

IDF

EXPERIENCE GUIDE



© Here Next Year 2015

HERE
NEXT
YEAR

לשנה הבאה
★

Table of Contents

1. Armored Corps (Tanks).....	4
2. Armored Corps (Tanks)	7
3. Armored Corps (Tanks)	10
4. Armored Corps (Tanks)	13
5. Armored Corps (Tanks)	16
6. Armored Corps Infantry (Tanks)	18
7. Artillery (Totchanim)	20
8. Artillery (Totchanim)	22
9. Artillery (Totchanim)	24
10. Artillery	26
11. COGAT.....	29
12. COGAT.....	31
13. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)	33
14. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)	35
15. Combat Engineering (handasa Kravit)	38
16. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)	41
17. F15 Technician.....	43
18. Field Intelligence (Isuf Kravi)	46
19. Givati	48
20. Givati.....	51
21. Givati	53
22. Givati Infantry Battalion	56
23. Givati Recon Battalion	58
24. Golani.....	61
25. Golani.....	63
26. Golani.....	65
27. Golani.....	67
28. Golani.....	69
29. Golani.....	71
30. Golani.....	73
31. Golani.....	76
32. Golani	78
33. Home Front Command (Pikud Ha'oref)	80
34. Kfir.....	83
35. Kfir.....	85
36. Kfir.....	87
37. Kfir.....	89

38. Kfir.....	92
39. Kfir.....	94
40. Kfir	96
41. LIBI and ATAL	98
42. Medical Corps.....	101
43. Medical Corps.....	103
44. Mekakar.....	105
45. Nachal.....	107
46. Nachal.....	109
47. Nachal.....	112
48. Nachal.....	115
49. Nachal.....	118
50. Nachal.....	120
51. Nachal.....	121
52. Nachal.....	124
53. Nachal	128
54. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	130
55. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	132
56. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	135
57. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	138
58. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	140
59. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Charedi)	142
60. Netzach Yehuda (Nachal Chareidi)	144
61. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	145
62. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	148
63. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	150
64. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	153
65. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	156
66. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	160
67. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	162
68. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)	164
69. Paratroopers Recon (Sayeret Tzanchanim)	166
70. Tznicha V'Hatasa.....	169
71. Yachmam in Modiin Sadeh.....	171
72. Undeclared	173

1. Armored Corps (Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a tank driver. I was responsible for the hull of the tank, which includes the engine and track system- the two main components that keep the tank moving.

Description of Unit:

Tanks in warfare are used as close range Infantry support. With a 120 millimeter cannon and several machine guns we can eliminate large and dangerous threats and protect the men around us.

High School: DRS

Hometown: West Hempstead, NY

Yeshiva: HaKotel

Year of *aliyah*: 8/14/12

E-mail: az.thau@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I received my *tzav rishon* several months after making *aliyah* and the office where I had to go helped me with everything. My *yeshiva* helped me get my appointment for my *tzav rishon*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 3

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: They gave me something if they were ever able to, but for the majority of the time that wasn't the case. I love and appreciate everything they did for me. I was extremely lucky.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

I had surgery on my knees. After my *tzav rishon* they needed a letter from my doctor and surgeon saying that I was healthy and to what extent I could serve. I would recommend the more letters

saying you are healthy the better off you are!

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 4

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They helped with preparations, what to expect, what I needed to know, and how to do it!
They helped me with the mental preparedness aspect the most.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Parent's apartment

Time off:

17 days in base, 4 off. That was only once I finished both basic and advanced training.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Like a regular Israeli.

Expenses during service:

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Special giftcards by different holidays that worked in a variety of stores.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

In training it was very easy. We almost always had *minyan* and on *Shabbos* there was no training so it felt like *Shabbos*.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

They visited us once in the *shetach* and I had regular phone calls from a friend.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Yes, I would because then at least for the beginning (if you are in *shiryon*) you will have a *minyan* and a religious environment. If you are in *chir* you will be with the same guys the entire time and therefore will almost always have a religious group.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? *Madrich* in *yeshiva*.

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Whenever they call! It's not supposed to be more than 2 months for the entire year and even that's a lot.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Having the life-long privilege and honor to serve both with my friends and other Jews in the first Jewish army in 2000 years! Once you have that attitude it helps a lot. I loved being in my combat unit and being treated like a normal person and feeling useful.

Most challenging part of the army:

Not knowing Hebrew.

Advice for people considering joining:

Learning Hebrew and being as mentally prepared as possible those are the two biggest factors. Being in shape helps out a lot but even if you are not, the army will get you to where it needs you to be physically.

2. Armored Corps (Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a tank driver.

Description of Unit:

We defend our country with tanks and when needed invade enemy territories. We likewise perform infantry guard duties and patrols.

High School: TABC

Hometown: Teaneck, New Jersey

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: friedmanyishai@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder, started in *machal* but made *aliyah* in the end

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I followed yeshiva protocol in going to my *tzav rishon*. I went to the *lishkgat hagiyyus* 3 times to complete the process and went to the *mador beinish* twice.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No. It is important to call them during night guard duty.

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
They do their best to help you.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

By providing information, visiting the base, bringing Bamba, offering advice and inspiration.....there was no end to their help and support.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:

Every third weekend, give or take.

Helpful organizations: Yeshivat Hakotel

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Expenses during service:

Shabbat gifts

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Double salary, *meyuchedet* to America

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

It was uplifting to sit down with fellow yeshiva guys and see them adhere to rigorous learning schedules without compromising their military duties. Even more impressive were all the secular Jews reciting/ listening to kiddush, discussing Jewish ethics, donning *tefillin* before operations, and uphold Jewish morales so dear to them.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

The most helpful organization ever created.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder, yes. *Nachal Chareidi*, no, unless you are an *arse*.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? *Yeshiva shiur Daled* and then Bar Ilan

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Barely

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Success with great friends.

Most challenging part of the army:

Proving my ability to perform all tasks with commands in Hebrew.

Advice for people considering joining:

Prepare ahead of time in how to address a commander, what the ranks are, and military keywords.

Stories/Anecdotes:

Speak to me on a private basis for personal stories.

3. Armored Corps (Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Combat medic. Combat soldier first and foremost and then also a medic in the battalion's ambulance.

Description of Unit:

75th battalion of 7th brigade of the tank corps.

High School: TABC

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: Moshe.kollmar@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Machal* enlistment included getting a temporary ID from *misrad hapnim* and security clearance from *misrad habitachon*. Then I had my *tzav rishon*, *chiyul* and *giyus*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
I had everything settled at the *tzav rishon* and didn't have to go through the rest of the process.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 6

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Yeshiva has helped people go through the process for years, knew exactly what I needed to do at every step of the process, and were available to explain anything.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: I started off with adopted family and then rented an apartment	Time off: Every other Thursday for the weekend
--	---

Process of finding an apartment: From yeshiva

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: About 1,500 NIS, plus other benefits like rent	Expenses during service: Not including rent, maximum about 150 NIS a month
--	---

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Rent, 120 NIS a month at shufersal, gift cards at holidays, days off to take care of stuff when needed, and the army bought me a heater.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
A disaster, although that's more the fault of a few individuals than of the army as a whole.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?
Machal Hesder. I would totally recommend *hesder* for anyone who wants to mix religious learning with army service.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? I wish I could have, but it never worked out.
--	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Went back to yeshiva and started applying to colleges in Israel.

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I've gotten one week as a medic and two days as a religious soldier to help prepare for *Pesach* in about eight months

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The best part was the feeling that I was doing something important, both as a combat soldier and as a medic.

Most challenging part of the army:

Being separated from all my friends, at least until I made new ones. I started with a group of friends before being separated to do medic training. I was promised to be sent back to everyone else after the course, and was therefore depressed when I got sent to a different brigade of tanks and knew almost no one. Within a few months, though, I had a group of friends in my unit that I still chat with regularly via phone calls, texts, and whatsapp.

Advice for people considering joining:

No matter how much you try to prepare mentally, you still will be unprepared. So just do your best not to get overly stressed and have fun.

4. Armored Corps (Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a gunner and commander of a tank.

High School: TABC

Hometown: Teaneck NJ

Yeshiva: Lev Hatorah

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

E-mail: yeger921@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Made *Aliyah*, finished 2.5 years

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined the army through *machal* and they took care of my *tzav rishon* for me. I went, did all the tests, and was sent to *michve alon* to learn Hebrew.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 1

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, but they came around.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

Took a color blindness test and failed.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

The *yeshiva* at the time did not have a framework in place to help their students join the army. That has changed since.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: Every 3 weeks
Process of finding an apartment: Through the yeshiva community.	
Helpful organizations: I had no connection to any organizations.	

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: In the beginning 1000 NIS and post training 1,700 NIS	Expenses during service: Food to bring to base and when I was home. Extra clothes the army didn't provide.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Extra money in my salary, extra days off, special donations, help with rent money, paid for flight home for a month, one month per year of service to visit family, 8 days a year to visit family that comes to Israel	

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience: I joined a non-religious unit. We rarely had a minyan. It took dedication to stay on track.
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? They came to my ceremonies and always welcomed me to the yeshiva for meals and shabbatot.
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I specifically did not. I was looking to connect to the other side of Israeli culture to better understand the country.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
---	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Spent the summer relaxing visiting family and then started university.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Comraderie, understanding what I am capable of, and skills learned.

Most challenging part of the army:

Hebrew, Israeli mindset and physical difficulties.

Advice for people considering joining:

It will be the best and worst experience of your life. You will be pushed to places you never imagined you can go. You will become so much more than what you were. You will be capable of so much more than you were previously. You will gain confidence and skills for the rest of your life.

5. Armored Corps (Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

During training and practice in the Golan Heights, I drove and maintained the *merkava* mark 3 battle tank. While in the West Bank, I participated in patrols, guarding, arrests, and ambushes.

Description of Unit:

My unit was amazing, I still feel a strong connection to my company. I had an awesome and fulfilling service.

High School: Spanish River Community High School

Hometown: Boca Raton, FL

Program of service:

Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did everything through *garin tzabar*. They dealt with my *tzav rishon* and I went to the offices in Teveriah.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Depends

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,700 NIS	Expenses during service: Snacks, cola and cigarettes
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: I received more money than the Israelis, a free plane ticket back to the States for a month, time off for family visits	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? No
GARIN TZABAR	
* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)	
Overall Experience: 9	
Advantage of <i>garin</i> : Making great friends and the staff help you if there are problems with your service.	
Advice: It helps.	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? I went to the states for 3 months.

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Almost everything!
Most challenging part of the army: Not seeing my family.
Advice for people considering joining: Choose your unit wisely if you can.

6. Armored Corps Infantry (Messiat Shiryon)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Tank commander, squad commander, platoon sergeant, *mashad* (educational commander/administrative assistant to *mem pey*).

Description of Unit:

Tanks = Large firepower and lots of mechanical work.

Messiat = mortar, recon, and scouting platoons based on APCs and Hummers

High School: Mesivta Yesodei Yeshurun

Hometown: Monsey, NY

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

Year of *aliyah*: After my service

E-mail:

sameisen93@yahoo.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined through *machal*. I drafted to non-combat due to my profile. I raised my profile, *maslul* in tanks, tank commanders course, crossover course to infantry, *mak* for basic training, *samal* in advanced, *mashad mivtzait*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

High prescription. I fought for a year before the army but didn't succeed. I drafted and got to the head eye doctor who gave me an exception.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 2
In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful? Specific rabbis helped.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Parents' apartment	Time off: Every second or third <i>Shabbat</i>
Process of finding an apartment: Facebook group	
Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center	

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? If you have basic Hebrew, then no.
--	---

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? I interned and started Hebrew University in October.
--

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army: The amazing people.
Most challenging part of the army: Hebrew and profile issues.
Advice for people considering joining: Do a lot of proper research about the units positions you want. Speak to real people.

7. Artillery (Totchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Like most units in the army, there are lots of *shmirot* and *immunim* (practices with the artillery). You are trained in one or two specific jobs within the tank (loader, aimer, driver etc.).

Description of Unit:

Totchanim are very big cannons (which in modern times usually look like a tank). They generally provide support for infantry and can reach over 10 KM.

High School: Or Chaim

Hometown: Toronto

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

Program of service:
Machal (*machal-hesder*)

E-mail: aaronlesser@gmail.com

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I was in yeshiva so they helped a lot. I do not remember the entire process, but the *Iggud Yeshivot Haahesder* was also very helpful in guiding us through everything. After speaking to them (*Iggud*) a few times, I went to my *tzav rishon* where they gave me all sorts of physical and psychological tests.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues? Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They did not push people to go to the army, but for those who decided that they wanted to join, the yeshiva was very emotionally supportive and also helped in guiding us through all the different offices and forms etc.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Israeli relatives/friends

Time off:
Twice a month, on average

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a unit with many religious guys because I drafted through yeshiva, which was very helpful.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

They would visit the base once in a while and I would speak to one of the rabbis once in a while.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Through *hesder* and I would recommend it.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*? Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? IDC

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

I had two guys in my unit who were hilarious and always kept me entertained.

Most challenging part of the army:

Not being an individual and essentially 'belonging' to the army for all intents and purposes.

Advice for people considering joining:

Speak to lots of different people before you join.

8. Artillery (Totchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I started as a soldier who takes the artillery shells from the ammunition truck to the canon. I then switched jobs and joined "*machsar*", which was a reconnaissance unit.

Description of Unit:

We blow stuff up from the ground from outside enemy lines before the foot soldiers go in. We are the airforce of the ground.

High School: Fasman Yeshiva High School Hometown: Chicago, IL

Yeshiva: Hakotel Year of *aliyah*: Dec-10 E-mail: gruvyruvy33@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Did the whole shabang via the *hesder* offices.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: I was offered but did not take it, *Baruch Hashem*.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

General support and the office staff had connections.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

About 1-2 times a month

Process of finding an apartment: Craig's list or yad2

Helpful organizations: They did not exist yet or had just started. No help from them.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,340 NIS

Expenses during service:

Phone, house bills, food, *sefarim*

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Extra money, days off, trip to America etc.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Lovely, increased

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Not exactly, but supportive which was nice.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

Hesder. Sure, why not?

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

If it counts as part of service, then sure.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? *Hesder*, *Machon Lev*, engineering, work

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I get a *tzav* about twice a year.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

It was fun and ideologically pleasing.

Most challenging part of the army:

Not being in charge of time.

Advice for people considering joining:

Do it because it is right not only because it is cool.

9. Artillery (Totchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Loading artillery shells into the vehicle that we used to fire.

