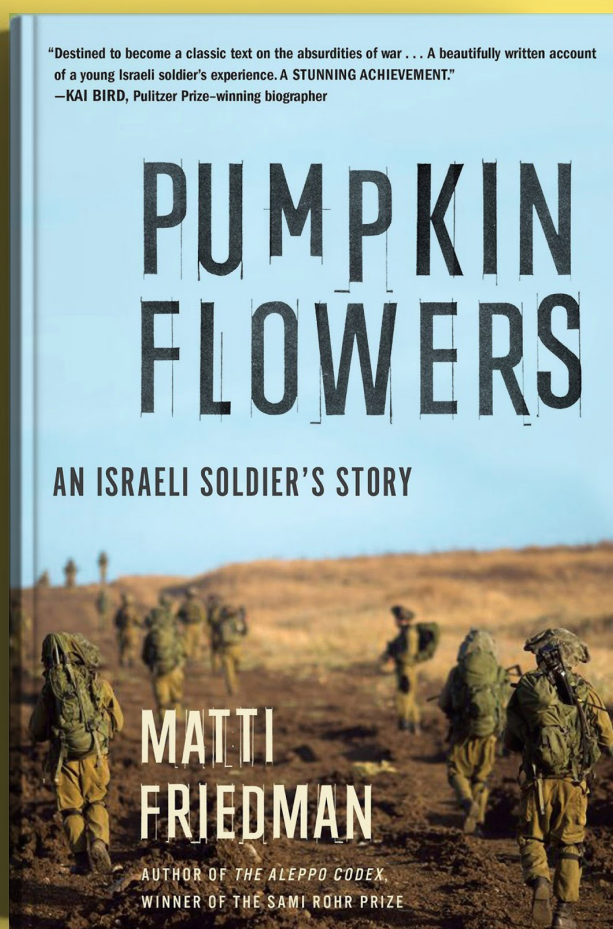


JBC Book Clubs Discussion Guide

Created in partnership with Algonquin Books
Jewishbookcouncil.org



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Timeline of the Israeli-Lebanese Conflict

- 1968** The PLO begins an ongoing practice of conducting raids on northern Israel from Lebanon.
- 1970** The PLO relocates its base to Lebanon after being expelled from Jordan. From headquarters in Beirut, they turn southern Lebanon into “Fatahland”, recruiting new members from the over 300,000 Palestinians living in PLO-run camps in the area.
- 1975** The Lebanese Civil War, a conflict that runs until 1990, begins between warring Lebanese factions of Christians, Muslims, Druze and others. Israel backs the Christian group of Maronites starting in 1976.
- 1978** In response to the Coastal Road Massacre, an attack by a Fatah cell from Lebanon that killed 38 civilians along the road from Haifa to Tel Aviv, Israel launches Operation Litani, a military incursion into Lebanon aimed at driving back the PLO and curbing the attacks on Israel’s northern communities. The Operation succeeds in pushing the PLO north of the Litani river, and leaves Israel occupying southern Lebanon with aid from the South Lebanese Army, a Lebanese Christian militia. Israel pulls out of Lebanon later in the year, leaving the SLA to fight on its behalf.
- 1982** The first Lebanon War, or Operation Peace in the Galilee, begins on June 6, 1982. Israel invades Lebanon and lays siege to Beirut, after repeated attacks by the PLO, including the attempted assassination of Israel’s ambassador to the UK. They successfully drive the PLO out of Lebanon, and try to install a pro-Israeli Christian government under Bachir Gemayel. The US brokers a peace deal in August. Shortly after his election, Gemayel is assassinated, Israel reoccupies West Beirut, and Israeli-allied Lebanese Christian militias perpetrate the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in which hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese Shiite Muslims were killed at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

- 1983-1985** Israel remains in the south of Lebanon. In the vacuum left by the departure of the PLO, Hezbollah is started by clerics with support from Iran to fight the Israeli occupation and continues to grow in strength and popularity as more independent militias continue to join together.
- 1985** Israel withdraws from all but a 12-mile security zone along the Lebanese-Israeli border to protect northern Israel from rockets and other attacks. Hezbollah issues an open letter calling for violent uprisings against Israeli forces in the security zone.
- 1985-2000** Israel remains in the security zone until 2000. These years see continued attacks by guerilla Hezbollah groups and responses by the IDF, ongoing incidents and operations that result in casualties on both sides.
- 1993** Yitzchak Rabin and Yasser Arafat sign the Oslo Accords, working toward a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- 1994** The Pumpkin Incident puts the Pumpkin outpost in the news. This attack on the Pumpkin is staged in order to be filmed as propaganda and widely disseminated, resulting in the image of a win for Hezbollah and a humiliation for Israel. This is possibly the first such instance of video being used as a tool of war.
- 1995** Yitzchak Rabin is assassinated.
- 1997** Two Israeli helicopters collide over Israel while transporting soldiers into Lebanon, killing 73 soldiers.
- 1997** The Four Mothers movement forms to protest Israel's involvement in Lebanon. Considered possibly the most successful protest movement in Israel, the Four Mothers are able to sway Israeli public opinion toward a pullout.
- 2000** Ehud Barak is elected Prime Minister, and, in May, fulfills his campaign promise to withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon.

