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Settling the Military: the pre-military academies revolution and the creation of a new security epistemic community – The Militarization of Judea and Samaria

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The article describes the establishment of the pre-military academies in Judea and Samaria as cultural agents preceding the militaristic habitus of these areas. It follows the development of the security epistemic community in these areas which formed a new identity of the settlers. The increase of religious-Zionist youth in combat units and officer courses in the IDF due to these academies altered the positioning of the settlers and all religious Zionists in Israeli society vis-à-vis non-religious elites, the ultra-orthodox, and religious-Zionist groups who did not join the pre-military academy revolution. Judea and Samaria became a 'security zone' identified with sacrifice, heroism, giving, a pedagogical partnership with the army, reflected in higher percentages of activities in educational, religious, and cultural institutions encouraging meaningful army service.

Keywords: epistemic community; military; Samaria; pre-military college; religion

Introduction and the objectives of this article

Since the beginning of the millennium, a greater percentage of Israeli religious Zionists serve in combat units of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), as well as becoming middle and high ranking officers in these units. For years the military arena and ethos of Israel had been identified with the left-wing socialist agricultural movements: secular movements which realized the option of the 'new Jew' who turned his back on the religious diaspora, especially marking the Torah world and army life as dichotomous spheres. This article focuses upon the dynamics initiated by the establishment of pre-military academies – institutions that created an option for religious-Zionist youth to relate to the military and Torah worlds in a hybrid manner, leading to an unprecedented participation of religious nationalists in Israeli military activities. In the book *New Elites in Israel* published in 2007, in the chapter 'The New Army Elite', under the sub-title 'The New Stockpile of IDF Officers', Yoram Peri, former editor of the Israeli Labour Movement's *Davar* newspaper, wrote:

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The most prominent group is the national-religious camp. In the past the number of religious Jews ... in the high ranks of the IDF had been minimal ... [Nowadays], a quarter of squad officers and unit leaders are religious ... This phenomenon received a boost by the establishment of pre-military academies which granted religious legitimacy to serving in the army as a regular soldier within regular army units, and not as a soldier associated with the *hesder* yeshiva movement which had separate units within the army.¹

As will be demonstrated, this not only affected the army's image, but also affected national-religious society in general and the settlers' social order in particular, especially concerning the positioning of these sectors within Israeli society: in relationship to the general secular public; in relationship to the ultra-Orthodox (*Haredi*) sector; and in relationship to the national-religious bourgeois who did not join this new military track – thereby effecting new divisions within the national-religious camp. This new positioning has political, cultural, and even erotic ramifications.

This trend of accelerated integration of religious soldiers into the army has recently attracted scholarly as well as polemic attention, even being referred to as regionalization.² The essential discussion focuses upon cultural negotiations concerning the character of the army, especially concerning feminist issues (some religious-Zionist rabbis demand that religious soldiers do not serve alongside female soldiers in the IDF); ramifications concerning the ethics and warfare values of the IDF; and the possible dilemma confronting religious soldiers should they be ordered to evacuate settlements. This article, as mentioned, will focus upon one facet of this development, demonstrating the internal communal dynamics within religious-national society, with special attention to the implications of these pre-military academies for Judea and Samaria – the West Bank. In my opinion, the discussion of the militarization of the religious sector in Israel has ignored the spatial element, for, as will be demonstrated, the pre-military academies are also a novel development concerning the status of the 'territories' east of the Green Line, in the eyes of national-religious soldiers as well as concerning the general public's views of the settlements and settlers. The generation of the founders of the *Gush Emunim* movement framed the settlement movement as the continuation of the pioneer settlers of the *kibbutzim* (collective settlements) and *moshavim* (cooperative settlements), while granting these territories religious meaning, thereby viewing themselves as returning the Jewish people to their roots. Since the pre-military academy revolution took place in Samaria (northern West Bank), as will be demonstrated, the present generation of fighters owe their new military identity to this area. The location of many of these academies in Judea and Samaria, which attracted religious youth from their parents' homes for an experience of adolescence and autonomy, became the location where this psycho-cultural transformation takes place – a metamorphosis from someone raised on values of intellectual Talmud study to one whose physical and spiritual masculinity and maturity are formed in preparation for combat army service. Similar to the

college experience of American youth, or the metropolis for the homosexual, it will become clear that the areas of Judea and Samaria are the places where religious-Zionist fighters can change into what they are, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the general Israeli public: combat soldiers and officers. These areas facilitate the metamorphosis that grants it legitimacy. The central objectives of this article are to note the following developments:

- (1) The pre-military academies are the institutional launch pads propelling many boys from the national-religious sector to meaningful positions in the IDF, in addition to their becoming spatial militaristic habitus initiators. With the establishment of the first pre-military academy in the Eli settlement in Samaria and its becoming a model for other such institutions, the areas of Judea and Samaria have become 'security areas' where its youth are channelled to significant military service, resulting in the psycho-cultural singularity of this area. The spatial habitus of this area is identified with cultural militarism. This then trickles to other institutions there – the *Hesder yeshivot*, religious and secular high schools, youth movements, etc.
- (2) This trend has significant ramifications for the identity of religious-Zionist children born since the 1980s, for Judea and Samaria are viewed as a place facilitating the psycho-cultural transformation of the youth of the religious-Zionist sector: channelling religious youth from being yeshiva students to becoming combat soldiers. Thus, this region is inseparable from their social identity and positions.
- (3) As a result of this development, a new security epistemic community has been formed in Judea and Samaria. During their military service, the officers and soldiers return there, whether to live there or to seek advice from their mentors in the academies or to share their experiences with their friends. This is a community with symbols, heroes, intellectuals, and mentors.
- (4) Concerning this sector, there has been a rejuvenation of its ethos and social positioning: not only the tendency to position this sector with the kibbutz movement by presenting the settlements as a continuation of this movement, thereby acquiring the sympathy of secular Israelis, and not only their positioning in the Jewish ethos as settlers within the biblical land of Israel and thus acquiring the sympathy of religious Israelis, but as a new constructive model which differentiates the settlers from other segments of religious Zionists who continue to attend the *Hesder Yeshivot*. Primarily, the pre-military academy is an original institution created in the settlements of Samaria and became a model for imitation within all sectors of Israeli society, appreciated and recognized by the state.
- (5) In contrast to the old image of the settlers within the Israeli public – that of maximizing their own interests – the revolution of the pre-military academies, which led to an unprecedented integration of their students into

the army, has for the first time transformed their image into persons who contribute and sacrifice for the betterment of general Israeli society.

The *Bnei David* academy in Eli: accepting integration and excellence in the army

In 1987, Amram Mitzneh, major-general of the central command, who eventually would go on to be head of the Labour party, together with Yossi ben Hanan, commander of the Tank Corps, invited Rabbi Yigal Levenenstein, who was then a deputy commander of a reserve tank unit, to return to the army. In this meeting they discussed the difficulty of relying upon the veteran population which had supplied most of the army officers until now (left-wing, secular, urban or kibbutz populace). This took place on the eve of what has become known as the 'motivation crisis': the distancing of these elite factions from military service, an Israeli expression for what is generally known as the civil–military gap.³ The officers complained to Rabbi Levenenstein that 'religious youth do not become officers nor do they take responsibility'. Major-General Mitzneh clarified that

Israeli society is nowadays in a crisis of values and that will only continue to develop ... The religious public has deep values of motivation ... We are of the opinion that this sector must make a greater qualitative contribution to the army.⁴

As a result of this meeting, a year later Rabbi Levenenstein and his mentor, Rabbi Eli Sadan, established *Bnei David*, the first pre-military academy in the settlement of Eli in Samaria. This institution would prepare its students for integration into the army, equipping them with spiritual and religious resources, as well as physical ones, and essentially with a singular social awareness, in order to reduce the possibility that their future integration within the IDF would facilitate the loss of their religious identity or erode their motivation to contribute to the army.