High School: TABC

Hometown: Teaneck, NJ

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2006

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Did everything through the *yeshiva* and *Iggud Yeshivot HaHesder*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 5

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:

Every 2-3 weekends

Helpful organizations: I don't think any of those existed in 2008. But *Yashar Lachayal* donated things to our unit.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary:

Expenses during service:
Just a little food

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Free rent, 120 shekel a month at Shufersal, 30 days to visit home. On paper, a *Yom Sidurim* per month, but in reality one every 2-3 months.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Very spiritual - was able to daven 3 times a day and learn throughout the day during free time.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*? I don't know

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

10. Artillery

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Moran Unit and Pilot's Course.

Combat soldier in *pluga mivtzait* doing *pe'ilut b'bitachon hashotef*, squad commander for basic training, and sergeant for basic training (lead training of two rounds of incoming soldiers to my unit).

Description of Unit:

Began in pilots course, then joined elite combat unit that dealt with an electro optic missile.

High School: Mizrachi

Hometown: Cleveland, OH

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

Program of service:

Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Garin Tzabar* set up the whole process.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes. The army and *kibbutz* really took care of everything.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

Acceptance to pilots course process that has many stages, including cognitive tests and a week long physical *gibbush*. Once I transferred from the pilots course, I did a process called *shavua ra'ayonot*, where many elite units come and accept soldiers based on interviews. Other processes as well.

Did you have any medical issues? No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No
*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)
Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 2
In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful? My yeshiva was supportive but didn't take an active role.

DURING THE ARMY	
LIVING SITUATION	
Description of living situation: <i>Garin/kibbutz</i>	Time off: Once every three weeks
Helpful organizations: <i>Garin Tzabar</i> - living conditions and army process.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 1,400	Expenses during service: Very minimal - Close to 200 <i>shekel</i> a month. Needed to pay for phone and some extra snacks on a constant basis. Everything else was really provided by the <i>kibbutz</i> .
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Gift cards to stores on <i>chagim</i> , 120 shekel a month to the supermarket, 8 vacation days when family visited, and once a year a month off to go to the US.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: I was the only religious soldier in my unit. Most of the time it was tough but made it an opportunity to make a <i>kiddush Hashem</i> .	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Occasional phone calls	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as Nachal Charedi or Hesder? Would you suggest it? Highly considered it. I enjoyed learning in Yeshiva very much but realized that I wanted to join elite units and serve our country in the best way I could.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Depends
GARIN TZABAR	

* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)

Overall Experience: 8

Advantage of *garin*:

Made all the bureaucracy extremely easy and everything was provided for us. Had a built in support network of friends and families on the kibbutz.

Disadvantages of *garin*:

It's not the most religious program. They get many people from various religious backgrounds. Some who went to yeshiva, some who only keep *shabbat* and *kashrut*. But the *kibbutzim* are religious and do provide a good religious framework at home. I really loved the *teffilah* on *kibbutz*.

Advice:

Would recommend it to anyone who is not doing *hesder* or *machal*. Without a doubt, it is the best option there is for those want to be *kravi*, get into elite units, and want to live with other Lone Soldiers.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Three times a year

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Being able to help defend our country.

Most challenging part of the army:

The army is tough. Not one specific thing I can think of.

Advice for people considering joining:

For guys looking to be combat, workout before the army (running, push ups and situps). Think of things that you enjoy doing that don't take too much time (i.e. reading) to do throughout the army. I made myself a small card with a few images and *teffilot* that gave me strength. Also, don't always take the whole army too seriously. Many of the commanders are still kids and immature, and many parts of the army don't run smoothly. Don't become cynical but know how to have a good laugh and keep a smile.

Stories/Anecdotes:

To become a commander I had to be very assertive and demand what I wanted. American culture usually means being shy and subtle when it comes to asking for things. In the army, you need to know how to demand clearly what you want without apologizing.

11. COGAT

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

COGAT- Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories. As a regular soldier, process applications for special ID cards for Palestinians to enter into Israel.

High School: MJBHA

Hometown: Silver Spring

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

E-mail: kwiatm@gmail.com

Program of service:
Regular Service

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I got a *tzav rishon* and I just went through the process. I spoke a bit with older Israeli friends to understand what I was about to do.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
I didn't go through one. The doctor set my profile at 64 and that was it.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:
Chamshushim/yomiyot

Process of finding an apartment: First apartment I found through Janglo. Others were

found through real estate agents or yad2.
Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center - they help with literally everything.
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:
Description of religious experience: There were tough times, but generally speaking the army is very respectful and accommodating.
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Rarely
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? No and I wouldn't suggest it. It is important to meet all types of Israelis.

12. COGAT

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

COGAT- Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories. Approve or deny permits to come into Israel, making ID cards for Palestinians.

Description of Unit:

Cogat is a unit in the Israeli Ministry of Defense that engages in coordinating civilian issues between the Government of Israel, the Israel Defense Forces, international organizations, diplomats, and the Palestinian Authority.

High School: Yeshiva of Far Rockaway

Hometown: New York

Yeshiva: Tiferet Jerusalem (TJ)

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: David.hoffman1992@gmail.com

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Got my *tzav rishon*, after a month got a draft date, then it got switched, then I switched it, then I got a text saying I was in a unit that I was not in. Drafted, went to basic training (02), after basic training went to *bakum*, asked for *Cogat* and I got it.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 1

Level of Hebrew after the army:

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Israeli relatives/friends

Time off:
Chamshushim

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and NBN- they had informative meetings and offered help all the time.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 650 NIS plus rent
money

Expenses during service:
Rent, food, buses

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

30 days a year to go home, double pay, rent money, nice parties etc.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Depends on the person, I am good without it.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

13. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *negevist*. I had the big machine gun.

Description of Unit:

My unit is in charge of explosives, including mines, booby traps and blowing up tunnels.

High School: Hebrew Academy

Hometown: Montreal

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

E-mail: ayunger@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined the army through my yeshiva. My father is Israeli so it made things a little more complicated but my yeshiva ended up sorting it out through *hesder*. I got my *tzav rishon* and my *lishkat hagiyyus* was in Chaifa so that was a big shlep.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Israeli relatives/friends	Time off: Every 3 rd or every other weekend
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 2,400 NIS a month, including rent.	Expenses during service: I did not spend a lot of money. Once in a while I would go out to dinner with my girlfriend.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Extra salary, gift cards on the holidays, free trip to <i>chutz la'aretz</i> and time off.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: I joined through <i>hesder</i> so most things were taken care of (<i>minyanim</i> , <i>davening</i> times). I was able to eat mostly <i>Mehadrin</i> food. I was able to learn a lot.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Older alumni from my Yeshiva helped me a lot. I didn't really need help from my yeshiva but if I needed something they would have definitely helped me.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I did <i>Hesder</i> and I definitely recommend it.	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? I finished off <i>Hesder</i> . Now I am in Bar Ilan.
How often do you have <i>miluim</i> (reserve duty)? I have been out of the army for 2 years and I have done <i>miluim</i> twice. Once to help clean kitchens for Pesach and once for the war.

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Feeling so accomplished after doing big tasks like <i>masaot</i> or big runs.
Most challenging part of the army: The most challenging part was ignoring all the annoying tasks we had to do and remember why I was doing it.
Advice for people considering joining: This is your one chance. This is such an incredible experience that you will not regret.

14. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I'm a squad commander, I lead my soldiers on missions and when not on a mission I make sure they are always ready.

Description of Unit:

We deal with explosives and if need be we would make a path through obstacles whether natural or man made for the rest of our forces to follow.

Hometown: Montreal

E-mail: levidworkin@gmail.com

Yeshiva: Netiv Aryeh

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

Program of service:
Full 3 years

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I received a *tzav rishon* to the *Tel Hashomer* drafting office. On the date listed I went there, went through the whole process and waited for a draft date which came in the mail later.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 7

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They just knew who to speak to when needed and knew what I had to do.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Approximately every other Shabbat

Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center is great. They are constantly hosting Shabbat meals and making events for lone soldiers, as well as distributing furniture or equipment to those who need it.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: As a combat lone soldier, you receive a salary of about 2,000 NIS per month and if you rent where you live, they will give you up to 1,000 NIS to cover your rent.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Depending on who you will end up with in your *machlaka*, you'll have either more or less religious soldiers with you. Regardless, in training you are entitled to receive time three times a day for *teffilah*, and every shabbat there's no training and there's a *seudat shabbat* where the whole base eats together.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Netiv Aryeh was great. They would call me from time to time to see how I was doing and would always be so welcoming when I would go for a Shabbat.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as Nachal Charedi or Hesder? Would you suggest it?

I personally didn't, but if you want to keep your yeshiva spirit with you it helps a lot if you join through *hesder*.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

I suggest doing an *ulpan* before you draft.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

For me, definitely doing the real deal and protecting this awesome land's borders.

Most challenging part of the army:

Honestly the most challenging part of my service was training the new recruits as a commander.

Advice for people considering joining:

The army can be mentally challenging and a lot of times you might forget why you're

doing this, when you're cleaning a toilet and a commander is yelling at you for instance, or if you got punished to stay on base for Shabbat for something you didn't even do. The best advice I can give is to really have reasons why you want to join the IDF and to even write them down and then whenever you are feeling like there's too much bad stuff flying around you pull out your note and you remember the bigger picture and that you are protecting this beautiful land and that because of you other people can live in peace.

Stories/Anecdotes:

On *Yom Hashoa* 2014 when I was in commanders course we marched at dawn in full equipment with *kumtot* on our heads and Israeli flags in our hands and they did a really moving ceremony and I thought to myself "Wow, in the Holocaust what the Jews would have given to be here in my place with a gun in one hand and a flag in the other."

15. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *negevist* (handling the *negev* machine gun). In addition, I was trained in explosives and mine field safety.

Description of Unit:

The unit was in charge of handling obstacles such as mine fields and traps set up for tanks and other artillery. We clear the path for other soldiers to enter safely.

High School: Or Chaim

Hometown: Toronto

Yeshiva: Shaalvim

Year of *aliyah*: 2009

E-mail: adamhdavis@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did receive some help from my yeshiva but I had to go through the process myself - from a meeting at the *lishkat ha'giyus*, to going through the other meetings to calculate my profile, etc. I did not know any Hebrew at the time, which made it more difficult, but I managed to handle everything.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes, but also an Israeli friend of mine from yeshiva adopted me into his family during my service. My parents supported me, but found it very tough. It was also difficult during the Cast Lead Operation in 2009 when I chose not to tell them I was going into Gaza.

Did you have any medical issues?

No

Medical Committee process:

Nothing major. I wear contacts, but I still earned a 97 profile.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes
*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)
Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8
In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful? The office manager helped set up my meetings with the army and was a correspondent when they had to get in touch with me. The guys I went into the army with from yeshiva were helpful and some of the older guys who had finished the army helped us prepare beforehand.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION	
Description of living situation: Adopted family	Time off: Almost every week. Excluding Cast Lead, I never was in the army more than two weeks at a time.
Helpful organizations: The <i>Aguda Leman Hachayal</i> was helpful during my service in providing me with special benefits for being a lone soldier.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Considering I had 'flipped out' during yeshiva, my time in the army brought me down to earth a little. For me, I got the most out of Shabbat when we involved all of the non-religious soldiers as well.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes - our Rabbis attended all of our ceremonies and were in touch with us.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I joined through <i>Machal Hesder</i> - it was definitely beneficial to be in a group of yeshiva guys, but I also would not recommend full <i>hesder</i> to people. In my opinion, you can be in yeshiva for the next 20 years, but to be tied down to it for 2 more years is tough for people who want to get married/ start school.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? I didn't choose it - they put me in one, but it was definitely helpful.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? I went back to yeshiva for half a year and then enrolled in Bar Ilan.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The point after training when you're actually protecting the country - it's actually the most relaxing time from an army standpoint, and you feel like you're actually being useful when you go on hummer tours of villages, performing raids on terrorists and doing guard duty at road blocks.

Most challenging part of the army:

Specifically, definitely being in Gaza during Cast Lead, but overall, not having any English speakers / North Americans to be with to take a step back from the Israeli culture and the Hebrew.

Advice for people considering joining:

Sometimes the units that a lot of Israelis and other soldiers make fun of can be really exciting. Take advantage and speak Hebrew with Israelis - no matter how embarrassing it is at the beginning. Don't worry about acting up and even getting punished a bit for it - it makes for great stories.

Stories/Anecdotes:

During advanced training, a friend of mine killed himself during shmira. This is not the first suicide in the IDF nor will it, unfortunately, be the last. My advice is to utilize the camaraderie of the guys in your unit and try to let more things roll off your back. The army is tough at times, but it can also be a great experience and there are always people willing to help.

16. Combat Engineering (Handasa Kravit)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was responsible for shooting road side bombs with a barrett.

Description of Unit:

Everything to do with mines and explosives.

High School: Or Chaim

Hometown: Toronto

Yeshiva: Hakotel

E-mail: djblinick@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 3

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No. There is no need, the army takes care of everything.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They pretty much did everything for me.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: Once every 2 weeks
Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Ceter	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: Started at 700 NIS a month and after 6 months, became 1,400 NIS. I recieved 1,050 NIS for rent throughout.	Expenses during service: Rent, phone bill, a little food, not much else.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Gift cards, an extra day off every month, a month off and a free trip to Canada.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Very easy because since I drafted through yeshiva, I was in a platoon with only religious guys.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Very helpful, they came to visit and were always supportive.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as Nachal Charedi or Hesder? Would you suggest it? I joined with <i>Hesder</i> guys and I would very much recommend it to people who would like to have a lot of religious support throughout.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? No

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? Attending Bar Ilan University.

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Basic training was fun if you like to run a lot (which I do), and <i>kav</i> (active duty) is pretty relaxed so that's a nice break after the intensity of training.
Most challenging part of the army: The most challenging part was always keeping a smile on my face and staying positive.
Advice for people considering joining: Just try and take things with a smile, try not to stress, and don't expect any special treatment. That way when it comes it will be a pleasant surprise and if it doesn't come you wont be disappointed.

17. F15 Technician

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Daily preflight inspections of the F15 Fighter Jet and loading weaponry and other additions on the F15.

Description of Unit:

Includes signing off that a plane is safe to fly and general responsibility for the aircraft when not in the air.

