

# World in Pieces

mckshmt

## Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank those who made it possible for me to write up a whole book.

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And most of all to my:

Parents who supported me no matter what

## Introduction

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Thank you for choosing to read this book. I hope I will not let you down, but if I had, then do not hesitate from sending me some comments. I enjoy reading them and will appreciate it if you took time to actually comment on my writing. If you dislike the commenting system here at the Puboo, then you are also welcomed to send an e-mail to: [i.choose.to@live.com](mailto:i.choose.to@live.com)

I will now leave you to enjoy a little time of quietness to read my actual writings. But before you fly off to the world of chaos, please disregard the names of people and organizations as totally fictional.

Thanks.

Enjoy

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## Afghanistan

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A man sits beside the Kabul River, all alone and keeping to himself. He roams around the city during the day and comes back to the river at always the same time, always to the same riverside. Once distinguished with his family and wealth, this man now looks miserable with the eyes of the dead. His clothes worn out and torn at places, the time he spent smiling happily was gone, buried in his memory with the laughter of his family. All he does now is to steal food from the market and sits all day beside the river. Wondering what he has done to deserve this loneliness.

The man had a decent life until the Soviets came along with their artillery guns slung over their hunched shoulders. The man had a beautiful wife with a name of Setara, which means stars. She owned silky black hair that shimmered down her back, almost to her knees. She had a graceful figure when she married the man that eventually became plump as she bore him seven children. He remembered that she sang well, especially the old Afghan songs that are now long lost since there are no one to sing these days, days of long war. He couldn't keep himself from how she died while cradling their latest daughter in her arms. His wife and his youngest daughter died of stray bullets while his family tried to escape from truck full of raging Soviet soldiers. He could recall the bullets striking Setara's right chin and splashing the daughter's face with her mother's blood. Setara's knees giving away as they buckled out; the next thing he knew was his wife dead on the ground, along with his daughter under her, already unconscious with her mother's weight all on her tiny body. The daughter died namelessly. He wept as he recalled his beloved ones died. He tried to forget every time this exactly same memory surfaces, but it seemed like his brain would not allow himself to forget even the dying image of his wife.

Next day, the man on the Kabul River remained in his position. He wake up every day on the same spot and went to sleep on the exactly same place, hugging himself with a thin, filthy blanket full of flees that he took from a barrack he wondered into during the day. Looking back to the memories of his wife brought him too much sorrow. So did the memories of his children, but they left him in less agony. The oldest son was the man's favorite, because his appearance was much like his mother's. That is why he named his first son Sepehr, the sky. The man used to take his oldest son to Jalalabad, the city of trade and business of all sorts via this very river. Sepehr followed him everywhere as his father browsed through the bazaar, and sipped a cup of coffee beside him when the man stopped for a shisha. The man taught his son many things; he told Sepehr many stories and history of the Kabul River as they sat in one of the cafes of Jalalabad. The man would talk how Alexander the Great used this very river to invade India in the fourth century BCE in his low, tenor voice and Sepehr would admire the river on the way to home, begging his father to tell him more stories about the river. Few years later, Sepehr married at the age of nineteen. He raised five children and the man was happy enough to congratulate him even though the man missed his company terribly. However, the happy

days of Sepehr's merry life has ended with the footsteps of Soviets soldiers on the Afghan soil, as the man's ended with that exactly same moment. The man learned too late that Sepehr and his family tried to cross the border to Pakistan via Khyber Pass and were all killed by the Taliban while still trying. The man noticed a teardrop falling on his lap. He didn't know until then that he was crying; he thought of how tearful he was lately of everything he lost. He stared into the river, reflecting the moon off the starless twilight sky. There were no stars at night in Kabul anymore, because of the pollutions that plagued the city and the air. He looked up at the once-starlit now-starless sky, shook his head and laid down with his thin blanket.

