



Update . . .

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Lone soldier reenacts a rescue from the 2006 Lebanon War.

Why Support Our Soldiers?

by Richard D. Weisskopf, chairman

Before immigrating to Israel, I volunteered with Sar-El to help the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) side-by-side with young Israeli soldiers. (This is an experience I recommend to all IDF supporters.) A few things stuck out for me about the IDF when I lived and worked in such close proximity with these soldiers.

Firstly, no other military in the world hosts as many thousands of foreign guests so openly and generously every year. Secondly, no other army expends so much of its resources on humanitarian work nor demonstrates so much heart-felt compassion like the IDF. Most striking for me was the privilege of being a tiny and direct part of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ez. 37:1-14). I needed to physically live and work

on an Israeli army base to fully appreciate these things.

While on the base, my quality of was similar to that of the base commander. We ate the same food, shopped in the same canteens, wore the same army-green uniforms, slept under the same sky. There was not preferential treatment as the IDF took care of all my needs with similar quality as its highest-ranking officers.

It was a very different story on weekend leave. Most people on the base looked forward to spending their leave time with their families and friends. I am sure the base commander went home to the sounds of "Abba! Abba!" from his little children and a home-cooked Sabbath meal his wife had lovingly prepared. An ocean separated me from the warmth of my family. Instead of

enjoying Sabbath meals at home with my family, I ate “bachelor food” in a small one-bedroom apartment I had rented.

Imagine how much more lonely and difficult these leaves are for young lone soldiers. While I could at least afford to buy “bachelor food” for myself - some of these kids had no grocery money at all. While I worked voluntarily with enough maturity to cope with isolation, many of these kids were in mandatory service fresh out of high school. Most lone soldiers were, like me, separated by many miles from their families. Some, however, had no families at all. How much harder would it be for these kids?

It is stunning how sensitive the IDF and Israeli society are to the needs of these lone soldiers. The IDF goes the extra mile to help, but their realm of influence is limited to helping lone soldiers while on active duty. The Love for Israel Relief Fund comes along side the IDF to help these lone soldiers especially when they are on leave.

Passover leave for these soldiers is only a few weeks away. We want to make sure each one has plenty of food to eat during the seven days of Passover. Our first priority is to help nearly 140 orphans serving in the IDF and also approximately 6,000 lone new immigrants in the IDF.

Not only is it a mitzvah (good deed) to

help orphans and immigrants; but we are also privileged to be a small and direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy with each IDF soldier we encourage. How much greater is it to help orphan and immigrant IDF soldiers? It is with great enthusiasm that I look forward to our cooperation together.

Special events, like weddings and bar mitzvahs, happen year round for hundreds of at-risk kids and needy young adults in Israel. Donations designated “special events” will be set aside for such use.

Lone Soldiers video is available online at:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/LIRFchairman>

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Love for Israel Relief Fund
2020 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Suite 445
Washington, DC 20006