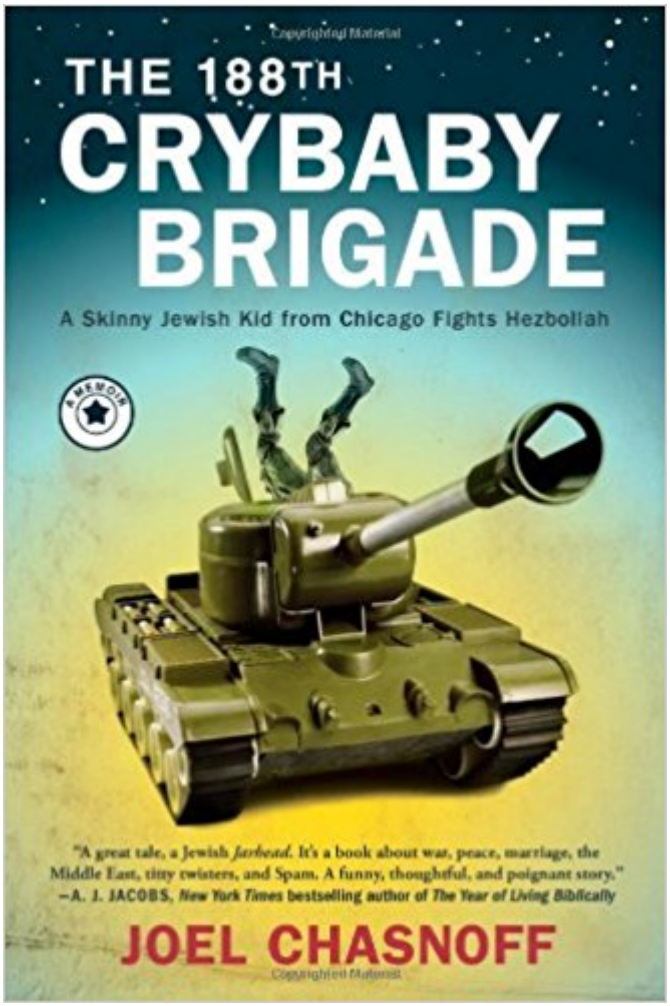
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The 188th Crybaby Brigade: A Skinny Jewish Kid From Chicago Fights Hezbollah--A Memoir