The man woke up with a startle as he heard screech of kids. He shuffled onto his feet to see what is going on under the bridge where homeless kids who sometimes stole foods from the bazaar with the man gathered. Kids noisily talked, screamed and shouted as they please, and started to rush toward the man when they saw him approach. All of them were orphans, with no place to go home and no parents to take care of them. So they simply took care of each other, trying only to live another day in this war-raged country where orphaned children are forced to labor, prostitute, or gradually starve to death. The man watched as the kids raced to him, shouting all at the same time and pointing excitedly under the bridge. Excited as they were, kids took the man under the bridge to where a baby wrapped up in brown blanket lay quietly sleeping. The man couldn't quite believe his eyes. The baby sleeping angelically before him looked a lot like the youngest daughter he had, the very daughter he thought was dead along with his wife. The kids looked up at him, trying to figure out why the man stared at the baby for such a long time, and then they noticed tears silently falling down his cheeks. Of all these days, he thought he had become a hopeless man without family. But now he had found his reason to live again, and the light of hope has returned to his eyes ever since the war begun and bullets started flying. The man gently scooped up the baby in his arms while the homeless kids looked on from a step behind. No one was going to ruin a perfect moment like that, a moment when the long-lost family was finally reunited even in crucial situation.

The man looked up at the sky and suddenly came to notice that the stars are always up there in the sky. They have always been there, keeping him and his daughter safe. The man smiled down at the small face of his baby, now yawning. Now he had a life other than his to protect. He had cried over past days for the families he had lost, but now he had the family to smile for.

He was once again hopeful.

## Israel #1

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Ding-dong...

Ben-Gurion woke up with a startle as he heard a doorbell ring. He rubbed his bloodshot eyes and looked up at a clock hanging from the wall of his bedroom. He wondered who in the world planned to visit him in the eighth of Saturday morning, especially that today was his first day serving as an IDF officer-in-training. With a yawn, he trotted along the narrow corridor of his apartment in barefoot and opened the door.

“Good morning, Ben! How is my darling son doing on the morning of his big day?”

A plump woman of fifty-six nearly shouted in her soprano voice when Ben opened the door and greeted him with a warm hug that only reached to Ben’s mid-torso because of her son’s tallness. Ben cringed at his mother’s high-pitched shriek, but managed to mumble something that sounded like “come in”.

With a hot cup of herb tea that Ben poured for his mother, Tzahala Lempel, the very mother of Ben, settled down on the couch, which was the only furniture that occupied Ben’s small apartment. She sipped the tea from her cup, sighed satisfactorily, and smiled at her son.

“So, darling, tell your mother how excited you are of joining the IDF.”

Ben rolled his eyes, because it was the very subject he and his mother talked endlessly over the phone, most of the conversations filled with a number of similar questions.

“Oh Mom, you of all people should know how matter-of-fact I am offering a service in the Force. We’ve talked about it ever since the day we’ve discovered that letter from the Force in my mailbox. Can’t you just drop the subject and tell me why you are really here?”

“Well, of course, being your mother, I thought it appropriate to discuss your feelings on your big day even it was obvious. But since you insisted, I think I will tell you how your father thinks about it.”

Ben shot a glance toward his mother when she mentioned his father who was an IDF officer until he retired the previous year. Ben loved both his parents, but his father didn’t give him much of fatherly impressions from Ben’s childhood. Only thing he remembered was his gray beard with an IDF uniform, complete with a beret with many badges in his honor.

“What about him?”

Ben asked nonchalantly while he pretended to be interested in an article on the today’s copy of daily Haaretz. His mother eyed him from the couch as she took few more sips from her cup of tea, placed the cup down on a little plastic table, and continued.

“Your father sends his congratulations to you, of course...it would have been even better if you could have joined the army when he, too, was present. Nevertheless, of all things, he sent you a warning...he knows, I and your father both know that you are very intelligent and physically tough, Ben, but we want you to be weary of your emotions. We are not saying that you’re a bat in the belfry. Of course not, but we all know that you’ve always been kind to the others, most of the time sympathetic to those who are hurt or in need. Your father and I are just worried that your own goodness will bring bad luck to you when you are in combat. Are we worrying too much, do you think?”

