

IDF

FOR WOMEN!

EXPERIENCE GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

As the IDF becomes more accomodating towards women, it has become increasingly popular for religious women to join the IDF. Because of this, it's hard to find relevant and practical information. There are thousands of jobs in dozens of units and it's important to do as much reasearch as possible before making any decisions.

A great way to become informed is by speaking to people who have been through the process. This booklet contains personal experiences of religious women in the IDF. Please reach out to them- they would love to hear from you and answer any of your questions!

<https://goo.gl/Uxtcw6>

Our hope is to grow this booklet to include as many tips, advice and stories as possible. If you have served as a woman in the IDF or know anyone who is serving, please have them fill out this questionnaire.

As always, if you have any questions please let us know at info@herenextyearisrael.com

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1. Airforce

BASIC

Description of individual role in unit:

I was a fitness instructor on one of the biggest airforce bases. I was in charge of the gym and running workouts.

Hometown: New York

High School: Yeshiva of Flatbush

Seminary: Midreshet Amit

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:

Garin tzabar took me through the whole process.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 4

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?

No

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

No

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Every week

Helpful organizations:

Lone Soldier Center and Nefesh B'Nefesh

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: Around 1,000 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

I was not with many other religious people, but people were supportive

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?

No

Did you join the army through a religious framework?

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest it? No

What did you do after the army?

I worked.

GARIN TZABAR

Rate your overall experience from 1-10 (1=worst, 10=best):

4

Living accommodations:

Kibbutz Be'erot Yitzchak

Advantage of garin:

Support system

Disadvantage of garin:

It was annoying to have rules and someone in charge of you.

Advice:

Talk to people before to make sure it's the right choice

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

It was a great way to learn Israeli culture.

Most challenging part of the army:

Age difference.

Advice for people considering joining:

its not for everyone so do your research.

Anecdotes:

Basic training I gave a speech on Zionism and made everyone cry.

CONTACT INFO

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2. Anti- Aircraft

BASIC

Description of unit:

I was an instructor for the unit that shoots down enemy planes and helicopters, using a missile defense system.

Description of individual role in unit:

I instructed the soldiers to use the missile defense system, including how to assemble and disassemble, and how to shoot.

Hometown: New York

High School: YUHSG (Central)

Year of Aliyah: 2009

Program of Service: Garin Tzabar

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

I did Garin Tzabar so they organized it for me. I originally had an exemption because I did national service so I had no *tzav*. When I got to the *bakum* they canceled my exemption.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 4

My father was more supportive than my mother.

Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 4

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

No

Did you have any medical issues?

Glasses

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Twice every three weeks.

Helpful organizations: Garin Tzabar

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: Approximately 1,300 NIS per month

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

Only religious girl on my base.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?

Never went to seminary.

Did you join the army through a religious framework?

No. And I wouldn't suggest it because programs like Hesder do less service.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No. Only do it if you don't know Hebrew.

What did you do after the army?

Travel

GARIN TZABAR

Advantage of garin:

Framework, kibbutz family, early *giyus*

Advice:

It's very different than it was four years ago so look into it.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The courses

Most challenging part of the army:

The people

Advice for people considering joining:

Do it. Look into which you want before you join but you can still have a great service even if you don't get it.

3. Cheil Hachinuch V'Hanoar

BASIC

Description of unit:

Cheil hachinuch is responsible for pre-army programs for teens, Ulpan for olim chadashim, courses to finish a full high school diploma or bagrut for those who don't have, a conversion course for those who aren't Jewish by halacha, and many other programs. It is also responsible for the day-to-day education of all soldiers, which includes trips to museums and hikes, bringing speakers and other programming to the base, and classes about history, values and Zionism, among many other topics.

Description of individual role in unit:

I am a mashakit chinuch, so I am in charge of the education of all the soldiers in the unit that I was placed in, which is the advanced training of the combat soldiers in the artillery unit. I plan out the content before the soldiers come, and during their four months of advanced training I give their commanders classes and activities to give over in a variety of subjects, bring speakers, and take the soldiers on trips.