High School: Weinbaum Yeshivah High School

Hometown: Boca Raton, Florida

Yeshiva: Orayta

Year of *aliyah*: 8/1/14

E-mail: yaakovepstein@aol.com

Program of service:
Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined through *garin tzabar* and they took care of everything for me. They arranged my *tzav rishon* to be expedited to about a month after my *aliyah*. I went to Tel Hashomer and did all of the *tzav rishon* stuff. My yeshiva was happy to give advice when they could, but *Garin Tzabar* was the main facilitator.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 1

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
If you have vision worse than -2.00 in both eyes it drops your profile to an 82.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 2

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Orayta isn't a *hesder* yeshiva but the rabbis are incredibly supportive of *aliyah* and army service. They were happy to recommend and advise me with regards to the process about looking at *hesder yeshivot* and about *aliyah* in general.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

It changes all the time. Sometimes every week, sometimes twice a month.

Helpful organizations: *Garin Tzabar*. The other organizations are amazing but when drafting with *Garin Tzabar* they really take care of everything for you, from a place to eat to where to live (with your *garin*) etc.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Still not 100% clear.

Expenses during service:

Snacks, buying a lost *kumta*, not much else. *Garin Tzabar* covered everything with the rent money received from army.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

All the ones we are entitled to. I believe Nefesh B'Nefesh and the Lone Soldier Center have a list on their websites.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

So far really good. I was in *Michve Alon* and they are great about giving davening time. Now I'm in the airforce and it's amazing. I closed for *Pesach* and we literally had hotel quality food and the rabbi led a nice *seder*. I've managed to find time to learn. It's not bad but it's not the same as drafting *hesder*. Even though I did *Garin Tzabar*, I majorly considered *hesder* and for those who it's right for should 100% do it. *Garin Tzabar* is not the right fit for everyone.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes. I visit there all the time and crash in the dorms. It's a great feeling to go back and my *rabbeim* still feels like family there.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as Nachal Charedi or Hesder? Would you suggest it?

No, I didn't join through that but *hesder* is an amazing system. Also to be pointed out

that *Nachal Hareidi* (*Netzach Yehudah*), the religious unit in *Kfir*, is not really all that *hareidi* or as religious as it appears. I have heard positive things about the religious *gdud* of *Givati*, though.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
Yes

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

If you need it, yes. Go to *Michve Alon*. If you don't, stay far away.

GARIN TZABAR

* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)

Kibbutz:

Overall Experience: 10

Advantage of *garin*:

They take care of everything, from your *teudat zehut* to helping set up a bank, to the drafting process, food when you come home, friendly faces happy to see you, comfy living situation and no out of pocket for rent. Overall, a great situation.

Disadvantages of *garin*:

Religiously, *Kibbutz Dati* at its best is not the same as religious experience that those coming from Yeshiva and seminary are used to. For some it's great, for others not. Ultimately, the food is kosher, and *chagim* and Shabbat are kept. You may not love the dry and fast paced davening. It's not amazing religiously but it's not bad either.

Advice:

Feel free to get in touch and remember *garin tzabar* is not for everyone. *Sherut Leumi* and *hesder* are great options as well. Make sure to consider everything.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The pride of feeling that I am contributing to the defense of the State of Israel.

Most challenging part of the army:

So far, probably the waking up at 4 am on a Sunday to get back to base and the feeling of being alone. Also, *tironut* and closing days like Passover and other important days were hard.

Advice for people considering joining:

Think it through. Once you're in there is no backing out. Be ready to work hard and be ready to struggle. In the end it all works out - even the longest day ends. Remember even your commanders were once young in army and they struggled too. Try to enjoy the fun parts.

18. Field Intelligence (Isuf Kravi)

BASIC

Description of Unit:

A lot of intense field combat work, balanced with learning intelligence.

High School: MTA

Hometown: New York

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: zachyrosenthal@yahoo.com

Program of service:
Hesder

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Tzav rishon*, *giyus* for *hesder* and then the actual *giyus*.
Yeshiva helped out the entire way.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No. They were neutrally proud but not actively supporting the decision.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:
2 days for every 11 days

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,300 NIS

Expenses during service:

Not many expenses, except for rent, which is separate.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was with friends from yeshiva and always had no problems about davening.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

They had some visits and emails and were always open to helping.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

I would definitely suggest *hesder*, I enjoyed it tremendously.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Yeshiva

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The friendships, experiences, and activities that I would never have done.

Most challenging part of the army:

Learning the ropes at the beginning.

Advice for people considering joining:

You must be open-minded and roll with the punches.

There will be things that you don't understand

19. Givati

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Mashak dat - I served as the religious services commander, ensuring that all minorities needs were met and that Jewish services were tended to and protected, and I worked with the Education Corps to enhance Jewish identity amongst soldiers.

Description of Unit:

The unit is an infantry brigade (one of 5).

High School: JEC

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

E-mail: joshweix@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Hakotel took care of things for me. They got me a *tzav rishon* and I went to the *lishkat hagiyyus* in Jerusalem.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: I was able to live off of the money from the army, but my parents were ready to support if I needed.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

I told them I had asthma and got an immediate 64.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 7

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: Every Thursday afternoon through Sunday morning (was on base for Shabbat once every 3 weeks)
Process of finding an apartment: Through the friends that I lived with.	

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,200 NIS	Expenses during service: Apartment expenses (rent, electricity, etc.), basic food while off base, going out with friends.
-------------------	--

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Rental assistance, extra money, a free washing machine

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
Went in *dati*; came out *dati*. Had no major challenges (all the commanders were very supportive).

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
Not so much (but help wasn't necessarily requested by me).

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Machal hesder, but as a *jobnik*, I didn't join them in the unit.
I would recommend that for someone looking to maintain their religious lifestyle.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
---	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar-Ilan

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
The feeling that I was doing something important for my people.

Most challenging part of the army:
Being away from my family.

Advice for people considering joining:

Don't just join because it's "the cool thing to do." Seriously consider it, and speak to lots of people, including those who had a bad experience.

20. Givati

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *lochem chir*.

Description of Unit:

Infantry unit

High School: DRS

Hometown: Long Island, NY

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes, they always helped when I needed.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

I went through *hesder* and they basically arranged everything.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Time off:

Parents' apartment	Once or twice a month
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 600 NIS	Expenses during service:
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Usually fine. In smaller units, the commanders don't always know what your rights are as a religiously observant person. In bigger units there is no problem.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? The rabbis called on a regular basis to make sure everything was alright.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I would suggest going through some form of organization. If not <i>hesder</i> , then <i>Garin Tzabar</i> .	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? Law school
How often do you have <i>miluim</i> (reserve duty)? Not very often because my unit happens to not be very active.

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Growing, meeting new people, and discovering what I'm capable of doing.
Most challenging part of the army: Being in a framework and having to meet the demands of the framework.
Advice for people considering joining: Talk to as many people as possible.

21. Givati

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *negevist* (machine gunner). The gun is important because it has a lot of fire power and the ability to be pretty accurate.

Also, lots of *shmira* and cleaning dishes!

Description of Unit:

I was in the Shaked Unit. Training takes place in *Ketziot/Har Keren* about 45 south west of Gaza. I served *Kav* everywhere.

High School: Fuchs Mizrahi School

Hometown: Cleveland

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 8/1/14

E-mail: jeheger@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder, Machal Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I came to Israel not even really considering it. After being at Hakotel, where one is surrounded by people who go in, you see how realistic it is. Once i decided I was going to do it, my yeshiva helped a lot. I had my buddies doing it with me so it was relatively easy.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 1

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No. I spoke to them often, but they were totally against my service.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

We have a mashgiach, Rav Tuvia Lifshitz, who really worked a lot on our behalf, processing all the documents via the *Igud Yeshivot Ha Hesder*. I basically gave him the documents he asked for and he took care of the rest.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:

During training, about every other shabbat. During *kav*, 17 days on base and then a 4 day vacation.

Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center was great and always gave out free stuff (food, toiletries, furniture).

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: After training 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a *Beenish Machlaka* (everyone was some degree of *dati*). It made getting a *minyan* easy, and there were often other people who I could rely on when I did not know the proper *halacha*. But that also comes with a huge responsibility of not making a *chilul Hashem*. Unfortunately, we failed on several occasions.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

From the beginning, they always offered a place for shabbat. But the follow-up was pretty poor. My rabbi called me 3 times over the course of 1.5 years. We got 2 visits over 1.5 years. That's about it. Overall, they were pretty hands off.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Depends on the person. If you need that framework in order to support you, then yes. If you can succeed without it, I suggest going without. Religion can be very intimidating and create a lot of barriers. You have a greater opportunity to create a *kiddush Hashem* on an individual level if you go in individually.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Back to Yeshiva

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I have not been *zoche* (yet).

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

There were rare flashes of it, but when I felt really connected to the nation as a whole and to the Jewish people and being a proud part of an amazing miracle we call the State of Israel.

Most challenging part of the army:

Learning to get along with people you just don't like. I don't mean ignoring them, because that's not effective. I mean learning to work alongside them. And realizing that just because someone is a good friend, doesn't mean they are a good soldier.

Advice for people considering joining:

Try to view everything, good and bad, as an "experience". You will remember it for the rest of your life; try to glean from it. You will laugh about all the huge mistakes with your friends later. Don't be afraid to cause 'trouble' during training (as long as you don't cross the red line). It really enhances the mood of your fellow soldiers and your commanders - promise.

22. Givati Infantry Battalion

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Sharpshooter

Description of Unit:
Combat infantry unit in Gdud Rotem.

High School: Skokie Yeahiva

Hometown: Skokie, IL

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Year of *aliyah*: 2001

Program of service:
Machal

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I signed up through yeshiva and had to go to *lishkat hagiyyus* and *Igud Yeshivot Haheesder*.

*Scale of 1-5
(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 7

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:
One weekend every two to three weeks

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 800 NIS

Expenses during service:

A few hundred shekel a month for snacks and gear.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Additional money to pay for rent, extra day off (*yom siddurim*)

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Was in Hesder unit.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

Best to join through *Hesder*.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? University

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? About a month every three years

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Being able to protect *Am Yisrael*.

Most challenging part of the army:

Getting used to the army mentality and lack of freedom.

Advice for people considering joining:

Depends on the person. Don't take it lightly.

23. Givati Recon Battalion (Gdud Siyur)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a sniper spotter for two snipers, was in charge of the unit's camouflage and was in charge of equipment customization.

Description of Unit:

I served in Givati's special operations recon battalion. I originally served in *Palchan* (saboteur company) and then I transferred to the heavy weapons company's (*Orev*) sniper team.

High School: SAR

Hometown: New York

Yeshiva: Lev Hatorah

E-mail: noam.s.white@gmail.com

Program of service:
Regular

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did the whole process on my own. A few months after making *aliyah* I received my *tzav rishon*. I went to the draft office in Jerusalem. The whole process took me about 6 months.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, at some point, one has to make decisions for one's self regardless of their parents opinion.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I did the try out for the *Gadsar*. When you get sent to your unit everyone gets the option to try out.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They weren't involved in any way. I did it all myself.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Depended on the stage. During *tironut* and *imun mitkadem*, about every other week. During *kav*, every 3 weeks. During training after *kav*, almost every Shabbos.

Helpful organizations: I didn't need help.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,500 NIS

Expenses during service:

Rent and food. I was able to save 900 shekel a month.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

120 a month for food (on your army ID), gift cards before every *chag*

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

It was hard. Nothing worth doing was ever easy.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

They were very supportive. The *rabbaim* came to my ceremonies and I ate meals by them on *shabbatot*.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

No. It all depends on you. Everyone is different.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

It depends on your hebrew level.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? 1 month a year

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

I grew immensely as a person.

Most challenging part of the army:

It is challenging religiously.

Advice for people considering joining:

It is going to be hard, but nothing worth doing was ever easy. Go with the flow. Do not go into the army assuming you know what it is going to be like. Know why you are doing it and constantly remind yourself.

24. Golani

BASIC

High School: Skokie Yeshiva		Hometown: Chicago, IL
Yeshiva: Hakotel	Year of <i>aliyah</i> : During the army	E-mail: siegmanj@gmail.com
Program of service: Machal, Hesder		Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did it through the yeshiva. If I remember correctly, I started by going to the *Igud Yeshivot Haahesder* to sign up and later went to *misrad hagiyyus* for a *tzav rishon*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:

Depended on the stage - during *tironut* and *imun mitkadem* about every other week, during *kav* every 3 weeks and during training that took place after

	being on <i>kav</i> almost every shabbos
Process of finding an apartment: yad2.co.il	
Helpful organizations: I have heard the Lone Soldier Center is extremely helpful, although I did not need much assistance.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: Increased with time. I think it started at about 1,400 NIS and went up to 2,500 NIS.	Expenses during service: Mostly just rent and utilities, and some food when I was out of the army. I also had enough from the army to spend pretty freely on restaurants and bars when I was out.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Salary close to 3 times what Israelis in my units made. I got 4 weeks per year to fly back to the States with one trip back to the states paid for by the army. " <i>Yom sidurim</i> " - a day out of the army every month or two to take care of errands.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Very positive. There were challenges, as there are in any environment outside of <i>yeshiva</i> . It provided a great religious experience in ways that a <i>beit midrash</i> cannot.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes, visits to base and support when needed.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I joined through <i>Hesder</i> . It was definitely very helpful in certain ways - finding a <i>minyan</i> is rarely a problem, and the <i>mifakdim</i> and other soldiers are taught to be more sensitive.	

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? 5 days a year

THOUGHTS

Advice for people considering joining:

Always be positive - your attitude in the army will make or break your service.

25. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Basic training, advanced training, guarding borders in different areas of the country.

Description of Unit:

Infantry unit

High School: JEC

Hometown: USA

Yeshiva: Netiv Aryeh

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: stevenathan1@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: A bit of an annoying process, but I did it together with a few friends and together we spoke to different people to figure out the next steps. Netiv Aryeh helped a lot, both with the process of joining and with choosing a unit.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 2

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They had everyone who was joining the army speak to other former yeshiva students who joined to learn what to expect. They helped deal with the beauracracy involved in drafting.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:
Every 3 weeks

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:
Cell phone, food when off

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
1,050 shekel a month for living expenses

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a religious unit. There wasn't much time to learn but there weren't religious issues.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Representatives from my yeshiva visited a few times and would check in on us.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Through *machal hesder*, joining a *hesder machlaka*. For those that would do better in a religious framework, I definitely think its a good option.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar ilan

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
Friendship

Most challenging part of the army:
Training

Advice for people considering joining:

First speak to those from a similar background who have done it.

26. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a soldier for about 10 months. I spent four months in the commanders course, spent 8 months as a squad commander (*mac*) and then 9 months as a platoon sergeant (*samal*).