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Synopsis

Look at me. Do you see me? Do you see me in my olive-green uniform, beret, and shiny black boots? Do you see the assault rifle slung across my chest? Finally! I am the badass Israeli soldier at the side of the road, in sunglasses, forearms like bricks. And honestly -- have you ever seen anything quite like me? Joel Chasnoff is twenty-four years old, an American, and the graduate of an Ivy League university. But when his career as a stand-up comic fails to get off the ground, Chasnoff decides it's time for a serious change of pace. Leaving behind his amenity-laden Brooklyn apartment for a plane ticket to Israel, Joel trades in the comforts of being a stereotypical American Jewish male for an Uzi, dog tags (with his name misspelled), and serious mental and physical abuse at the hands of the Israeli Army. The 188th Crybaby Brigade is a hilarious and poignant account of Chasnoff's year in the Israel Defense Forces -- a year that he volunteered for, and that he'll never get back. As a member of the 188th Armored Brigade, a unit trained on the Merkava tanks that make up the backbone of Israeli ground forces, Chasnoff finds himself caught in a twilight zone-like world of mandatory snack breaks, battalion sing-alongs, and eighteen-year-old Israeli mama's boys who feign injuries to get out of guard duty and claim diarrhea to avoid kitchen work. More time is spent arguing over how to roll a sleeve cuff than studying the mechanics of the Merkava tanks. The platoon sergeants are barely older than the soldiers and are younger than Chasnoff himself. By the time he's sent to Lebanon for a tour of duty against Hezbollah, Chasnoff knows everything about why snot dries out in the desert, yet has never been trained in firing the MAG. And all this while his relationship with his tough-as-nails Israeli girlfriend (herself a former drill sergeant) crumbles before his very eyes. The lone American in a platoon of eighteen-year-old Israelis, Chasnoff takes readers into the barracks; over, under, and through political fences; and face-to-face with the absurd reality of life in the Israeli Army. It is a brash and gritty depiction of combat, rife with ego clashes, breakdowns in morale, training mishaps that almost cost lives, and the barely containable sexual urges of a group of teenagers. What's more, it's an on-the-ground account of life in one of the most em-battled armies on earth -- an occupying force in a hostile land, surrounded by enemy governments and terrorists, reviled by much of the world. With equal parts irreverence and vulnerability, irony and intimacy, Chasnoff narrates a new kind of coming-of-age story -- one that teaches us, moves us, and makes us laugh.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“One of the funniest books youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll ever read about the sometimes absurd alternative reality of the IDF.... What drives the book Ã¢â ¬â œ which is named after the nickname ChasnoffÃ¢â ¬â„¢s commander gave to the unit Ã¢â ¬â œ is ChasnoffÃ¢â ¬â„¢s uncanny ability to nail the various idiosyncratic elements of the Israeli psyche as mirrored in the 18-year-old boys heÃ¢â ¬â„¢s thrown his lot in with for a year.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Jerusalem PostÃ¢â ¬Å“An unusual story, humorous but not without heartbreak, told well by an intelligent and funny person.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The ForwardÃ¢â ¬Å“Laugh-out-loud funny.... [Chasnoff] has some serious and even shocking things to say about Israel and its relationship with American Jews, and I promise you that you will not think about your own Jewishness in quite the same way after you finish his smart, funny and provocative book.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Los Angeles Jewish JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“Through the humor, the tone dips deep into tenets of Judaism, Middle East politics, discrimination, racism and more. Ultimately, the author offers a poignant account of attitudes and policies that are bound to fail the region. And sadly, it’s funny as hell.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Colorado Springs IndependentÃ¢â ¬Å“Part Stripes, part Camp Ramah, comedian Joel Chasnoff presents a new kind of coming-of-age story in his memoir and first book, The 188th Crybaby Brigade.... ChasnoffÃ¢â ¬â„¢s comedic timing and honest heart shine throughout the narrative as we follow his journey from supposed zero to Israeli hero.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Jewish Book World"In The 188th Crybaby Brigade, former Israeli soldier Joel Chasnoff [describes] his service as a passionate defender of Israel in an army that seems to be collapsing into tactical mediocrity and a widespread indifference to duty... A pleasure to read... that make[s] war a personal journey through a hazy political landscape." Ã¢â ¬â •Washington Post"A great tale, a Jewish Jarhead. It’s a book about war, peace, marriage, the Middle East, titty twisters, and Spam. A funny, thoughtful, and poignant

story." -- A. J. Jacobs, New York Times bestselling author of The Year of Living Biblically"In this illuminating work Joel Chasnoff does for the IDF what Mailer did for the Pacific campaign and O'Brien for the war in Vietnam. This is a chilling book." -- Anthony Swofford, New York Times bestselling author of Jarhead"This comic coming-of-age memoir is as touching as it is tough, as insightful as it is funny. The 188th Crybaby Brigade is an unsentimental but moving portrait of a soldier's heart and mind." -- Lauren Weisberger, New York Times bestselling author of The Devil Wears Prada and Chasing Harry Winston"Joel Chasnoff writes like Woody Allen channeling Leon Uris, with altogether charming results. As hilarious, unsparing, and surprisingly tender a memoir as they come." -- Elisa Albert, author of The Book of Dahlia"Joel Chasnoff's fascinating account of his time in the Israel Defense Forces is a rare window into the real Israel. If you really want to understand the Jewish state and its army, put away the propaganda and read this unusually funny and honest book." -- Sam Apple, author of Schlepping Through the Alps and American Parent

Joel Chasnoff is a stand-up comedian and writer with stage and screen credits in eight countries. His writing has been featured in The IdiotÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Guide to Jokes and The Big Book of Jewish Humor: 25th Anniversary Edition. On tour, he was the warm-up act for Jon Stewart and Lewis Black of The Daily Show.Ã Â After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Chasnoff moved to Israel and volunteered for a combat unit of the Israeli Army. As a member of the 188th Armored Brigade, Chasnoff was voted Outstanding Soldier of the Company and deployed to Lebanon for a tour of duty against Hezbollah. The 188th Crybaby Brigade is ChasnoffÃ¢â ¬â„¢s humorous memoir about his year in the Israeli military. A portion of all proceeds from sales of The 188th Crybaby Brigade is donated to ChasnoffÃ¢â ¬â„¢s charitable foundation, Project Elijah.

