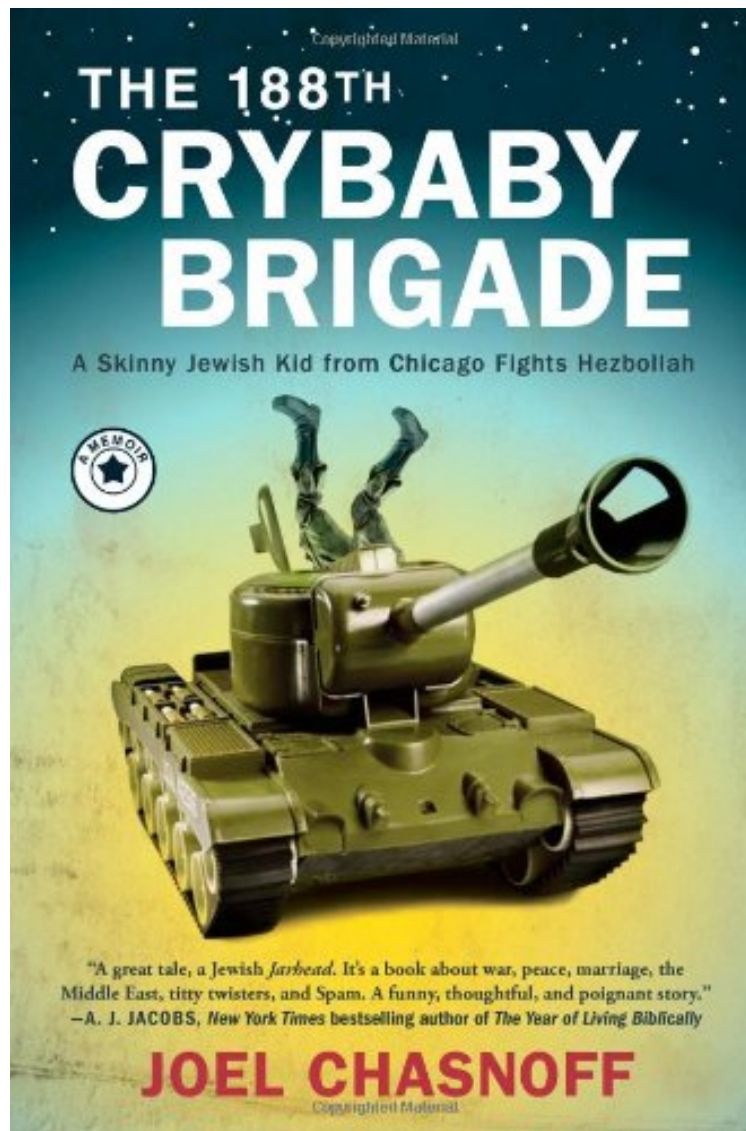


(Mobile ebook) The 188th Crybaby Brigade: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah--A Memoir

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

Joel Chasnoff

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Joel Chasnoff : The 188th Crybaby Brigade: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah--A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The 188th Crybaby Brigade: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah--A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. PART COMEDY CLUB, PART STRIPES, ALL