Hometown: Highland Park, NJ

High School: Yeshivah of Flatbush

Seminary: Midreshet Amit

Aliyah: Before service

Length of service: 24 months

Program of Service: Garin Tzabar

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Hebrew after the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

No

Extent of parental support: 5

I think that emotional parental support is extremely important. The army isn't exactly a picnic for most people, especially olim and lone soldiers, and having your parents behind you or not can really impact your service. Financial support is more of a personal issue and is different in every situation.

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the

drafting process?

2

In what way was your seminary helpful?

I left seminary halfway through, though while I was there I did discuss it a little bit with some teachers. However, as a school I don't think they would really encourage their students to join the army.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Almost every week on Thursday, though I did sometimes have to stay on base for Shabbat. I closed Shabbat on base probably around 4 times within 6 months.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: 1415 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

In my course, out of 70 girls we were 4 religious girls. We also had 2 religious commanders, which was very helpful, but the other commanders often didn't understand. There were times when they didn't give us everything we needed, but once we explained what we needed and why, we almost always got it. It was very important that we knew our rights, because the commanders didn't necessarily. The other girls were very respectful, but many of them were also unfamiliar with most of halacha. But again, once we explained they were really good about it. By the end we even had two more girls join us in davening every morning. Shabbat was the most difficult, because even if I keep Shabbat to a tee, the atmosphere can really affect the experience. I found that if I brought Shabbat clothes to wear in my room during free time, that helped me have a more shabbosdic Shabbat. Also staying in my aleph uniform, even when everyone else wore bet, helped. In my regular service I have a lot more freedom so it's easier to do what I need to do, though it can sometimes be difficult to stay motivated when all of my friends are doing something and I can't join. It takes a lot of willpower to be religious in the army, and it's definitely not easy. The other difficulty is shmirat negiah. People have a really difficult time understanding it, and even more remembering about it. The best part about being religious in the army (though it also presents a challenge sometimes) is that I get to show the other soldiers the beautiful side of Judaism. I can explain halachot and minhagim that they've never heard of, answer their questions about things they've seen or heard, and tell them the stories of the chagim and tanach. They also sometimes ask me things that I've never learned or thought of before, which then gives me an opportunity to learn new things too.

GARIN TZABAR

Rate your overall experience from 1-10 (1=worst, 10=best): 9

Living accommodations: Kvutzat Yavne

Advantage of garin:

They help with basically everything. I have a place to live, food to eat, and emotional support from my garin, rakezet, and adopted family on kibbutz. It's really nice knowing that when I leave the army I'm coming home to something. They also helped with the pre-army things, like tzav rishon, yom hameah, and just general advice and information, as well as with aliyah stuff, bank issues, and all the other bureaucracy. They also have contacts within the army, so if I need help with something after I drafted they can sometimes help with that also. I live on an amazing kibbutz and my Garin is really close, so I got very lucky.

Disadvantage of garin:

Being part of a program there are obviously restrictions they I wouldn't have if I lived alone, but personally they don't really bother me, and I think the benefits are worth following a few rules. The experience you have in Garin Tzabar is very dependent on a lot of factors. The kibbutz you live on and the dynamics within your Garin and with other garinim on the kibbutz have a huge impact. In religious garinim, not everyone is necessarily at the same level of observance, which could also have an impact for some people.

Advice:

Go to the seminars and make friends. Obviously it's impossible to know what it's like to live with someone until you actually move in, but you can still more or less gauge if this group of people is a group you could fit in with and feel comfortable in. The people in your Garin make a huge difference, so if you can't see yourself ever getting along with the people at the seminars, then that Garin might not be for you.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