Description of Unit:

Golani infantry Brigade, 13th battalion. A group of *arsim* and Americans.

High School: SAR

Hometown: Great Neck, NY

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

Year of *aliyah*: Dec-14

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: My yeshiva didn't help. I had a *tzav rishon* about two months before I drafted and completed the whole process in 10 weeks.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 1

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They didn't do much at all.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Adopted family

Time off:

4 days every 21 days

Helpful organizations: FIDF

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Not many. Don't expect to receive special treatment, you'll be resented for it.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Similar to high school - whatever you make of it.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

No

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

No

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Going to college

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Friends I made in the army.

Most challenging part of the army:

Protective Edge.

Advice for people considering joining:

Don't have any expectations going in. Be prepared for anything and don't be a stuck up American since you're there to help, not cause more problems. Don't speak english!

27. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Standard infantry unit. I'm going to the commanders course in two weeks.

Description of Unit:

My specific platoon is made up of *Hesder* guys.

High School: YULA

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I went through the yeshiva. They set up my meeting with the *machal* office and *Igud Yeshivot Haahesder* and after that I had the standard *tzav rishon/chiyul* process.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

In my specific case my yeshiva was drafting to a unit that I was ineligible to serve in, due to citizenship issues. The yeshiva worked with me and the other guys in my position to ensure we could serve in the unit we wanted (infantry) and we ended up being given a choice of exactly which brigade we wanted to be in.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:

During training, approximately every other week. Operationally, out of every three weeks we receive 4 days off.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: About 3,000 NIS after getting my rifleman 07 rating.

Expenses during service:

Living in yeshiva and random food items.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Rent money and a double salary. A *yom siddurim* once a month.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Joining with a *hesder* unit virtually ensures you will have no issues religiously.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder. For people who want to do *Hesder* or are particularly concerned about religious issues it's a good framework. Retrospectively, I should have done *garin tzabar*, but that's only because what I want out of the army is only something you can really get from doing three years.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

All the new things I learned.

Most challenging part of the army:

Adjusting to a new type of *chevra*.

Advice for people considering joining:

It's not a decision you make based on friends and it's not a decision you make because you're 99 percent sure; you need to be 100 percent sure that this is what you want. If you're drafting to a combat unit try to be in good shape, although at the end of the day the army takes care of that. Be prepared to be lost occasionally due to language issues, but don't be afraid to ask questions.

28. Golani

BASIC

Hometown: Brooklyn	E-mail: Shaulgaon94@gmail.com
Program of service: Machal	Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4 Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3 Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center and *moked bodedim* were helpful mostly for questions and not receiving my rights

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2700	Expenses during service: Mostly food and rent.
--------------	---

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? No
---	---

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Completing my 8 month training.

Most challenging part of the army:

The mental challenge of basic training. It gets difficult sometimes being the only American amongst Israelis.

Advice for people considering joining:

If it's what you really want you should for sure do it. It's an amazing experience.

29. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Kashar mem mem.

Description of Unit:

Combat, infantry unit, *machleket beinish*

High School: WYHS

Hometown: Hollywood, Florida

Yeshiva: Ma'aleh Adumim

E-mail: oey95@yahoo.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did everything through the yeshiva, which helped a lot. I received *tzav rishon*, went to *bakum*, did a *chiyul* and then the *giyus*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Israeli relatives/friends

Time off:

Every two weeks

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,600 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Excellent. I was with a *machlaka* of only *beinishim*, which was great.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

Hesder. I would recommend it very highly.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Finishing *tironut*

Most challenging part of the army:

Tironut

Advice for people considering joining:

Do it!

30. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a regular foot soldier. I trained more for war than day-to-day life in the West Bank, but I served in both capacities. Learned to handle a lightweight anti-tank weapon, drive a namer APC-tank, use riot control weapons and lead a squad in battle.

Description of Unit:

Machleket Beinish in *gdud* 51. Golani= crazy Moroccans from Be'er Sheva . *Beinish*= sweet, guitar-playing sandalim-wearing *hesder* boys.

High School: SAR

Hometown: Teaneck

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: A year into the army.

E-mail: Gillguy10@aim.com

Program of service:
Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: It's always going to be a *balagan* but yeshiva helped a lot. I went to *Misrad Iggud Ha Hesder* in Jerusalem to join *hesder* and had an interview in an office in Tel Aviv to join *machal*. From there they sent me my *tzav rishon*. The *tzav rishon* and *giyus* themselves were in Tel Hashomer (ten minute bus ride from Givat Shmuel).

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: I was able to be financially independent without their assistance so I asked not to be supported.

Emotional support > financial support.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 7

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

The yeshiva itself was a bit disorganized, but there was an American rabbi who helped me through. It felt like a sea of forms and appointments.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:

During training it was every other Friday and Shabbat. During my actual service it was 17 days in and 4 days out.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Machleket Beinish was not as serious as I would have liked, which definitely made it harder to stay strong as time went on. A lot depends on what kind of environment you are in- although that's no excuse.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Rebbeim were always happy to catch up if I came in to visit.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder, which I very much recommend to someone planning on learning seriously.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
No

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

As hard as it is, it's 100% worth it. I never regret it for a second. One needs enough perspective to understand that even though it can be tough, it is one of the most powerful, important and idealistic things one can do. It will shape you- and your country- for the rest of your life. The army honestly stinks, but you come out of it a way, way better person. Also, it's phenomenal for integration and a better understanding of Israel and it's many cultures.

Most challenging part of the army:

You are not your own person. You belong to the state and the people. Sure that sounds nice when it's the first few months and you are all idealistic, but when it is Sunday morning a year in, and you have to wake up at 5 AM to get back to some base in the desert where you'll be washing dishes for hours on end and doing needless guard duty.... it's hard!

Advice for people considering joining:

Talk to as many people as you can. Be sure you are doing it for the 'right' reasons so that no matter where you find yourself in a few months you will be sure that it is still the right path to take.

Stories/Anecdotes:

The country cares about its soldiers. It is always a great feeling when random people come up to you and thank you or buy you food. Usually this only happens when we are at war so you have to time it right!

31. Golani

BASIC

High School: DRS	Hometown: West Hempstead, NY
Yeshiva: Netiv Aryeh	E-mail: josh.orenbuch@gmail.com
Program of service: Machal, Hesder	Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 3

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: A little bit.

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
They didn't find out.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They did everything they possibly could to help.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:
Twice a month

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Expenses during service:

Not much, considering we didn't get out much and our yeshiva let us stay in the dorms for free.	
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Double salary, rent stipend	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Difficult at times.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes, very much so.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? It really depends on each person individually.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Depends on the person

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? YU

THOUGHTS
Most challenging part of the army: The language barrier

32. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

To protect the land of Israel, by foot and gun.

Description of Unit:

Infantry unit with a lot of line soldiers. Very tough training, but totally worth it.

High School: Ida Crown

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

E-mail: gabriel4441@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I received a *tzav rishon* while in yeshiva. The yeshiva did all the work for me in order to join with the *hesder* group. All the offices I went to were in Jerusalem.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Parents' apartment	Time off: Every other weekend
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Expenses during service: Only food on the weekends that I was out.	

33. Golani

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Combat infantry soldier in 12th Battalion, specialized as a sharpshooter.

High School: TABC

Hometown: Teaneck, NJ

Yeshiva: Lev Hatorah/Otniel

Year of *aliyah*: 2011

E-mail: zvirapps@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Joining the army with a *yeshivat hesder* (Otniel) made the process significantly easier. I had a *tzav rishon* in Yerushalayim, which was fairly straightforward, and a *chiyul* at the *bakum*. I was guided throughout the whole process by the administration (shout out to Orna) in Otniel.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

One of the women working in the office was extremely helpful for me and all of the *chayalim bodedim* that have gone through the process there. She helped me fill out forms, made appointments for me, and fought for me when necessary.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Adopted family

Time off:
Once every 2-3 weeks

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:
Dates

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Double salary, rent subsidies, 120 shekel a month voucher to a supermarket, special "lone soldier" days, gifts before *chagim*, lone Soldier packages from Nefesh B'Nefesh, round trip flight to America from FIDF

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Overall, very positive. Being in some sort of *hesder* environment is very helpful in this regard.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder. It really depends for each individual, but I found from personal experience, and meeting many soldiers who had started the army religious and did not finish that way, that being in a religious framework can be very positive.

My yeshiva does what is called *me'urav*. As opposed to almost all *hesder* army units, which have 35 or so religious guys together, as a *meurav* unit we had a mix of 50% religious and 50% non-religious. I personally really loved the support and foundation I had as a religious soldier, while at the same time getting to meet and interact with less religious Jews (and Druze). It was an extremely positive experience.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

You do NOT need to be fluent when joining the IDF, but you should have a basic foundation of Hebrew.

AFTER THE ARMY

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Once a year or so

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The guys I was with, really feeling like I was protecting the State of Israel, and

accomplishing so much.

Most challenging part of the army:

I think the challenging part of my service was probably the mental aspect. There were extremely challenging physical elements, but at the end of the day, almost everyone gets through them. For me, the mundanity of *toranut* in the kitchen, or the way my unit valued the guys who had been in for slightly longer than the newer guys (*vatikut*) above all else, was difficult.

Advice for people considering joining:

Make sure you have the best intentions at heart. Succeeding in the IDF is probably 98% mental.

Everyone goes through rough times, and forgets why they volunteered to put themselves through it, but keeping in mind your ideals and why you're here is imperative. (See story below.)

For many people, training is the hardest part of their service, because of the rigid rules you constantly have to follow.

Try and have fun with it, but be mature and understand that this is what you signed up for. Yes, you have a 19 year old screaming at you and you may not use your phone for a week while you're in the *shetach*, but that's just how it works.

Stories/Anecdotes:

I was in the army with another lone soldier from America.

He was having a really rough time, and basically wanted to give up. When I spoke to him about it, and really tried to pump him up and remind him why he was there, he admitted to me that he hated the idea of joining the army, he just had nothing else to do. He thought it would help him "pick up chicks" and impress his friends back home (true story). It was incredibly disheartening. He eventually was discharged from the Army and went back to America. He was in way better shape than I was, but mentally he just didn't want to be there. And it really taught me that you can't join the IDF to impress people, or because of peer pressure.

34. Home Front Command (Pikud Ha'oref)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I served in multiple jobs both as a soldier and as an officer. As a soldier, I served as an emergency preparedness instructor. As an officer I taught search and rescue, and currently work as a training coordinator in the central district of the home front command.

Description of Unit:

The home front command is responsible for preparing the civilian sector for different emergencies (rockets, earthquakes etc.) and for giving a proper response during emergencies. The home front command has combat jobs (search and rescue brigades), teaching jobs (emergency preparedness instructors, search and rescue instructors, among others) and office jobs.

High School: MJBHA

Hometown: Silver Spring, MD

Yeshiva: Mechinat Eli

Year of *aliyah*: 2011

E-mail: Sam.cohen00@gmail.com

Program of service:

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Because I made *aliyah* after my *shana aleph*, I had to call the army every day for about three months in order to join the army during my first year as a citizen. Once I received a date for my *tzav rishon*, everything went smoothly.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes. Before I came to Israel, my parents tried to convince me to go to college before making *aliyah*. Once they realized that coming to Israel would allow me to acclimate into Israeli society, they were very supportive.

Did you have any medical issues? Yes	Medical Committee process: I have been trying unsuccessfully since before I joined the army to raise my profile.
---	---

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? I received help from the staff of my *mechina* while joining the army.

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

The *mechina* is used to working with Israelis, who are going to combat units, and not *olim chadashim* who are going to be *jobnikim*.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:

Depends on the period of time.
Sometimes every day, sometimes every weekend, sometimes once every two weeks.

Process of finding an apartment: Through friends and the Internet.

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center helped before the army and throws great events for lone soldiers!

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary:

Between 1,500 NIS and 2,000 NIS a month

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Errand days, a month off every year to go visit family, a week off to spend with my parents in Israel.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

At times very good and at times very difficult.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

My *mechina* is very helpful, both in keeping in touch with the soldiers and having *shabbatot* for the soldiers.

35. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Kravi (combat)

High School: TABC

Hometown: Teaneck, NJ

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2011

E-mail: akivabuckman@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder, *shlichut* instead of *shiur* hey.

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I signed up through *Machal*, then had my *tzav rishon*, then made *aliyah*, then had my *giyus*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Lived by my brother

Time off:

Every 2-3 weeks

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and FIDF helped immensely when I was denied my *zechut* of a month in America.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary:	Expenses during service: Half rent (to my brother), some groceries, cell phone
---------	---

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Some *yemei siddurim*, a total of 5 weeks in America (2 trips), 120 shek/month at *Yesh*

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Not good, not bad.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Slightly

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as Nachal Charedi or Hesder?

Would you suggest it?

Yes, but not so strongly.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? *Shiur daled*, *shlichut*, now Ariel University

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I've done it twice since July 2012.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Getting out. I learned a ton about myself and (a while) afterwards it affected me very positively.

Most challenging part of the army:

Not being miserable. I was miserable.

Advice for people considering joining:

Don't expect to love every minute or else you'll hate every second.

36. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Completed basic and advanced training. Afterwards, I went with my unit to Hebron where we were in charge of a given area. Responsibilities included guard duty, arrests, and setting up checkpoints.

Description of Unit:

Infantry unit dealing mostly with the West Bank.

High School: Frisch

Hometown: Teaneck, NJ

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined the army together with the Israeli guys in Hakotel. *Rabbeim* were helpful in navigating the process.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Israeli relatives/friends	Time off: After I completed training, I was on a cycle of 11 days in the army and 3 days off.
---	--

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Around 1,000 NIS	Expenses during service: I lived with my grandparents during the army, so I essentially did not have any expenses.
--------------------------	---

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

As a *chayal boded* my pay check was double that of most soldiers, plus I received a 150 NIS coupon per month for food. I was also allowed days off when my parents came to visit, a one month trip to America, plus one day a month off to take care of anything that would come up.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was with a *hesder* unit, so my entire *machlaka* was made up of religious guys.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The self-satisfaction of doing something important.

Most challenging part of the army:

Acclimating to a different culture.

37. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Basic guard duties, arrests, patrols (foot and vehicle), and crowd control at protests.

Description of Unit:

Infantry combat unit specializing in urban warfare mainly in the West Bank.

