

Cong Bnai Yeshurun Remembers Israeli Troops: Water Packs for Hareidi Soldiers



B'nai Yeshurun just donated 150 water backpacks to the soldiers in the Nachal Hareidi Battalion of the IDF

CONG BNAI YESHURUN of Teaneck has long prided itself on its close connection to numerous organizations and activities in Israel.

For the past ten years, on Yom Ha'atzmaut, the shul's Men's Club has sponsored a Kiddush on behalf of organizations which support Israeli troops.

Members who participate in the Kiddush donate \$180 for the cause. According to Jon Bendauid, the head of the IDF Kiddush committee, at least half of Bnai Yeshurun's membership participated this year, allowing the shul to raise \$50,000.

"Over the years, we have supported Friends of the IDF, Beit Halochem, and Bshvil Machar," said Mr. Bendauid, adding that Bnai Yeshurun's spiritual leader, Rabbi Steven Pruzansky, not only supports the Kiddush, but delivers a drasha encouraging others to do so, too.

Giving to the IDF

Based in New York, Friends of the IDF was established in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors

to provide for the wellbeing of the men and women who serve in the IDF as well as the families of Israel's fallen soldiers. With its motto, "Their job is to look after Israel; ours is to look after them," FIDF supports a scholarship program, a leadership training program that specializes in Jewish studies, touring programs, programs that help soldiers with financial problems, and programs to help soldiers whose families live abroad and who are in Israel alone. The organization works to integrate Ethiopian Jews as well as teenagers from difficult backgrounds into the IDF. It also helps family members deal with the loss of loved ones who died in the IDF.

With centers in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Nahariya, Beit Halochem provides facilities where disabled Israeli soldiers can participate in sports and related activities suited to their individual needs. The spacious centers, situated on beautiful campuses and in scenic areas, are conducive to successful

rehabilitation by maintaining the individual's physical fitness and preventing deterioration. Each center offers a wide variety of social and creative activities, including music, classrooms, fitness rooms, gyms, swimming pools, a cafeteria, and occupational and physical therapy.

Bshvil Machar is an Israeli organization designed to help Israeli soldiers suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Nachal Hareidi

This year, the lion's share of funds raised through the IDF Kiddush went to Yashar LaChayal, an Israel-based non-profit that provides combat soldiers with goods and services.

According to Lisa Weinsoff, project coordinator for Yashar LaChayal, among other goods and services donated by Bnai Yeshurun were 150 water backpacks given to the Nachal Hareidi Battalion.

Created in 1999 on the premise that Torah and mitzvot should underlie the physical strength required by the IDF,

Nachal Hareidi was founded by a group of rabbis as a venue for young men who wish to serve the national interests of the State of Israel while adhering to the highest religious standards.

Supported by the IDF, Nachal Hareidi soldiers contribute to Israel's military defense, within a framework for personal and professional achievement that promotes a Torah-true lifestyle in every way.

"From a small unit of 30 soldiers, Nachal Hareidi has become an IDF battalion of close to 1,000 troops and now aims to reach the requisite threshold for designation as a fully operative infantry brigade," said Ms. Weinsoff.

Yashar LaChayal

According to Mr. Bendauid, Bnai Yeshurun felt comfortable donating to Yashar LaChayal and following its instructions as to where the needs are greatest because the organization deducts nothing for administrative costs.

"It is funded by the family of Dr. and Mrs. Irving Moskowitz,

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ranging from the extremist Al Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra (Al Nusra Front) to more moderate factions which claim to be seeking democratic reforms.

The rebels are supported by all other Sunni-dominated Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, who see the rebels as striking back at Shiite-dominated Iran. Because Mr. Assad has used chemical weapons against the rebels, the US is now also committed to supporting them against the Syrian regime.

No Game Changers

Neither Israel nor the US wants any of these parties to gain access to weapons of mass destruction. US plans call for deploying forces on the ground, as well as waves of airstrikes, to assure that the chemical and biological components are neutralized.