This was a pioneering initiative concerning the army service of the religious public in Israeli. Until this time, religious young men at the age of 18 belonged to three groups:

- (1) The ultra-Orthodox public which for the most part completely avoided the Israeli draft, by means of *de jure* or *de facto*, formal and informal arrangements between the ultra-Orthodox parties and Israeli governments, starting from the end of the 1970s.⁵
- (2) Religious Zionists who were drafted at the age of 18. A great many of them, especially those who belonged to combat units, became non-religious. Others, who retained their religious identity, were those who served in non-combat units. The public image of religious soldiers in the army was as *kashrut* supervisors, chaplains, and other sundry role within the army's rabbinate.⁶
- (3) Religious Zionists who upon completion of their high school studies joined a *Hesder Yeshiva*. These were *yeshivot* (rabbinical seminaries), whose leaders (religious-Zionist rabbis) had an arrangement (*hesder*)

with the Defence Ministry allowing students in these institution to follow a course of Torah and Talmud study for four years during which they would serve in the army for 16 months. During their military service they serve in homogenous units with their colleagues from other *Yeshivot Hesder*, units which facilitate religious observance.⁷ In this sense the *hesder* students formed a type of gated community within the army, preventing these soldiers from being exposed to the Israeli army melting pot.⁸ Thus, these students have only marginal duties in the army, for their abbreviated service does not enable them to attend officer courses or take on obligations for additional years of service.

The innovation of the pre-military academy in Eli was that its objective was just the opposite: its students were not to be penned in within religious units, but were urged to join diverse units together with non-religious soldiers. The religious community became convinced that the academy prepared its graduates with a solid spiritual and religious foundation that would prevent them from losing their religious faith while serving in the army. Accordingly, Rabbi Sadan testified that he chose the term 'academy' (*mechina*, lit. preparatory programme) and not 'yeshiva'. He clarified that the role of his academy was to grant the students 'spiritual preparation for their mission, properly preparing them to spiritually and mentally cope with their military service'.⁹

The *Bnei David* Academy became a flagship, a symbol and model for imitation. For the first time, a model was invented in the territories of Judea and Samaria, and was adopted by similar institutions throughout the state. Ten years later, 10% of the graduates of religious educational institutions attended the pre-military academies throughout Judea and Samaria before their army service. The academy became an institution initiating a psycho-cultural transformation among national-religious youth – from youth designated to fulfil marginal roles in the army and whose leaders were rabbis and Torah scholars to youth who viewed the army as central to their lives and ambitions, were interested in being integrated with male and female soldiers from the secular Israeli public, and whose leaders and mentors were courageous combat officers, whose activities were not just spiritual and but physical. All this took place not in opposition to the religious-Zionist Torah world, but with the blessing of communal leaders, including many Zionist Orthodox rabbis. The revolution of the pre-military academies was that with their establishment, students who preferred these academies to attending a *hesder yeshiva*, as well as serving together with non-religious soldiers (as long as they had attended an academy), were no longer considered as deviant or unfaithful to the world of religious Zionism, but were now viewed as legitimate and normative, even heroic.

The pre-military academies are institutional launch pads for combat soldiers. These are similar to the military academies in the United States; graduates serve with all the servicemen and not in separate military frameworks. The Israeli academies offer their students sport, navigation, and many military combat exercises, while deepening their battle heritage, clarifying national security issues,

and offering lectures by past and present senior officers. This all takes place within a Torah framework with scrupulous observance of the commandments and portrays military service as a Jewish commandment. The academy itself is a hybridization between a dormitory and an army camp, and its daily schedule – including housework and guard duty, volunteer communal service, and scrupulous attendance at Torah and Talmud lectures – is managed by the students themselves. The students rarely leave the academy, and family visits usually take place on weekends, exactly like in the combat units in the army.

During their military service, the academy remains their second home, a supportive institution, a place for meetings and advice, holidays and ceremonies, and for vacations – the students prefer meeting classmates than their families. The academies have someone for each class who maintains contact with students while they are serving as soldiers. Representatives of the academies attend their students' graduation ceremonies upon completion of various strenuous military courses, while the soldiers themselves, with their officer's permission, are invited to ceremonies that take place within the academy. Pamphlets published by the academy are sent to their graduates, either by regular mail or email. In 2006, Rabbi Sadan reported that at any given moment there are 450–500 of his students serving in the army.¹⁰ There is even a new social awareness and identity in the army: the *Mechinastim* (lit. men of the academies) – as they are known in the army.¹¹

As mentioned, since the founding of *Bnei David* in the Eli settlement, the pre-military academy has become a model for other such institutions, and became popular among national-religious youth, and eventually secular youth followed in their wake. A friend brought a friend, brother brought brother, especially as there was a yearning for significant military service, now possible with the agreement of the religious community's leaders. Furthermore, there were many other benefits such as physical fitness, health, and a novel legitimacy for desirable masculinity, which led hundreds to come to the academy as a natural part of their development. Thus, 36 pre-military academies, both religious and secular, were established throughout the land.

At first lobbying and persuasion were required among the Defence Ministry managers in order to convince them to postpone the military service of the pre-military academy students. Upon the request of his nephew, Rabbi Moshe Hagar-Lau, head of the *Yatir* academy, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, then chief rabbi of the State of Israel, worked on behalf of the pre-military academies. When the first academies were established in Eli, and then in Beir Yatir, Atzmonah, and Peduel – all beyond the Green Line – Rabbi Lau went together with MK Zebulun Orlev, of the *Mafdal* (Mizrachi) party, to Reserve General Mordechai Gur, then serving as deputy minister of defence, to request a postponement of military service so that these students could complete their preparation in these pre-military academies. During the following term, Rabbi Lau went to Defence Minister Moshe Arens and his deputy minister, Obadiah Eli, in order to defer their service for two years, as well as to increase the number of students, which until then had been limited to 200 throughout the entire country.

Slowly the Defence Ministry and the army, which appreciated the quality of the academy graduates and their probable success, began to encourage the religious recruits to attend these pre-military academies after their high school studies. Moreover, when two graduates of different schools were competing for acceptance by the same troop or commando unit, the army began to prefer the pre-military academy students over those who had been drafted immediately upon high school graduation.

The government discovered quite quickly that this was an incredible success story with strategic ramifications: The number of combat soldiers from the pre-military academies was twice as high as from all recruits; the number of commanding officers coming from the pre-military academies was 3.5 times higher than officers from all recruits; and the number of high-ranking officers was three times higher. In June 2012, it was found that a quarter of the graduates of the officers' track in the infantry were alumni of pre-military academies, while 18% of the graduates of such courses in other branches of the army (artillery, tank corps, etc.) were pre-military academy alumni. This is quite amazing when considering that graduates of pre-military academies were only 4% of all recruits.¹² Consequently, the government authorized an annual increase of 15% in the number of students in the pre-military academies, noting that the academies 'contribute to society, the army and defence, as well as the personal development of the students'.¹³ This resulted in the students of these academies receiving deferments from the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Education financially supported them. Furthermore, recognition of these academies and collaboration with them found expression in the decision in the Youth Department and Pioneer Combatant Youth (*nachal*) in the Ministry of Defence – the body that authorizes the establishment of new pre-military academies as well as appointing the personnel in command of them¹⁴ – to grant the pre-military academy, from the minute it was founded, the status of a branch of the Ministry of Defence, thus operating under its auspices. The Ministry of Education also identified the pre-military academy project as a valuable national resource, granting it government patronage. The Ministry of Defence webpage lists the goals of these academies, which are financed by the state:

The pre-military academies were established with the purpose of preparing youth, graduates of the school systems, for full meaningful military service in the IDF, to encourage volunteering for combat units, elite units, and officer courses . . . Within the framework of collaboration between the Ministries of Education and Defence and the IDF, the state covered the pre-military academies with an official 'umbrella' including: recognition, authorized deferments for the students, allocating budgets, etc.¹⁵

The new security epistemic community in Judea and Samaria

Within a dozen years the cultural shift that had been launched by the pre-military academies revolution led to the creation of a new security epistemic community,¹⁶ fostering new symbolic types that had hitherto been unknown in religious society.