I've met so many different kinds of people that I never dreamed I would meet, let alone become friends with. I have friends who are Christian, Druze, atheist, non-observant Jews, traditional Jews, modern orthodox Jews, ultra-orthodox Jews, formerly orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews, ethiopians, politically left wing, right wing, and center, olim from all over the world, Israelis from all over the country, people who hate the army, people who love the army, people of all different ages, and people who couldn't care less about any of that and just want to know when their next meal is. And that's not even including all of the people outside of the army whom I've met through my job as a mashakit chinuch. I don't think there is any other way I could have met and learned about so many different kinds of people and heard so many new points of view. I've learned to be more open-minded, and that I can find something in common with everyone, no matter their backgrounds or opinions. I've made friends that I'll keep for the rest of my life. "The nation builds the army builds the nation" "עם בונה צבא בונה עם"

Most challenging part of the army:

During my training, the Hebrew was very challenging. I came to Israel with very good Hebrew, but for my job I have to read and write a lot, as well as teach classes to large groups of native Israelis, and I found it difficult. The other girls in my course and my commanders helped me a lot, and my Hebrew has improved a huge amount because of the army. In my regular service, aside from the difficulties of the job itself, I find the religious aspects to be challenging. As much as we are a Jewish army, most soldiers are not religious, and a lot don't know or understand a lot of the halachot and minhagim. I've done a lot of explaining, but sometimes I just have to say that this is what I do, please accept it. Most of the time people won't intentionally be insensitive, but once in a while there are also those who are anti-religious, which can create a very difficult environment to live in.

Advice for people considering joining:

First of all, don't let anyone make the decision for you. Only you know what's best for you, and it doesn't matter if you seem like the army "type" or not.

Second of all, push push push. If you aren't getting what you want or need, or if they're telling you one thing but you feel you should do or get something else, tell them. Write letters. Go up the chain of command. Talk to anyone and everyone and force them to listen. It won't always help, but if you don't try, you definitely won't get anywhere.

Anecdote:

In my course, there was a girl who was almost completely deaf. She could speak, and she read people's lips when they spoke, but at home she mostly communicated in sign language. During the last week of the course, we were practicing for our ending ceremony, in which of course everyone sings Hatikva, and one girl asked her to teach her the words of Hatikva in sign language. This quickly caught on, and she was soon teaching the whole course. We decided to request permission to do the motions during the actual ceremony. In general, during army ceremonies everything is orderly and structured and with no extraneous movements or noises, but the commanders agreed, as long as we could get it totally in sync. We managed it, and during the ceremony as everyone sang Hatikva, we sang with our voices and our hands. I'm filled with pride and happiness and emotion every time I hear Hatikva these days, but that moment was on another level. It reminded me that one of the incredible things about our army is that even in the midst of all the structure and discipline, we also make time for the individual. We provide accommodations so that every soldier gets what they need and feels included, whatever their personal challenge may be. We are an army with a purpose and a heart, and we care about our soldiers, because we aren't just an army, but also a nation. That is something so special and unique to the IDF, and one of the reasons that I am so honored to have the privilege to wear this uniform.

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4. Education Corps (Cheil Chinuch)

BASIC

Description of unit:

Tour guide at Ammunition Hill.

Description of individual role in unit:

I give tours to Anglos at Ammunition Hill.

Hometown: New Jersey

High School: Public school

Year of Aliyah: 2008

Program of Service: Garin Tzabar

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 5

Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 1

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

Yes

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Every day

Process of finding an apartment:

Janglo

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary:

800 NIS

Expenses during service:

Food, rent, bills,

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:

Rent subsidy and gifts from time to time

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

I became more religious during service.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest it? No

What did you do after the army?

University

GARIN TZABAR

Rate your overall experience from 1-10 (1=worst, 10=best):

1

Living accommodations:

Baram

Disadvantage of garin:

They put me in a non-religious kibbutz. I was traditional...not a good mix

Advice:

Only do it from chul, the group that forms in israel isn't as close

5. International Relations (Kishrei Chutz)

BASIC

Description of unit:

Coordinating and being a liason for anything that has to do with the IDF's relationship with foreign militaries.

Description of individual role in unit:

I worked as an international relations soldier at one of Israel's military colleges. There is a program there for foreign Colonels to study in the college. I was part of a team responsible for coordinating and translating everything for this group of foreign officers.