High School: Yeshiva of Flatbush

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY

Yeshiva: Otniel

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

E-mail: nwallick92@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I started the process through *hesder* so my yeshiva was helpful in getting me into the database. I had one meeting at *mador beinish* (army *hesder* liaison) and they put me in touch with the right offices to get my *tzav rishon*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes. My parents were very supportive and I think that's very important.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

I was supposed to draft with yeshiva so they were very helpful. The secretary at Otniel was always making sure I was on top of what I needed to do.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: About every 2 weeks
Process of finding an apartment: Through friends I knew who were looking.	
Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center helped clarify my eligibility for <i>machal</i> , which I wasn't sure about because of the amount of time I was in Israel before my <i>giyus</i> .	

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: About 2400 NIS, including rent money	Expenses during service: Rent and food
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Rent money, days off	

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience: Very easy. There were <i>hesder</i> guys in my <i>pluga</i> and we always got time to daven.
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Not really, but I didn't reach out. I'm sure if I did, they would have been.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
--	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Study geography and urban studies in Bar Ilan

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army: Doing <i>kav</i> in Shchem, we all became closer and felt like what we were doing really meant something.
Most challenging part of the army: We had winter training for 3 months in the Golan. It was cold and tough both physically and mentally.
Advice for people considering joining: Don't move in to an apartment with other <i>chayalim</i> , move in with roommates that are

always around. It really makes a difference to come home to people.

Stories/Anecdotes:

My first shabbat off from the army I was running to catch a bus and the bus driver didn't stop, an 80+ year old man stood in front of the bus with hand up and shouted at the driver "*ten lachyala la'alot*" I got on the bus, feeling pretty darn good about what I was doing and who I was protecting.

38. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *mogiest* (heavy machine gunner) and a squad commander.

Description of Unit:

Infantry Combat Unit serving in the West Bank, usually in Jenin and Ramallah.

High School: Weinbaum Yeshiva High School

Hometown: Hollywood, FL

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

E-mail: Yoelgoldberg@bellsouth.net

Program of service:
Aliyah

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I went to *netzach yehuda* so it was very simple to sign up. I just called them up and spoke to the Nefesh B'Nefesh FIDF program and they helped me throughout my journey.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes, although it's hard for my parents, they could never be more proud of their child defending the Jewish people and the Holy Land.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:
I did 11 days on base and 3 days home.

Process of finding an apartment: Rented with friends in Givat Shmuel

Helpful organizations: FIDF and Nefesh B' Nefesh

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2000+ NIS

Expenses during service:
Rent and food while off base

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
More money and a month to fly home every year

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
I was in *netzach yehuda*, the religious unit, so it was very solid religiously.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
They were definitely supportive.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?
Netzach yehuda/ nachal charedi

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
Arresting terrorists and protecting Israel

Most challenging part of the army:
Learning Hebrew

Advice for people considering joining:
It's a huge honor and a huge mitzvah. The most meaningful thing I've ever done.

39. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Unit:

We have one of the 5 main foot soldier units, and operate specifically in the West Bank.

High School: Skokie Yeshiva

Hometown: Memphis, TN

Yeshiva: Hakotel

E-mail: ssomer@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: My yeshiva was very helpful. I started through *Machal* and each step guided me to the next.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army:

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 5

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Most weekends

Process of finding an apartment: Hillel Davis

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and Chayal El Chayal were both very

supportive by hosting events, shabbatot and providing anything that was lacking.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: About 1,500 NIS

Expenses during service:
Hosting friends for shabbat

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Days off, extra help in classes, lots of patience when needed

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in *hesder* so it was a very nice religious environment, including three *minyanim* per day, a little bit of learning time, and a very positive mindset.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder. It is different for everyone. It's good for some people and not good for others.

THOUGHTS

Advice for people considering joining:

Be very positive and know that it's all a game.

40. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Patrol commander. Entry team on arrests.

Description of Unit:
Urban warfare in the West Bank. Night time patrols, arrests and raids.

High School: Skokie Yeshiva

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Yeshiva: Netiv Aryeh

E-mail: Nachmeyers@gmail.com

Program of service:
Machal

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Got a *tzav rishon* after contacting the *machal* office.

*Scale of 1-5
(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 1

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Free room and board.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Time off:

Yeshiva/seminary	Every 2 weeks
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 2,000 NIS	Expenses during service:
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:	
Rent expense	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience:	
Decreased religiously.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?	
Rarely	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ?	
Would you suggest it?	
<i>Nachal Chareidi</i>	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? Yeshiva University

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army:
Joining a family
Most challenging part of the army:
Medical injury
Advice for people considering joining:
Talk to someone currently in the army.

41. Kfir

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Regular infantry stuff - guarding, patrolling on vehicle and on foot, arrests, checkpoints etc.

Description of Unit:

Regular infantry unit in *gdud Shimshon*. Same as *nachal*, *givati*, *golani*.

High School: MTA

Hometown: New York

Yeshiva: Mevaseret

Year of *aliyah*: 2006

E-mail: rkc1818@msn.com

Program of service:

Machal hesder then *aliyah* then return to regular service.

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Joined *machal* through a *hesder yeshiva* (Neharde'a in Nahariya). They helped me through the whole enlistment process. I served a year and two months. After my release, I made *aliyah* and soon decided to go back to the army. I figured out from different people how to apply via the *Misrad Michzur Sherut* and served another year and seven months.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, my family would have helped if needed but the army salary was enough to cover my expenses.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?
They helped with all the offices and paperwork.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Yeshiva and then apartment	Time off: Usually a weekend every two weeks
--	--

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center- Friday night dinners.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,000 NIS including rent	Expenses during service:
----------------------------------	--------------------------

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
Army did not have much of an impact on my religiosity one way or the other.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
In theory, yes, but I rarely asked for help.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?
Machal Hesder. I would recommend it because they take care of a lot of the enlistment process.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
--	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Bar Ilan University
How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Once a year, from a week to a month

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
It was the most fulfilling thing I have ever done as a Zionist.

Most challenging part of the army:
As an independent person it was tough being in a framework where you are told what to do and where to be all the time.

Advice for people considering joining:

Talk to as many people as you can before you sign on so that you know the various options.

Stories/Anecdotes:

Not really an anecdote but - I served in *hesder* for part of my service and then served as one of the few religious people in a normal *machlaka* of the unit for the remainder. I feel like the second half of my service was more meaningful in that I was able to become familiar with a far wider range of Israeli society, and I personally did not feel negatively affected in terms of my religious observance, although that may not be the case for everyone.

42. LIBI and ATAL

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

L'maan Bitachon Yisrael Fund and Agaf Ha'Technologia V'Logistica. Oversaw the marketing processes of the unit.

Description of Unit:

Fundraising for the soldiers.

High School: HAFTR

Hometown: Woodmere, NY

Yeshiva: Torat Shruga

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: tylerratz@gmail.com

Program of service:

Normal Draft

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Tzav rishon* in *lishkat hagiyyus* in Jerusalem. I did everything without help. Luckily people understood my horrible Hebrew.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, as expected. They were nervous for my safety.

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:

Get a letter from a doctor (even from America) specifically explaining every single issue you have and give it in at *tzav rishon*.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

A lot more than most people, luckily.

Process of finding an apartment: I moved to RBS before the army.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 5,500 NIS

Expenses during service:

Rent, being married with a pregnant wife, lots of expenses.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Not much. I was married, so I lost most of my *chayal boded* benefits.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? I continued my job as an online marketer that I had before the army.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Becoming part of the Israeli culture.

Most challenging part of the army:

The fact that you don't decide what you do.

43. Medical Corps

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Managing logistics.

Description of Unit:
Responsible for providing healthcare services, medical treatment and instruction to all levels.

High School: Bnei Akiva	Hometown: Ra'anana	Yeshiva: Eretz Hatzvi
-------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

Program of service: Hesder	Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.
-------------------------------	--

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I got a *tzav rishon* when I was in high school. I did *hesder* so everything was pretty well organized, until I was required during the service to bring applications. That's when bureaucracy started and I had to confirm with every department that they got my applications.

*Scale of 1-5
(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4 Level of Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 4 Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Explaining the process and what I was about to go into. On the day of *chiyul*, they took us to the *lishkat hagiur* and brought us back. In case you need to use external pressure, *hesder* and *yeshiva* had a major influence.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Parents' apartment

Time off:
Weekends

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 356 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Hesder gathered *yeshiva buchrim* from all over Israel together and for me it was very convenient to serve with people who share the same values and mindset as me.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

They were there for advice in case I had a halachic question or needed a place for *chag*/shabbat.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Yes. I will highly recommend *hesder*.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Working in finance and studying business.

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Once a year

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Personal growth and expanding, looking and experiencing from a different angle.

Most challenging part of the army:

Dealing with HR and bureaucracy.

Advice for people considering joining:

Accept the different standards you're about to experience.

Go through *hesder* (if Torah learning is a significance part you your lifestyle) or different organization that can promote your ideals.

Make Israeli friends, they will be a great help, warm and genuine.

44. Medical Corps

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Medic

Description of Unit:
Trains medical personnel for the IDF, responsible for the health of the soldiers

High School: SAR High School

Hometown: Riverdale

Yeshiva: Gush

Year of *aliyah*: 11/1/13

Current or former soldier: I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5
(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes, they helped a lot, but I would not say I couldn't have survived without it.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I applied to medical studies as part of *atudah*.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

I got a lot of information from talking to people at *yeshiva* before the army, but once I joined I was more or less on my own.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Currently, once a week

Helpful organizations: Nefesh B'Nefesh and army *giyus* hotline

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Around 2,500 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Varies depending on what base you are on. It is extremely important that people who are serious about religion in the army make an extra effort to show their commanders and other soldiers that they are genuine and not just trying to get extra time to sleep or something.

THOUGHTS

Advice for people considering joining:

Lower your expectations. Try to come in more practically minded and less idealistic. Be adjustable and non-confrontational even at times when you get frustrated. Don't be closed off to listening to people who are different from yourself. Try and learn from others.

45. Mekakar

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Industrial Engineering Officer - multi division project management.

High School: RTMA (NJ), Kfar Haroe

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Shvilei Hatorah

Year of *aliyah*: 2010 (came to Israel in 2005)

E-mail: Justlevine@gmail.com

Program of service:

Atudat Olim

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did my *tzav rishon*, deferred for a year, went AWOL for a year and searched online for protexia.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Daily

Process of finding an apartment: The GSC

Helpful organizations: IDF Info helped set interviews, helped with my application for *atudat oleh*, and my draft dodging.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,600 NIS (after benefits)

Expenses during service:
More than 2,600 NIS

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Rent subsidy, food subsidy, furniture and appliances, *yom siddurim*, time off for work and family visits

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I am the only religious person in my unit. The army accommodates for pretty much everything regardless.

THOUGHTS

Most challenging part of the army:

Complying with a schedule.

Advice for people considering joining:

Bring socks. Lots of socks.

Stories/Anecdotes:

I learned so much about Israeli culture, as well as about the motivations and even religions of the people I serve with. The bottom line is, no matter what you believe, you're still serving your country.

46. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Infantry soldier, sharpshooter.

Description of Unit:

Standard infantry unit, but with the addition that my specific *pluga* was a mix of mostly *sfardi hesder* guys, and soldiers from very left wing youth groups who join through *garin* programs. It was a real melting pot.

High School: MJGS / Hasmonean

Hometown: England

Yeshiva: KBY

Year of *aliyah*: 2006

E-mail: yedidyak@gmail.com

Program of service:
Hesder

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Yeshiva didn't really help with the process. I'm a *katin chozer*, so it was all slightly more complicated too. I asked for a *tzav rishon* and then arranged to be part of the *hesder* draft through the *Igud Yeshivot HaHesder*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I did the *gibbush tzanchanim* and passed the physical part, but really messed up the interview.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They had a general lack of understanding about what it was like to be a *chayal boded*. Then, it was very uncommon for Anglos in KBY to draft so they didn't really get it.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented a room from relatives

Time off:

Every 15 days, I had 3 days off

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,100 + 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:

Rent and general things. I didn't need to pay for most food when I was home.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Extra salary, rent assistance, time off to visit family, occasional *yom siddurim*.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a pretty strong *machlaka* religiously. There were minyanim and I was the *machlaka ba'al koreh*.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder, which I would only recommend if you are really sure that you want to spend the time at the *yeshiva* after the army.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

No

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? University

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Two weeks at a time, normally twice a year.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Knowing that I was doing something meaningful and that it was the right thing to do.

Most challenging part of the army:

Dealing with officers and commanders who weren't prepared to help or couldn't understand.

Advice for people considering joining:

Tironut is a summer camp if you treat it as such. Also, everyone had moments when they break down. That's OK.

Stories/Anecdotes:

Everyone appreciates soldiers. Sometimes you don't see that, but during a war it comes out. I was stuck in Nahariya overnight after I was called in during Cast Lead. Everyone in the city was amazing, from the guy who reopened his shwarma shop for me and refused to let me pay, to the three different people who, instead of giving me directions, insisted on giving rides, to the *yeshiva* that with no advanced warning gave me a room and food.

47. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Served in the West Bank and the Northern border doing arrests, patrols and guard duty. Participated in training exercises.

Description of Unit:

Combat, Infantry. Comprised of 3 main battalions and one elite unit.

High School: Yeshivah College

Hometown: Australia

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: figdorb@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, *aliyah* during service

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I started the army as *Machal*. I initially started the process through *Bnei Akiva* and then continued independently with a little assistance from the Lone Soldier Center in Jerusalem.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: They offered but I didn't use it. Make sure to have answers to their questions. If they understand that you can deal competently with your future, they will be reassured.

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:

They raised my profile from a 72 to 82 after requesting for the *katzin miyun* (placement officer) to see an ENT and have the chance to raise my profile. I was cleared of one of my issues.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They allowed me time off to visit the necessary offices and acquire the documentation needed.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Varied

Process of finding an apartment: Janglo

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center. They fought for my rights as a Lone Soldier, provided mentoring, Shabbat meals and social events.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: It Varied

Expenses during service:

Rent, utilities, arnona, leisure, clothes, food

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Double basic salary, a free flight to visit my family, 120 NIS to Shufersal monthly, gift cards for *chagim*, *yom siddurim*, glass raising before *chagim*, up to 1050 NIS for rent monthly, special consideration for leaving on Fridays, parental visits.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I looked after myself. During basic/advanced training I had rights to prayer times.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

No

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

No. For some people it's convenient, some would rather the independence.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Worked and volunteered

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The sense of fulfilment and seeing parts of the country I wouldn't normally see. Also learning how to push myself beyond my limits.

Most challenging part of the army:

Dealing with army bureaucracy and acknowledging that things never run smoothly. Learning to be more insistent and fighting for my rights.