Joel Chasnoff has created a wonderful inside look at contemporary Jewish America and Israel. One part Comedy Club, one part coming of age (although 24 is awfully late to be coming of age), one part ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Buck Privates,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• one part ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Stripes,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and one part secrets never told. Chasnoff also reinforces the truism that all armies are incompetent in exactly the same way given sufficient time.We are privileged to accompany Joel through his childhood as an Orthodox Jew, with a uniquely American twist. During this time, Joel identifies strongly with his Jewish heritage and his Jewish religion, while also identifying strongly with his roots based in the reborn nation of Israel. America is where he lives. Israel is where he is from.Then we are entertained by JoelÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s attempts to immigrate to Israel and join the IDF. Once a member of this storied force, Joel comes face to face

with the bureaucratic realities of all armies. He is joined by a number of 18 year old draftees who donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t want to be in the army, much less be in the tank corps. He is commanded by 20 year old ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“veteransÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• who have no clue what they are doing and really donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t much care but are looking for their next promotion. Who knew ambitions could be so low? He is in a "war zone" where there isn't much war, although death is lurking around the next hill.All of his trials and tribulations are crowned with his attempts to marry his love, in Israel, in a Jewish ceremony. It is here that Joel is faced with the biggest challenge of his short life. Mazel tov.

Loved this book. Anyone picking it up should bear in mind that Joel is a COMEDIAN; this is a memoir--not non-fiction. The author tells only a part of the story, and twists it to make it funny, which is what comedians do. Anyone who thinks the IDF is primarily made up of wimpy, reluctant, bungling raw recruits doesn't know the IDF. [N. B., not interested in a political argument here.]I found the book hilarious--he did hold up a mirror to Israeli life and the Israeli character, and the bull**** of all armies everywhere.I was particularly impressed with some more serious insights into what holds Israeli society together; the nature of "never again," the complexity of the Lebanon war in which he served, and his, and Israel's, identity crisis as a Jewish State in thrall to the ossified rabbinate that controls religious life in the larger, secular society.

I recommend this book to any of those wannabe-heroes-of-the-epic-saga-of-Zionism who come here all soft, naive, from sheltered backgrounds and expect Israeli Jews to be as lovey-dovey and smiley as the Americans these wannabe-heroes grew up with. As the author's girlfriend is quoted, "Israelis are animals. They will eat you alive".This book both serves as a reality check to said naive ego trippers, as well as an illusion buster for patrilineal or non-orthodox convert Jews who think Israel will treat them as well as did the US or Europe or wherever you may be from.Chasnoff's writing is hilarious, he draws you in and lets you feel what he feels, see what he sees. If you have issues with coarse language, this book is not for you (unless you want to toughen up). If you like your "Holy Land" illusion, this book is not for you. If you want first-hand experiences, unembellished and unbleeped, this is for you. Especially when you like a good laugh at brutal cynicism and scathing sarcasm. I sure enjoyed it.Chasnoff hilariously, yet undramatically describes his time in the Israeli tank unit after having come to be an epic paratrooper. He cynically documents every brutal reality check Israel dealt him. He does not try to inspire other wannabe-"lone soldiers", or at least he doesn't seem to. He goes full Israeli with the bluntness. He shows things as they are - harsh and not

summer camp at all. No hand-holding dancing Jews who are all your "brothers" and beyond proud and happy to serve, oh no sir, there are suicide attempts and nervous breakdowns and absurd attempts at getting discharged no matter how dishonorably, and Chasnoff cares little that you expect nothing but praise and love for coming to our country with the astounding arrogance of assuming we need your sheltered little a... to survive the over-inflated "Arab threat". Chasnoff has you know: Israel is harsh, IDF is harsher. And only grateful for PR's sake.In short: this book is for those who want the real deal. It is absolutely not for the dreamers and the illusion huggers. I recommend buying this along with "Foreskin's Lament" and "Ben Gurion's Scandals".

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