately 2,400 married soldiers in mandatory military service. Married soldiers are eligible for various benefits such as alleviations in terms of service, special holidays, rent/mortgage payment subsidies.

## Guidance Prior to Discharge from Military service and Financial Assistance

The IDF, as the people's army, and as part of the interaction between the army and society, sees itself as committed to preparing its soldiers for civilian life. This preparation is accomplished in collaboration with other entities such as: the Ministry of Defense, The Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers, government organizations, civilian funds and local authorities.

### **The IDF Provides Discharged Soldiers with the Following Forms of Assistance:**

(with an emphasis on combat and combat support units)

- **Preparation for civilian life:** an "honorable discharge" card with its related benefits; a wide range of workshops to help the soldiers prepare for civilian life; counseling on any topic is available for discharged soldiers for up to five years following their release.
- **Financial assistance:** a personal discharge grant (4,000-8,000 NIS); a personal deposit for set purposes: studies, completion of matriculation exams, setting up a business, purchasing an apartment or marriage (up to 25 thousand NIS).
- **Studies:** completion of studies required for a high school diploma and a SAT test preparation course; fully funded practical engineering studies, including living expenses; full scholarships for academic studies (3,000 scholarships); English, foreign language and computer studies.
- **Employment:** a vocational training program including placement; help with vocational counseling; help with launching an independent business and initial counseling; professional courses.



## Aid amounts available for discharged soldiers:

	Service Division	Discharge grant and personal deposit amount
<b>Soldiers</b>	Combat	32,431 NIS
	Combat support	27,754 NIS
	Home front	22,452 NIS
<b>Female soldiers</b>	Combat	32,431 NIS
	Combat support	18,399 NIS
	Home front	14,968 NIS

### **The Fund and Unit for the Guidance of Discharged Soldiers:**

The Unit was founded in 1949, in line with the vision of then Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, David Ben-Gurion, who attributed national importance to the task of integrating discharged soldiers into civilian settings. Since its inception, **the unit has been involved in helping soldiers discharged from military service to adapt to civilian life through personal counseling and guidance, training and information sessions.** The Discharged Soldiers Absorption Fund, which was established in 1994, enables the Unit to better realize its goals and objectives in the realm of education (completing and improving the results of matriculation exams, scholarships for technological training and so forth) and integrating the discharged soldiers into the Israeli market (vocational training, joint projects with leading companies on the market, etc.)

### **Eligibility for grants and financing of SAT test preparation courses**

In order to encourage the discharged soldiers to pursue higher education, the IDF grants tens of thousands of soldiers – with an emphasis on those who served in combat units – vouchers for SAT test preparation courses, since the SAT test is the ticket to academic studies and scholarships. Moreover, approximately 3,000 discharged soldiers are awarded scholarships from civilian funds (Mifal Hapayis, Impact, Heseg and external funds).

# 5. Reinforcing Israel's Technological Infrastructure

*"Our choice youth, the crème de la crème from a pioneering-moral standpoint, and those of the highest intellectual capacity should devote their time, talent and lives to the State's defense."*

(David Ben-Gurion)

The IDF, as a technologically progressive army, invests a great deal in the integration of young high-quality people in educational-technological projects. Even though the IDF is the one behind the training, the human, technological-military infrastructure is also – to a large extent – the technological-national infrastructure: the programs' military graduates are leaders in their field and are involved in the technology industry outside of the military as well. For these young people, military service is their spring board, which offers them the opportunity to integrate within the field after their discharge as well.

A great many prominent companies – including international companies with a market worth of billions of dollars – were launched by graduates of technology units. The following is a partial list:

			
Removal of cancerous growths through cryosurgery	A global provider of information technology and services	Supplier and manufacturer of identification & security solutions	Three-dimensional video imaging

The technological education stream in the IDF encompasses several programs, which reinforce the IDF's professional and technological ability:

### **The Talpiot program**

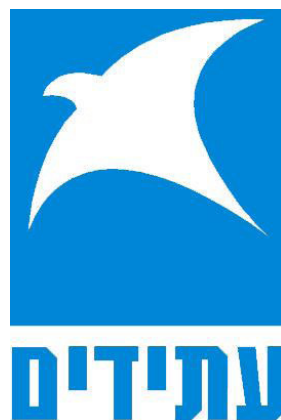
Since its inception in 1979, as part of the legacy of the Yom Kippur War, **the Talpiot program has made it its mission to train young people with national and professional motivation and integrate them in key positions within the IDF's research and development divisions.** The program is sponsored by the Administration for the Development of Weapons and the Technological Industry whereas the Air Force is responsible for implementing the training program within the scope of the Faculty Training Institute in Jerusalem. **To date, approximately 700 graduates have successfully completed the program. Talpiot's graduates have an impact on security-related research and development and leave their mark on Israel's defense and civilian systems.** Many of the program's graduates – who form the elite of Israeli technology – are currently involved in academia, Israel's hi-tech industry, the defense industries and of course the IDF's research and development units and the defense system. Approximately 10 percent of the program's graduates are the recipients of prestigious defense prizes (such as The Israel Defense Prize).

