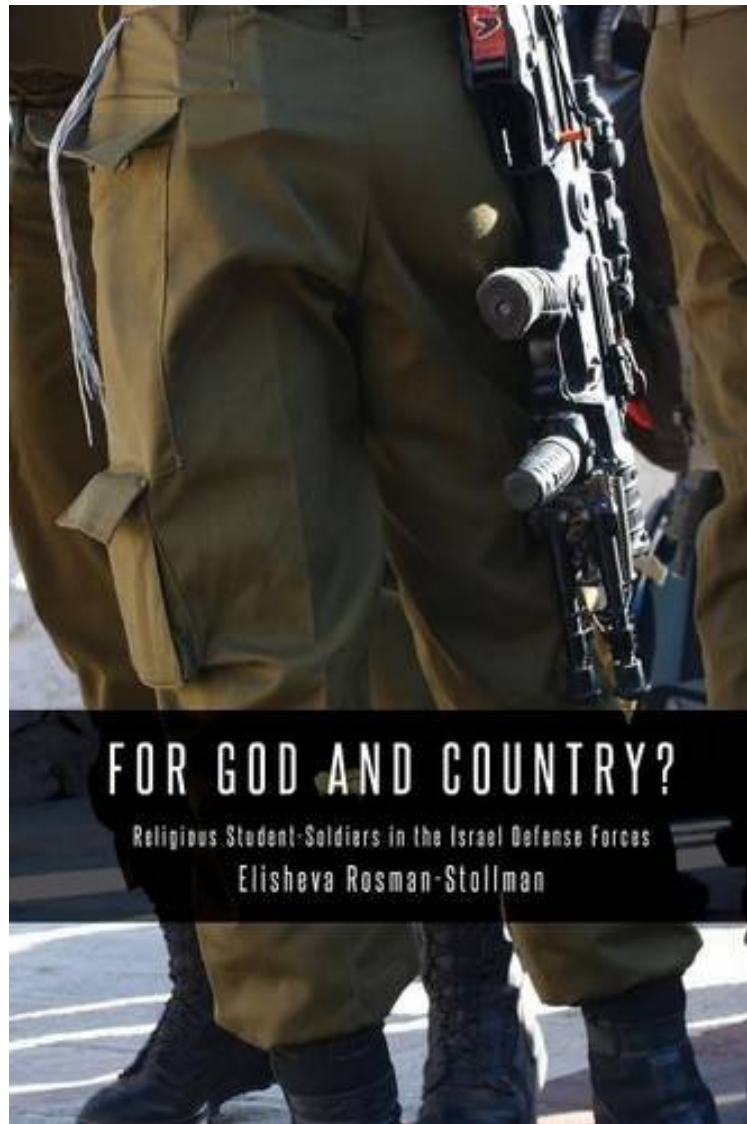


[Free download] For God and Country?: Religious Student-Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (Binah Yitzrit Foundation Series in Israel Studies)

