

CASE STUDY 25

Asher

Settler, student, soldier

Asher is an Israeli soldier and a student at Yeshivat Har Etzion, a military religious college in a West Bank settlement. His parents moved to Israel from the USA before he was born, so Asher grew up Israeli.

When he was at school in Jerusalem, aged 15, two other students were shot and killed by a Palestinian.

Asher remembers: “That was when I first understood that there will always be people who want to kill us – that not everyone likes Jews.”

He believes Palestinians should have a state of their own, but that Israeli settlements in the West Bank should remain.

When he was older, he completed 16 months in the Israel Defense Forces, where he was promoted to sergeant. As a religious Zionist, Asher believes that serving in the army is part of his duty as a Jew. By defending Israel, they hope to bring about the coming of the Messiah, foretold to bring peace on earth.

This is different from ultra-Orthodox Jews, who don't have to do military service. They believe it is God, not people, who will bring this about.



Typical Haredi dress for men and women.

Asher did part of his military service in Hebron, a city where the conflict between Israeli settlers and the Palestinians can be fierce and violent.



Children walking to school. Photo: EAPPI/Helen

“...in yeshiva they teach us to respect everyone as a human being, and that makes us more ethical soldiers.”

When the soldiers he was commanding caught children who had been throwing stones, Asher says he ordered them to stop.

“I told them that being in the Israeli army means living up to the ideals we believe in.”

This case study is drawn from ‘Meet the Settlers’ in the *Daily Telegraph*. Read more at www.telegraph.co.uk/meetthesettlers.