#### **Prominent "Talpiot" Graduates:**

- Brig. Gen. Ophir Shoham, a member of the second graduating class of the Talpiot program, currently serves as the head of the Lotem unit. In the past – among other positions – he served as Assistant Head of the Planning Branch and Commander of a Fast Missile Boat.
- Colonel Nurit Gal, a member of the eighth graduating class of the Talpiot program, is currently head of a department at the IDF General Staff. In the past, she served as Head of the Planning Department of the Israeli Planning Directorate.
- Professor Nir Davidson, a member of the first graduating class of the Talpiot program, is a world-renowned biophysicist. Professor Davidson is a researcher and lecturer at the Weizmann Institute and is considered to be a groundbreaker in his field.

## **The Atidim program**

**The program was launched in 2000 with the aim to encourage recruitment among the inhabitants of Israel's periphery to the IDF's technology academic reserve program.** The program is run by The Directorate of Military Intelligence, in collaboration with the Atidim Association that is subordinate to the Manpower Directorate. The program is supported by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Finance. Public entities (such as local authorities and government ministries) and private donors (such as Mr. Eitan Wertheimer) also take part in the project and its funding. The project was launched by Brig. Gen. (Res.) Avner Barzani, who served as President of the Association until mid-December 2009, until he succumbed to severe illness.



The program candidates must meet several criteria, such as demographic data (residents of the periphery, members of minority sectors and students from a tough socioeconomic background), meeting the academic admission requirements and conforming to the IDF's standards of excellence. In 2008, there were 1,503 students studying in the program, and enlisting in the reserves track ensures their integration into the IDF's leading professional and technological divisions. The Atidim program is a multifaceted educational program that has trained many thousands of young men and women from Israel's development towns and periphery.

## **Atidim for Science and English Teaching**

This special track allows young people to complete their BA in science and obtain a teaching certificate. The program's graduates then teach in educational institutions in peripheral areas throughout Israel. This is the program's sixth year of operation and there are currently 46 teachers who graduated from the program.

## The Air Force's "Blue Steel" Program

This Air Force program is designed to identify students from 54 top vocational and academic educational institutions and train them for the Air Force's technological division. **There are approximately 5,500 soldiers serving within the scope of this program and they make up the core of the Air Force's technology force. Out of the overall number of soldiers serving in this program, 24.5 percent are women and 35% are immigrants.** The "Blue Steel" project consists of several different programs, such as a training program for technology track graduates for a degree as a technician or practical engineer in the fields of mechanics, electricity and electronics, a training program for girls who graduated from academic tracks for practical engineering studies, industrial schools where the studies acquire a technological-aviation vocation during high school, etc. **The "Blue Steel" program currently makes up 21 percent of the overall technological education in Israel.**

## Technology academic reserve program

**This project is a continuous program, within the scope of the post-secondary track, designated for 12th grade technology graduates.** Within this context, the IDF offers 12th graders with a technology diploma the option to pursue their studies to grade 13 (if they obtained a technician's degree) and to grade 14 (if they obtained a practical engineer's degree).



# Conclusion

Out of a broad perspective on national resilience, the IDF invests a great deal in nurturing the recruits within its ranks and reinforcing their sense of identification with the State of Israel, its values and its symbols. **The IDF is led by the credo whereby it is not enough for the soldiers to be familiar with the combat doctrine or to be skilled at operating advanced weaponry – they must also understand what and whom they are fighting for. Accordingly, the focus on imparting education and values is an integral part of the IDF's national defense tactic.**

Since its inception, the IDF has been defined as the people's army, and ever since, it has been an inseparable part of Israeli society. Throughout its years of existence, **the IDF has been influencing society by shaping its future citizens, and it is a reflection of Israeli society in all its aspects within the scope of military service.**

Just as it was during Israel's very first years as a State, today as well, the IDF's main efforts focus on protecting the inhabitants of Israel from its enemies as well as on recruiting and running a combat force. **However, over the years, the IDF's involvement in Israeli society and national processes – which was born of historical necessity – has become an ideological commitment which guides the IDF to this very day, and will continue to guide it in the future. The IDF's ideological commitment is a fundamental value, which supports the IDF's commitment to ensuring the defense of its inhabitants.**



