

Nahal Mahal News

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From the Director's Desk *Rabbi Tzvi Klebanow*



Dear Mahal Alumni and soldiers,

In just a few weeks, we will once again gather on Pesach night and re-tell the story of our exodus from Egypt.

In the opening passages of *Magid*, we read:

"Even if we're all learned, all

wise, all elders and all knowledgeable in the Torah, it is incumbent on us to recount the Exodus, and the more one recounts the Exodus the more praiseworthy it is."

It is a curious statement that appears in the Hagadah for if one already knows the story of *Yetziat Mitzraim* – and surely we all do – then why must we retell it over and over, year after year?

Rabbi Yehuda Henkin offers a beautiful explanation and re-

lates that the Exodus is not simply a tale of history, but the very source of our belief in G-d. Retelling it is not a matter of increasing knowledge, but of strengthening our faith.

The story of Nahal Haredi is also a story that must be told and retold. It is a dramatic tale of soldiers like yourselves who display remarkable commitment both in your military service and in your observance of *Torah V'Mitzvot*. It is the saga of dedicated parents, Rabonim and supporters who aid us in our cause.

During the last few months, we hosted many distinguished visitors to our base including: Minister of Immigrant Absorption Ze'ev Boim; Minister of Industry Trade and Labor Eli Yishai; IDT Corp Chairman Howard Jonas and most recently Chief Rabbi of France Yosef Sitruk and distinguished leaders of the Consistoire, the federation of French Jewish Communities.

In retelling the story of Nahal Haredi to our visitors, we

helped strengthen their faith in our task and inspired many others to support us in our mission. You too can help tell the story of Nahal Haredi. I urge you to tell your friends about Nahal Haredi and help "strengthen their faith" to join our ranks.

As Pesach approaches, I wish you and your families a Chag Kasher V'Sameach. May this be the year in which the retelling of our exodus from Egypt is the prelude to the "glorious redemption" to which we look forward with anticipation and faith.

Rabbi Tzvi Klebanow,
Executive Director

Director of the Nahal Haredi organization, Rabbi Klebanow serves as the liaison to the IDF and the Ministry of Defense and represents Nahal Haredi to Jewish communities worldwide. Rabbi Klebanow holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and a M.S. in Computer Engineering.

ki miTzion Tetzei Torah *Rabbi Shlomo Ben-Zeev*

Avos U'Banim – part 2



In the previous article, we discussed the importance of the stories of the Avos in relation to the Land of Israel. As we said, it is through the

merit of our Forefathers' sacrifice, that our nation still possesses Eretz Yisroel.

In this article, I would like to discuss Sefer B'reishit and the story of the Avos in further detail.

The Torah provides us with an explanation of G-d's relationship with the Avos, but why does the Torah examine this subject in such detail? Wouldn't it have been enough to say that Avraham, as opposed to the people of his generation, walked in the ways of HaShem, all the days of his life? That he was committed to Hashem even though he was put to through the ten trials of Faith? That his son, Yitzchak, and his grandson, Ya'akov,

also remained faithful? Why does the Torah go into such great detail?

According to the Ramban (Rabbenu Moshe ben Nachman), the answer is found in a concept from our sages: מעשה אבות סימן לבנים "The actions of our Fathers are a sign for their children." I would like to elaborate on this concept:

1. Every action that the Torah discusses concerning the Avos, is really a pre-cursor for what will happen to their children. This is a concept that our sages used in order to decide which prophecies would be included in Tanach. Our Sages tell us that there were millions of Prophets in our nation until the second temple period, yet, only those prophecies which were needed for future generations were documented and encoded in the Bible. (See Megillah 14a). For example, upon "Avram's" arrival in Egypt, his wife was captured by Pharaoh, and was later released

after Pharaoh received an affliction (see Rashi). Similarly, our nation was enslaved by the Egyptians, and was released after the Egyptians received ten afflictions.

2. Another aspect of מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, relates to the actions of our Fathers and how the attributes which the Torah highlights concerning them, becomes ingrained in the generations that follow.. According to our Sages (see Yevamos 79a) there are three characteristics that distinguish בני ישראל: רחמנים, ביישנים וגומלי חסדים - their capacity to be merciful; shy and kind – were inspired by the attributes of our Avot and inspired the Nations to refer to Bnei Yisroel as "merciful sons of merciful ones and faithful sons of faithful ones.