ENTERTAINMENTBy Nancy Thompsen 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 "Buck Privates," one part "Stripes," 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 Joel'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 don't want to be in the army, much less be in the tank corps. He is commanded by 20 year old "veterans" who have no clue what they are doing and really don'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.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Most Unlikely Hero of the Jews By JTEvery Jewish male, most Jewish females, and anyone interested in the Israeli military, or any military, should read this book. It's difficult to imagine a more improbable "Hero of the Jews" than Joel Chasnoff --though that is just what he longed to be. Skinny, unathletic, pacifist, extremely overprotected, fear-ridden (to the point of having full blown Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, with an irrational terror of most everyday objects, and associated compulsions to cope with that terror), a lactose intolerant city boy. . . yet he goes through the process of becoming one of those apparently tough, tanned, hardened, professional, sunglassed, olive-drab clad IDF troopers with beret on head and assault rifle slung oh so casually, diagonally across their backs, muzzle down but battle ready, who line the roads and streets of Israel. Along the way he exposes, in a Jewish "Jarhead" (yet much warmer and funnier than "Jarhead", without the macho posturing), the random idiocy of all armies which pervades the IDF as well, and unlike many soldier memoirs, keeps reminding the reader that, at 24, as a private he was older than most of his officers and NCO's. Like most armies the IDF is an army of kids, run by kids, with the many of the irrational rules and random punishments passing for justice that an army of kids tends to have. He also constantly reminds the reader of the underlying tensions between light and dark skinned Israelis, and the attitude of the new generation of Israelis, which is not the warrior ethos of their fathers but rather that of rap or headbanger modern American culture. And there's that ambivalent attitude of Israelis towards Americans: envy of America's material wealth and national power, while contemptuous of soft, comfort conscious individual Americans. For any Jew who has rebelled against all those images of the victimized, helpless Jews of the Holocaust, this is an irreverent antidote--complete with IDF troopers giving each other wedgies at Yad Vashem. You really will laugh and cry, often at the same time.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. RICK "SHAQ" GOLDSTEIN SAYS: "FINALLY, I DON'T JUST HAVE TO WHISPER, "NEVER AGAIN"-I AM NEVER AGAIN!" By Rick Shaq Goldstein Author Joel Chasnoff answers his own stated question of: "SO WHY WOULD A PEACE-LOVING, LEFT-LEANING, LACTOSE-INTOLERANT JEW(ish) (Reviewer's note: for some reason normally doesn't post reviews if the "ish" isn't at the end of Jewish, so even though the author doesn't add the "ish", from experience, I know if I don't, they may not post my review.) FROM THE SUBURBS JOIN THE ISRAELI ARMY?" In Joel's answer, which is of course this book... he accomplishes his task with a wide range of emotions. One minute he's satirically mocking his romantic and awe inspiring childhood image of the vaunted Israeli Army... (Note: his experience is not in Special Forces nor the heroically portrayed Israeli Air Force.) and the next minute... as I am a proud Jewish Viet Nam era veteran... his writings put pride in my heart... and tears in my eyes... when he writes: "THE SOLDIERS WERE A WALKING MIRACLE: SIXTY YEARS AFTER OUR PEOPLE WERE SHOVED INTO OVENS, WE HAD AN ARMY OF OUR OWN." "TODAY, I AM ONE OF THOSE WALKING MIRACLES. STANDING HERE IN YAD VASHEM IN MY OLIVE-GREEN UNIFORM, WITH MY GLILON ASSAULT RIFLE ACROSS MY BACK, I FEEL ABSOLVED OF THE HOLOCAUST GUILT I'VE BEEN CARRYING SINCE GRADE SCHOOL. FINALLY, I DON'T JUST HAVE TO WHISPER, "NEVER AGAIN"-I AM NEVER AGAIN!" On the lighter side of getting ready for war... the five-foot-eight-one-hundred-thirty-pound Joel shares his fear of being able to match up with... or simply being able to "hang-on" with the level of world renowned warriors he expected to be in Israeli basic training. The author narrates and pulls no punches as he describes the less than inspiring members of his basic training group. The fact that all Israeli's... male or female are drafted at eighteen... and Joel is twenty-four... adds to the learning curve of fitting in... as he is one of the only Americans. Throughout his adventures from Israel to Lebanon, his main attempt at creating a communicative bond is his declaration that he's from Chicago and has seen Michael Jordan's house. (These attempts also bring him shame... when he realizes that despite his growing up in the hometown of Jordan's championship Bulls... he never even took the opportunity to go see Jordan play!) After basic training Joel is ordered into the Armored Brigade and trained for tank warfare. Joel is surprised at the lack of intense training and is leery of entering the Lebanon war zone due to the lack of any confidence building training. Through it all the author attempts to carry on romantically with his Israeli girl friend... and the reader gets to know the mostly defective members of his brigade. Interwoven with his scathing *DON-RICKLES-LIKE-

ASSESSMENTS" of the people all around him... he also juggles the possible mortality and morality that is war... and realizes that Israel never has... and never will... be able to live without this daily burden. In addition to fighting a war... maintaining a romance... trying to adapt physically... and culturally... the author gets another shocking surprise... that he has to relearn and investigate his families Jewish heritage.

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 embattled 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.

"One of the funniest books you'll ever read about the sometimes absurd alternative reality of the IDF.... What drives the book -- which is named after the nickname Chasnoff's commander gave to the unit -- is Chasnoff's uncanny ability to nail the various idiosyncratic elements of the Israeli psyche as mirrored in the 18-year-old boys he's thrown his lot in with for a year."—The Jerusalem Post "An unusual story, humorous but not without heartbreak, told well by an intelligent and funny person."—The Forward "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."—Los Angeles Jewish Journal "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."—Colorado Springs Independent "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*.... Chasnoff's comedic timing and honest heart shine throughout the narrative as we follow his journey from supposed zero to Israeli hero."—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." —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* About the Author Joel Chasnoff is a stand-up comedian and writer with stage and screen credits in eight countries. His writing has been featured in *The Idiot'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. 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 Chasnoff'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 Chasnoff's charitable foundation, Project Elijah. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

