Suited for Action
Israel's Women Ready for Combat
Where the Boys Are
Jewish Programming Aims at A Gender Left Behind
Sefardic Routes
500 Years After Expulsion
Jewish Footprint in Spain
Meet the women of the 37th Magal Squad Commander Course of the Israel Defense Forces. The privates of Magal—the Hebrew acronym for Combat Support Corps—become experienced at training the squad commanders who, in turn, train other privates and facility guards.

Israeli women soldiers are increasingly taking a career path...
Photography by Debbie Zimelman

For Action

ew path in the military and rising to higher ranks than ever before.
Whether pensive, actively engaged, at ease or focused, working alone or as a team, trainees of the 37th Magal Squad Commander Course are unquestionably determined to succeed. Even before being drafted, they had to take a qualifying test to be accepted into Magal, which was established in 1997 with the motto “Here we lay the foundation for a successful Army.” Magal shapes soldiers for initial combat levels and, since 2007, the corps has also trained combat soldiers for other units to become, among other positions, platoon communications officers and paramedics. Though not a combat unit, those women who complete Magal’s intensive training can, during emergencies, be deployed as regular combat soldiers.

Over the years, the Israeli military has expanded opportunities for women—in the Air Force, Navy and Army—and now they can be deployed in 90 percent of all positions, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Women represent about a third of all soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces, and they serve in intelligence, the Border Police, maintenance and a variety of technical and administrative support roles.

There are still gender differences: Men are drafted for three years, women for one year and nine months. But after initial deployment, women can participate in an officer-training course and sign up for career service; indeed, today there are women battalion signal officers. They can also become part of several elite combat battalions, such as Karakal, alongside men. These images capture the early stages of training that shape Israel’s defenders.
Women With (a Different Kind of) Makeup

Magal’s field-training regimen includes (clockwise from left) target practice; a solitary lunch break; attending a lecture; completing a three-hour, 7 1/2-mile hike; tent living; applying camouflage; and, finally, tossing of the caps at a graduation ceremony.