3. Lastly, מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, shows us the way to deal with the various trials and tribulations that occur in life. For example, Gedolei Yisrael say that before any

Meet Mahal:

dealings with a non-Jew, and particularly in the political/public realm, one should read over the passages and the Midrashim concerning Ya'akov Avinu's meeting with Eisav (Parshat VaYishlach). Similarly, HaRav Shwartz shlita, explained, that the Torah records the debate between Ya'akov Avinu and his sons Shimon and Levi, after they destroyed the city of Shchem (Nablus) for having violated their sister Dina, because each side (to destroy or not to destroy) was a valid response, based on the circumstances of the time. These circumstances are to be interpreted by the Gedolei HaDor, together with the military heads.

It is for these three reasons that the Torah goes into depth about certain aspects of the lives of the Avos.

Our Avos were the trail-blazers of our nation. They helped ingrain in us, attributes which are G-dly. In their actions, they warned us or at least hinted to us, the pathways of the future, and lastly they showed us by means of their actions (referred to in Gemara as a מיעשה רב), how we are to deal with our trials and tribulations.

So read the stories of the Avos scrupulously for you never know when and how that information can inspire and inform the conduct you adopt in your personal life!

Rabbi Shlomo Ben-Ze'ev has an M.A. in Jewish Education studied in Yeshivot Mir and Itri and served in the IDF as a Hesder soldier from Yeshivat Sha'alavim. He serves as the spiritual mentor for Nahal Haredi Mahal recruits.

Mahal Member Ephraim Wolfe, 21 Chicago, IL Recruitment 16

"...when you're training and your officer tells you it's time for Mincha – that gives you a feeling that you are fighting for your people and Hashem's Torah!"

Hailing from the "Windy City" Ephraim came to Israel to learn in a yeshiva in Jerusalem for two years before joining Nahal Haredi. "Nahal Haredi is an opportunity to be a soldier surrounded by a religious atmosphere. Outside Nahal Haredi you can be religious, but in Nahal Haredi there is Torah, Shabbat and Chagim to the fullest that you possibly can in the army". Ephraim is presently in the MACHSAR going on advanced missions and Intel gathering. He plans on serving for two full years. Ephraim would like to become an electrician and raise a family in Israel.



Nahal member Natan Baron, 20 Cedarhurst, NY Recruitment 17

"I learned a lot of Hebrew, made lots of friends, learned an honest days work and I feel like I make a difference!"

Natan was born in Israel but his family moved to the States while he was little. Natan learned in South Shore Yeshiva. After High school he came to Israel and attended Yeshivat Torat Shraga for a year before joining Nahal Haredi. "Nahal Haredi is meant for religious people who want to keep the faith... it's a big problem to remain religious in the army". Yet even though Nahal Haredi is a separate unit "it connects me to all soldiers. If something happens to them – I feel it too". Natan takes his job as a soldier quite seriously "You have to give yourself to the army and focus on that until you are done serving, I have a year and a half left as a combat soldier, and then I have a year of studies. My dream is to start a Yishuv with friends of mine; settle and raise a family in Israel".



Mahal Alumni Yosef Traube, 21 Cleveland, Ohio Recruitment 15

"...the same exact training as anywhere else (i.e. any other infantry unit) while still staying religious!"

Yosef (known as Itchy) grew up in Cleveland and studied at the Waterbury Yeshiva in Connecticut. Yosef came to Israel to join Nahal Haredi. "Nahal Haredi has the best quality of people serving in the army and the most experience with Mahal guys". "It gave me the opportunity to give to Eretz Yisrael and helped me mature as a person". "Nahal Haredi gives a soldier the opportunity to mature without distractions". Yosef recently finished his service. He plans to go back to the United States for college and hopes to eventually settle in Israel.



An ISRAELI SOLDIER'S STORY

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(IsraelNN.com) By Fred Taub

His nickname is "Itchy", which some people may guess he received after leaving home in Cleveland, Ohio, to join the Israel Defense Forces. Perhaps because of a proverbial "itchy trigger finger" many people think all soldiers have, but it has actually been Yosef's nickname all his life, and his IDF service exemplifies the professionalism he and his fellow soldiers exhibit. What makes Itchy different from most other Israeli soldiers is that while most Orthodox Jews who join the IDF come from a strongly Zionist family, Itchy's family "wears black hats"; thus, not the typical family whose kids people expect to join the IDF. "I wanted to do it since I was a kid," he said. "The opportunity struck at a certain time, so I grabbed it. I was learning in the yeshiva in Waterbury, Connecticut, when my brother-in-law mentioned an IDF religious unit to me. I decided I was old enough to do it and I was ready to join. I did not give it much thought. I made the decision to join and that was it."