Hometown: Brooklyn, New York

High School: YUHSG (Central)

Seminary: Shaalvim

Year of Aliyah: 2014

Program of Service: Machal

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

I made an appointment at the machal offices at the Jewish Agency.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 3

Hebrew after the army: 4

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

Yes. It's really important that at least one of your parents is proud of you for your choice to enlist. When the going gets rough in the army (and it will), you will need someone to say that you are doing the right thing, and that he/she is proud of you for it. Financial support is also important. The army did not cover all my costs..

Did you have any medical issues?

No

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

No

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

1

In what way was your seminary helpful?
Shaalvim discourages it.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation: Rented apartment	Time off: I did yomiyot - most nights and weekends
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Process of finding an apartment:
Via people I met in Givat Shmuel.

Helpful organizations:
Lone Soldier Center

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: Around 1,800 NIS, including apartment expenses	Expenses during service: Shabbat food, dinner, toiletries etc
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Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Every holiday I was given a gift certificate.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:
I found the army really inspired me to feel closer to God. I managed to daven twice a day while on base.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?
Not at all

Did you join the army through a religious framework?
No

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?
No

What did you do after the army?
IDC

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
The connections I made and the valuable experiences.

Most challenging part of the army:
Shmira and dealing with sometimes irrational commanders/officers.

Advice for people considering joining:
The easiest way to do it is if you can be all in emotionally. If you have other distractions, such as a serious relationship, it's much harder to stay motivated and optimistic if you get stuck on base with more responsibilities etc. When your life revolves around the army, it's easier to feel better about getting stuck there than if you expected to have free time.

Anecdotes:

My best friend from the army is left-wing, secular and many things that I am not. I was her first religious, right- leaning friend, and we became inseparable over the course of our service. We both had a positive influence on one another, and my relationship with her is one of the most valuable things I gained from the army. I was also at a small dinner with Benny Gantz once, which is pretty awesome.

CONTACT INFO

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6. International Relations (Kishrei Chutz)

BASIC

Description of unit:

We work with foreign armies, as opposed to the spokespersons unit, which deals with the media. I worked directly with Egypt in the South.

Description of individual role in unit:

I worked on a 24/7 hotline that connects the IDF to Egypt. I also coordinated with the UN peacekeeping presence and often escorted them in Israel. We also worked on developing the relationship with Egypt through joint activities.

Hometown: New York

High School: SAR/Yeshiva of Flatbush

Seminary: Harova

Current or former soldier: I have completed my IDF service

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

I went to the Lishkat Hagiyus in Haifa by myself. I don't recommend doing this. I went through the whole process alone but my dad helped me a lot with reading through all the materials and figuring out where I needed to be and when.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 5

Extent of parental support: 5

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?

No

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

No

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

1

In what way was your seminary helpful?

I wasn't in touch with my seminary about joining.

DURING THE ARMY

LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Parents' apartment

Time off:

Every other weekend

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

I was lucky to have another religious girl with me by chance. People were very respectful, but it was good to have someone who knew what I was going through.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?

No

Did you join the army through a religious framework?

No

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*?

No

Would you suggest it?

Yes

What did you do after the army?

I went back to NY.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The best part was when I finally joined my unit and starting doing work and making friends.

Most challenging part of the army:

The most challenging part was feeling so alone during basic training.

Advice for people considering joining:

Dont join alone!

CONTACT INFO

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7. Karakal

BASIC

Description of unit:

Co-ed combat unit on the Egyptian border.

Description of individual role in unit:

I am a telecommunications instructor and operator. I teach about radio and technology systems on base and operate them, as well.

Hometown: San Diego, California

High School: Torah High

Seminary: Brovenders

Year of Aliyah: 2012

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

The Israeli program in Brovenders drafts together and I began the program with them.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 2

Hebrew before the army: 2

Extent of parental support: 4

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?