JBC Book Clubs

Discussion Questions

Note: the questions below do contain spoilers!

1. How has reading this book affected your view of Israel? Of the IDF? Has it changed your thoughts on Israel's present day situation or on other ongoing conflicts in the Middle East?
2. The title of the book refers to Israeli army jargon that gave pretty names to harsh elements of a military world, names that "seem intended to bestow beauty on ugliness and allow soldiers distance from the things they might have to describe" (p. 24). Why do you think the author chose this as the title? How did it affect you as a reader both before you read the book and after?
3. Readiness with Dawn is the beginning of a soldier's day, both a ritual, and as Friedman writes, a state of mind. What is Readiness with Dawn and why do you think the book opens with it? Does it play a larger role in the book as a whole? What does Readiness with Dawn mean for the author and for the reader?
4. The author is an *oleh* (immigrant), having made aliyah from Canada just a year or two before his army service. How does his Canadian background impact the story, his own experience, and his telling of it?
5. The first part of the book is told through the eyes of Avi, a soldier who was killed in the helicopter crash. Why do you think the author chose Avi as his narrator? Avi's fate is not revealed until the end of Part 1 when the actual crash occurs, a narrative technique that is employed for each of the soldiers that we meet throughout the book. Why do you think Friedman chose to write the book in that way? What is the effect of that technique?
6. What is the significance of the Pumpkin Incident described in Chapter 9 (p. 30)? Why did this incident—one in which nothing actually happened militarily and which had fewer casualties than other incidents—generate so much attention? What impact did it have going forward? Read the *Tablet Magazine* and *New York Post* articles written by the author (see Recommended Reads section in this guide). What is the author saying about this incident?
7. The women of the Four Mothers movement, among them Bruria and Orna, took on the generals of the IDF and Israeli society as a whole. In what ways were they like their matriarchal namesakes from the Bible? How did the culture of the army define their struggle? How does the structure of the book impact your thinking of the Four Mothers?
8. What is the role of the kibbutz movement in this book? What is its relationship to the Four Mothers movement? What is the link between the decline of the kibbutz and the conflict in Lebanon, and how does this affect the soldiers?
9. The chapter that details an incident in which the author narrowly escapes a roadside bomb begins with the words, "The Pumpkin finally introduced itself to me on the night Natalie was going to get undressed" (p. 128), describing a popular Israeli television show. Why do you think this detail is included? How does the frequent mix of mundaneness and violence interplay for you as a reader?
10. Unlike other wars in Israel's history, this period of the security zone in Lebanon is an unnamed war, one that barely registers in the collective Israeli memory.

Why does it matter that this war remains unnamed? What does that mean for the soldiers who fought at the outposts in South Lebanon? What is the impact of being able to stand in safety at the site of a battle (p. 179), and does the author's trip back to the hill in Lebanon carry any of the same weight?

11. Ilya, a soldier from Avi's platoon, says that one of his most lasting memory is doing dishes (p. 29), and Friedman's platoon leader tells an interviewer that he returned to his base after losing his entire platoon in the helicopter crash by taking a bus (p. 112). Do you think these are displays of the lack of ideology (p. 125) that the author describes among his fellow soldiers or something else? Why do you think the Lebanon conflict bred an attitude of "feigned indifference" (p. 180) among the soldiers?

12. Friedman writes that "the fulcrum of Israel's recent history can be found in those months in the spring, summer, and early fall of that year" (p. 177). Why does he feel that short period was so influential? Do you agree with his statement?

13. On his trip back to Lebanon, the author writes, "When I went back to the Pumpkin in the fall of 2002 I thought it was a conclusion...But I sensed then, and know now, that I was wrong...The outpost was the beginning. Its end was still the beginning...The present day might still be the beginning" (p. 222). What does he mean by this?