No, they weren’t, and Ben himself knew that his parents were dead on the point...he couldn’t sleep

last night at all, worrying about that very same thing over and over in his head. Will he be able to shoot someone with his gunpoint at their shuddering faces? He couldn't. He never hurt people in his life, either physically or mentally. It was in his nature to be friendly to people, and that was why people were kind to him, returning the favor. Despite the uneasiness he had when his mother told him exactly what his problem was, he couldn't tell his parents how he really feels because that will make them worry too much of him and he couldn't make himself do that, out of his love to his parents. That's why he lied to his mother, quite casually, and somehow with assuring laughter.

“Wow, Mom! That was some serious show of deep reading into my thoughts, huh? But don't you worry, you and Dad, because I'm not that naïve anymore. I can handle myself better than I did back in my childhood.”

Tzahala looked rather relived at hearing this, and pushed herself from the couch to bring her cup and saucer into a sink. She washed her share of the dish and wiped her hands on a sheet of kitchen paper.

“Well, if that's the deal, then I'm glad to tell you that we have gone ahead of ourselves to make fool of all of us. I've got to run for a grocery shopping and I hate to make haste, but just promise me that you will call once you get a chance, okay? And stop by as often as you can when you have time.”

She said as she collected her purse and shuffled to the door. Ben followed to the doorway and kissed her both cheeks good-bye. She told him once more to call on a first chance he got, and he told her not to worry too much. He threw himself onto the bed once again to get some sleep when his mother finally let herself out of his apartment. He had few hours left until he was due to leave for the IDF camp of Combat Engineering Corps.

Five minutes before ten, Ben stepped off of the shuttle bus that dropped him off at the camp. Bold letters of Israel Defense Forces and the symbol of the Corps, which is a sword on a defensive tower with a blast halo on the background, displayed on a massive billboard indicated that this was where he was headed. A Boston bag filled with minimal amount of his personal possessions, books and CDs mostly, was carelessly slung over his manly shoulders, lightly bouncing up and down as he scuffled towards the entrance of the camp to register. When he finished registering himself, he heard a familiar voice calling his name.



## Israel #2

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“Hey, Ben! Over here!”

Ben looked around until he spotted a possible source of the familiar voice that belonged to Amit Hirsch, his best friend since middle school. Amit had a voice that would silence the room in no time; he was talkative, friendly to just about anyone but much too short tempered although his bad mood didn't last much too long every time he got upset. His appearance was rather odd for Israeli; he had spiky black hair with a pair of blue eyes, the color so deep they sometimes looked like bottomless ocean. Ben strode towards his old time friend, gave him high-five when he got to his side, and sat down next to him while eyeing a stranger cowering behind Amit.

“Hey Amit, it's been forever since we last talked, man. I'm glad I know at least someone in this camp, or otherwise I wouldn't be able to survive through three years of service here.”

Amit smiled knowingly at Ben and the guy sitting next to him. With a suppressed excitement, Amit asked him if he wanted to hear good news. Ben wondered briefly what the deal was, but told him to spill the beans nonetheless.

“Well, earlier I took a chance to glance at the room-share announcement, and you and this mate here, are fortunate winners to be my cabin mates!”

Ben stole a glance at the stranger sitting across Amit from him who smiled at him unsurely when he noticed Ben staring at him. Ben shot back an assuring smile that enchanted just about anyone who saw his brilliant smile. Ben chuckled inside himself at his best friend's self-consciousness and good humor that never changed since they've first met. Ben extended his hand to the stranger who now presented himself as Ben and Amit's cabin mate.

“Well, in that matter, I guess I should be introducing myself to the gent over here; I'm Ben-Gurion Lempel. Glad to have you in my cabin. Just call me Ben from now on like this dork here Amit does.”

