



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

EIT LAASOT LASHEM

I could leave this topic to Rabbi Brander's Message from the Haftara. He said it well.

I can leave it to Rabbi Natan Slifkin's emails (emphasize the plural of the word); he says it in a variety of ways - and very strongly.

But there are topics that the fact that others speak out is not an excuse to just be a bystander.

Back in my Torah Tidbits days (make that years, 28 of them), I always tried to speak my mind but I was occasionally reminded that there were things I should not speak about in my own way. Let's leave it at that.

Here are a few ways I can say what I would like to say - one at a time. (And I would love some feedback on this - positive or negative.)

Way back then (the 60s) and there (the USA), every boy (young man) of 18 years of age had to register for the draft. It was very common for college students to delay or postpone their army service - or avoid it altogether by being classified as 2S rather than 1A. Rabbinic students readily received a 4D classification which exempted them from army service. (It was

expected that some Smicha students would voluntarily enlist as chaplains. This was so, not just for Jews, but students for the clergy of other religions, as well.

At a certain point during the Vietnam war, the U.S. reclassified all men of eligible age as 1A, basically saying that your country needs you in the army and the fact that you are a student - secular or religious will now take a backseat to the war situation.

The US government recognized that studying full time is a positive thing, but reality at that point recognized something else. Something more essential.

Do I need to spell it out?

The government and many people in Israel understand the value of full-time Torah learning as a positive activity. (Not sure that's the best word, but I'll use it.) And the same goes for secular studies.

But when we are at war, we are in serious danger. And what Moshe said to B'nei Gad and B'nei Reuven in last week's Torah reading can and must be said to fellows of eligible age - Are your brothers going out to war, and you are sitting here?

Don't think that I don't value Torah learning as a significant contribution to the war effort. But drafting guys of the right age for military

service will not at all weaken the vital weapon of Torah Learning. Younger bochrin, older men, guys not fit for the army will still be learning up a storm and that will contribute to our success.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest teacher of Torah ever. That makes Yehoshua - his talmid muvhak, the greatest Talmid Chacham and Yeshiva bocher ever. And who did Moshe choose to lead the battle against Amalek?

And today, with not only Dati Leumi frameworks for the army, but chareidi units as well, every able bodied person should be sharing the burden of our situation rather than hiding in the 4 amot of the Beit Midrash.

One further point - and not at all, a small one. One of the definitions of CHILUL HASHEM, disgracing G-d's Name, is acting in such a way that lowers the esteem of Torah in the eyes of the beholder.

Every single milu'im-nik has his life disrupted when he is called to serve. And many resent - and rightly so - the fact that their burden is not shared by the majority of the chareidi segment of the population.

Will the quality of a bocher's Torah learning suffer because of what I am saying. Possibly. But with intensified effort, that can be overcome. We are not in an ideal situation. But when

have we ever been?

I believe that more and more voices - especially from the leaders of the religious and chareidi world need to be heard loud and clear on this issue.

And speaking of Chilul HaShem - what do you think mass violent protests that disrupt the daily lives of so many people accomplish?

In normal times, someone who wants to learn full-time should have the opportunity to do so. But not at the expense of others.

And these are not normal times. **PTDT**