These included all kinds of opinion leaders on security topics, mostly from Judea and Samaria, whom Osborne labelled ‘public intellectuals’,¹⁷ idealistic types to be imitated – essentially, new epistemic-ethical authorities. These are described below.

Teachers and educators

The heads of the pre-military academies were ‘new’ educators: not great Torah scholars, or scions of famous rabbinical families, but rabbis who were senior officers in the army reserve. Their army status was their symbolic wealth and the basis for their legitimacy as well as their charisma. The fact that they had rabbinic ordination was but a supplementary biographical detail. The educators in the pre-military academies were also reserve officers, while also having rabbinic ordination. Thus, for example, in the pre-military academy of Eli, three senior educators were reserve commanders of battalions.¹⁸ The founder and head of the Otzem academy established in the settlement of Atzmona in the Gaza area was Rabbi Rafi Peretz, a helicopter pilot in the air force, and after his discharge with the rank of major, served in the army reserve in the IDF’s school for pilots. Peretz was one of the first religious Israelis to complete a pilot course. For years the Israeli motto, ‘the best are for flying’, had been fulfilled by non-religious Israelis, mostly from elite European backgrounds (*Ashkenazim*) – kibbutz youth or graduates from elite urban high schools. Peretz was religious, Moroccan, had studied in the *Mercaz haRav Yeshiva*, and had been ordained for the rabbinate in *Yeshivat haKotel*: both institutions had hawkish, right-wing ideologies. From the *Mercaz haRav Yeshiva* came the call to religious Zionists to settle the liberated territories after the Six Day War. In 1992 Peretz established a pre-military academy and headed it until 2011 when he was chosen to serve as chief rabbi of the IDF with the rank of brigadier general. Peretz’s stature within the national-religious community did not result from his Torah status, but from the fact that he was the first religious Jew to become a pilot – a military role having mythical stature within Israeli culture. Likewise, senior officers head other pre-military academies and are admired not for their Halachic prowess but for their military symbolic capital.

The former chief rabbi of the IDF, Brigadier General Avi Ronzky, served in the elite Shaked unit during the Yom Kippur War. He has published articles concerning the IDF, as well as a series of volumes (*KeChitzim beYad Gibbor*, lit. ‘As Arrows in the Hand of a Hero’) containing rabbinic *responsa* dealing with military issues. He himself is a penitent (*ba’al teshuvah*), studied at the *Mercaz haRav Yeshiva*, and was head of the pre-military academy of Yatir, and then head of the *Hesder Yeshiva* in Itamar – both settlements east of the Green Line. The fact that he went from an academy to a *hesder yeshiva* only reinforces the process of the *hesder yeshivot* and other institutions remodelling themselves to be like the pre-military academies, illustrating the revolution caused by these academies in Judea and Samaria: a combat officer ordained as a rabbi had become a pedagogical personality also accepted by the *hesder yeshivot*.

In addition, the head of the Ateret pre-military academy in Jerusalem is Rabbi Krim, a lieutenant colonel in the army reserve, a former commander of an elite paratroop unit. The head of the *beit midrash* in the *Bnei David* Academy in Eli is Rabbi Ohad Tirosh, also a lieutenant colonel in the army reserve. Rabbi Moshe Hagar, head of the pre-military academy in Yatir, near Hebron, is a colonel in the army reserve, deputy commander of a reserve battalion. He is an example of a person who moved from the Torah world to the army, as he is the son of a famous ultra-Orthodox rabbi. Rabbi Aaron Shenwald, an active army reserve colonel, who had formerly served in the operations branch of the northern command, is the head of the yeshiva known as *sheshder* – a play on the words *hesder* and *shesh*, which is the number six in Hebrew – a six-year-track *hesder* yeshiva in which the student studies for six years while serving in the army for three. It is a hybridization of a pre-military academy and a *hesder* yeshiva.

Admired fallen soldiers

Israeli memorialization culture has transformed fallen soldiers from private personalities to public ones, ideal types, models for perpetual imitation in popular culture. Whether one is referring to fallen sons from the Labour movement, like Ephraim and Zvi Guber, sons of Rivka and Mordechai, who fell in the War of Independence, or sons from families identified with the Revisionist movement, like Yoni Netanyahu, brother of PM Benjamin Netanyahu, and commander of the General Staff Commando Unit, who fell in the IDF action at Entebbe, the common denominator of these ‘mythical fallen soldiers’ is that they were non-religious Israelis. Only with the organized and collective wave of religious nationalists joining combat units in the IDF, mostly graduates of the pre-military academies influenced by the spirit of these institutions, did religious fallen soldiers become part of this pantheon, giving the national-religious sector much symbolic capital. Books and biographies about them have been published, films made about them, Torah lectures were held in their memory as well as conferences and conventions in the pre-military academies. Their parents have become public intellectuals invited to lecture or give interviews in the media.

Thus, for example, Roi Klein came from Rananah to study at *Bnei David* in Eli, and then chose to live in Eli with his new bride. Klein was one of the original officers who set up the *Egoz* unit, and was deputy commander of a battalion in the Golani Brigade. In the second Lebanon war he sacrificed himself to save his men from a hand grenade that had fallen next to them: He jumped upon the grenade while reciting ‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d is one’. For this heroic deed, he posthumously received a medal from the chief of staff.¹⁹ After his death, he achieved mythical status within religious society: institutions are named after him, books are written about him, lectures on leadership, armies, and Judaism, as well as conferences are held in his honour. Babies were named after him, in addition to schools and cultural centres. In the pre-military academies, films dedicated to his memory are screened, and discussions are held analysing his

heroism. Elementary school Chanukah plays are dedicated to his heroism, comparing him to the Maccabees.

Lieutenant Colonel Emanuel Morano also became a symbol. He had emigrated from France, lived in Jerusalem, and had studied in the pre-military academy in Eli. He was a combat soldier in the General Staff Commando Unit and fell in the second Lebanon war in circumstances which qualified him for a posthumous medal. For security reasons, in contrast to other fallen soldiers, his photograph was not allowed to be publicized, enhancing the mythical and singular nature of his character and deeds. He had been considered as one of the commanders of this unit and a future general in the IDF.²⁰ His memory has also been perpetuated in various memorial projects, films, and plays. One film is called *The Legend of Morano*, in which he is compared to Bar-Kochva. He posthumously received the Jerusalem Prize for Jewish Heroism in the annual Jerusalem conference.

Klein, Morano, and others are new symbols in religious Zionism in general, especially in the settlements. They are memorialized in the pre-military academies as well as in many other places in Judea and Samaria. For the first time, both religious society and the settlements have mythical fallen soldiers who testify to religious Zionism's contribution and sacrifices for the security of the state.

Bereaved parents

One should not underestimate the status and symbolic capital of bereaved mothers, especially within Israeli society. With the death of their sons, the mothers become opinion leaders, with an entrance ticket to the mass media that is intensely influential in granting or negating legitimacy to the government's security policy.²¹ Following the pre-military academies revolution which resulted in a great number of religious combat soldiers, bereaved mother 'celebrities' began to appear in the religious sector. An example of this is Miriam Peretz, who emigrated from Morocco to Israel, and lost two sons in the IDF; the first, Uriel, fell in Lebanon, and the second, Eliraz, who had studied at the pre-military academy of Otzam in Gaza and lived in Eli, Samaria, fell as a deputy commander of a battalion in the *Golani* Brigade, during the winter 2008–2009 Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead).