No

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

Yes

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

4

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Rented apartment

Time off:

Twice a month

Process of finding an apartment:
Through friends in Givat Shmuel

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary:
2,900 NIS

Expenses during service:
1,200 NIS for rent
Besides for that, about 200-400 NIS per month

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Time off to fly home, days to organize things at home, help moving apartments and a lot more.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:
It's difficult especially because I'm on a small base with few religious people, but it's inspiring being the religious role model.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?
Yes, there are organized visits every now and then and seminars for girls in the army.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest it? Yes

THOUGHTS

Advice for people considering joining:
It's a big decision but if you are ready for a daily challenge, not just physically but mentally and emotionally, then I definitely recommend. The army is a chance to grow, especially if you are planning on living in Israel. It immerses you into the culture and helps you build roots.

Anecdotes:
I have many! Feel free to look at my blog
Morethanjustacity.blogspot.com

CONTACT INFO

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8. Kfir

BASIC

Description of unit:

Kfir is the newest infantry unit in the IDF. We specialize in protecting Yehuda and Shomron as well as the West Bank. The Kfir unit was very involved in Shuvu Achim.

Description of individual role in unit:

I am a weapon instructor for the Kfir infantry unit. I teach combat soldiers how to use their weapons.

Hometown: Los Angeles, California

High School: YULA

Seminary: Migdal Oz

Program of Service: Machal

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Description of draft process:

I had an interiors at the mahal office, had to get a visa, prove I was Jewish at the Jewish agency, then had my Tzav rishon and then an interview for job placement.

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 3

Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 3

Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 3

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

No

Did you have any medical issues?

Yes

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

No

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

4

In what way was your seminary helpful?

My seminary is Israeli with a Garin that the girls enlist through. It just happened to be that the job I wanted couldn't be done through the Garin, but they helped me in every other way they could.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Adopted family

Time off:
Every other Shabbos at the beginning of my training, now I only close (stay in for) shabboses around every 7 weeks.

Helpful organizations:
The Lone Soldier Center

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary:
Around 2,400 NIS

Expenses during service:
Toiletries, food, army necessities (socks, shirts)

Special benefits you received as a Lone Soldier:
Double the salary, Yom Siddurim, a month to go home, and gifts before every holiday.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:
I was the only religious girl during my training and now the only religiously observant girl on my base. It's very hard. Shabboses are the worst because religious boys have a whole community, a minyan, hesder--for me it's just me. People are for the most part respectful.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?
Ya! I go there every couple of weeks for Shabboses. I'm still in contact with my Madrichot and girls who stayed Shana Bet.

Did you join the army through a religious framework? No option for girls.

OTHER

Did you attend army *ulpan*? No

Would you suggest it? It really depends on your Hebrew background.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:
I love working with so many different types of people--officers, commanders and soldiers.

Most challenging part of the army:
Explaining really complicated things in Hebrew. Shomer negia was difficult because being shomer negia automatically makes you stand out, which is sometimes not the best thing.

Advice for people considering joining:
Don't be too scared. The army is run by 18 year old kids- it's not as scary as it seems.

CONTACT INFO

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9. Meitav and Chinuch

BASIC

Description of unit:

Meitav- in charge of draft to the IDF.

Chel Chinnuch- wide range of jobs in Education within the army and preparing special populations for the army (olim, youth at risk etc).

Description of individual role in unit:

Meitav- the draft of Olim to the IDF (Rakezet Olim Hadashim)

Chinnuch- officer in the charge of soldiers (morot chayelot, including many religious girl soldiers and garinei nahal) who served in institutions for youth at risk (pnimiyot, special school and homes), preparing them for their draft/ life in general. I was also Mefakedet Course Morot Chayelot

Hometown: South Africa

High School: Herzlia High School

Seminary: Midreshet Yeud (Bnei Akiva-MTA)

Aliyah: Before service

Years of Service: 2 years
(2012- 2015)

Current or former soldier: I have
completed my IDF service

JOINING THE ARMY

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 3

Hebrew before the army: 2

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Hebrew after the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

I lived with my Mom who made Aliyah.

Extent of parental support: 4

My parents in the beginning did not really understand why I wanted to join the army or why I couldn't just stay in sherut leumi, but in the end they were so proud and supportive! My dad came from overseas and cried at every tekes.