Amit slapped Ben's back good-naturedly when he heard the last sentence and their newly acquainted roommate giggled along. He took Ben's hand and shook it gently with his chubby hands. He introduced himself as Navah Haza, rather shyly than was appropriate for the boys his age. His appearance seemed to resemble the very character he was...he was short, chubby with flushed cheeks the color of rose, and a pair of thick black-rimmed glasses that screamed he was nothing other than a math whiz type of kid, a chess club frenzy. When they all settled in their seats, a squally man in an IDF uniform with a grey beret that indicated that the man was a member of the Combat Engineering Corps, took a microphone and stood glaring at a crowd of soldiers before him, newly registered soldiers who will be trained in the camp until they were good to go. The man barked into the microphone, introduced himself as General Ahuv Elfenbeim, a chief commander of the IDF Combat Engineering Corps, and continued.

“My fellow gents! Welcome to the Combat Engineering Corps, the GOC Army Headquarters of IDF, maybe better known to you people as Muhandesim. You should consider yourselves lucky to be admitted here in this corps, highly respected branch of the IDF. The Muhandesim has participated and is honored in various wars, most notably operation Abirey Lev of Yom Kippur War, which was a mission to breach the

Suez Canal. Well, enough of the history for now. My role here today, is to familiarize you young sheep to this camp and the organization that are formed here. Generally, you will be assigned to four units of approximately fifteen for the daily routine of works and trainings, of which you will be responsible to complete, starting from tomorrow. Each team will be supervised by an assistant of mine who will be reporting directly back to me, which enables me to keep track of who obliges to the orders and who does not. I am well aware that not everybody here excels in labor works such as combat or bulldozer driving. That is why the units are arranged according to your abilities and inabilities. Some of you will be Sapper, trained with all the basic engineering skills to breach through terrain obstacles, natural and artificial, breach through minefields and enable ground forces to advance in the battlefield. They are trained to supply close combat support for both armored fighting vehicles and infantry. If you are not excited about body contact with the opponents, then you might be settled in for EVO, Engineering Vehicles Operator, less combatant but nonetheless significant. For those of you EVO trainees are expected to be skilled in the operation of heavy mechanical equipment and engineering vehicles such as heavy bulldozers, excavators, cranes, tractors and mine-breaching devices. If you insist that you prefer to use brain instead of your muscles, well then you will be better off as NBC disposal...doesn't necessary mean that you are not needed, of course. NBC disposals are responsible for handling nuclear, biological and chemical threats that are posed to the IDF in general. I hope none of you have slept off during my informational speech, because now I'm going to post the room-sharing sheet...follow the sheet and settle into your cabin as you please. When you are done unpacking your bag, then come back here to be escorted to the cafeteria by your unit supervisors. Understood? Dismissed!"

As final bark echoed off the tent they were inside, Ben, Amit, and Navah shuffled to their feet along with dozens of other soldiers. Navah pointed to the direction of cabin 109, which was to be their room for a solid three years according to the sheet provided for them. Three of them noticed that they weren't the only one living in that cabin for next couple of years; there was a man already sprawled on a bed who popped himself up in a sitting position when he noticed three of them approaching.

"Hey, you must be Yonatan Graff. Nice to meet you; I'm Ben, this here's Amit and Navah. We will all be cabin mates for next three years."

Yonatan glanced wearily at Ben who smiled charmingly at his fox-like face. He continued to stare at Amit and Navah without saying a word, his stare rather rude and making three of them rather uncomfortably rooted to their spot. He snickered half-heartedly when he saw that he made his roommates uncomfortable in their own room. He presented himself as a heir of a rightful military family, rather too self-consciously in a voice that indicated that he considered himself superior to his audience and then added matter-of-factly;

"You think we, or you, for that matter, will all survive through all these years that we are going to be here? Oh, please tell me that you are kidding me, do you not? I mean, we are talking about an army here, except that brain whiz who is mostly likely to end up in that, what is it called again? Oh, NBC disposal."

He empathized the last word "disposal", in an effort to make Navah blush in embarrassment, which proved to be the very reaction he took in return to the insult he received. Ben furrowed at the pointed face of Yonatan who obviously would not contribute to a friendly air that Ben tried to create in the cabin. He thought

he had never met a person so visibly uncooperative. But as friendly and good-natured as he was, he decided to shake the entire conversation off as a case of homesick for Yonatan. After all, they were all going to be spending the time together for few years, and he was willing to spend it merrily if possible with just a few tries on his part.