Advice for people considering joining:

Fight for your rights and follow up on a regular basis on any requests you have. Learn to be flexible.

48. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I switched between different units and tasks, between combat and the *rabbanut*.

Description of Unit:

A foot soldier brigade tasked with guarding the borders and other wartime responsibilities.

High School: RTMA

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Yesodei HaTorah

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

Program of service:

Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I went through *Garin Tzabar* and they made the drafting process very simple.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Didn't need.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They were uninvolved.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION	
Description of living situation: <i>Garin/ apartment</i>	Time off: Varied
Process of finding an apartment: <i>Yad2</i>	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 1,400 NIS	Expenses during service: Occasionally going out for food.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Traveling to America and days to organize things that I needed to take care of.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Disheartening. I was first in a unit where I was one of the only people who kept shabbat in my division. This was a huge shock for a <i>yeshiva</i> student.	
Was your <i>yeshiva</i> helpful during your army service? Not involved.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I did not, although I wish that I had joined through <i>Hesder</i> (for friends and a religious environment).	
GARIN TZABAR	
* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)	
Overall Experience: 8	
Advantage of <i>garin</i> : They make the drafting process very simple. I knew friends and had a support system throughout.	Disadvantages of <i>garin</i> : Remote, making it hard to travel. Also they aren't very <i>yeshiva/seminary</i> oriented. Some of the events aren't catered to a religious crowd.
Advice: It's an iffy place for a religious student to consider.	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? <i>Bar Ilan</i>
How often do you have <i>miluim</i> (reserve duty)? Haven't been called.

THOUGHTS

Most challenging part of the army:

Mostly connecting with the guys in my unit and being in a place where religion was not a main focus.

Advice for people considering joining:

Try to find a framework that will allow you to function the best you can. Don't feel pressured to join a certain unit by your friends, discover what is really the best for you.

49. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *kasher mem mem*.

Description of Unit:

Amazing, great guys. Good *kavim* and *mivzaot*!

High School: Maimonides

Hometown: Boston, MA

Year of *aliyah*: 2009

E-mail: Milgramjonathan@yahoo.com

Program of service:

Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Easy- *Garin Tzabar* did all the work.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

4 days every 17 days

Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:

Food and phone bills

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
Hard, but not impossible.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
Yes

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

GARIN TZABAR

* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)

Overall Experience: 5

Advantage of *garin*:
Great friends, help of you needed it, great *kibbutz*.

Disadvantages of *garin*:
None, really.

Advice:
Do it.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Security guard for trips

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Every 2-3 months

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
The friends I made.

Advice for people considering joining:
Do it but for the right reasons

50. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Infantry soldier, heavy machine gunner, and intelligence NCO.

High School: MTA

Hometown: New York City

Year of *aliyah*: 2002

Program of service:

Garin Olim

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

Eyesight

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

14-21 days in

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Once every 3 years

51. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Regular soldier

Description of Unit:

Regular infantry unit. I was on the base for *machal* and therefore it had many lone soldiers and accommodates for them well.

High School: Hasmonian

Hometown: London, UK

Yeshiva: Hakotel

Year of *aliyah*: 2009

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I volunteered, so I did not receive a *tzav rishon* but had to request one. I did the *tzav rishon* at the *lishkat hagiyus* in Jerusalem. It takes pretty much a whole day and I had to go back with a doctor's letter due to a complication I had. I did *Machal Hesder*, so I did the *chiyul* a couple of months before the army and this was mostly coordinated by the yeshiva (we were several *machal* guys going in together).

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Rented apartment

Time off:

Once every 2 weeks during training. 3 days off after every 18, and then 4 days off every 17 days during *kav*.

Process of finding an apartment: Through a real estate agent in Jerusalem. We were not proficient enough to do it alone and *Yad 2* was not so big at that time.

Helpful organizations: None of these really existed. *Tzvika Levy* was helpful, as was World *Bnei Akiva*.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Expenses during service:
Rent, bills, food

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

We received care packages on a number of occasions, as well as gifts and special events from FIDF for Lone Soldiers. Of course, also the usual benefits of *yemei siddurim*, *meyuchadot*, etc.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a *Hesder* unit so was a very religious experience.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Machal Hesder. I would not necessarily recommend taking that route now as it is difficult to make *aliya* afterwards. I also think that doing full *Hesder* would have been too much for me so I'm not sure what I would have done had I been drafting into the army now.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Psychology BA at IDC

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Twice a year

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The camaraderie was great as well as the constant feeling of achievement.

Most challenging part of the army:

It was difficult coming from *chutz la'aretz* and not knowing a lot of the basic things that regular Israelis know. Also, the physical commitment of a *kravi* unit should not be underestimated.

Advice for people considering joining:

Speak to as many people as you can who have done it before and try to get a diverse range of opinions. Don't allow yourself to be brainwashed or just carried by hype and then end up drafting.

52. Nachal

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I'm a commander in 931 Shachar Battalion. I have 12 soldiers whose lives are in my hands. In Operation Protective Edge, for example, I was in charge of them and everything they did was under my command. I position them and tell them when and where to go. I shoot the first bullet and then they shoot in the direction I shot.

Description of Unit:

One of the 5 major infantry brigades. It was 8-month training and during non-war times we usually do border patrol.

High School: Hebrew Academy High School

Hometown: Montreal, Canada

Yeshiva: Lev HaTorah

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: noam9321@gmail.com

Program of service:
Regular 3 year service.

Current or former soldier:
I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined the army after getting my *tzav rishon*. I asked Nefesh B'Nefesh to help me speed it up so that I could make it in time for the draft that I wanted, which was August '13. Once I got the *tzav rishon*, I just followed the process of going to the recruitment office in Jerusalem and going through the whole procedure. I had a lot of help from Nefesh B'Nefesh and I attended their "pre-draft information day" where I met Maya Liss who is one of the NBN army helpers and she helped a lot (she actually worked at the recruitment office during her army service).

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, it was one of the most important parts of my enlistment. I needed their support and, thank God, I have it

strongly.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I didn't apply. The recruitment office told me that I was eligible for "*yom sayarot*", which is a day that there are tryouts for elite units. I was only able to do it, however, if i pushed off my draft date by 4 months. I was not willing to do that and thus declined the invitation.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

I have ADHD. It doesn't affect your profile generally speaking, but I had a crazy doctor who didn't understand me and gave me a 64 profile. I had to go to a different doctor, one who I knew because she was the mother of a friend of mine, and she wrote me a note saying that I am perfectly healthy and should have a 97 profile. They then changed my profile to a 97.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 2

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They were helpful with preparatory *shiurim* and personal guidance of how to stay religious in the army. I still go back there from time to time and they try and help me with everything that they possibly can. Also, I must mention that this is before the "*Lev Lachaya*" program opened. That new program is an outstanding program - highly recommended!

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

17 days on base, 4 days at home

Process of finding an apartment: I recommend not only living with soldiers, in order to have people look after the house while you're not there.

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center helping with furniture and gifts. They were just awesome to talk to about anything. Nefesh B'Nefesh helped me a lot as well.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 3,000 NIS (including rent money)

Expenses during service:

Food on weekends, clothing, bills like internet, gas/electricity, etc.

Other than that, just luxury things like going out to eat.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Loads! Half off electricity, no *arnona*, every month I get an extra 300 NIS from *misrad haklita* and 350 NIS from *misrad habinui*, a month off of the army every year.

After the war, FIDF paid for an extra flight back to Montreal for 2 weeks, in addition to the month off per year. Also, I get a day off of the army every month to get things done; banking, shopping, etc.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

At the beginning it was great. I had *hesder* guys with me all the time and they really set the tone. Now, after they've finished their shortened service, the tone is a lot less religious, but in terms of *kashrut* and *halacha*...everything is still pretty much under control (the other few remaining religious guys and I make sure of that).

Overall, it's hard but it's not that hard. It depends on how much you want to stay religious.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes- they are always available at any time of the day or night willing to help with anything I need.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*? Would you suggest it?

No and I would HIGHLY recommend *hesder*. After a year and a half of army service (and after you've been through *Shuvu Achim* and *Tzuk Eitan*) the army gets very restless and repetitive and you get sick of the general *avira*. I recommend ending your service after 1.5 years if possible or maximum 2 years if possible.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Operation Protective Edge. Without a doubt, most intense, real, mind-blowing, life changing events happened in Gaza. Also, the feeling of walking home into Israel after spending a whole bunch of time in Gaza was a really amazing feeling. It was exactly

what I was looking for in my service.

Most challenging part of the army:

Probably being away from family for so long and having to close many, many *shabbatot* throughout my service. Most recently, I closed my first *Pesach* in the army and it was very very hard. I never want to do it again. Other than that, not much.

Advice for people considering joining:

Be yourself, be positive all the time. Don't EVER forget why you're there. Don't worry about Hebrew! I came into the army very worried about it...and i didn't even do the *ulpan*. I just went in alone without any friends and found myself among 13 Israelis in my *kita*. You learn pretty quickly when that's the case. I now consider myself fluent.

53. Nachal (Nachal Palchatz- Search & Rescue)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Tironim samech mem pey sheni

Description of Unit:

My unit is unique, we are trained to save people from collapsed buildings and to protect people on border duties.

High School: King David High School

Hometown: Manchester

Year of *aliyah*: 2009

Current or former soldier: I am currently serving in the IDF.

E-mail: adamlabaton@gmail.com

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I just made it up as I went along- no *garin*, no *machal*, no groups.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 1

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I did a *gibbush* for *Gadsar Nahal*. Unfortunately, I didn't get in.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Between 1,300-2,000
NIS

Expenses during service:
Food, rent, electricity, water, phone, gas

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Rent

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

No

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Standing with my soldiers at their masa kumta, seeing my soldiers become *mefakdim*,
seeing my *mefakdim* become *mem memim*.

Most challenging part of the army:

Coming home to an empty home with an empty fridge.

Advice for people considering joining:

Learn Hebrew and get in shape. Never give up.

54. Neztach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Border patrol, arrests and guarding of Israeli settlements.

Description of Unit:

A foot soldier unit for religious men.

High School: MTA

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Reishit

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: stepansky.benzi@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I worked with an agent of the unit who helped me draft into the army.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 5

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Adopted family

Time off:

Every 3 weeks

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,500 NIS

Expenses during service:
Nothing

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Vacation and some small monetary stipends

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

It was okay. I was never bogged down nor did I get more religious. I stayed the same throughout, which is more traditional.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

I would visit them but none of my rabbis served in the army. Just seeing them cheered me up.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Nachal charedi is a great place as you get to meet a lot of Americans as well as Israelis, but if you're looking for religious reasons then I would not recommend it.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? University

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The guys - the brotherhood you gain is worth all the pain.

Most challenging part of the army:

Mental challenges – you are being treated like a child, but you learn discipline.

Advice for people considering joining:

Just do what they tell you. It's all mental games, but if you're mentally strong you will be just fine.

55. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a trained sharpshooter and Armored Personal Carrier driver. I served near Jenin and participated in daily patrols and arrests when needed.

Description of Unit:

Combat infantry unit with a strictly religious atmosphere.

High School: Ramaz

Hometown: Connecticut

Yeshiva: Reishit

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

E-mail: adamlabaton@gmail.com

Program of service:
Machal

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined the army pretty much on my own. There was a website machal2000 that described the processes needed and they submitted my request to join via *machal* (I met with a representative who helped). I also received advice on the process and what exact steps I had to take from another soldier in a similar situation to mine who joined before me. After that, I waited a few months to receive my *tzav* and then went to the *lishkat giyus*. My yeshiva was not *hesder*, so they did not assist in the process.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes. At first they were hesitant, but once they saw my commitment they were supportive

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They had no connections, so they didn't assist but it wasn't too difficult to join without them. Plus, *Netzach Yehuda* has a special enlistment arrangement, which made things easier.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Israeli relatives/friends

Time off:

On average, every other Shabbat.

Helpful organizations: The only organization that helped was *HaAguda Lemaan Hachayal* (FIDF) who, during my service, helped pay for a ticket home to visit my family in the USA.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,300 NIS

Expenses during service:

Very little. Basic food when out of the army.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Days off to take care of things, time off when my parents were in Israel and a month to travel to the USA. Also, a bump in salary.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I had a positive religious experience. I was able to *daven* almost all 3 *tfillot* a day with a *minyan* and occasionally in training I had specified times for learning or *shiurim*. Also overall there was an atmosphere of observance and respect, which is always nice. On the other hand, I felt very separated from the rest of the army units.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Not much. They always welcomed me back with open arms whenever I chose to visit and always offered me a place to stay whenever I wanted.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*? Would you suggest it?

Yes. *Nachal Charedi* (*netzach yehuda*). Depends on what you are looking for. There are pros and cons to this unit. On the one hand, you have an excellent framework (in relation to other units) for religious observance (davening with minyans, learning, etc.). That said, you often feel isolated and separate from the other units nearby. You can't eat with them and are always separated in some way.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
--	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Went to Bar Ilan University.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The feeling of completing a specific training/stage in service and looking back on it. It pushes you as a person to your limits and thus allows for true growth.

Most challenging part of the army:

Being able to maintain the idealism/optimism which motivated me to join in the first place. There are many challenges in the army and one must always remember the big picture and why he/she is there. Also being constantly physically tired makes all things you do harder.

Advice for people considering joining:

Try and speak to people who were in a similar situation to you who completed it and find out as many aspects as possible. Be fearless and go for it if you feel it in your heart.

56. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *mifaked kita*, or squad leader. I was in charge of 10 soldiers. During training, I was fully responsible for their training and well-being. During active duty, I was in charge of various patrols, as well as other missions.

Description of Unit:

The unit is made for *charedim* or ultra orthodox Jews. The reality is that although most of the soldiers come from religious backgrounds they themselves are barely, if not religious at all. The upside to the unit is that many American and French flock to the unit, so you are unlikely to be alone.

High School: Yeshiva Tiferes Yisroel

Hometown: Brooklyn, New York

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

Year of *aliyah*: Jul-12

E-mail: ufried@gmail.com

Program of service:

Netzach Yehuda

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Yeshiva* didn't help at all. It was a very difficult and confusing thing to do. I went in six months later than planned because of the disorganization of the army.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 1

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: 4 days off every 17 days
Process of finding an apartment: Joined a friend's apartment.	
Helpful organizations: Jerusalem Lone Soldier Center gave me warm winter clothes that I needed. It is a great social outlet when not on base because it enables you to meet and speak with more lone soldiers like you.	