Peretz is quite prominent within the Israeli public discourse, especially in that she differs from most bereaved mothers who are known for their protests against the army because of the tragic deaths of their sons in Lebanon. Peretz, in contrast, found both religious and national significance in the death of her sons; she was not angry, but viewed their deaths as productive, exclaiming: 'One who lives in this land much also take the love with its thorns.' She became a popular speaker among soldiers and young adults, emphasizing the importance of Zionism and Judaism in military service, and became a representative of the religious sector as well as in the army, appearing in various fundraising events throughout the world. Her biography was published by the most popular Israeli publisher, written by the most popular young author in Israel,²² and quickly became a best-seller. Popular newspapers began to

call her 'The Mother of the Sons', just as they had called Rivka Guber, the original of the Israeli bereaved mother.²³ Peretz received many titles, and in 2014 was chosen, together with the first woman to hold the rank of major-general in the IDF, to light a torch during the Independence Day ceremonies, a ceremony marking and honouring personalities viewed as 'national'. The *Haaretz* newspaper chose her as one of the most influential women in Israeli society, and the Menachem Begin Heritage Centre in Jerusalem gave her their annual prize for her activities (together with the elite army unit *Shayetet* 13, and with Alan Dershowitz, an international defender of Israel's right to self-defence).

Political leaders

Testimony to the religious public's yearning for a physical military experience and not just a rabbinic-Torah one was evident in politics also. For years, members of the Israeli parliament (Knesset), and certainly those who head the religious-Zionist parties, were political high-flyers, academicians, and for the most part rabbis. However, parallel to the pre-military academies revolution, the choice of political leaders began to change. The first sign was the election of Brigadier General (res.) Efi Eitam, the most senior religious combat officer in the IDF, to head the Religious Zionist (*Mafdal* – Mizrahi) party a year after his discharge from the army. Eitam, a former kibbutz secular Jew, had been commander of the *Givati* Brigade. Ten years later, he took first place in a survey that examined the choice of religious Zionists for a personality to lead a party to represent their sector.²⁴

In 2012, Naphtali Bennet ran and was elected as head of the *Bayit haYehudi* party, the present-day incarnation of the *Mafdal* (Mizrahi) party. Bennet, a reserve major in an elite unit, was known as being involved in high tech, but focused his campaign on security issues. He repeatedly emphasized that his son was named after Yoni Natanyahu who had been killed during the Entebbe rescue, and not after some biblical figure. One *Bayit haYehudi* election poster pictured four combat soldiers in full army gear, photographed from the rear, with the focus upon the religious soldier (the one wearing the skullcap) who has raised his hand, urging his colleagues forward. This soldier is more alert and vigorous than the others and clearly he is the leader. Above the photograph is the following: 'We love the State. We serve the State.' At the bottom was the party's slogan: 'Something new has begun', as well as 'the *Bayit haYehudi* headed by Naphtali Bennet'. Professor Aviad Kleinberg, who wrote a column in the *Haaretz* newspaper, noted the difference between former religious political leaders and Bennet: 'He speaks less about the Temple and fulfilling the Messianic vision of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook . . . Bennet does not speak in terms of Divine Providence and does not mention the Redemption. Bennet speaks about security, and only security.'²⁵

The erotic vision of the religious soldier

The extensive following that the pre-military academies enjoyed among the national-religious public is a result of a combination of an institutional option

initiated by the academies and the psycho-cultural disposition originating in the maturity and longing of this sector's younger generation for the militarism that they had been excluded from. This generation, despite their educators' hopes that they would join the *hesder yeshivot*, did not have a natural ability for studying Torah. Moreover, they were often admiring of many elements of the non-religious world, especially the army heroes, like Meir Har-Zion, Yoni Netanyahu, and Aric Sharon, who even in the secular world's post-militaristic period remained religious youth's heroes. In general, the army was an attractive secular commodity, and religious youth had been excluded from it in accordance with the instruction of its leaders. Now, with the establishment of the pre-military academies, legitimacy was granted to everything that had been denied them: masculinity, militarism, physical prowess – within a framework of erotic capital for those involved.²⁶

This found expression in popular culture. For example, Ron Leshem's book *Im Yesh Gan Eden* (If There is a Garden of Eden) describes soldiers in the Beaufort fort on the eve of the withdrawal from Lebanon, and the book became a best-seller. A film and play were based upon it, and it received the most important Israeli prize for literature. One of the soldiers in a scene describes:

In my brigade, in all the infantry brigades, the religious Jews have become the backbone [of these brigades]. They are the best fighters and they are growing stronger. This new generation is not like their settler fathers, they are not similar to anything at all produced in the past within the national-religious education system . . .

Concerning love of the homeland and the land, sacrifice, even comradeship, they are the best, the most enthusiastic, and often the most extreme. They have no competitors in their physical prowess, in their fervour, and in their determination to succeed. I am not speaking about the *hesder yeshiva* students, not about those for whom the army is just a temporary transfer station on his way to continue his Torah studies. Ours are men of implementation, *the graduates of the pre-military academies*, the great hit of this sector, the heroes of the *Bnei Akiva* [Youth Movement] . . . They have captured the battalions, the commando units, and the officer courses.²⁷

Five years earlier (2000), the very successful Israeli feature film *HaHesder* was screened, and received the Ofir Prize (the Israeli Oscar). The hero of the film is Menachem, a religious officer in the Parachutist Commando Unit, a graduate of the *hesder* Yeshiva, who fell in love with the daughter of the head of a *hesder* Yeshiva in one of the settlements. This rabbi had wanted his daughter to marry Pini, who was the ideal fulfilment of religious Zionism's mission in the era before the pre-military academies: a Torah scholar, a prodigy, who had been marked by the rabbi as one who would become a leading Torah scholar. However, his beautiful daughter actually fell in love with Menachem, the fighter, a character whose masculinity and activities were, as mentioned, not the ideal model for a religious couple at this time, when marriage to a Torah scholar was considered more desirable. The message from the film was that in order to make a beautiful woman fall in love with you, it was preferable to be an officer in the Paratrooper Brigade than a Torah scholar in a yeshiva. This insight had apparently surfaced

when the screenplay for this film was written, which had required the screenwriter – Yossi Sider – to live in the settlement of Dolev for two years.

The message that a soldier was more attractive than a Torah scholar was also reflected in the choice of actors. Menachem, the officer, was played by Aki Avni, who then was the ultimate celebrity, the idol of Israeli youth, a muscular actor-model, who had already acted in the television series ‘Basic Training’ as the company commander of a troop of recruits in the *Givati* Brigade. The daughter was played by the well-known actress Ravit Rosen, nicknamed Tinkerbelle for playing a loose, childish young woman, sometime appearing nude in her movie scenes, who was the subject of gossip columns, and an icon in feature nightclubs. Pini was played by the comic actor Idan Alterman – who is viewed by Israeli culture as the typecast of a pitiful, luckless clown, reminding one of the Diaspora Jew in his physique (short and thin), he is weak and pale, and wears glasses. The film *HaHesder* was produced by a religious Zionist and was very popular among religious nationalists in Israel.²⁸ As I will demonstrate below, in the real settlements, and not just in films, the character of Menachem became more popular than that of Pini. Thus the territories were transformed from an area that had essentially been religious and faith oriented to one that was now militaristic and security oriented.

Judea and Samaria – the “militarized space”

The revolution engendered by the pre-military academies had a special, recognizable influence on the image and management of Judea and Samaria, which became what can be labelled a ‘Security Space’: a leading area in all indexes – percentages of draftees into the army; adopting militaristic, cultural characteristics; and militaristic habitus among the youth.

Pre-military academies east of the Green Line

The first pre-military academy was founded in the Eli settlement in Samaria and since then has flourished there. It is labelled ‘The Mother of the Academies’ – a model for imitation by other such institutions. Likewise, the first non-religious pre-military academy was founded about a decade afterwards in the Nili settlement, also east of the Green Line.²⁹ Nowadays, out of 36 pre-military academies, 41.66% (15 academies) are east of the 1967 boundary (12 in Judea and Samaria and three in the Golan Heights).³⁰ Across all pre-military academies, 74% of senior staff were from the settlements beyond the 1967 boundary.

