

MODERN DAY HEROES

LONE SOLDIERS AND THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES: A RESOURCE GUIDE

Center for Israel Education: Israel Educator Certificate Project

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Enduring Understandings: (CIE/ISMI enduring understandings that frame its Israel Education Teacher Workshop 2014)

Connection to the Land of Israel is a core component of Jewish identity.

The creation and development of the State of Israel must be understood in the context of Jewish history.

Studying how Israel sought to achieve and maintain sovereignty sheds light on Israel's current challenges and successes.

Background: More than 5,000 Lone Soldiers serve in the IDF. When they return to the US to visit their families at least once during their tour of duty, they are eager to share their experiences with congregations and Religious School and Day School students. Within the Conservative movement, a system is now in place through the Jewish Educators Assembly (Hedda S. Morton) and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (Rabbi Paul Freedman) to notify communities of forthcoming visits of Lone Soldiers and the process for arranging for them to speak about their experiences. The visits can have an even greater impact if students are prepared in advance and/or if there is subsequent follow-up. While many suggestions are offered, time will be the most significant factor in terms of preparation and follow-up.

Note: The opportunity to interact with Lone Soldiers and to become familiar with Israel's defense system (prior to and after the establishment of the State of Israel) is intended to enhance, enrich, and supplement a broad, comprehensive Israel education program.

Proposal: Students will interact with Lone Soldiers, who form one particular cohort within today's Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Through this in-person, interactive encounter with a Lone Soldier, students will hear the inspiring stories of young American Jews who have chosen to express their Jewish identity and connection to the Land of Israel by serving in the IDF. Students will prepare for the Lone Soldier experience by learning about the historical development of Israel's defense system and its unique influence on Israeli society.

Objectives:

1. Students will interact with one or more Lone Soldiers, experiencing first-hand the personal story of young American Jewish adults not much older than themselves, who demonstrate tremendous Jewish pride through Israeli military service.
2. Students will prepare for a visit with (or follow-up to) an interactive encounter with a Lone Soldier by exploring the history of the defense of the Land of Israel from the early 1900s through today.
3. Students will learn about and gain insight into the unique impact of today's IDF throughout the country: socially, politically, economically, and culturally.
4. Students will learn about the phenomenon of Jews moving to Israel to serve in the IDF.

Target audience: Religious and Day School students, 4th grade through high

school. **Program length:** Ideally, this program would be implemented in 2-4 class

Activities and Procedures: Students will engage in a variety of individual and group activities to explore such questions as how did the early settlers defend themselves, why were there a variety of defense forces in pre-1948 Israel, why did Ben Gurion insist on a united Israel

Defense Force after the establishment of the State of Israel, what Jewish values form the IDF, and what has been the impact of Israel's military forces on Israeli society?

A selected bibliography of written materials and on-line resources will be created to support this project.

Assessment: (Students will select one of the following activities which may be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups): Students will create a series of journal entries (written or visual format) of a Lone Soldier reflecting on how they first heard about the IDF, what made them begin to consider joining the IDF, what were the reactions of their family and friends and how did they respond, experiences of the first week of service, a memorable experience during the first year, describe an experience after completing the IDF tour of duty.

Design a poster to recruit young Jews to help the early settlers of Palestine defend their land.

Students can create a poster or write a feature article about any one of the branches of the IDF, including key features, the insignia, the role/primary areas of responsibility, and outstanding accomplishments.

Enact the life and impact of a famous military personality from either the pre-State or post-State time period.

Design your own project that will enable you to explore questions you have about anything related to the defense of the Land of Israel, its impact on Israeli society and/or the differences and similarities between the IDF and other military systems.

ARRANGE FOR A LONE SOLDIER TO VISIT A CONGREGATION, SCHOOL, OR YOUTH GROUP

Contact Rabbi Paul Freedman (freedman@uscj.org) and/or Hedda S. Morton (heddiamorton@gmail.com) to arrange a visit. Include your name, the name of your synagogue or school, address, phone and email address. Note: Flexibility is essential as soldiers are not given very much advance notice with regard to their dates of leave. Also realize that these Lone Soldiers are enjoying well-earned leaves, so please be sensitive to their schedules. JEA (Jewish Educator Assembly) members are alerted to forthcoming visits via the JEA Listserv, including contact information. An electronic copy of *MODERN DAY HEROES...LONE SOLDIERS AND THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES: A RESOURCE GUIDE* will be sent to you upon request. It is a useful tool to help prepare you and your students for the Lone Soldier's visit.

NOTE: For communities that are too distant for an in-person Lone Soldier visit, a Skype interview may be possible. Contact Rabbi Paul Freedman (freedman@uscj.org) or Hedda S. Morton (heddamorton@gmail.com) for assistance.