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process? 1

My seminary was not at all involved in the process/ didn't check up on me along the way.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:
Parents' apartment

Time off:
Sometimes daily, sometimes every weekend, officers course every 2/ 3 weeks

Helpful organizations:

I wasn't a lone soldier, unfortunately, so even as an Olah I got no help whatsoever! I know a few people who made Aliyah after yeshiva/sem and their families joined, and as Olim (not Chayelim Bodedim) there really was/ is no one to help. I think it's very problematic because Olim parents themselves don't understand the process and can't do much to help their kids.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: As a soldier 300 shek a month, officers course 900 shek a month, Keva (permanent force) about 5000 shek a month.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

In education there are many religious girls in every job imaginable. It was amazing being in the unit and seeing how many religious girls from every background imaginable choose to draft. I got all my "religious rights" throughout my service and always had meaningful shabbatot in the army, but I think its because of the unit I was in.

I was also in charge of Morot Chayelot in a special "stream"/ maslul (tarbut toranit) built for religious girls and to ensure they can have a service under conditions that suit their needs.

Was your seminary helpful during your army service?

They were not involved in the process/ during my service. There is Aluma who are highly recommended to help religious girls, but I did not draft with them.

OTHER

What did you do after the army?
I travelled for seven months and I am currently doing Psychometry.

Miluim:
I have miluim in Pikud HaOref , only in times of war/ extended military missions

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

I loved Officers Course. It was a huge challenge and an amazing experience. I also loved my job as an officer in the Education Corps. Even though it wasn't always easy, I felt like I was doing something special and meaningful every day and learned so much along the way.

Most challenging part of the army:

I think the hardest part as a religious girl was deciding to join the army! Even though it was only four years ago, when I made Aliyah people weren't really talking

to girls about joining the army, I didn't really have anyone to share experiences with me or explain anything to me... I kind of just figured it out as I went along. I think the more prepared people go into the experience the better it will be for them.

Advice for people considering joining:

Speak to as many people as you can, do a lot of research and LEARN HEBREW! If you are looking to do a non-combat job, you really have to have good enough Hebrew that the army can give you a good job with real responsibility so that you can fulfill your potential :)

Anecdotes:

I think Tzuk Eitan was a time I will never forget. I was down South with my soldiers in communities that were living under constant rocket fire. It was an amazing feeling knowing that even though we served in Education and not combat we were doing a critical job for the army and to keep the citizens of Israel safe.

CONTACT INFO

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10. Search & Rescue Combat

BASIC

Description of unit:

A combat unit that, like all combat, focuses on border defence on a day-to-day basis. Our main goal is saving lives with the search and rescue training behind us - we're talking rescuing people trapped in bombed buildings or suffering as a result of natural disasters.

Description of individual role in unit:

To guard and defend the country on a daily basis and to provide search and rescue if need be.

Hometown: Australia

High School: Masada College

Aliyah: Before Service

Seminary: Midreshet Harova

Current or former soldier: I am currently serving in the IDF. Length of service: 2.5 years (2014-16)

JOINING THE ARMY

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 1

Hebrew before the army: 3

Extent of parental support: 2

Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 5

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

Yes

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

1

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Parents' apartment

Time off:

Around every 2 weeks

Process of finding an apartment:

Janglo

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary:

1200 NIS per month

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

Very challenging but at times uplifting and incredibly meaningful. I see parts of Israel I wouldn't have seen as a citizen and have merited to defend the country promised to our forefathers.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The amazing moments when I'm in my full army gear on the top of a mountain in the middle of the night and I just stop and look at where I am and think "how did I get here?!"

Most challenging part of the army:

Getting through the day-to-day routine without going crazy. The border isn't the most fun and can be crazy intense or crazy boring depending on the day.

Advice for people considering joining:

Talk to a lot of people, read about all the tafkidim and decide whether you would rather say, "I could have joined the army but..." or "yeah I served".