Regional military draft statics

In 2010, investigators of the IDF’s Manpower Directorate analysed the recruitment index in the regional councils. First place for numbers of inductees into the army was taken by the regional council of Mount Hebron, with 96.4%.

Among the inductees of the settlements of this area, 83.3% served in combat units.³¹ In that year it was also found that 61% of the inductees from Samaria chose to serve in combat units, in contrast to 36% from Tel Aviv.³²

In 2011 it was found that there was an increase in male inductees in Samaria – 81.2% of that area's population, in contrast to the national average of 74.8%. In addition, it was found that the percentage of soldiers who were attached to combat units stood at 67.1% for draftees from Samaria in contrast to the national average of 39.5%. Similarly, the percentage of volunteers for officer courses was higher in Samaria: 15.9% of the draftees (i.e. one out of six draftees from Samaria) became officers, while the national average was only 8.3%. Finally, it was found that 88% of the draftees from Samaria (i.e. nine out of ten) chose what was called 'meaningful army service' (i.e. combat units).

This data was repeated in 2013 – the inductees from Judea and Samaria had the highest percentages joining combat units.³³ A breakdown of towns showed that out of five towns that had the most draftees who joined combat units, three were in Judea and Samaria. First place was taken by Beit-El, where more than 86% of the men born in 1991 served in combat units. Third place was taken by Efratah in the Etzion Bloc, where the percentage was 81% of men born in 1991 joining combat units; and fourth place was taken by the regional council of Mt. Hebron with 78.4%. An analysis of the men who became officers demonstrated that the Judean and Samaritan settlements took the first two places: First place was taken by Efratah in the Etzion Bloc, where 23% of the inductees became officers (every fourth inductee volunteered to become an officer and served longer in the army) while the second settlement was Oranit on the Green Line, where 19% volunteered to become officers.

Even more interesting are the statistics for the city Ariel, the only urban, secular settlement in Judea and Samaria. A non-religious city in character, not a communal settlement, most of its residents originate from Eastern Europe with doubts lingering about their Jewishness, and yet the militaristic habitus is active: For example, in 2011 the head of GHQ, Major General Oranah Barbeebai, presented the percentages of urban inductees. Ariel was one of the four cities where the percentage of draftees was above 90%, and was one of the cities where the increase in male draftees was quite significant.³⁴ In 2012 Ariel was in fourth place in the list of settlements for the percentage of inductees, receiving a certificate of merit from the head of GHQ.³⁵

The increase in the presence of settlers in the army can be linked to the pre-military academies projects which kindled the militaristic habitus in this area. In the beginning of the 2000s, an anonymous officer (whose army duty was classified) published an article in the army magazine *Ma'archot* based upon his research during his course of studies at a military college for officers. He divided the graduates of religious institutions on officer courses in the land forces of the IDF into sections.

From his findings, one can learn that until 1992 the number of religious soldiers on officer courses was marginal. However, between the years 1993 and

2000, the increase was six-fold, while in 2000 there was even a higher increase. Thus, in 1990 2.5% of the cadets were from religious institutions. In 2000 the figure was 15.5%, and in 2011 42% of the cadets hailed from religious schools. The officer explained the phenomenon as resulting from the pre-military academies: 80% of their graduates are combat soldiers and 25% of them are officers. In contrast, within the army in general, only 40% of the soldiers were in combat units and only 7% were officers.³⁶ The academies, as noted, were mostly located in Judea and Samaria, and attracted national-religious youth from throughout the State of Israel.

Pro-army civilian projects

In contrast to other areas in Israel, during the last few years the settlement councils of Samaria have financed programmes to encourage motivation to serve in the army, including programmes like 'The Selected of Samaria' or *Gavish* (lit. Crystal) which bolster the youth by having them acquire leadership skills and values that prepare them for meaningful military service in the IDF. 'The Selected of Samaria' programme operates in 15 settlements throughout all of Samaria and its essential objective is to provide youth with the best skills required to meet the challenges of adolescence, when the draft is the most dominant. The coordinator of preparations for the IDF in the Department of Youth in the Samaria Regional Council promoted this programme, its objective being to adapt and expand the programmes to the differing character of the settlements: secular, religious, mixed. The programme includes mental and physical preparations, learning about the structure of the army, and workshops to aid the inductee in coping with the challenges of the army. Emphasis is placed on the regional context: not only cultivating the mission, and pride that Samaria led the percentages of inductees, but learning about the security significance of Samaria, as well as the roles played by Judea and Samaria in Jewish history, which would probably intensify motivation to defend it. Similar to what was undertaken by pre-military academies, the high school students meet with army men, with heads of the regional council, and with key figures in Israeli society. It would appear that this regional enterprise to send students to the IDF explains why the Department of Youth of the Regional Council of Samaria received the Ministry of Education's regional prize for their achievements.³⁷

Hence, not only students of the academies but all students in Samaria find themselves together with military personal in open boundaries. For example, during Chanukah 2011, the youth of Samaria joined the soldiers of the Samarian Brigade in a march which ended with a joint ceremony of lighting Chanukah candles at the brigade's base. 'This is just another event among a chain of events that link settlement youth as well as the settlers themselves with the soldiers of the IDF who serve in this sector', explained the coordinator of the youth of the Itamar settlement. The march passed the village of Ovarta, the location of the Fogel family murderers. The coordinator explained: 'Such an event broadcasts

the vigour of our youth as well as the vitality of the connection with IDF soldiers. We are with the soldiers the entire year. They protect us . . . our association with the soldiers cannot be severed.³⁸

Which pre-military academy produces more combat soldiers? A spatial community culture of military-republican competition

Further testimony of how deeply the pre-military academies revolution has become rooted within religious society is found in how the mass media covers this phenomenon. Such coverage views the military profession, especially combat soldiers, as a preferable, desired, normative option, valued by the new religious youth. For example, under the title of ‘Mostly Combat Soldiers: The March of the Combat Academies of Religious Zionism’ (<http://www.kipa.co.il/>), a report measured the pre-military academies according to how their graduates integrated within IDF combat and command positions.³⁹

If in the past the *hesder yeshivot* had been ranked according to how many of their graduates became important and influential rabbis; now ‘combat soldiers’ and ‘military commands’ are the new ethos in ranking pre-military academies. Once again the Judea and Samaria areas were in the lead. First places were taken by the pre-military academies beyond the Green Line, noted as the most promising and attractive institutions, whose graduates had the best chances of fulfilling their aim in joining the academy – to become integrated in combat commands within the IDF.

Fourth place was taken by *Keshet Yehuda* in the Golan Heights. Third place was taken by Elisha in the settlement *Zofit* in the Benjamin region. It was found that 28% of its graduates joined officer courses, 60% held junior commands, and 85% did significant combat service. The article even noted an additional resource in the academy: due to its locale, the academy creates a continuum between the settlements of Ateret and Neve Zuf in Benjamin, thus strengthening the Jewish hold of this region. It physically forms one large Jewish bloc along the inter-Benjamin highway – with the settlers appreciating it, while the Peace Now activists were openly hostile towards it.⁴⁰ Second place was taken by Atzmona, originally in the Gaza strip, and following the withdrawal from Gaza (2005) relocated to the Eshkol region. There it was found that 30% of its graduates became officers, 66% held combat commands, and 90% of them requested combat service. First place was taken by the ‘Mother of the Academies’ – *Bnei David* in Eli. The Kipa article described:

It is no surprise to discover that the first pre-military academy, which has been active for 23 years, easily succeeds in reaching first place among the religious academies operating nowadays in Israel. This educational institution established by rabbis Eli Sadan and Yigal Levinstein, manages to produce not only heroic stories like those of the late Roi Klein, Benju Hilman, Jonathan Netnael, or Emmanuel Morano, but essentially produces hundreds of junior and senior officers who fill the ranks of the parade grounds of the *ba'd l* training camp⁴¹ as well as in IDF command posts.