14. What effect did the author's trip back to Lebanon have on the narrative of the book? Did it alter your reading in any way? If the book ended on page 190, before the return trip, would that have changed how you view the book or what you see as the focus of the book?

15. Which sentences, paragraphs, moments, or events stayed with you after you finished reading *Pumpkin-flowers*? Why did those instances or thoughts stand out for you?

Pumpkin, Red Pepper and Basil Salad with Crispy Haloumi

Adapted from Foodlovers by [Helen Jackson](#)

The IDF's horticultural preoccupation in its military jargon (p. 24) is the reason for including this delicious salad, whose ingredients include the names of the Israeli outposts that made up the security zone in southern Lebanon, and are at the heart of this book.

Ingredients

1 lb pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled and cut into approx. 1 inch cubes

5 tbsp. olive oil

1 tsp. cumin

1 clove of garlic, minced

freshly ground black pepper and salt

1/3 cup pumpkin seeds

1 red pepper, roasted and sliced (or jarred roasted red pepper)

1/2 red onion, thinly sliced

1/2 cup basil leaves, torn

1 cup of arugula leaves

12 oz. haloumi cheese, cut into sticks

1/2 cup of olive oil

2 tbsp. white wine vinegar

1 tsp. honey

2 tsp. balsamic vinegar

1 tsp. whole grain mustard

salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F.

2. On a roasting pan, mix the pumpkin, 3 tbsp. of olive oil, cumin, and salt and pepper to taste. Roast for 10-15 minutes, then add the pumpkin seeds and garlic to the pan. Mix together and roast for another 10 minutes or until the pumpkin is tender and the seeds are toasted. Allow to cool slightly.

3. While the pumpkin is cooling, pat the haloumi sticks dry. Heat the remaining 2 tbsp. of olive oil in a pan over medium heat, and add the haloumi. Cook until golden brown and crispy on each side, then remove them from the pan and allow them to drain on a paper towel-lined plate.

4. In a serving bowl, combine the pumpkin, pumpkin seeds, red pepper, red onion, arugula, basil, and haloumi.

5. Add olive oil, vinegars, honey, mustard, salt, and pepper in a small jar and shake to combine. Dress the salad as desired.

Spicy Moroccan Fish

This is a dish that is prepared for one of the army outpost seders (p. 183). This is a traditional dish that is often served for holidays in Moroccan Jewish homes.

This recipe is courtesy of Danielle Oron, a recipe developer, food blogger, photographer and cookbook author of *Modern Israeli Cooking* (Page Street Publishing, 2015). You can find this recipe and more on Danielle's blog, www.iwillnoteatoysters.com.

Ingredients

- 3 large fillets of Tilapia or other similar white fish
- 2-4 long hot peppers, the light green kind
- 28 oz. can diced tomatoes
- 2 small carrots, chopped
- 13 cloves of garlic
- 1 very large handful of cilantro
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. sweet paprika
- 1/2 tbsp. pilpelchuma, optional (this hot pepper paste can be found in stores or made using the recipe below)*
- 1 1/2 tsp. turmeric
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 -1 tsp. hot paprika or more, to taste
- 1 tspn. salt
- grilled bread or pita for serving

1. Add the garlic and cilantro into a food processor. Pulse to get a medium-fine chop. (You can also do this by hand.)
2. Remove 1 1/2 tbsp. of this mixture into a small bowl and top with the olive oil and lemon juice. Set it aside in the fridge. This is the “chimichurri”.
3. Spread 2/3 of the diced tomatoes and all the chopped carrots into a large sauté pan with tall sides and lid. It should cover the bottom of the pan.
4. Lay the whole hot peppers and fish in the pan leaving a bit of room between them. Make sure the fish does not have contact with the bottom of the pan. It should sit on top of the tomatoes and carrots.
5. Add the remaining diced tomatoes, all the spices, and salt to the garlic/cilantro mixture in the food processor. Process until fine. If don't think by hand, just mix those ingredients together in a bowl.
6. Add 1/4 - 1/2 cup of water to this sauce mixture to loosen it.
7. Spoon the sauce over the fish and peppers.
8. Turn the heat on to high and bring to a boil.
9. Once it reaches a boil, turn the heat down to medum-low and partially cover the pan.
10. Simmer for 35 minutes, adding a tablespoon of water the sauce if it looks too dry.
11. Serve hot with the “chimichurri” and grilled bread. Enjoy!

*Pilpelchuma can be made by combining 1 1/2 tbsp. of olive oil, 1 tbsp. sweet paprika, 1/2 tbsp. hot paprika, 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper, a pinch of cumin, and a pinch of salt into a paste which will keep for 3 weeks or more in the fridge.

