



Lonely Soldier: The Memoir of an American in the Israeli Army

Adam Harmon

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He is an American citizen and an Israeli soldier. Now, in a stunning memoir, Adam Harmon recounts his service with one of the most effective and admired fighting forces in the world.

Raised with a strong Jewish identity in New England, Harmon visited Israel as a teenager in 1984. He immediately knew he wanted to live there. Six years later, the Palestinian Intifida was under way and Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Just out of college, Harmon was back in Israel, joining the military. Without family in the country, he was designated a *chayal boded*, or lonely soldier.

One of the few nonnatives to become an Israeli paratrooper and already an old man in a country where service is compulsory after high school Harmon describes the tough training and strict standards that define the Israeli combatant. From the very first push-up to ambushes in Lebanon and operations in the West Bank, readers march alongside Harmon and discover the value of having *retsach bi anigh* (murder in your eye) and learn why time is holy.

The Israeli military culture surprised Harmon. It was very different from the one he expected to find. As within the U.S. military, Israeli soldiers avoid punishment only by being perfectionists, but the Israeli military has an unusually high regard for individualism. Commanders rely more on achieving consensus than on issuing orders; and every soldier is free to disobey an order he finds immoral.

Over the next thirteen years, Harmon was in the ranks of a military that was adapting to ever-changing threats. In 1990 killing was always used as a last resort, but by 2002 targeted assassinations were employed to decapitate terrorist gangs. Harmon's own wish for a separate Palestinian state never wavered, but his dismay at the increasing violence by Palestinians, desperate to achieve independence, mirrors the growing belief in Israel that a true rapprochement is not on the horizon.

Lonely Soldier, completed as Israel was beginning to disengage from Gaza, is a unique and thrilling glimpse into a revered yet misunderstood institution that is integral to Middle East peace.

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