1. You will then be able to communicate directly with the Lone Soldier either by phone or email to arrange a mutually convenient time for a visit. The following questions can help the Lone Soldier prepare for the visit.
 - a. Provide information about the audience including the number of students/adults, and the setting.
 - b. Encourage the Lone Soldier to bring “show and tell” items such as photos, a hat, and insignia.
 - c. Share his/her experiences in the IDF.
 - d. Why did you enlist in the IDF?
 - e. What do you do in the IDF?
 - f. What surprised you?
 - g. What is your favorite place in Israel?
 - h. Do you have a favorite holiday? What do you miss?
 - i. Was this your first time in Israel?
 - j. What do you expect to do after your service is completed?
 - k. Allow time for questions from the audience.
2. Display a large map of Israel so that the Lone Soldier can identify the places that may be mentioned.
3. Publicize the visit in-house and in the community.
4. Take photos and post in your institution and share on social media.
5. Invite parents to join their students for the presentation.
6. Prepare your students for the visit or use as follow study:
 - a. Have your students develop questions in advance to ask their visitor.
 - b. Students can investigate different aspects of the IDF (think in terms of individual or small group activities where they can each be given a set of facts to match with photos; series of events to arrange in chronological order; study photos of Israeli units and draw conclusions; read selected info about individual Lone Soldiers—what inspired them to join the IDF, what was their background, etc.? What questions would you ask this person if you could meet him/her? How did their parents/families react to their decision to join the IDF, to become a Lone Soldier, etc.?)

- c. Explore the role the IDF serves in Israel in addition to defense: build the society–bonding experience for all Israelis; education—everyone must speak Hebrew; patriotism; pride; confidence (push oneself); impact on the economy, the culture, the society, and politics.
- d. View images of the IDF:
https://www.google.com/search?q=israel+defense+forces&newwindow=1&rlz=1C2CHFX_enUS666US666&biw=1920&bih=979&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&sqj=2&ved=0ahUKEwi5ivXcv53LAhUGFx4KHaoEAAEQiR4IkwE

Ask your students: What can you learn about the IDF from viewing these images? Select an image that surprises you. Select an image that makes you ask a question. Is there an image that makes you wonder?

7. Follow-up with Rabbi Paul Freedman (freedman@uscj.org) and Hedda S. Morton (heddamorton@gmail.com). We would love to hear comments and reactions to the visit and see some photos.
8. Students can write thank you notes to your Lone Soldier or consider a Lone Solider *mitzvah* project (<https://lonesoldiercenter.com>).

HELPFUL HINTS FOR LONE SOLDIERS PREPARING TO VISIT A CONGREGATION, SCHOOL, OR YOUTH GROUP

Thank you very much for taking time during your leave to visit your family here in the US to share your experiences in the IDF with area congregations, schools and youth groups! Your engagement with our communities presents a unique opportunity for Jewish youth to hear your inspiring story and to interact with you on a very personal level. Such an encounter can be extremely effective in forging their connection to Israel as a part of their Jewish identity.

Here are some things to consider as you prepare for your visit:

- a. Ask who the audience will be, the number of students/adults, and the setting:
- b. Advise if you will need a laptop, projector, screen to show photos.
- c. Bring “show and tell” items, such as photos, a hat, insignia, etc.
- d. Share experiences in the IDF?
- e. Why did you enlist in the IDF?
- f. What do you do in the IDF?
- g. What surprised you?
- h. What is your favorite place in Israel?
- i. Do you have a favorite holiday? What do you miss?
- j. Was this your first time in Israel?
- k. Did you know Hebrew before you enlisted?
- l. Translate any Hebrew words or phrases that you may use.
- m. What do you expect to do after your service is completed?
- n. Allow time for questions from the audience.

ELECTRONIC AND INTERNET SOURCES

Center for Israel Education, *Israel: A Curriculum for Grades 2-7*, Atlanta, GA. Chapter 4

Center for Israel Education, *Israel's National Security and Civil Liberties*, Atlanta, GA.

This E-book (www.israeled.org) provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges that early settlers to present day citizens face defending *Eretz Yisrael*. Excellent resource for teachers and students in grades 7 through 12.

DEFENSE: HAGANAH AND THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES (IDF)

<https://israeled.org/themes/defense-haganah-and-idf-2/>

<https://israeled.org/bibliographies/defense-bibliography/>

Yitzak Rabin recalls the dismantling of the Palmach per Ben Gurion (9.14.48):

<https://israeled.org/palmach-integrates-idf/>.

http://www.historama.com/online-resources/idf-israel-defense-forces-tzahal/idf_israel_defense_forces_foundations.html

IDF leaders and commanders:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Israel+defense+forces+leadership&newwindow=1>

Israel Defense Forces: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces

Women in the IDF: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/israel-defense-forces> .

“The Role of the Military in Israel” by Jonathan Kaplan

<http://www.jewishagency.org/society-and-politics/content/36591>

“The IDF’s Role and Impact on Israel’s Society in 2010”

“... historical and contemporary role and influence that the Israel Defense Forces has had in Israeli society, and highlights the benefits of the IDF as a “people’s army”-one which serves as a melting pot and strives to fit the needs of Israel’s ethnically, culturally, religiously, and socio-economically diverse array of citizens.”