THE RUSSIAN The Russian is poking my balls. It's awkward. I've been trapped in this dank examination room since nine o'clock. In five minutes it'll be nine-thirty, and I feel like a dope, what with my boxer shorts at my ankles and my dick in my hand so the Russian can get a good view. "Hmm," he says. It's Tuesday morning, the eighth of July, and I'm at the Israel Defense Forces Induction Center outside Tel Aviv. I arrived in Israel three weeks ago. Today is my first pre-army checkup. The Russian says something in Hebrew, but I can't understand him through his thick Russian accent. "Huh?" I say. He switches to broken English. "You pee-nus ? hurt you?" "Lo!" I say in Hebrew, and shake my head. "Penis tov! My penis is fine." The Russian scoots forward on his knees. He's about sixty years old and bald. Even though he's a doctor, he's dressed like a plumber—plaid short-sleeve shirt, dirty jeans. I imagine that back in Russia he was a brain surgeon. Now he checks gonads for the Israeli Army. "Up," he says. I lift my penis until it's flat against my stomach. He squeezes my testicles gently as if trying to pick the perfect peach. His forehead is inches from my belly. I'm a hiccup away from a dishonorable discharge. "Cough," he says. "Huh-hem." He pulls his enormous Clark Kent eyeglasses off the crown of his head, presses them onto his nose, and jots a note on his clipboard, while I, in the meantime, try to think about anything in the world besides how much I hate holding myself while a nearsighted, balding Russian takes notes. I try to name every team in the National League. Cubs. Phillies. Mets. My visit to the Induction Center began at eight this morning, when I showed up at the front gate without so much as an appointment. "I can't let you in without draft orders," said the soldier guarding the entrance. He was a chubby kid, with blond hair, sunglasses, and an Uzi. He stood in a white booth next to a chain-link fence. A hundred yards behind him were the three redbrick buildings that made up the Induction Center com-plex. I explained in Hebrew that because I'd immigrated to Israel less than a month ago, I hadn't yet received my draft orders. "But here," I said, pulling out my brand-new national ID card. "I'm Israeli." The soldier scrutinized my ID card. Then he looked at me, then back at the card, and then back to me. "Where're you from?" he asked suspiciously. "The United States," I said. "America," he purred. "Where?" "Chicago." "Chicago Bulls!" he cried. "Michael Jordan!" "I've driven past his house," I said. He handed me my ID. "Straight ahead. Inside the middle building." The Russian grabs the edge of his desk and hoists himself to his feet. "Bend over," he orders. He must see the look of horror that flashes across my face, because he quickly adds, "You can put on your pants first." Thank God. I bend over and touch my toes. The Russian taps my spine. "Your back's crooked," he says. "It is?" I shout through my legs, trying to sound surprised. "You ever have back pain?" he asks. The way I see it, I have two options. Option One: tell the truth, that is, confess to the Russian doctor that I was diagnosed with mild scoliosis when I was nine and that, three months ago, during a pickup basketball game at the JCC, I collapsed to the gymnasium floor with back pain so severe it took the paramedics thirty minutes just to roll me onto the stretcher. I would then have no choice but to inform the Russian that my personal physician in the States, Dr. Zielinski, had advised me not to enlist in the Israeli Army—not that Zielinski had thought the IDF would take me. "I can't speak for Israel," he'd said, "but a back as messed up as yours would never be allowed in the Marine Corps." The problem with Option One is that if the Russian finds out about my back, he will assign me to a noncombat desk job. But I don't want a desk job. I didn't immigrate to Israel to type memos or change tires. I'm here because since I was seventeen years old, I've dreamed of jumping out of planes, charging up mountains, and hiking the desert with a pack on my back as a combat soldier in the Israeli Army. For this reason, I choose Option Two: Lie. "My back's perfect," I say. "Hmm," says the Russian. He massages the glands in my neck. He studies the soles of my feet like they're a map of the sunken treasure. He sticks an icy stethoscope into my chest and orders me to breathe. "Ah-huh." "Sit." I sit. He sits across from me at his desk. "Tell me about your family," the Russian says. "Any medical history I should know about?" I shake my head. "Your mother?" My mother has multiple sclerosis, walks with a cane, and at times is confined to a wheelchair. "Nope." "Father?" My dad's back is worse than mine—so bad that he's had surgery on it twice. "Nothing comes to mind." "Siblings?" One of my younger brothers has Crohn's disease. The other had croup, two hernias, and an undescended testicle. "Not that I can think of." The Russian scribbles on my chart. "You're going combat," he says. I pump my fist and smile. My scoliosis has been overlooked! My feet are arched! My balls are worthy of a medal! I skip to the door. "Chasnoff!" the Russian barks. I freeze. "Don't do anything stupid," he says. Too late. © 2010 Joel Chasnoff