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"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***

THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE

A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah

By Joel Chasnoff

What's a nice American Jew doing in a place like this? So asks Joel Chasnoff - Ivy League-educated, suburban-born stand-up comedian - as he sweats, grunts, and rolls his eyes through a military tour in the Israeli Army in **THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah (Free Press; Feb. 9, 2010; \$25.00)**. Surrounded by a platoon of mama's boys and crybabies carrying loaded weapons, this admitted peace-loving, left-leaning, lactose-intolerant Jew from the suburbs invites the reader to share his journey from gung-ho, would-be warrior to disillusioned soldier who in the end discovers he isn't really a Jew at all.

Like a *CATCH-22* for our time, **THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE** boasts a cast of characters rarely seen outside the realm of fiction: the diabolical, 20-year-old sergeant who torments Chasnoff as an outsider; platoon-mates who accidentally nearly kill Chasnoff – twice; the tough soldier who cries when his girlfriend dumps him; an entire brigade of teenagers barely able to contain their sexual urges; and, of course, the most memorable character of all: Joel Chasnoff himself.

A University of Pennsylvania graduate living in Brooklyn and at loose ends, the 24-year-old Chasnoff makes good on his dream of giving back to Israel (and of being a badass, gun-toting soldier) and voluntarily enlists in the Israeli Army. The lone American in a platoon of 18-year-old Israelis, Chasnoff spends two months in Tank School, 14 weeks in advanced warfare training, 10 days in intense pre-Lebanon training (where they do everything BUT train for war), and three months in Lebanon, lying in ambush against Hezbollah, before realizing that, by Israel's religious law – his mother converted to Judaism - he isn't even considered a Jew. Translation: Chasnoff can die for Israel; he just can't get married there.

THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE presents a disturbingly hilarious look at life inside the Israeli Army, from the mandatory daily chocolate snack breaks at 10 am and 4 pm to the ridiculous “duck walk” in which the entire platoon plods across a parade ground on their haunches as punishment. Chasnoff teaches his fellow soldiers the joy of making snow angels in the Golan Heights and leads the troop in a rousing rendition of their favorite song, “*Breakfast at Tiffany's*” while training in the desert. Mishaps abound, including mistaking a dog for a terrorist in Lebanon and blowing him up, or the Israeli Army's inability to fire on a group of Hezbollah guerrillas because, according to the UN-negotiated Rules of Engagement, the enemy was standing on a farm.

At the same time, **THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE** offers a deeper glimpse into one of the world's most complicated and long-lasting struggles in which an army of kids is responsible for guarding against guerrilla and terrorist threats. The disconnect between Chasnoff's view of service – he revered the Israeli soldiers as protectors of the Jews - was contradicted by the soldiers themselves, who viewed their service simply as what they do after high school. A culture clash of epic proportions permeates this foreign world, and Chasnoff captures the generational conflict between older Israelis who see the army as the solution and the younger Israelis, many of whom try to avoid military service altogether.

Through it all, **THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE** describes the unique bond between soldiers in a combat platoon: young men who share hopes, fears, thoughts on death, and detailed descriptions of sexual escapades. Chasnoff's wry style brings warmth to this wacky army—a military that's more like a zany extended family than a lethal fighting force. And although the author ultimately leaves his service disappointed but wiser, the reader will not be disappointed with his wise-cracking journey.

About the Author:

Joel Chasnoff is a stand-up comedian and writer with stage and screen credits in eight countries, including a U.S.O. Comedy Tour of Japan and Korea entertaining American Marines, performances at over two hundred North American colleges, stand-up spots on Israeli late-night TV, and voice work for cartoons. When he's not on tour, Joel teaches stand-up comedy and humor writing at the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan. He lives in New York. A portion of all proceeds from Joel's stand-up comedy performances and this book is donated to Joel's foundation, Project Elijah, which distributes money to organizations promoting humanitarian causes. Most recently, Project Elijah sent one hundred low-income New York City schoolchildren to the circus.

To meet the characters from *The 188th Crybaby Brigade*, view photographs and video clips from Joel's military service, and learn more about Project Elijah, visit www.joelchasnoff.com.

About the Book:

THE 188TH CRYBABY BRIGADE: A Skinny Jewish Kid from Chicago Fights Hezbollah

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