Itchy joined the Nahal Haredi an all-religious battalion: "This is the unit I wanted to be in because it's an uncompromising religious unit. I had the chance to grow and practice religion too." Just because they take extra time to pray and study the Talmud does not make them a lesser unit in the eyes of other soldiers. In fact, it is the opposite: "We regularly compete against non-religious units and we come out on top. There are no girls in the unit and the unit is highly praised by generals. People come to me on the streets and see my insignia, and say 'Kol hakavod! One of the best parts of our unit is that rabbis are there all the time to answer Halachic questions and soldier's wives can visit the base. They [the IDF] understand the needs of the religious soldiers." While the unit is primarily comprised of Israeli-born soldiers, people come from all over the world - including from the US, France, Australia and South America - to join the brigade.

"I spoke basic Hebrew when I came, and my Hebrew got better in the army," Itchy said. "At first I walked around the streets in a uniform with a gun, but I couldn't even give people directions. There were challenges every day because I was an American. Learning the language was the hardest part, but I picked it up after a few weeks. This was my first time in Israel, but I fit in perfectly after a while." Studying long hours in yeshivas all his life, being strong-willed

and decisive has paid off. After just nine months in the army, Itchy is a squad leader, in charge of his unit when no officers are around, and will soon be going to the IDF's officer training school. "Army life is not all fun and games. Training is rough and you really have to want to be there," he said. "It is a matter of will. Sometimes, the scrawniest kids make it and the toughest guys don't. You have to want to be there.

"One day I was on a jeep patrol, checking things out, and we decided to stop to pick up lunch at one of the checkpoints where our unit was set up. There were about 30 Palestinian cars in line at the checkpoint when we left to go back to our base for a shift change. Suddenly, over the radio, we heard there was a terrorist attack at the checkpoint we just left. After five minutes, the commander announced on the radio that the incident was cleared." As it turned out, an officer at the checkpoint noticed a Palestinian man wearing a big coat on a hot day and carrying a larger than usual stomach. The man looked "overall suspicious", Itchy explained. The officer on-scene screamed, "Stop!" to the man in the suspicious jacket. Upon hearing this, all the soldiers went into heightened alert. The Palestinian tried to explain that the wire hanging out from his shirt was from a TV remote control, which only made the Israeli soldiers more suspicious, to say the least. A command was given. The IDF soldiers pointed their guns at the suspicious Palestinian man. The officer said, "If you move one inch, we will blast you down."

The man was ordered to back up away from the checkpoint and away from everyone. From a safe distance, he was ordered to remove his coat, which revealed a fully loaded suicide bomb vest. He was then ordered to strip down to his underwear, just in case there was a second bomb. The would-be suicide bomber was taken into custody and everyone was safe. Itchy had been at the checkpoint just moments before, where IDF soldiers check cars and IDs with the utmost respect for Palestinians, even when they know any one of them may be wearing a suicide belt:

We treat everyone like humans. We don't touch anything in cars. We show respect. They move things if we want to see things we are not allowed to touch. We stand behind them as they move things for us. If we suspect something is wrong, we check with metal detectors, and if something is wrong, we go up the command chain for permission to search further. We ask for everything and only touch something if something is very not right.

The procedures they follow obviously work well.

These soldiers saved countless lives by preventing a suicide bomber from striking his target somewhere in central Israel, but they did not celebrate, as most people would have expected: "We were not scared and we acted better than people expect because we have good training and good officers in control. There were no high-fives. We did not win a football game. We did our job and we are ready to do it again. There was no party and that's the way it should be." Somewhere in Israel, families are continuing to have birthday parties thanks to the bravery of soldiers like Itchy and his battalion who catch would-be terrorists. The soldiers on the front lines in the war on terror in Israel, Iraq, the US and everywhere else in the world all deserve our respect and appreciation. The next time you see a soldier; take a moment to look that brave man or woman in the eye and simply say, "Thank you," because that soldier, unbeknownst to you, may have already saved your life.