It was found that more than 40% of this academy's graduate inductees participated in officer courses, 65% completed courses to become squad commanders or junior officers, and almost 90% requested combat service. The article continues:

The educational staff in Eli knows how to encourage military leadership. They are not satisfied with Talmud lectures in the Torah Study Hall, or discourses on matters of religion and faith, or citations from Rabbi Kook, but invite a slew of guest lecturers, mostly military personal, who come to the Study Hall to explain IDF battle heritage and 'turn on' the students, including: Defence Minister Moshe (Bogee) Ya'alon,⁴² former Chief of Staff Reserve Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, battalion and brigade commanders, and even officers of commando units (those whose faces are distorted when appearing on television). They not only recount complex operations, but mostly the importance of the audiences' contribution to the IDF. Apparently, their words do not fall on deaf ears.⁴³

The article recounted the Eli academy's achievements, even if some were tragic:

Majors Benjy Hillman and Roi Klein who were killed in Lebanon were its graduates. Since its establishment 18 years ago, 50% of its graduates are officers ... and it has lost 17 soldiers until now [which comprises] 1% of all its graduates ... Four candidates compete for each of the 120 places in a new year of students.⁴⁴

The article is written like a report about an elite university and the number of graduates in job markets, or about a music academy or college of fine arts and their graduates who have filled positions in the field of music and art.

This ranking of pre-military academies is not new. For example, in 2006 an article on this topic was published entitled 'IDF's Most Combat Soldiers' and it also found that the academy in Eli was top in a number of military achievements.⁴⁵

Judea and Samaria in the mind of the academy students

From these studies it appears that many of these pre-military academies, whether beyond the Green Line or within it, are exposed to the regions of Judea and Samaria in their tours and lectures, as the students learn about the strategic value of these areas, as well as their place in Jewish national history. The students, including those in Samaria's pre-military academies, frequently tour these areas, an experience that transforms these regions into a natural element of the inventory of landscapes, regions, and sites that comprise the Israeli experience in general, and especially that of adolescence. As already mentioned, even non-religious pre-military academies are located beyond the Green Line in Samaria.

The last non-religious pre-military academy was established in the Hermesh settlement in northern Samaria in 2014. When its founder, Uriel Eldad, son of former MK Aryeh Eldad,⁴⁶ was asked concerning the meaning of having the academy in Samaria, he replied: 'Since the early 2000s these areas no longer interest the youth ... The Arabs indeed want to wipe us out, and thus all the discourse concerning Judea and Samaria is irrelevant.'⁴⁷ One of the students,

from the Sharon region on the Coastal Plain, explained that he came to the academy in order to increase his chances of being accepted into the navy commandos, and the academy's location over the Green Line is meaningless for him: 'I have no problem with the settlement being in Judea and Samaria. On the contrary, here is a weak settlement that needs to be fortified, and I am not interested in the locale.'⁴⁸ In the opening ceremony, Yossi Dagan, deputy head of the Regional Council of Samaria, lectured the students, saying:

Northern Samaria in general and specifically Hermesh is the most important national mission nowadays. Most of our culture as a Jewish nation was formed here in northern Samaria. From a security point of view, this area is vitally strategic – two kilometres is the Hadera Power Station. Hermesh is the heart of the state, overlooking the centre of the land and the Sharon Mountains. Thus, our correct answer as Zionists eager to contribute to the state is to come and strengthen settlements like Hermesh and the pioneering people who live here.⁴⁹

Military appreciation

In the last few years, the pre-military academies have been adopted by the IDF's operational brigades. The students of each pre-military academy take part in 'field workshops' as well as combat fitness training led by soldiers from these brigades. The students visit the brigades' facilities, and attend lectures and meetings with representatives of all the IDF's land forces. These activities are funded by the Ministry of Defence.⁵⁰

The cooperation between the army and the pre-military academies has become partially formal, as the army itself turns to the heads of the academies when it wants assistance in channelling graduates to a certain branch of the army, should there be a need for the manpower there.⁵¹ Sometimes senior officers compete to receive and absorb these graduates into the brigades or units under their command.

Local testimony to this feeling of cooperation and obligation of the army towards the students of the pre-military academies can be found in the order issued by the commander of GHQ to grant leave to all graduates of the pre-military academy of Eli from their respective units, in order to attend a special assembly conducted for them. In spite of the complaints of many of their commanders, the army explained that the order had been issued 'for the significant long term contribution of many academy graduates during their army service'.⁵²

The pre-military academies' strategic significance for the army can be seen in vol. 16 of the series *Iyyunim beBetachon Leumi* (Studies in National Security) published in 2011 on the topic 'The Contribution of the Pre-Military Academies to the Army and the Religious–Non-Religious Discourse'. This is a series of publications by the research centre of the IDF's 'National Security College' – the highest military institution, whose commander is a major general in the IDF, entrusted to intellectually prepare senior officers. As stated in their advertisements, their objective is to disseminate these publications among 'the

political leadership, the professional echelons which make decisions, and the operative echelons, students of the National Security College who will be future authorities, senior academics, newspapermen, academic think tanks, etc.’⁵³

This series focused upon the issues reflecting the agenda of the heads of the security forces and the IDF, which the National Security College heads considered suitable to be brought to the attention of their unique audiences. The fact that this issue of the journal chose to include a study about the pre-military academies reinforces the point that this phenomenon was marked as significant for the army.

The heads of the army and security forces frequently visit the pre-military academies in general, and especially the *Bnei David* academy in Eli, in order to emphasize their acknowledgment and esteem of it as a central and significant agent in encouraging service in the IDF. Thus, they have marked both the academy and the settlement, without any connection to its being beyond the Green Line, as having clear, revolutionary, national significance.

These are the words of Minister of Defence and former Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon in Eli at the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the pre-military academy:

This settlement, with its men and women, is attempting to breathe new life into the Zionist dream. In the centre of the settlement, there is a revolutionary educational institution, which has altered higher education in Israel: the pre-military academy *Bnei David*. *Bnei David* Academy, the pioneer of these academies, and talented officers who lead in carrying the burden of security in these last years, and the heroic deeds of the soldiers have breathed new spirit throughout the land. Personally, I know and hold in high regard the activities of this academy from its establishment when I was commanding officer of the Paratroopers Brigade. Following this academy, many more were established . . . I have come here, citizens of Eli, in the name of the government of Israel, in order to bless you: to continue to blossom and flourish, to disseminate the singular Torah studied in the Study Hall here, the Torah of the Land of Israel, at all levels of the people for the good of us all.⁵⁴

In 2012, the commander of GHQ, Major General Orna Barbiebai, sent a letter of greeting to the head of the regional council of Samaria, Gershon Masika, after learning that Samaria had the highest percentage of inductees among Israelis. She wrote:

These facts, which should be a source of pride for you and all the citizens of this region, demonstrate, among other things, the influence of significant activities undertaken by the regional council to increase the awareness for meaningful [military] service and preparations towards it. Receive my appreciation and thanks to you and all who are involved for their good work.⁵⁵

Political-cultural positioning of the militarized space

It is interesting to note the dynamic ramifications concerning the positioning of the settlers in Judea and Samaria in general and the families of the soldiers in particular. From the study it becomes clear that the ‘territories’ not only produce

soldiers and influence the image of the settlers and religious Zionists among the Israeli public, but facilitated the forming of a new identity for the settlers and graduates of the pre-military academies themselves.