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,600 NIS after a year, including rent subsidy	Expenses during service: Mostly food and rent. Here and there some "wasach".
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Rent money, 120 NIS to Shufersal, double salary, free flight for a month to America	

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience: Although before I drafted I firmly did not believe it would happen, my religiousness did deteriorate to some extent. The basic things that I did before the army became a huge challenge in the army, such as washing for bread.
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? No
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I would recommend <i>hesder</i> over <i>nachal charedi</i> because in <i>hesder</i> you have the support of your friends from <i>yeshiva</i> that are with you.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? If it means signing more time, then no.
--	--

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Work and college

THOUGHTS

Advice for people considering joining:

1. If you are joining the regular *gdudim* don't waste your time in a pre-army *mechina*. Nobody comes to the *gdudim* in shape.
2. Always carry toilet paper on you.
3. Don't eat tuna for at least four months before you go in.

57. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a commander for training and patrol.

Description of Unit:

A religious unit that partakes in patrolling the West Bank.

High School: RTMA

Hometown: New Jersey

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

E-mail: gabikaye7@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I called the *machal* office and followed their directions. They were helpful with any questions I had through the process.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Parents' apartment	Time off: About every other week
Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center helped with preparing before drafting.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 1,800 NIS	Expenses during service: Food and general necessities
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Extra salary, money to shufersal.	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: I was part of a religious unit so had prayer time every day. Most of the unit was also religious so it was very easy.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I joined <i>Nachal Charedi</i> . It was great for me. However, not everyone is religious and there is no learning time as advertised.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? No

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? I went back to America for college

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Becoming friends with the people I served with.
Most challenging part of the army: Getting accustomed to Israelis.
Advice for people considering joining: Prepare for it to be hard and potentially boring.

58. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a light machine gunner, the soldier in the very front of the line in formation while traveling and was part of squad to breach terrorist suspect houses on arrest.

Description of Unit:

We arrested terrorist suspects in the West Bank and protected 4 Jewish settlements in the area.

High School: Southern California Yeshiva

Hometown: San Diego, CA

Yeshiva: Torat Shraga

E-mail: Egipsman@yahoo.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did everything based on what *Machal* told me to do.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, they didn't want me to join, but were supportive when I told them I was going.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 4

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Provided housing and answered any questions about the army.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Yeshiva/seminary

Time off:
Every 11 days

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and *Moked Bodedim* helped with bureaucratic problems.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 850 NIS

Expenses during service:
Food

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Money for rent, flight back to America

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
I was in a religious unit and had no problems with any religious issues.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
Yes. They gave advice and helped me with housing.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?
I did *nachal charedi* and I would absolutely recommend it.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Division head at Camp Nesher and YU

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
Going on missions.

Most challenging part of the army:
Basic training, adjusting to the army life.

Advice for people considering joining:
Go to *Netzach Yehuda*!

59. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

A forward sharpshooter leads the company with his officer and also goes into house arrests right after the officer.

Description of Unit:

Religious infantry unit specializing in house to house combat in *Yehuda* and the *Shomron*.

High School: HANC

Hometown: New York

Yeshiva: Rieshit

Year of *aliyah*: 2015

E-mail: esaidoff5490@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Tzav rishon* in Jerusalem. Bring a book or music- it's a long process. Much better to go through some sort of program to ease the way because you probably will have no clue what to do.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, they moved with me.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Time off:

Every other week

Process of finding an apartment: Networking with friends.

Helpful organizations: *Chayal El Chayal* is great for meals on Shabbat and free laundry usage. Lone Soldier Center is good for getting free stuff, like a sofa and appliances. Also, they'll call for an expert with army connections if there are any problems within the army, such as not giving *yom siddurim*.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,400 NIS plus 1,000 NIS for rent

Expenses during service:
Rent and food

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

A visit to the US, extra money, *yom siddurim* once a month.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Nachal hated that I was completely frum.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

No

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Nachal Haredi

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
Yes

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
No

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Madrich in Bar Ilan and then went back to New York

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Knowing that I was doing the right thing.

Most challenging part of the army:

Language

Advice for people considering joining:

Learn Hebrew, get in a network of lone soldiers, don't be afraid.

60. Netzach Yehuda

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Negevist (light machine gunner).

Description of Unit:

Combat unit designed for religious men.

High School: Breuer's

Hometown: Monsey, NY

E-mail: simons1691@gmail.com

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Worked with *garin machal* (garinmachal.com).

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 5

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Israeli relatives/friends

Time off:

Every 2 to 3 weekends

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and *Chayal el Chayal*

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Studying medicine in the Technion.

61. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

In *tzanachanim* our responsibilities were the same as many other units - doing regular border service, as well as arrests and various missions around the country. Due to the high level of training, *tzanachanim* is also one of the first units called into action in the event of any wars or operations.

Description of Unit:

Tzanchaim is basically a regular foot soldiers infantry unit, like *golani* and *givati*. *Tzanchaim* is the only regular infantry unit with a tryout, which allows for them to choose and weed out soldiers that they don't feel are capable of being part of *tzanachanim*. For this reason the intensity of the unit is higher and they push you to do more, since you are part of a unit with a great reputation.

High School: Or Chaim

Hometown: Canada

Yeshiva: Gush

Year of *aliyah*: 2012 (in Israel since 2006)

Program of service:
Machal, Hesder

Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.

E-mail:
shmaryagreen@gmail.com

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I volunteered through my yeshiva and ended up going to many meetings and offices for interviews and tests. At the time it wasn't so organized and I was required to make many phone calls and arrange many meetings to get permission to try out for *tzanachanim*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues?
No

Medical Committee process:
I wore glasses.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes
*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)
Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9
In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful? They helped set up initial interviews and meetings to get the <i>tzav rishon</i> . For certain units and permissions I was required to do that on my own, but during that process they helped me with finding contacts and making calls.

DURING THE ARMY	
LIVING SITUATION	
Description of living situation: Israeli relatives/friends	Time off: Between 3-5 days every 21 days
Helpful organizations: I didn't use any of them.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 1,400 NIS (after training, during active service)	Expenses during service: Almost none. I was living with family during my entire service.
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: For the first 8 months of training I was with a bunch of religious soldiers and had <i>minyan</i> every day and <i>Shabbat</i> when on base. During my first <i>kav</i> (4 months), I was the only religious soldier on my base. Soldiers were respectful of my observance and I never had issues. It was understood that the army takes precedence over <i>shabbat</i> and other laws, but for the most part it wasn't hard. At the next base, after the first four months of active service, I had plenty of religious soldiers again.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes, they came to visit before certain <i>chagim</i> and always tried to keep in touch and make sure that we were OK on all scales from physically, financially, and emotionally.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I joined through a <i>machal hesder</i> program, though I dropped out in the end.	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? Studied in yeshiva and went to university.
How often do you have <i>miluim</i> (reserve duty)? It differs from year to year but anywhere

from 1-3 times a year (5-30 days).

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Knowing that what I was doing was important and having fun with the guys in my unit.

Most challenging part of the army:

Hebrew was the hardest part, and not being raised to go through some of the things they put you through.

Advice for people considering joining:

Two things, first is that you can do whatever they are making you do, its just mind over matter.

The second is, don't go in trying to challenge them, go in to the army knowing you are no longer in control and that no matter how much you complain it wont change. Be positive about everything and assume there is a reason even if you don't understand it. With that outlook you will be able to go through whatever they may throw your way and not get depressed or sad about not being in control of your life.

62. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I am a *chapash* (*chayal pashut*).

High School: Or Chaim

Hometown: Canada

Yeshiva: Lev HaTorah/ Ma'alot

E-mail: wesfieldj@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I am currently serving in the IDF.

JOINING THE ARMY

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 4

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They did almost everything for me, but I was the only American who drafted with my *yeshiva*.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

About once every second week

Process of finding an apartment: Friends I knew were putting together an apartment.

Helpful organizations: The Lone Soldier Center gave us furniture for my house.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 2,000 NIS a month (once I was a *lochem*) and 1,000 NIS for rent

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was in a *hesder machlaka* so I had no problems.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

Hesder. It was great.

63. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Negevist, light automatic machine gunner.

Description of Unit:

Combat unit with 3 months of basic training, 4 months of advanced training, and 2 weeks of paratrooper training.

High School: Beth Tfiloh

Hometown: Baltimore, MD

Yeshiva: Lev Hatorah/ Otniel

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

E-mail: arkystaiman@gmail.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined through my *hesder yeshiva* after I had made *aliyah*, which made everything a lot easier because I was always with other people who were in the exact same boat as me. The only difference between my army service and theirs was the process of learning the language. Everything with army bureaucracy was taken care of by the *yeshiva* as with every other boy.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No, they eventually made *aliyah* and came to many of the important milestone events and ceremonies.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I went for the *gibbush* of *tzanchanim* and, once again, because I was with other guys who were doing it with me, it helped me be in a lot less "shock". That doesn't make it any easier physically.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

I had broken my ankle and didn't tell them. I had a perfect profile and then on the last day before I

	finished my service I re-sprained it, so I didn't deal with the doctors too much.
--	---

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 9

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Just being able to answer any question and listing dates for important draft details. Also, getting me the *gibbush* for paratroopers, which was important. Most important was just being with other Israelis who knew what they were doing.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Parents' apartment

Time off:

Every 3 weeks

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center helped with events like parties and stuff. Also Nefesh B'Nefesh sent many nice packages.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 700 NIS

Expenses during service:

Literally NOTHING

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

I lost those benefits when my parents made aliyah (no complaints though).

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

The army challenges your self-motivation. Being in a mixed unit (*Hesder* guys and regular soldiers) means you are constantly being looked at by others to see if you are always at your religious best. This is very challenging especially because after no sleep, food, and walking all night, it is a lot harder to wake up for *shacharit*, but if you don't the non-religious soldiers will know and it will affect your relationship with them.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Not so much, but it was a good place to stay if I didn't have a home for whatever reason.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Yes. I suggest *Hesder*- but I did it through mixed *Hesder* which means that I was not in a bubble, which helped me acclimate into regular Israeli society after the army.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

NO NO NO NO! it is only a place to learn how to curse in Russian and take away your motivation to be in the army. Better to join a *Yeshiva/Mechina/Kibbutz* with mostly Israelis and spend a few months there and then draft regularly.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Started the Tour Guiding Course through Haifa University.

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? Once a year

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Feeling of self-satisfaction after completing something very challenging. Also, the camaraderie and attachment to the soldiers in my unit.

Most challenging part of the army:

Becoming the same as everyone and being bossed around to do everything in a very very particular way.

Advice for people considering joining:

Learn Hebrew on your own before the army.

Do push ups, sit ups and run a little before the army.

Don't get too attached to the idea of "home", the more you want to be "home" the longer each time on the base will feel.

Bring projects and other things from your real life to do during down time.

Don't try to understand the logic behind everything in the army.

Stay in touch with old friends from back home, girlfriends or family. Talking to people will keep you sane.

64. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was the *negevist*, meaning I held and operated an automatic machine gun at the front of my platoon.

Description of Unit:

The paratroopers brigade is an airborne infantry unit.

High School: Ramaz

Hometown: Englewood, NJ

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Program of service:

Machal

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I used a program called *garin machal*, who were helpful with the bureaucracy of it all. The *tzav rishon* and all the rest of that stuff is like anything else in Israel, slow and frustrating. My *yeshiva* was also very helpful.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Even though I didn't do *hesder*, they helped me get into the *beynish* unit (i.e. the *hesder* platoon) which was helpful because my friends from *yeshiva* were in the unit.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Every 2-3 weeks

Process of finding an apartment: It is difficult to have roommates in the army. They were not very clean, and would leave food around and I would come back 3 weeks later on an off-Shabbat and it would still be out and moldy.

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center and FIDF are great.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,400 NIS

Expenses during service:

Rent, water, gas, electricity

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

1,046 NIS in rent per month, double salary, sometimes days off to run errands (but very erratically during training).

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

Excellent. Struggling is very important and to hold on to the religion, even through the tough times, made me emerge stronger. Also my connection to the land was strengthened.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Yes

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

Hesder, yes. *Netzach*, no.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? College in America

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Days with friends during *regilah*.

Most challenging part of the army:

The War in Gaza

Advice for people considering joining:

Talk to as many people as you can about the experience. Make sure you are under no illusions about the army being fun, or exciting, or making you feel like Rambo. Ditch the romanticized thoughts and you should be OK. Understand that (in combat) you are willing to sacrifice your body, but be smart during training. Look out for yourself!!! Don't be a *freier*. Nobody else will help you.

Stories/Anecdotes:

It's hard to see Palestinian children arrested. We had to arrest two fifteen year olds in the West Bank and it was difficult. Never take any sadistic glee in that.

65. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was primarily a sharpshooter. However, I was also certified to be part of the team that carries and operates the M60 automatic grenade launcher.

Description of Unit:

It's an infantry unit, with the exception that we are also trained to jump from planes. This will probably never happen again in combat though.

High School: Weinbaum Yeshiva High School

Hometown: Miami, FL

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Sha'alvim

E-mail: Ysschultz@gmail.com

Program of service:
Hesder

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: Since I went through the *hesder* route, the liason specific to my *yeshiva* was instrumental in putting me in touch with the relevant offices and setting up interviews. I wouldn't have been able to navigate the system without him and I owe him a debt of gratitude.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 2

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No. Initially, my parents were very against the idea of me joining the army. They said that if I were to do so, then that would mean I would have to do it on my own terms - which I did.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I did not apply. I was offered a position within intelligence that would require five years of service. I turned it down because I couldn't commit to the length.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes
*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)
Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 10
<p>In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?</p> <p>As described before, I only had to let them know I intended to go to the army. After that, our liason set up all the necessary meetings and kept me up to date on how my draft was proceeding. If there were any forms to be filled or discrepancies to be resolved, he alerted me in a timely and appropriate manner. Furthermore, the <i>Igud Yeshivot Ha'hesder</i> has some sway in determining where you'll go in the army, if you choose to pull strings.</p>

<h2>DURING THE ARMY</h2> <h3>LIVING SITUATION</h3>	
<p>Description of living situation:</p> <p>Israeli relatives/friends</p>	<p>Time off:</p> <p>Not often enough. Specific to <i>tzanchanim</i>, they have a lot of money so they can afford to keep you on base for <i>Shabbat</i>. Other units are more generous in giving time off. Roughly every three weeks I was able to leave.</p>
<p>Helpful organizations: They all offered their various services, which I declined. However, they can be extremely helpful to those who are having difficulty navigating the system.</p>	
<h3>FINANCIAL SITUATION:</h3>	
<p>Salary: 2,500 NIS</p>	<p>Expenses during service:</p> <p>Food, when you leave base. Rent, phone bills, incidentals. Nothing out of the ordinary.</p>
<p>Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:</p> <p>Double salary plus rent assistance.</p>	
<h3>RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:</h3>	
<p>Description of religious experience:</p> <p>My <i>machlaka</i> was a religious one, composed of <i>hesder</i> students. I found that since we were a unified group, we were able to push for accommodations that wouldn't have been made for us had it been only one or two people asking. I think that a person who goes into an entirely non-religious unit should realize that it will be a struggle to speak up at times for your rights as a religious soldier, when you're the only one who needs them. This is specifically because other people in your unit may come to resent that</p>	

you're treated differently than they are - it could be viewed as being treated preferentially.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

I saw other yeshivot come and visit their students on base. Ours (I went with two others from *yeshiva*) did not. I chalk this up to us all being Americans, as well as the only ones in our year to be in a combat position. I still visited whenever I could and received a warm welcome from the staff and students when I did so.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*? Would you suggest it?