Visit of French delegation to Nahal Haredi base headed by Chief Rabbi of France, Yosef Sitruk

Nahal News

December 2006: Nahal Haredi welcomes the soldiers of the 19th recruitment "Re'em" to our ranks. Good Luck!

January 2007: Five months into their training and after a 45 kilometer hike, platoon 18, "HaOz", receive their berets at a ceremony on Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem.

January 2007: Nahal Haredi Battalion held a day of learning in memory of Sgt. Roi Farajun ZT"L at the Tirzah base. Rabbis Shalom Arush Shlit"a and Tzvi Zukker Shlit"a attended and inspired the soldiers. The day concluded amidst singing and dancing as the Battalion welcomed a new Sefer Torah donated by the Laufer family.

February 2007: Minister of Absorption, Ze'ev Boim, paid a visit to Nahal Haredi's Tirzah base to speak to our Mahal soldiers about their readiness to make Aliyah.



From left to right: Mr. Howard Jonas, Mr. David Hager, Minister Ze'ev Boim and Rabbi Tzvi Klebanow

February 2007: Mr. David Hager, one of Nahal Haredi's esteemed supporters, arranged for Mr. Howard Jonas to visit Nahal Haredi's base. Mr. Jonas, owner of IDT, decided to help Nahal Haredi graduates to become intergraded into the work force by enabling them to join the IDT Corporation. The Nahal Haredi Organization is indebted to Mr. Jonas for his gracious offer which will enable Nahal Haredi graduates become self supported.

February 2007: A delegation of nearly 300 communal leaders and Rabbis from the French Jewish Community - representatives of the "Consistoire" - headed by the Chief Rabbi of France, Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, landed in Israel on a high level fact finding mission that included a meeting with the soldiers of the Nahal Haredi Battalion

BREAKING NEWS:

12/20/06: A jeep patrol encountered three Palestinian youths, one of whom was armed with a hunting rifle, in a stolen Israeli car. The three were caught and were given over to the Military Authorities.

1/7/07: During an operation in the Palestinian village of Tubas close family members of a high ranking terrorist were caught and delivered to the security services for interrogation.

1/8/07: During operation "Knock on Door" (HaKesh BaDelet) two suspects were apprehended.

1/14/07: During operation "Big Vulture" (Nesher Gadol) in Jericho, in the Akbat Jabber district, two wanted terrorists from Islamic Jihad were apprehended and brought to the Etzion jail.

1/15/07: During a raid on seven homes in the village of Tamun three wanted terrorists were apprehended. A fourth was later caught in a "fishing net" maneuver.

2/23-26/07: After a four day chase soldiers of the Nahal Haredi Battalion caught a terrorist who crossed into Israel through the Jordanian border.

2/28-3/1/07: During an intense operation in the village of Tamun three terrorists were apprehended, one was the second-in-command of a high ranking Fatah officer. A fourth was shot and captured as well.

ORGANIZATION IN ACTION:

Below are events that came about through the efforts of the Nahal Haredi Organization:

- The Organizations staff has been in contact with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Education and several donors in order to try and secure a campus for the Nahal Haredi's educational program.
- New battle equipment was purchased for the Machsar.
- New posters were purchased for use at all Nahal Haredi bases in the Jordan Valley.
- Rosh Chodesh Adar was adorned with musical accompaniment and dancing at the Tirzah base.
- The Nahal Haredi Organization arranged the second "Parents Evening" with Rabbis Yoel Shwartz, Yitzchak Bar-Chaim and David Fuch for the parents of the advanced training platoon.
- The Berman Bakery of Jerusalem is now donating cakes and cookies to the Battalion for Shabbos.
- The Organization sponsored a Shabbaton for the "Gibborei HaChail" platoon (draft 15) at "Yeshivat Or Etzion" in memory of platoon member Roi Farajun HY"D.
- Rabbi Yitzchak Bar Chaim Shlit"a has been in contact with the relevant authorities concerning the establishment of a new Yishuv in the Jordan Valley for Nahal Haredi Alumni.
- Rabbi Zecharia Ben Shlomo Shlit"a began preparing the Battalion for the upcoming Shmita year.
- The Organization arranged that every Nahal Haredi soldier received a "Mishloach Manot" package on Purim.

This newsletter is for you!

Please write to us at mahal@nahalharedi.org. We encourage you to share the news of your Mazal Tovs and milestones or any suggestions you may have for the next issue. Above all, be sure to sign up for the Nahal Haredi email newsletter.



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