Starting in 1967, the identity of the settlers had been defined by their positioning in the movement of building settlements in uninhabited areas, in order to view them as continuing the *kibbutz* and *moshav* movements, who had been the pioneers of practical Zionism. This was coupled with a religious positioning, which became prominent at the beginning of this millennium, as they presented themselves as fulfilling the commandment of settling the Land of Israel, working towards returning Israeli society to biblical holy sites like Hebron, Shilo, and Bethlehem. These were the two areas of positioning that the settlers had located themselves: the non-religious Zionist settlement movement and the Judaica-biblical field. The revolution caused by the pre-military academies led to a new identity by their positioning with regard to many groups within Israeli society by means of a republican parameter: the extent of military contribution. This novelty, as will be demonstrated, facilitated separation from groups whose previous positioning had attempted to align the settlers with them. This new positioning with regard to these groups, no longer being linked to their heritage, gave the settlers a leading moral status, and for the first time placed them in the vanguard, as the elite, holding the ultimate moral capital – sacrifice for the sake of Israeli society.

An alternative to ‘the state of Tel Aviv’

The moral superiority felt by the settlers due to their sons’ military service is especially noticeable with regard to the non-religious Israeli population associated with the upper middle class, who usually hold left-wing political views. This sector, stemming from the *kibbutz*, *moshav*, or urban centres, comprises the Israeli elite, the second and third generation of the founders of the State of Israel, and in the past had essentially carried the burden of defence. However, in the present millennium, this sector has become more sensitive to the expenditures of war: financially, in loss of life and limb, and in diminished freedoms.⁵⁶ Thus, the upper middle class generally negates the legitimacy of employing military means, preferring to solve confrontation with diplomacy, with an inclination to compromise. Pahlavi and Ouellet referred to this sector as ‘post-heroic society’.⁵⁷ In contrast to the post-heroic society and from the point of view of the settlers, military service, readiness for sacrifice, and acting as a heroic society define them as an ethical alternative, and should confer upon them greater social admiration and esteem, as well as cultural preference.

From the metaphoric point of view of the settlers, the ‘post-heroic society’ is identified with Tel Aviv, which is a post-national, non-religious, liberal, cosmopolitan metropolis, representing all the ‘illnesses’ that have pervaded Israeli society. Accordingly, regarding Tel Aviv and all it represents, the settlers are both its opposition and its ‘cure’. In 2007, eulogizing his friend who had been

murdered by Palestinian terrorists, Benaya Sarel (a settler from Hebron, who fell in the 2014 Gaza war, Operation Protective Edge, as a commander of a reconnaissance platoon in the *Givati Brigade*) said:

Tomorrow morning, a complete state that dwells on the plain,⁵⁸ will wake up and be interested in how many centimetres has Ninet's hair grown.⁵⁹ All the non-combatant soldiers,⁶⁰ all those draft dodgers, have not gotten up in those hours where you have already finished to march, to hike, to fight, and to die.⁶¹

In 2010 the data concerning inductees to the IDF was published according to the breakdown of cities. Tel Aviv was in 18th place with regard to the percentage of its youth, prompting Yisrael Harel, former head of the Judea, Samaria, and Gaza council, to publish an article entitled 'Tel Aviv is Isolated and Draft Dodging':

A city of 400,000 people in which only three of its citizens serve as company commanders, while in the settlement of Beruchin in Samaria, where there are fewer than 600 settlers, live six company commanders . . . It is for naught that it is referred to as the 'State of Tel-Aviv'.⁶²

Harel's essay led to a polemic in which someone defended the 'State of Tel-Aviv' not as one attempting to prove its contribution to the army, but, on the contrary, by glorifying the features Harel had criticized, thus reinforcing this view. Consequently, in the site 'Refusing for the Sake of Israel' – a site for resisting serving in the territories – Noam Livna, a Tel Aviv resident and founder of the Courage to Resist Movement, wrote an essay entitled 'Here in the State of Tel Aviv'. In it she turned to Harel, stating:

Here in the State of Tel Aviv we want to celebrate life and not death. We do not apologize for this . . . There is nothing holy or worthy of esteem in the army and in war . . . The headmasters of the high schools censured by Harel are worthy of praise – for they reflect the spirit of the city. *A school is not a pre-military academy.*⁶³

The criticism of Tel Aviv was also expressed by senior security officials. For example, when the IDF Chief Rabbi Avichai Ronzky, also a former combat officer, was discharged from the army, he stated: 'I hate the State of Tel Aviv. There, conversation is different, with display windows and bridal salons'.⁶⁴ Upon his retirement as commander of the Shai⁶⁵ region of the police, Major General Shlomee Katavi said in his retirement interview:

The settlers are the salt of the earth . . . People in Tel Aviv contribute zero to the state . . . These are the same people who oppose the settlers; they are the same people whose willingness to contribute to the state amounts to one big zero. They sit there in Tel Aviv, parking their jeeps on the steps of Shenkin,⁶⁶ sipping Espresso, crossing their legs, conversing, criticizing, and exchanging experiences.⁶⁷

An alternative to the Ultra-Orthodox

By means of nationally (and not religiously) positioning themselves within Israeli society through their army service, the settlers in particular, and national-Zionist youth in general, could, for the first time, clearly separate themselves from the

Hareidi (Ultra-Orthodox) community. For the most part, the Ultra-Orthodox as a non-Zionist population do no military service, and for years the national-religious sector refrained from attacking them, for within religious discourse they were viewed as partners in justifying an Israeli presence in the territories for religious reasons. Now, for the first time, the new positioning changed the settlers, even more than the non-religious, to aggressively argue with Ultra-Orthodox society.

Thus Avichai Ronzky, former IDF chief rabbi and a religious Zionist, expressed these sentiments during the debate over Ultra-Orthodox rights when justifying why army service should be the parameter for social hierarchy in Israeli society:

The general rule that 'one who gives is one who receives' is a simple one. Army service is a basic obligation of the citizen via-a-vis the state and nation . . . Army service should be a requirement for any public office: ministers, members of the Knesset, as well as rabbis.⁶⁸

In a special pamphlet published by his academy, Rabbi Eli Sadan, founder of the pre-military academy in Eli, Samaria, turned to the Ultra-Orthodox public:

We are obligated to serve in the army, even the rabbis among us . . . Tell the truth! There is nothing more shameful and demeaning, as well as profaning God's name, than using the Crown of the Torah for naught and falsehood. You cannot claim that you do not serve in the army because you are occupied with building the Torah . . . How will the majority of the Torah world be diminished if a brief military service is undertaken . . . and, then they would return to their studies, thereby being Torah scholars who share the burden of defence and existence of the state with their colleagues?⁶⁹

An alternative to the Hesder Yeshiva

After the pre-military academies revolution there was an unprecedented positioning with regard to a segment of religious Zionists who chose to send their sons to the traditional *hesder yeshivot* and not to the pre-military academies. This was a precedent making separation from persons from the same sector, the same lifestyle and political views, with the only difference being how much obligation should there be towards military service, in addition to an investment in it.

As noted above, with the inception of the pre-military academies, for the first time the *hesder yeshivot* appeared less attractive to religious-Zionist youth.⁷⁰ Applications to the *hesder* institutions continually decreased, especially among this sector's elite. The elite who had formerly wished their sons to become Torah scholars, experts in Talmud, and consequently sent them to the *hesder yeshivot* after high school, now sent them to the pre-military academies. This was a result of the legitimization granted to the pre-military academies by the rabbis who headed them, urging students to study with them, and then continue to combat service in the IDF.

Just as with the 'State of Tel Aviv', the *hesder yeshiva* track became identified with bourgeois religious Zionists living on the coastal plain in proximity to Tel Aviv and its lifestyle, and not in Judea and Samaria. As a religious parallel to Tel Aviv, the towns of Givat Shmuel and Ra'anana were marked as urban bourgeois districts for upper middle class religious Zionists, academicians, and intellectuals, an alternative to the settlers in the mountain

regions, i.e. Judea and Samaria, who are involved with settlements and military service. In contrast to pre-military academy students in Judea and Samaria, the *hesder* students preserved the old image of the religious Zionist, someone uninvolved with national achievements.

Therefore, Rabbi Eli Sadan stated in a lecture in his Eli academy and which became popular in the internet:

Someone who does *hesder* and serves [only] 14 months – the army has no real significance for him, he just does the track and returns to his studies ... for the army is something ‘tangential’ ... in the *hesder*, army service is ‘tangential’. The army does not interest them and they move onwards.