For Israel, the main concern is the armaments already in Syria, such as anti-aircraft weapons, chemical weapons, and others that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "game changers."

"They will change the conditions, the balance of power in the Middle East. They could present a terrorist threat on a worldwide scale. It is definitely our interest to defend

ourselves, but we also think it is in the interest of other countries," he said.

Who Can Win?

For some in Israel, it has become a pastime trying to decide which side in Syria has the upper hand and which could win. For months, it was assumed that Mr. Assad stood no chance at all, but last month, some Israeli officials, buttressed by the opinion of those in the Negev Bedouin Arab community, have predicted that the Syrian president is likely to be in office longer than most analysts believed, due primarily to the support he is receiving from Iran.

Last month it was reported that Iran sent 4,000 new troops to help Mr. Assad crush the rebel forces. This report came on the heels of news that the Obama administration plans to provide military aid to the rebels. The US has been providing them with non-lethal assistance for some time, and is upgrading its assistance after a report found that the Assad regime had used chemical weapons.

Some observers say this means the US will be plunged into the Sunni-Shiite conflict and will be held responsible for every war crime and atroc-

ity committed by the rebels.

Russian Aid

In May, Russia admitted it had agreed to sell Mr. Assad advanced aircraft interception technology, which could prevent Israel's air force from destroying Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

Lobbied by Israel to cancel the sale of the anti-aircraft system, Russia maintained it has an obligation to complete the deal. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei

Lavrov said his country is not in a hurry to deliver the equipment.

Moscow and China have regularly blocked attempts by other permanent members of the UN Security Council to condemn Mr. Assad's regime for its brutality.

Russia has said it objects to plans by the United States and other Western nations to arm the rebels. According to leaders in Moscow, the factions committed to de-

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define a common American set of values. Agudah fears that today's legal theory is driven by moral relativism in which there is no absolute standard. The Supreme Court ruling now enshrines that standardlessness in American law.

**Micha Berger
Passaic, NJ**

a marriage, you need a man and a woman." Agudath Israel does not face this same challenge.

**Carl Singer
Passaic, NJ**

people becoming one flesh. At heart, it is about procreation, even if the couple is infertile or doesn't want children. G-d bless two same-sex people who choose to live together, but all political organizations should oppose their being treated as married.

**Norman Rosner
Passaic, NJ**

decision not to discriminate against any specific group of people, and, in that sense, I don't think the ruling has a moral implication.

The problem is with the word "marriage." I am sorry that the court is calling the same-sex union by that word instead of calling it a civil union. Blurring the language can have a dangerous impact on the morality of a society. For example, when we call a terrorist a "militant" or a "freedom fighter," we are changing the way in which we look at the person. Language is important. In Israel, in particular, there is a serious problem and the gay movement there must be very careful.

To deny the declarations of the Torah in a public and social framework implies a rejection of the Jewish identity of the state. A person can decide, on a personal level, to eat treif or violate the Sabbath. But if, on the social level, he wants to mandate laws that are against the Torah, he is essentially saying that Jewish tradition has no function in the State of Israel.

Once we go down that slippery slope, Israel can become a bi-national or non-Jewish state. I, therefore, call upon the gay community to undertake its own personal decisions without endangering the entire State of Israel.

**Rabbi David Algaze
Forest Hills, NY**

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and we trust them to do the right thing. The money goes directly to IDF soldiers, which is what we intend by holding the Kiddush," he said.

According to Mr. Bendavid, members of the shul were particularly pleased that a Teaneck Conservative synagogue, Congregation Beth Sholom, followed Bnai Yeshurun's lead and raised \$10,000 this year for Friends of the IDF at a Kiddush that was held a week before the one at Bnai Yeshurun.

"Some members of Bnai Yeshurun went to the Kiddush at Beth Sholom, and some members of Beth Sholom came to ours," said Mr. Bendavid.

What was important, he said, was that American Jews recognized the need to support the IDF.

"It's an awareness that Israelis give three years of lives defending their country—and they do it for Jews throughout the world as well—and we should support them," he said. S.L.R.