Holocaust Education for Israel’s Defense Forces

In memory of Dr. Felix Zandman
Honoring the Memory of Dr. Felix Zandman

As a great Zionist, Dr. Felix Zandman understood that the State of Israel must have the ability to defend itself. With this deep understanding, Felix devoted his talent, time and energy to improving the tanks of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and enabling the soldiers to have better weapons in their tanks. However, Felix also understood deeply that our soldiers should learn about the Holocaust so that they will understand that being a soldier in the IDF and defending the State of Israel is not only a moral obligation, it is also a moral privilege.

IDF Day Seminars at Yad Vashem

Military service is a rite of passage for young Israeli men and women, and one of the most important stages in their social and moral development. The historical significance of the Holocaust, and the questions of existence and survival of the Jewish People are extremely relevant to soldiers during their service. It is therefore through deep introspection on these crucial themes that an IDF Soldier can understand the true significance of their military service defending their country. In this regard, the IDF has made studying about the Holocaust an integral part of its education programs. Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies, on the Yad Vashem campus, cooperates closely with the IDF Education Corps to produce tailor-made programs and develop seminars to instill a sense of identity.

Every year, approximately 80,000 soldiers participate in such seminars at Yad Vashem. Participants come from all military units and echelons, ranging from recruits to high-ranking officers, from veteran Israelis to new immigrants. The IDF soldiers come to Yad Vashem for a Day Seminar which generally includes an introduction, a guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum and a workshop on topics such as: Jewish leadership during the Shoah; daily life during the Shoah; existential dilemmas of the individual during the Shoah; the character of the murderers; the story of the survivors; Israeli society and the Shoah; and others.

The Day Seminars at Yad Vashem provide IDF soldiers with knowledge of the Holocaust and its implications; reinforce a personal connection with the Jewish people and its heritage, and bolster the sense of responsibility for the destiny of the Jewish people. They also stimulate dialogue on ethical issues and helps participants internalize humanitarian values of tolerance and moral courage. In conversations with commanders who conduct follow-up discussions with their soldiers we learn that through these Seminars, soldiers clearly understand the need to defend the Jewish State and maintain our own army.
In memory of Dr. Felix Zandman, Yad Vashem invites you to partner with us in this important initiative, thus ensuring the continuation of Holocaust education for Israel's soldiers, who were so close to his heart.

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