“Well, that’s a fair enough suggestion that some of us will survive and some of us wouldn’t, just as every single one of us has different capability. But that’s what why we are here, to be trained, in order to survive and maintain our strength and ability to its limit. So while we are here with shared goal, let’s be on friendly term, what do you say?”

To this friendly gesture, Yonatan looked surprised at first that he was responded in most kind way ever, after that unfriendly statement he has given him at first, but ignored Ben altogether when he realized he couldn’t immediately think of anything decent to say. He just shrugged off the comment, propped himself back on the bed, and continued to take a nap. Ben looked on disapprovingly but walked on to his share of room, followed by bitter-faced Amit and slightly nervous Navah.

That night in the cafeteria having dinner, Ben, Amit, and Navah discussed ill-behaving Yonatan and came to a conclusion that they will act nonchalantly to his insults as they thought it was best tactic of ending his misbehavior fast and peacefully. Navah sighed and blessed Ben for his bravery while stamping on himself of his cowardice.

“I admire your bravery, Ben. I couldn’t believe you came up with such intelligent things to shoot back at Yonatan when all I could think of was how I could stay calm and under control.”

Ben laughed half-heartedly when he heard his new friend congratulated on his behalf when Ben himself did not think of the prior conversation as suitable to be exchanged between roommates that will be living in the same room for next thousand or so days. Then it was Amit’s turn to speak bitterly about how Yonatan behaved earlier; yes Amit was friendly indeed, but the situation only applied itself when the befriended one was corporative to him as well. That was exactly why Amit didn’t approve Yonatan after the first conversation with him earlier; he just couldn’t take it. Ben imagined how all four of them were going to live together without much to be distracted except the daily training that was promising to be stressful to them all. He shook his head at the thought of this and continued munching on the food he thought was tasteless, missing his mother’s recipes already.

## Israel #3

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For the next half of the year, Ben and other trainees at the camp went through harsh trainings that prepared them for the actual battles, some of them in body-to-body combat and others in a room full of biological, chemical, and nuclear problems to find solution. As for Ben, Amit, and Navah, it was reliving to find the training tough even though it physically wore them out every day, because that meant they didn't have to socialize with their incoherent roommate, Yonatan. Nearly an year and half passed since their registration at the corps without anything major happening. It was beautiful spring day when all members of the corps at the camp were called to attention at the clearing. Like the very first time they were introduced to the camp and its stuff, Gen. Elfenbeim was ready to give speech to the audience. However, the announcement he was making this day was much more urgent and official than the one before at the exact same spot. He took the microphone from his assistant and adjusted it mechanically, a bag under his eyes indicating he slept not too soundly the previous night. He tiredly, but still barked orders into his microphone as he glared with bloodshot eyes at the soldiers lining up before him. The announcement was the following;

“Second Intifada, Palestinian uprising against us, have proceeded to such a scale that our help is needed at the IDF, none other than at the frontline itself. I will need every one of you to be fully aware that, by any degree, you will be honoring the country by the service you are offering. Units of Sapper 06, Rifleman 07, and EVO Operator 07 will be sent to Jenin refugee camp at West Bank, and brace yourselves to the real body-to-body combat. NBC disposals...the Purifiers will remain here so their specialty may be used accordingly if any problem of sort should appear. For further and detailed information of this mission will be provided through your supervisors. You have a night to prepare yourselves for this operation that will surely guide this country to her rightful power against the Palestinians. You can call your relatives via land phones in the registration office if you need to. Dismissed.”

