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# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## **Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...**

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16 Menachem Av 5768

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### The I.D.F. – What Your Country Can Do For You

[From parashah sheet "Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah" – Parashah Vaetchanan 5768

Translated by Rafael Blumberg]

When I joined the army, I thought the point was to give of myself, and I really did give of myself. Yet I received much more than I gave, and even if I pay it back all my life, I won't be able to give but a thousandth of what I have received. Only now do I understand. Only now do I feel that beforehand I was missing something. I was missing a great deal. I lacked being normal, being logical, being honest.

Beforehand I was a bit spacey, a bit theoretical, a bit unrealistic. Beforehand I was sort of wooden, sort of overly serious. Thanks to the army I became gracious and friendly. I became spontaneous. Beforehand, I made light of the nonobservant. I would look down on them. I would say that I loved them, but it was lip service. Now, that I really know them, I see what marvelous, friendly, sweet people they are. Beforehand, I would listen to myself. I thought I knew it all and understood it all. Now I listen to others. I learn from others. Thank G-d, I've learned a lot of Torah, and I thought I really know a lot. Now I see that in the army they fulfill what I learned – ideals and self-sacrifice. At first I thought that in yeshiva I was engaging

in self-sacrifice, especially when I made the effort to learn another hour, and I still think that. But now I understand something more. In the army people truly engage in “self-sacrifice” – literally.

Now I understand that back then I was part of a closed, arrogant sect. Now I am part of something big, something larger than myself – the Israel Defense Forces.