

**Moses replied to the Gadites and the Reubenites,
“Are your brothers to go to war while you stay here?”
(Numbers 32:6)**

During the current difficult and painful period, attention is focusing more than ever on the grave discrimination inherent in the unequal distribution of the burden of military service among different sections of the Israeli population. The exemption from military service granted to over 60,000 yeshiva students grossly violates the principle of equality among those who serve in the army and erodes the sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility in Israeli society. To make matters worse, the government transfers enormous sums to Haredi yeshivot whose students do not share in meeting the burden of military service.

For us, partnership and mutual responsibility among all parts of Israeli society is a value and a mitzva. This can be realized through diverse channels for giving, support, and mobilization – without exclusion and without impairing the rights of other groups in Israel.

We urge the Israeli government to end this grave discrimination, abolish the exemption from military service for the Haredi public, and establish an arrangement under which all Israeli citizens will be required to perform military or national-civilian service in a manner that reflects the value of partnership and of contributing to society and to the nation. Such an arrangement is particularly vital during the current period of combat, when hundreds of thousands of Israelis are being drafted to reserve duty, alongside soldiers serving in the standing army, and when so many have lost their lives defending the nation.

Our Sages of blessed memory taught us that “all of Israel are responsible for one another.” We all bear the responsibility to care for each other. We all share a common fate. It is time to put this saying into action and to ensure an equitable allocation of the burden.

**“Do not profit by the blood of your brother”
(Leviticus 19:16)**