Chocolate Covered Cornflakes

Enjoy one of the “security zone delicacies” that soldiers made at the Pumpkin (p. 28), dressed up a little for a civilian crowd.

Ingredients

Cornflakes

Chocolate (bittersweet, semi-sweet, milk chocolate or a mixture)

Optional additions:

Sea salt flakes or fleur de sel

Shredded coconut

Chopped nuts

Sprinkles

Dried fruit (chopped)

Toffee bits

Confectioner’s sugar

Halva, finely chopped

1. This recipe’s quantities are extremely adaptable. Keep a ratio of 1 cup of cornflakes to 4 oz. of chocolate, and you can make as much or as little as you want.
2. Pour cornflakes into a bowl, and set aside. If you are using add-ins that you want to have covered in chocolate (rather than as a topping), like dried fruit or nuts, mix these into the cornflakes.
3. Line a pan with parchment paper
4. Chop the chocolate and put $\frac{3}{4}$ of it in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave uncovered on high for 20-30 seconds. Remove the bowl, and stir the chocolate. Unless the chocolate is mostly melted, return the bowl to the microwave and heat for another 30 seconds. Stir, then heat in 15 second intervals until the chocolate is mostly melted. Once it is melted enough, add in the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of the chocolate and stir until the chocolate is uniformly melted and smooth (if it doesn’t all melt, return to the microwave for 5-10 seconds).
5. Pour the chocolate over the cornflakes and quickly fold the mixture together, taking care to keep the flakes intact.
6. Drop spoonfuls of the mixture onto the lined pan. Sprinkle with any additional toppings, and allow to cool until the chocolate hardens. Cooling can also be done in the refrigerator.
7. Peel the mounds off the paper and serve.

Recommended Reads and Related Media

Articles

The Atlantic: [Matti Friedman on military language and the jargon of the IDF](#)

The Forward: [Israel's political situation in the 1990s and the hopes for peace](#)

Matti Friedman on the Pumpkin Incident and the war for perception in the [New York Post](#) and [Tablet Magazine](#)

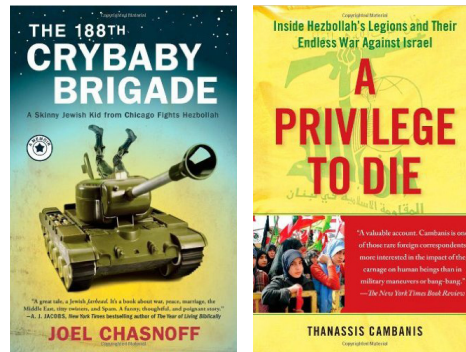
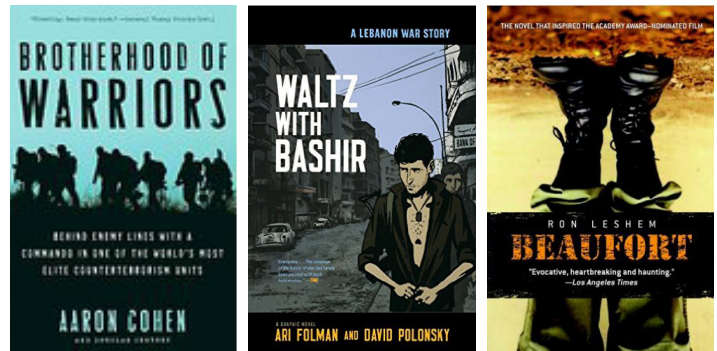
Times of Israel: [Review of Pumpkinfoowers and Interview with Matti Friedman](#)

Media

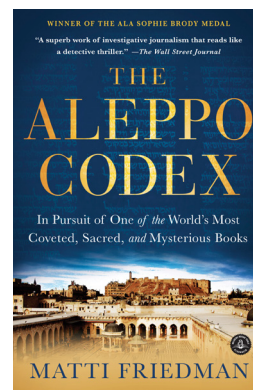
Beaufort. Written by Joseph Cedar and Ron Leshem. Dir. Joseph Cedar. 2007

YouTube: Video of the Pumpkin Incident

Books



Also by Matti Friedman



Winner of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature

JBC Book Clubs, a program of Jewish Book Council, provides resources and support for book clubs interested in reading books of Jewish interest. On the Jewish Book Council website, find thousands of book reviews, discussion questions and discussion guides, thematic reading lists, and more. JBC Book Clubs is a one-stop shop to build and enhance your book club's conversations—let us guide you on your literary journey.

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