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Elisheva Rosman-Stollman

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Elisheva Rosman-Stollman : For God and Country?: Religious Student-Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (Binah Yitzrit Foundation Series in Israel Studies) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised For God and Country?: Religious Student-Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (Binah Yitzrit Foundation Series in Israel Studies):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating book that explores the potential points of friction between religious soldiers and the military. By Ben Rothke. By and large, most non-Hebrew speakers are largely oblivious to nearly all of the civil-military issues that most Israelis deem important. In the introduction of *For God and Country?: Religious Student-Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces*, Elisheva Rosman-Stollman (Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University) writes that one of the most heatedly discussed issues by Israelis regarding civil-military relations is that of religious soldiers in the ranks. This fascinating book explores the potential points of friction between religious soldiers and the military. It also shows ways various armed forces from around the world manage these points of friction. It concentrates on the Israeli case - specifically on religious student-soldiers, with the social group focus on the Religious Zionist community. Perhaps it's ironic that some American parents have watched their sons who have not succeeded in American yeshivas, go to Israel and enlist in the IDF. These square peg Yeshiva students found their round hole in the IDF, succeeding and finding a sense of purpose. All the while staying true to their religious duties, which were so precariously held while they lived in the states. The book opens with an introduction to the notion of greedy institutions, as detailed in Coser's *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*. A greedy institution is where one is expected to serve that institution exclusively, and not belong to any rival institution. In our case, the two institutions striving for the same individual is the Yeshiva/religious institution and the IDF. In today's society, people can indeed belong to more than one greedy institution. For example, a working mother has work and family life to balance, or a professional trying to balance work and their religious life. They operate within two seemingly conflicting systems, each demanding their complete time and undivided loyalty. Rosman-Stollman then brings in the notion of mediating structures, coined by Peter Berger and Richard Neuhaus in *To Empower People: From State to Civil Society*. The term refers to the social groups and associations that exist between the individual and the state, and in this case would often be the yeshiva or seminary frameworks that serve as the mediating structures. The book provides a case study and compares three characteristics (conscription/volunteer, civil-military boundaries, defined religion) of the armies of Iran, Israel, India, Turkey and the US. Of the four other countries, the Turkish model is closest to that of Israel. Whether the notion of serving in the IDF is a religious imperative or simply a necessity is not taken for granted. The book notes that presently, those within the Hesder movement who view the Hesder option as ideal are in the majority. But she writes that there is a minority who view Hesder as an *ex post facto* solution rather than an optimal one. While most of us in the Diaspora know only of the Hesder program (started in 1965), the book details three other programs besides Hesder - mekhnitot, Shiluv program of the religious Kibbutz and midrashot for women. The book is quite clear that the military is by definition a morally corrupting environment, in that it teaches young men and women to kill and be prepared to be killed in a war, which is not generally acceptable behavior in civilian life. Regarding the morally corrupting environment of the military, the book quotes Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's classic article "HaDor" (published in 1906), that it's hard to see how "dignified and dear people disgrace and lower themselves until they themselves forget their dignity and honor." Rosman-Stollman opines the Religious Zionist view that part of the reason one should serve in the IDF is in order to change it. With that, the book notes numerous instances where youth from Religious Zionist society found themselves in a state of culture shock when they enlisted, due to the harsh encounters of army life. In chapter 9, the book provides three case studies that examine problems encountered by the students in various programs and how the students chose to solve the dilemmas they faced. Some of them used their institutions to help mediate the issues with the IDF. The author interviewed scores of enlistees, Rabbis, and senior military officers. She captures the entire gamut of emotions and all that military life entails. An interesting observation from one student was that his entire attitude to Torah and mitzvot changed from feeling like the yoke of mitzvot (ol mitzvot) to that of the pleasure of the yoke of mitzvot (no'am ol mitzvot). While the book features numerous greedy institutions, the reality is that Rosman-Stollman shows how in the case of the IDF and religious institutions, they are able to a large part accommodate each other. This is facilitated by the four unique programs where conscripts are able to attend institutions of religious learning before and during their military service. In theory, the demanding institution of the IDF is likely no place for a religious soldier whose loyalties may lay elsewhere. The reality though it that the two groups can, and do, indeed work together. As the book focuses on the Religious Zionist community whose broad-mindedness of the perceived reprehensible aspects (language, mixed-gender interactions, etc.) of military life are arguable more tolerated, the Haredi reader may find plenty of fodder for their *Weltanschauung* that the Army is no place for a Yeshiva student. Yet it's the Haredi who also has to reconcile that which Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, head of the Har Etzion yeshiva noted, that those who are opposed to the conscription of yeshiva students must remember that "the simple truth that a Jewish soul can only exist within a Jewish body", and this body must be protected. For anyone looking to understand how these two seemingly incongruous demanding institutions can operate together, *For God and Country?: Religious Student-Soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces* provides unique insights into the challenges these religious conscripts face. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Review of *For God and Country?* by Elisheva Rosman-Stollman. By Jonker. "For God and Country?" details the interrelationships between the IDF and "Religious-Zionist" oriented pre-service study programs, which often serve as proxies for the movements themselves. It covers the subject on multiple levels, from macro-political repercussions to the intensely personal problems experienced by students and soldiers. I think much of this

information will be new and truly enlightening to people outside of Israel, even those like myself who pay attention to these issues as they're covered by news media and had though they already had a good understanding. This book also provides some broader context by outlining, much more generally, how several other countries deal with tensions between the demands of religion and military, including the starkly contrasting systems of the U.S., Turkey and Iran. Furthermore, it brackets the discussion within a pre-existing social-science paradigm, which aids in conceptualizing the issues but which I think one could take or leave. The presentation is dry and occasionally repetitive, and like many books aimed at captive academic markets, the price is too high if you need to purchase a copy in order to read it. But if this is a subject that matters to you or just interests you, this is essential reading.

In many modern armies the religious soldier is suspect. Civilians and officers alike wonder if such a soldier might represent a potential fifth column. This concern is especially prominent in the public discourse over the presence of religious Orthodox Jews serving in the Israel Defense Forces. Will they obey their commanding officer or their rabbi? With research collected over almost a decade, including hundreds of hours of interviews, Elisheva Rosman examines this question of loyalties and reveals how religious soldiers negotiate a place for themselves in an institution whose goals and norms sometimes conflict with those of Orthodox Judaism. *For God and Country?* focuses on the pre-service study programs available to religious conscripts. Many journalists and scholars in Israel are suspicious of the student-soldiers who participate in these programs, but in fact, as Rosman's research demonstrates, the pre-service study programs serve as mediating structures between the demands of Religious Zionism and the demands of the Israel Defense Forces and do not encourage their students to disobey orders. This was especially apparent during the disengagement from Gaza in 2005. Many in Israeli society predicted student-soldiers would defy their orders, per the instruction of their religious leaders, but this did not happen as expected. In high profile cases such as this and in matters encountered daily by religious soldier the mixing of the sexes, for instance Rosman has discovered that the pre-service study programs can successfully serve as agents of civil society, both able to curb the military's efforts to meddle in civilian affairs and vice versa.

"This highly original and sophisticated study goes far beyond traditional two-dimensional descriptions of ideologies to uncover how religion fits in with other elements of society. . . . It is not often that a book based on the methodologies of political science is so useful to students of religion. In this case, it can offer a starting point for similar studies in different contexts. This is a fascinating study . . . both path breaking and profound." (Religious Studies) About the Author Elisheva Rosman-Stollman is Assistant Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University and a founding member of the Association of Civil-Military Scholars in Israel.