Yes. Absolutely. Don't think you'll beat the odds if you plan to stay religious - I've seen people go in the army as one person and emerge as an entirely different one (from a religious point of view).

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

If you really speak no Hebrew, then go to their *ulpan*. If you speak some Hebrew, you'll pick it up quickly and it isn't necessary to go.

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Went back to the US to school.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

90% of the army is hating whatever you're doing at the time. The other 10% is so mind blowingly awesome that it makes up for all the misery you've suffered. Where else can you jump out of a plane, blow up buildings, and meet some of the bravest people you'll ever find, without having to pay for the experience? Obviously I'm leaving out the details but you'll have to fill them in for yourself.

Most challenging part of the army:

The most challenging time was when I spent three weeks in the field in the winter, got hypothermia twice within that span of time, freezing rain every day, walked about 500 km within that time...it was generally a miserable experience. The important thing to realize is that everything will end eventually, and the only person that can make you quit is yourself. It sounds rough, but if you grit your teeth, and keep moving, you'll do just fine.

Advice for people considering joining:

Do it if you're considering it. There's a limited window of time where you can seize the

opportunity - you don't want to have the regret later on that you missed out. No one finishes the army having said they wasted their time. It couldn't happen.

Stories/Anecdotes:

I was once off base, and found myself in the old city in Jerusalem. There's a shul there that I have a connection to, so I went inside to visit. I didn't see anyone else in there, but had time to kill, so I took out a *sefer*, sat down, and started to learn. Some time after, an American Jewish man walks into the sanctuary, with his young (maybe around bar mitzvah age) son. He looks around, and sees me sitting there. He turns to his son and comments (not knowing that I spoke english) -

"Do you see that? A soldier learning with a gun in one hand and a *sefer* in the other. That's what a real Jew looks like. " Honestly, I nearly cried right there, and I'm choking up a bit while I'm typing this. It wasn't for the compliment, it was for all those Jews who didn't have the chance to be in the position I was at that moment - to proudly assert my religion while defending our land. It's not something my grandparents ever dreamed of living in Europe. Well, they may have dreamed it, but I made it a reality.

66. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Sharpshooter in Unit 101.

Description of Unit:
Advanced urban combat, riot control, high caliber weaponry, camouflage.

High School: MJBHA

Hometown: Maryland

Yeshiva: Yesodai hatorah

Year of *aliyah*: 2013

E-mail: Kotlickya@gmail.com

Program of service:
Machal

Current or former soldier:
I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I did it with *machal*. They were very bad and not punctual with their paperwork. It's not advisable.

*Scale of 1-5
(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 1

Extent of parental support: 2

Level of Hebrew after the army: 3

Physical fitness before the army: 4

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 3

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

Overall supportive. They always made sure I had places for *shabbos* and *chagim*, and checked up on me periodically.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: <i>Garin/kibbutz</i>	Time off: A few days a month
Helpful organizations: Michael Levin Lone Soldier Center. There is actually a unit in the army called <i>moked bodedim</i> . They were super useful because they deal with higher up officers in the army and they work pretty fast.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 1,400 NIS	
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: <i>Yom Sidurim, keif lechayalim bodedem, miyuchedet</i> to fly to America	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Put on <i>tefilin</i> and prayed every day in training. Once out of training, having a <i>minyan</i> was harder. I was not with a religious unit.	
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Phone calls, advice, last minute shabbos plans, food packages.	
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I did not, but I would suggest to join as a <i>beinish</i> so you stay with a group of religious people.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? <i>Aliyah, mechina, Technion</i>

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Living on kibbutz with <i>garin tzabar</i> . Living with friends that are like family.
Most challenging part of the army: Drafting, training, leaving
Advice for people considering joining: Dont do <i>machal</i> - go to <i>garin tzabar</i> . It will be hard in the army but don't give up.

67. Paratroopers

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was a *negevist*, light machine gunner.

Description of Unit:

Paratroopers Battalion 202 (*Misayaat*), support/heavy weapons company. We were the Recon squad.

High School: Weinbaum Yeshiva HS

Hometown: Miami

Yeshiva: went to college first

E-mail: urielturk@gmail.com

Program of service:

Garin Tzabar

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I went through *garin tzabar* – the best way to do it.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 5

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes. Emotional support is crucial too.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

Just paratroopers.

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

Medical Committee process:

Glasses and screws in ankle from a surgery. You can argue/beg with the doctors to raise your number.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION	
Description of living situation: <i>Garin/kibbutz</i>	Time off: More during training.
Helpful organizations: I was 2007, before these were big.	
FINANCIAL SITUATION:	
Salary: 750 NIS	
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:	
Description of religious experience: Army is very respectful but I wasn't very Orthodox going in.	
OTHER	
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Depends on your Hebrew.
GARIN TZABAR	
* Scale of 1-10 (1-bad, 10-good)	
Overall Experience: 9	
Advantage of <i>garin</i> : They help with everything - you are not alone.	Disadvantages of <i>garin</i> : None really.
Advice: Do it.	

AFTER THE ARMY
What did you do after the army? Back in NYC for now.
How often do you have <i>miluim</i> (reserve duty)? Once a year

THOUGHTS
Best part of the army: Following my dream and serving Israel.
Most challenging part of the army: Being without the family and friends back in the US.
Advice for people considering joining: Do it for the right reasons. If you are doing it because you think you will be Rambo and get all the girls, you will suffer.

68. Paratroopers (Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

I was in charge of the logistics on my base, including their weaponry and all other combat gear.

High School: Moriah College

Hometown: Australia

Yeshiva: Yeshivat Har Etzion

Year of *aliyah*: 2010

E-mail: samuelmccartney@hotmail.com

Program of service:

Machal, I made *aliyah* during my army service and ended up doing 2 years.

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I joined with *machal* so they did everything.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Somewhat, but no big deal. Highly supported my service.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
Scoliosis

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 6

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Pretty much every Shabbat

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 800 NIS

Expenses during service:

Phone bill and living expenses

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Double pay.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I was the only religious person on my base, which made life difficult at times.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

I didn't get anything.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?

Would you suggest it?

I went into *Nachal Haredi*, but due to army stuff they transferred me out of it.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

ONLY if you need it

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Volunteered on Sde Eliyahu for a few months before coming to Bar Ilan University.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

Fulfilling one of my life long dreams. Also wearing the olive-green of the IDF was incredible in and of itself.

Most challenging part of the army:

Being away from family and speaking a foreign language.

Advice for people considering joining:

Get ALL the advice that you can from people who have done their service already. Be in Israel for a while before going in so you that you have a base of knowledge of what's going on, even a minimal one.

69. Paratroopers Recon (Sayeret Tzanchanim)

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
Combat Soldier

Description of Unit:
Reconnaissance unit of the paratrooper brigade.

High School: Hasmonean

Hometown: England

Yeshiva: Netiv aryeh

Year of *aliyah*: 2012

Current or former soldier: I am currently serving in the IDF.

E-mail: joshuakurzer@gmail.com

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: *Tzav rishon*, *yom sayerot*, *gibbush matkal*. Yeshiva helped get *tzav rishon*, the rest I found out about from training program, *tzevet lohamim*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 3

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents: No

Application and acceptance process for special units:

Requested *yom sayerot* at *tzav rishon*, finished that and then did *gibbush matkal*. I drafted originally to *shaldag*.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 8

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They helped arrange for my *tzav rishon*, paperwork and calling up offices. They helped me request *yom sayerot* and allowed me to live in yeshiva dorms for free.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: 2-3 Shabbatot a month
Process of finding an apartment: Joined an apartment of some friends.	
Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center - free gear for winter and toiletries	

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: Roughly 3,000 NIS	Expenses during service: Apartment, food, shopping
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: Rent for apartment, gift cards for chagim, random gifts throughout the year	

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience: Difficult being one of the only religious guys in the team.
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? I lived there for about a year during service, they came to my <i>tekes</i> , brought food etc. They were always there if I needed something.
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I didn't. If someone isn't too fussed about going for <i>sayerot</i> and wants to be religious, I would recommend it. Although it can be done and is great to meet guys from different backgrounds, it's not always easy being one of the only <i>dati</i> guys. There's no guarantee how many religious guys there will be unless joining a religious unit.

OTHER

Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? No	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes
--	--

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army: Finishing training!
Most challenging part of the army: Changing units midway through training.

Advice for people considering joining:

Do it! But make sure before hand you know as much as you can about it and where you want serve. Work on Hebrew.

70. Tznicha V'Hatasa

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:
In charge of inventory.

Description of Unit:
Everything related to the jump from airplane course.

High School: MTA

Hometown: NYC

Yeshiva: YSMZ

Year of *aliyah*: 2009

Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I didn't really have any help. I wish I knew more going in. I got a *tzav rishon* and showed up.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 1

Level of Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Level of Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

Did you have any medical issues?
Yes

Medical Committee process:
They gave me a 45 profile and pretty much ruined my chances of doing anything during my service.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 1

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

I just never asked for any help.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Parents' apartment

Time off:
Every day

Helpful organizations: Never really asked for any help.

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: *Jobnick chayal boded* salary

Expenses during service:
I did *yomiyot* so food, every day, bills, toiletries, etc.

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
The normal *chayal boded* benefits.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:
I was given religious freedom to daven when I asked. They were always respectful.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?
No

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?
No

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
Yes

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?
Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Work

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I haven't had yet.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
Integrating into Israeli society.

Most challenging part of the army:
Culture shock

Advice for people considering joining:
Figure out what you're doing before you join. Ask questions.

71. Yachmam in Modiin Sadeh

BASIC

Description of Individual Role in Unit:

Sharpshooter, navigator, and intelligence assistant as a soldier then later a *mak* and then a *samal*.

Description of Unit:

Elite field intelligence unit, one of the armies newest units. Deals with surveillance, information gathering, and scout combat.

High School: Ida Crown Jewish Academy

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Yeshiva: Orayta and Otniel

Year of *aliyah*: 2011

E-mail: yairrudick@Yahoo.com

Program of service:

Hesder

Current or former soldier:

I have completed my IDF service.

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I had a *tzav rishon* and did my entire process with Yeshivat Otniel. After joining the army, I left *hesder*.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 4

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 3

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents: I didn't need it.

Application and acceptance process for special units:

I did *gibush tzanachanim* and *yom sayarot*. I highly recommend it, its always better to have more options.

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? Yes

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

They're a *hesder* yeshiva so they do everything for you

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Adopted family

Time off:

About a weekend in every three

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center- support, gifts, and programming

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 1,800 NIS then 2,100

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Description of religious experience:

I drafted with *hesder* so throughout training we had a core of *datiim*. After training, we split up and we were five *datiim* together. *Shabbatot* in the army were extremely difficult for us, seeing as that we were almost always on missions during *shabbat*. *Minyanim* and *davening* weren't relevant due to the fact that we were almost always in the field.

Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service?

Not really, although they did send a *rav* to visit during basic training.

Did you join the army through a religious framework such as *Nachal Charedi* or *Hesder*?
Would you suggest it?

It depends on the length of service. If one only plans on a year and four months, *hesder* is amazing. If someone plans on doing three years i'd recommend *sayarot*.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest army *ulpan*?

Yes

AFTER THE ARMY

What did you do after the army? Travel and start school.

How often do you have *miluim* (reserve duty)? I haven't served yet.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The people. My *tzevet* are still my best friends.

Most challenging part of the army:

Missions and the rigor of the unit's standards.

Advice for people considering joining:

Talk to as many people as possible beforehand. Talk to people who exclusively finished the army.

72. Undeclared

BASIC

Yeshiva: YTC

Hometown: Baltimore, MD

E-mail: nachi.ward@gmail.com

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process: I called *garin machal* and they set me up with a *tzav rishon*. I went to my *tzav rishon* and told them what I wanted.

*Scale of 1-5

(1-none, 5-completely/very important/fluent)

Importance of joining a unit with friends: 2

Level of Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 2

Level of Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents: Yes

YESHIVA INVOLVEMENT:

Did you join the army through your yeshiva/seminary? No

*Scale of 1-10 (1-not at all, 10-to a large extent)

Support and assistance of yeshiva in drafting process: 2

In what way was your yeshiva helpful or unhelpful?

My Rosh Yeshiva gave me very strong encouragement!

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Once every other week

Process of finding an apartment: My friend found it on Jango.

Helpful organizations: Lone Soldier Center

FINANCIAL SITUATION:

Salary: 3,040 NIS

Expenses during service:

		Not really anything, aside from snacks and better gear.
Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier: More days off, paid vacation time with free flights, respect from my command regiment		
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:		
Description of religious experience: I personally became more religious in the military.		
Was your yeshiva helpful during your army service? Yes, I never made any big decision without my Rosh Yeshiva.		
Did you join the army through a religious framework such as <i>Nachal Charedi</i> or <i>Hesder</i> ? Would you suggest it? I did, and I would not recommend a religious boy to join the army without some sort of religious framework.		
OTHER		
Did you attend army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	Would you suggest army <i>ulpan</i> ? Yes	

THOUGHTS	
Best part of the army: The structure and confidence that I gained.	
Most challenging part of the army: The <i>masaot</i> and language barrier.	
Advice for people considering joining: It was one of the best things that could ever happen to me. Although it may be a stressful job and have its downsides, the friends you make and the <i>mitzvah</i> and experience you will have cannot be had elsewhere.	
Stories/Anecdotes: When I got hurt in basic training, my officer offered to take my laundry to his house and wash it for me. Such a thing wouldn't happen in any other army.	