



Eretz Hemdah Launches Hotline Responsa During Conflict In The Middle East

JERUSALEM -- In wake of the conflict in the Middle East, Eretz Hemdah announced the launch of a Jewish Law Phone Hotline to field urgent questions that would help clarify laws of daily Jewish life during time of crisis and to enhance Jewish education and outreach.

Eretz Hemdah has become recognized throughout the world for providing answers to some of today's most difficult questions of Jewish law, from a Zionistic point of view. Over the last six years alone, its popular "Ask the Rabbi" responsa on the Institute's Website (www.erezhemdah.org), has fielded more than 11,000 questions and answers on a variety of topics from lifecycle functions to family relations, kosher food to business matters. Questions reflect the range of topics of concern to Jews in the Diaspora including those who have no connection with rabbis or Jewish communities.

A vast majority of the rabbis within Eretz Hemdah's faculty were also recently called up to fight and serve within various units in the Israeli army.

"Since all the staff and student body experienced military training and duties in the army reserve, it was only natural that Eretz Hemdah provided a support hotline to deal with the intricacies and the impact of the war on daily life," said Rabbi Yosef Carmel, dean of Eretz Hemdah Institute. "In times of crisis people have questions of life and death as well as other issues they need to consult with a rabbinic authority, but they might not have access to. The hotline was created at our disposal for callers to consult on urgent Halachik matters relating to such complex wartime scenarios."

Eretz Hemdah fielded inquiries from soldiers who managed to find a free moment away from combat and their duties, who were able to reach the hotline. For example, a decision was critical for one soldier, who feared being kidnapped on the Lebanon border, who called the Hotline asking if he needed to make arrangements for divorce papers for his wife, who would be prohibited from remarrying unless he was physically found. Another example involved a soldier who was away from his family after his wife gave birth to their first-born son, and he needed to know how they would be able to celebrate the Pidyon Haben (redemption of the first born). Another soldier who was ordered on Friday to report to military training on the Sabbath drove his car to the army base and wanted to know what to do about his car.

The rabbis of Eretz Hemdah handled these and other questions pertaining to Jewish laws imminently. Other questions that were not life threatening, but of a complex nature, involved additional scholarly research within the many volumes of Jewish law. Still, other questions such as whether or not one can eat on the holiday of Tisha B'av, if it means putting one's self in grave danger, invoked a quicker response.

"While it is difficult to know whether any lives were directly saved from our efforts, it is a privilege to prevent people from unnecessary danger or concern," added Rabbi Carmel.

"In some cases, such as in regards to fast days, the stringency associated with responses may lead people to act more strictly than Jewish law requires. In any event, rabbinical training comes in handy as the hotline counsels these callers into a course of moderation."

The Hotline is an important factor in Eretz Hemdah's prominence in providing responses to questions from around the world, and is one more reason why individuals should take advantage of this free public service. More than 1,000 questions have come from leading rabbis and rabbinic courts throughout the world, who turn to Eretz Hemdah with difficult questions. Few are trained to answer so quickly. For any questions, call the hotline at (+972-52-4800286), or email at (info@erezhemdah.org).