Ben wasn't going to call either of his parents...after all, he was the one who told them not to worry about him and he didn't want to tell them of his dangerous mission yet. May be he will when he is finished with it for once. That is, only if he came back alive. Ben walked back to his cabin to find Amit gone, probably calling his family who sent him pages and pages of letters weekly, asking about the life in military. It was considered a top-rated topic to be discussed in the Hirsch's, since all siblings of Amit were of female gender who were very conservative, and did not even dream of themselves in the women's army unit...ever. Amit was now a member of EVO, the Tzama units, and drove armored bulldozers most enthusiastically of all other drivers. As for Navah, he proceeded to be as exactly as Yonatan had guessed him to be on their first encounter; he was the purifier, one of the best ones to be exact. Ben and Yonatan were both stationed to the Rifleman 07 even though they disliked each other to the very core. Ben sighed at a mere thought of him and Yonatan going through the mission together, but collected himself to remind his very heart that it was his responsibility to fulfill the mission to its perfection. Whether he liked it or not, the mission had to be completed or the whole corps will be in trouble for his mistake. He braced himself for what he hoped to be the first and the last time for an actual combat.

“Rishonim Tamid!”

A motto of the CEC, “Always first”, was shouted with equal enthusiasm to the Brazilian passion of soccer game. It was the day of advance, first mission to the new soldiers like Ben, Amit, Navah, and Yonatan. Ben howled himself and his sack to the back of a khaki military truck where dozens of his team were already in sitting position, ready to go. Ben sat next to Yonatan out of no choice for it was the only seat available in the situation. Yonatan smirked at Ben, seeing how nervous he was on his first real combat operation. Yonatan whispered with half snicker as the truck started to move;

“Well, well. You seem quite unsure of yourself today, Lempel.”

Ben glanced in the general direction of Yonatan, but he was unable to utter a word out of his nervousness. Yonatan continued wickedly;

“Maybe you are a straight-A, brilliant trainee when we were back at the camp, Lempel, but what matters most is, as I’m sure you are aware, is how you can kill as many opponents as possible without getting killed yourself on the frontline, you see? I don’t know and am not interested in how you are feeling, but let me tell you that I am invincibly thrilled.”

Ben let Yonatan talk; he wasn’t too concerned about him right now, but was about Amit who would be the first-in-line of the operation, of which his main role in the plan was to clear booby traps that were reported to be laid inside the camp. The truck killed its engine when it drove for about three hours and led the operators step down from its back. It started again and drove away, heading back to the camp to bring two other teams of soldiers. A commander of the team motioned to the operators to stay behind the shadow of whatever objects that were around and large enough to cover their body. After an hour of waiting, Ben heard muffled sound of armored bulldozers approaching, probably the EVO Operator 07 unit Amit was assembled in with other dozen or so drivers. Ben was assured of his friend’s presence when he saw familiar face inside one of the front line bulldozers, looking in his direction and saluting half-serious, half jokingly. Ben saluted back, at the same time realizing that tension in the air was becoming fiercer by the minute. Bulldozers drove forward slowly until it was good five hundred meters away from the Jenin Camp. As the bulldozers neared, they all put on more speed, driving like a crowd of maniacs on drug. Ben didn’t notice until then that Yonatan was nowhere in sight as he looked about him. He searched as his eyesight would allow him for the now-familiar, fox like face, but he could not find Yonatan anywhere. The commander cursed under his breath when Ben reported Yonatan’s absence on the scene, but neither of them had time to discuss the matter, simply because it was the time to advance for the Rifleman 07. Ben took a deep breath and steadied himself. The combatants rushed straight to the Jenin Camp when they all heard a piercing sound of whistle, their first signal.

As the Rifleman 07 entered the Camp Jenin, they were already surrounded by the chaos as Palestinian refugees and the residents of the Camp tried to run for their lives. As instructed, Ben let children escape unharmed. It was the CEC’s policy not to harm the unnecessary. Ben went in to few tents that were still standing to find any signs of Palestinian militants, their main target of the operation. According to the General, the Jenin refugee camp served as a launch site for numerous terrorist attacks against both Israeli civilians and