Sadan also attacked the equal public image enjoyed by the students of the pre-military academies and the *hesder yeshivot*: ‘How does someone who does his [brief military] track and then returns to the yeshiva contribute more than someone who goes on to [military] commands and operations?’⁷¹

Likewise, former chief rabbi of the IDF, Amichai Ronzky, who lives in Samaria, attacked religious Zionists who send their sons to *hesder yeshivot*:

In my opinion, there is a great desecration of God’s name, and they have to make a reckoning ... There are some who should not receive a deferment from complete military service ... One must instruct the students that learning is equal to military service. There is no such thing that students get up late, study half a day, and then leave to attend a bar-mitzvah or wedding.⁷²

Yisrael Harel, former head of the regional council of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and an important publicist, attacked religious Zionists, members of his own sector, who chose *hesder yeshivot* over full military service:

Religious Zionists view military service in the IDF as a commandment, and not just a civil duty. They declare, in contrast to the separatist Ultra-Orthodox, that their way is one of integration ... [However], religious Zionists [who support *hesder yeshivot*] are in effect, especially in their opposition to extend the military service of the *hesder* students so that it should be equal to all inductees, proving that the narrow interests as dictated by the rabbis take precedence over national interests.⁷³

Their historical positioning did not allow the settlers and the graduates of the pre-military academies to separate themselves from these groups. However, for the first time the discourse by the settlers as well as by extensive segments of religious Zionism had become a republican discourse, supporting a cultural hierarchy according to an index of maintaining republican civil values: sacrifice and military service. This gives a moral advantage of one religious group over the other, thus creating a cultural gap within the national-religious public over issues of military service and ethos.

Summary

Separation and positioning – the image of the settlers in the militarized condition

The various developments testify that the national-religious public began to be more identified with Judea and Samaria as these areas became an inseparable part

of its existence, both practically and ideologically. Starting in the early 1990s, the Mizrahi party in its various developments became more hawkish, right-wing, supporting continuing Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria.⁷⁴ Various surveys demonstrate that the majority of religious Zionists have not only support and an emotional attachment to Jewish settlement of these territories, but have family members and friends living there. As Leon has noted:

The settlement landscape is an inseparable part of the world of the urban religious-Zionist community ... the Green Line [is] ... meaningless in the daily life of the religious Zionist public, and for them, just like for those who habitually cross this line ... the settlement movement serves as a basis of the religious-Zionist theory ... as someone susceptible to the overwhelming influence of the experience of living in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza; and thus, it is fitting to talk about present-day religious Zionism as religious Zionism in the generation of settlements.⁷⁵

Even before identifying the settlers' sons with military sacrifice, the settlers had already formulated an image of superior morality, positioning themselves as an alternative to the Israeli founding elites, since they were their successors in settling the land.

Thus, for example, the head of the regional council of Samaria wrote concerning 'the intense emptiness in other groups, essentially in leftist circles ... in contrast to real national challenges that Judea, Samaria, and Gaza attempt to meet'.⁷⁶ The new military identity brought about by the pre-military academies furthered this view among the settlers that they were the only individuals who were involved with achievement and national sacrifice. Justification for their claims of entitlement to public esteem originated in their parents' achievements and their own military sacrifice. For the first time, this feeling derived from their contribution to the general public, and not from sectorial achievements. As Benny Katzover, former head of the regional council of Samaria, and a founder of the religious political movement, *Gush Emunim*, expressed it:

The settlement of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza generated a new right-wing generation, for the most part religious. There is almost no high school yeshiva that hasn't visited Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, areas that have in effect educated an entire generation. Also the number of *hesder yeshivot* and pre-military academies that have been established in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza is greater than all of the rest of the country ... the young generation of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza joins the top quality army units, and establishes new settlements in the roughest areas.⁷⁷

Katzover has touched upon one of the most significant achievements of the pre-military academies in Samaria and other regions of Israel: They became the institutions that absorbed religious-Zionist youth from all over the country, and gave them a productive experience in Judea and Samaria. Hence, these areas had intense psycho-political significance for them. Accordingly, there was an attempt to frame this area and its inhabitants as taking the lead in contribution to country and society, but as sacrificing itself for the state, creating within itself its soldiers and officers and not an extorting sector thinking only of itself.

The sectorial image became a public one. In a unique survey conducted each year that examines the perception of citizens living beyond the Green Line, it was found that regarding the question 'Who represents the settlers the most?' the response was the same for five straight years: 'the sons of the religious Zionists who serve as soldiers in the IDF'. Much lower in the survey were the rabbis of Judea and Samaria, the heads of the *yeshivot* in Judea and Samaria, and others.⁷⁸

Regional pride exists because of the fact that this popular national model had been created in Judea and Samaria. Yuval Kahan, who heads the pre-military academy in Tel Aviv, wrote a column entitled 'Religious Academies as Models' and argued for copying the success of the religious pre-military academies to the mixed pre-military academies, i.e. having religious and non-religious students:

Twenty years ago Rabbi Eli Sadan founded the first religious pre-military academy in the Eli settlement of Samaria. This enterprise began a real revolution concerning the state of national-religious men in the army: in those days the best boys were inducted to a brief, divided military service in segregated units . . . Nowadays, the elite units and officer courses are totally filled with religious persons.⁷⁹

Thus, although they were in Judea and Samaria, outside Israeli sovereignty, it was recognized that it was precisely there that those who served in the most Israeli sovereign organization, the IDF, were formed. This led to the army itself feeling an obligation to this area due to the supply of soldiers and officers who join the army, its ethos and culture, and the pre-military academies located there. As Sheleg has written:

All of a sudden, thanks to the pre-military academies, the IDF reached to the national-religious sector, a concentrated mass of hundreds of students a year who have impressive motivation to serve in the army, and are potential officers . . . This immense mass of men is catapulted to the army by rabbis . . . and most of the academies are located in the territories of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.⁸⁰

This, of course, has been accompanied by public interest and much media coverage. Thus, *Haaretz* newspaper choose to include a special article entitled: 'Three Religious Graduates from the Academy in Yatir to Conclude a Flying Course Tomorrow.'⁸¹

Sectorial and personal cultural transformation

The academies were perceived as being responsible for the new prototype of religious youth, for the psycho-cultural transformation that allows a religious person to do what he wants. This is relevant not only to young men, but has relevance to young women as well. The first religious pilot in the IDF became head of a pre-military academy where he received students who wanted to be like him. The first religious female navigator in the IDF – Tamar Ariel – joined a flying course after she had studied in Zahali, a pre-military academy for religious young women that prepares them to cope with the combat fitness requirements, among other things. Moreover, her tragic death in an avalanche in Nepal resulted in publicity about her, thereby contributing to the perception that by means of the pre-military academy,

with rabbinic authority and legitimacy, a religious young woman can become 'cool', and undergo extraordinary experiences. The stories printed about her, appearing even in religious newspapers and journals, include her rescue from a jet crash; her participation in military flights over Gaza during Operation Iron Edge; an adventurous trip to a third world country, etc.⁸² Her picture in flight jacket or in her mountaineering clothes (wearing pants instead of a skirt as is the norm in the religious world) also augmented this perception. Religious girls who desire openness towards a non-religious lifestyle would now find the pre-military academy and army service a legitimate means of realizing this.

There is a myth from the first years of the State of Israel: when national-religious citizens complained to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion that they were not fully integrated in public administration or lacked the same status as non-religious citizens, he asked them: 'How many of you are [buried] in military cemeteries?' In effect, republican logic – i.e. military sacrifice – was the only parameter for one's civil status. It would appear that on a personal, sectorial, and cultural level, the pre-military academies revolution has led religious Zionists and the settlers to military cemeteries, both in reality and symbolically, i.e. everything connected to their positioning and status within Israeli society.

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