<https://www.idfblog.com>

Dilemmas facing IDF soldiers

Israeli Army’s ethical code compared with traditional responses in contending with moral issues facing the IDF today

<http://www.jcpa.org/jpsr/jpsr-guiora-s06.htm>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-ethics-of-jewish-war/>

LONE SOLDIERS

IDF Background Information: Volunteers who came to serve in the IDF, photos

<https://lsp.nbn.org.il/> The Nefesh B/Nefesh Program that helps soldiers move to Israel, serve in the IDF, and then after army, to study and get a job.

https://lsp.nbn.org.il/index.php?dir-site&page=gallery&op+category&cs_3210&langpage+eng What goes into preparing for acceptance into an elite IDF unit.

<http://www.mahal-idf-volunteers.org/information/background/content.htm>

<http://www.mahal-idf-volunteers.org/about/Machal.pdf>

<http://www.mahal-idf-volunteers.org/soldier/gallery.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_soldier

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Soldier_Center<https://lonesoldiercenter.com/#Gethelp>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_soldier

“Alone No More”, p.18 (March 2016): <http://www.uscj.org/todaysisrael>

“A Lone Soldier: Just out of high school, a Voorhees woman joins the Israeli army”, [SJ Magazine.net](http://www.sjmagazine.net), November 2014, pp 42-45

BOOKS

Bamberger, David. A Young Person’s History of Israel, 2nd edition. Behrman House, New Jersey, 1994.

Burstein, Chaya M. A Kid’s Catalog of Israel. The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia: 1988.
Chapter 6

Chasnoff, Joel. THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah. Free Press, 2010.

Harmon, Adam. Lonely Soldier: The Memoir of an American in the Israeli Army. Ballantine Books: New York. 2006

Hellman, Peter. Heroes: Tales from the Israeli Wars. Henry Holt and Company: New York. 1990

Israel at Sixty: From Modest Beginnings to a Vibrant State 1948-2008. Official Commemorative Publication, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Jacobs, Monty. The Birth of the Israel Air Force. Shulsinger Brothers., Inc., Publishers, New York, NY 1965

Schiff, Ze’ev. A History of the Israeli Army 1874 to the Present. Macmillan Publishing Company: New York. 1985

Singer, Suzanne and Max. Alex Building a Life: The Story of an American Who Fell Defending Israel. Gefen Publishing House, 1996

Sofer, Barbara. Keeping Israel Safe: Serving in the Israel Defense Forces. Kar-Ben Publishing, Minneapolis, MN. 2008 (Elementary grades)

Wolfman, Marv, et.al. Homeland: The Illustrated History of the State of Israel. Nachshon Press. LLC 2007, pp. 78-103.

Zenatti, Valerie. When I was a Soldier: a Memoir. Bloomsbury Publishing, Children's Books, USA, 2005.

VIDEOS

"Above and Beyond" (2014): Documentary about a group of Jewish American war pilots who smuggle planes out of the US and fly for Israel in its War of Independence
<http://aboveandbeyondthemovie.com/filmmakers>

"Beneath the Helmet: Basic Training Commander Coral" Online video clip. Jerusalem Online U.

"Eternal Hero, Soldier of Israel: Michael Levin" Documentary...The story of Michael Levin by Sally Mitlas. <http://www.aheroinheaven.com/1h139wlebf2e6jfxbp8cguhb4eoibo>

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

"Prayer for the State of Israel: a comparative text study adapted by Usy Shlichim"
<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:CNWUd2b46jMJ:www.usy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Prayerofthestateofisrael-atextstudy.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=>

Esther Leah Nof, Connecticut, USA, Age 23 (Sample bio of a Lone Soldier)

I was a student at Connecticut University studying in the Pre-Med honors department. Connecticut University happens to have a very anti-Israel campus, so in conjunction with my studies I established a pro-Israel group that focused on Israeli politics. We had all types of religious members, Christian, Jewish and even Muslim. Unfortunately, the pro-Israel club wasn't enough to quiet the anti-Israel groups, and the anti-Semitic sentiment on campus only got worse. I got to my breaking point during my Junior year when one of the most prestigious doctors of Sheba came to the University to receive the UN peace award for being one of the founders of 'Physicians for Palestine,' which is an organization that provides free medical aid to Palestinians. The Connecticut University campus went crazy that an Israeli was receiving an award on our campus. Even though he was providing a service to people they always claim to be advocating for! Even worse, all other award nominees forfeited their prize just so they wouldn't have to stand on the stage with this Israeli doctor...if they cared so much about Palestinians and Arabs there should have been a red carpet for this doctor for what he provides to the children. It was pure anti-Semitism what occurred there that day, and that was the last straw for me. I walked right out of an exam and decided then and there I had to do something more than advocate on a campus that would not listen. I left the exam because I was so scared that no one would be in the audience to support this Israeli doctor who supports Palestinian children. I had to support an Israeli regardless of his political affiliation. I had to leave that campus and make something happen...it was now or never. Indeed it was a life changing event.

After experiencing anti-Semitism on her University of Connecticut campus, Esther made Aliyah in the winter of 2013 and joined the IDF. She is now a *Katzina* in charge of *Shibutzim* for paramedics and dentists in the IDF. Despite the unfortunate events she endured, Esther exudes such pride in her current position; all while wearing her green IDF uniform.