CONTACT INFO

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11. Undisclosed

BASIC

Description of unit:

My unit is a special forces unit in the army branch of the IDF.

Description of individual role in unit:

I am serving in the research and development company of my unit, figuring out what problems the combat soldiers were dealing with in the field and then going to various high-tech companies around Israel to find a solution.

Hometown: Stamford, CT

High School: SAR High School

Seminary: Migdal Oz

Aliyah: Before service

Length of service: 24 months

Program of Service: Garin Tzabar

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

JOINING THE ARMY

Scale of 1-5 (1= none, 5= most)

Importance of joining unit with friends: 1

Hebrew before the army: 4

Extent of parental support: 4

Hebrew after the army: 5

Physical fitness before the army: 2

Did you receive financial support from your parents?

Yes

SEMINARY INVOLVEMENT

Did you join the army through your seminary?

No

On a scale from 1-10 (1=none, 10= very), how helpful was your seminary with the drafting process?

3

In what way was your seminary helpful?

My seminary told me that if I wanted to stay religious, I had to be in a unit with a large contingency of religious girls.

DURING THE ARMY LIVING SITUATION

Description of living situation:

Garin/kibbutz

Time off:

Every Week

Helpful organizations:

Garin Tzabar and Nefesh b'Nefesh. Garin Tzabar provided me with living accommodations, speeded up my army process and gave great advice about choosing the right unit for me.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Salary: 1950 NIS

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Description of religious experience:

My religious experience was not easy. I am one of the only religious girls on my base and the only one in my company. However, I am off for almost every Shabbat and my commanders are respectful of my beliefs.

Did you join the army through a religious framework? N/A

GARIN TZABAR

Rate your overall experience from 1-10 (1=worst, 10=best):

8

Living accommodations:

Beit Rimon

Advantage of garin:

It provides you with a framework that successfully prepares you for the army. Before the army, there is structured Ulpan, fitness classes and other activities that help participants learn about the army. In addition, there is an army representative who lives on the kibbutz who guides participants into choosing a unit. After enlistment, you always have a home to come back to with friends, there's food in the fridge, and a host family to provide you with your Shabbat meals so that you don't have to worry about cooking.

Disadvantage of garin:

Much of my garin left after years for various reasons, so I would only come home to a few people each week. In addition, most garinim are on kibbutzim so it takes a while to travel to base and there isn't always constant public transportation.

Advice:

It is definitely the right decision for people who are coming right after high school or seminary because it's a structured program that does help people beat the army system. However, if you are older and want to be working in the army as a day job, or want to be living in a city, then it is probably less appropriate for you to serve through Garin Tzabar.

THOUGHTS

Best part of the army:

The best part of the army is the camaraderie that exists between the soldiers and the rest of the country. Whenever I am in uniform and walk into a store, people stop

me and ask me what unit I am in and then begin to tell me which of their siblings, cousins or friends were in the unit as well. Being in the army bonds you to the rest of the country in a very unique way.

Most challenging part of the army:

The most challenging part of my service was dealing with people who were different from me religiously. Before I joined the IDF, most of my friends were Orthodox. While I have a few Conservative and Reform friends, I learned quickly that Reform and secular are quite different. As a result, many people were unsure of how to speak with me and even said a few things that upset me as well.

Advice for people considering joining:

Don't be afraid to join, even if many people advise you against it, because it is a life-changing experience. When I was in seminary, many of my teachers told me that if I wasn't in the education core (where many religious girls serve), I wouldn't be religious when I finished the army. However, a year and eight months later, I can proudly say that I am still shomer mitzvot. You need to know yourself and be strong willed in your values, however your religious beliefs should not detour you from being in your unit of choice.

Anecdote:

For the first six months of my service, many people said offensive things to me against religions and my beliefs. There was one guy in particular who would continue to make rude comments about how religion is stupid, what I was doing was wrong, etc. Almost a year and a half later, right before Rosh Hashana, I received a message from him saying that he'd been doing a lot of thinking and wanted to apologize for the way he acted and judged me before even knowing me.

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