Israeli towns and villages in the area. He was nauseated at even the mention of terrorists...his grandfather has died, getting unconsciously involved in a terrorist bombing of Jewish-Israeli bazaar where he had a shop of his own. Ben couldn't stand the thought of terrorists and was determined to track down every one of them, and kill them for the sake of his grandfather and all other Israelis who were damaged or hurt in the consequence. He managed to encounter no one who was eager to fight until he walked past a tent in which he heard a gunshot and sound of something collapsing. He hassled his way into the tent when he heard the gunshot. To his surprise, a body on the floor with a bloody gash on his chest was none other than Yonatan Graff; the missing operator of Rifleman 07. Ben barely had time to look at the body of his teammate when he was jammed to the aide with such force that he rolled onto his back, no time or opportunity to even hold a gunpoint to the very man who killed his coworker. He sprinted after the killer but was in no lack as to finding him inside the camp. He chided himself for failing to at least capture the criminal. Meanwhile, the second whistle rang, a signal that the Rifleman 07 was expected to hurry back to the track waiting once again outside the refugee camp. Hesitantly, Ben broke into a run and darted through rows of barrack tents to make his way to the track. He was still blaming himself when he had the time to report to the commander that Yonatan was now dead.

Life was no easier for Ben as it was not in the frontline. When he got back from the office, finally done with the report of the mission, Navah told him in the cabin that Amit too, was killed during the first day of the battle that was later to be called the infamous Battle of Jenin of Al-Aqsa Intifada. Ben couldn't believe his ears and tried not to register what Navah had said, but the words sank themselves to Ben's brain; Amit is dead. Ben crumpled on the floor, unable to keep his strength under control anymore. It couldn't be true that Amit was dead, but his doubt was confirmed to the negative side of the deal when a funeral, hosting the deaths of the battle, was held on April 20, 2002, two days after the IDF and the CEC withdrew from the refugee camp.

Ben headed to the edge of the camp when the funeral was over; a little hill, located so it will overlook the camp, was the only place he could truly be alone for while to get through difficult week. He cried for a minute or two until he saw a small figure approaching him, and after sometime he recognized the person to be Navah.

"I want to be alone, Navah."

Navah seemed to be surprised at this direct address, but he replied with somewhat composure and calmness on his part.

"I know you are upset, Ben, but you've got to get a hold on yourself. You have been like a zombie for over a week and it isn't like you."

To this acknowledgement of his current situation, Ben replied bitterly and slightly with meanness that he instantly regretted the moment the words departed his mouth.

"You don't know anything about me or how I'm like, Navah. We've only met a year and half ago, and we've didn't spend so much time together in that period either. Now leave me alone for a little."

Navah looked hurt at the comment, especially because it was coming from Ben who was always kind and friendly to just about everyone. Nevertheless, Navah dismissed the comment and talked on as though he didn't hear a word of it.

“Believe me when I say I know how you feel, Ben. Amit was my friend too, and I miss him terribly. I don't know if it will be a comfort to you or not, I hope it is, but people become stars when they pass away, so they can keep their eye on their beloved ones. Or so my grandma said when both of my parents died in a car accident when I was five. I thought Amit would watch over us, or at least make fun of us, from heaven above, like he always did...either way he'll be watching us.”

Ben didn't know what to say. He replied in a hushed tone, a little embarrassed of how nasty he sounded earlier.

“Your parents are deceased and you didn't tell me about it all these years? Well, I'm sorry about them, Navah. I truly am. Forgive me for the shitty comment I made earlier; I was so disturbed with Amit's death, you know?”

Navah nodded.

“Yeah, Ben. I know what you mean and it's all right on me. Don't worry a thing about it, okay? Let's just go back to our cabin.”

Navah turned to walk back to the cabin and Ben followed. They walked silently for few strides when Ben noticed there was a star already in the light of early twilight. He remembered what Navah said about stars. *If you are really there, Amit*, he thought to himself. *Watch over me and Navah until we join you up there in heaven, maybe in expected time or maybe earlier, or later even. Who knows?* Ben smiled to himself at that point when he noticed how fond of the CEC he have grown to, and silently congratulated himself for being there after thinking; *Maybe it wasn't too bad joining the army after all.* He looked at Navah walking few steps ahead of him, the very friend who helped Ben steer up from the sorrow. Now Ben knew for sure that he'll be fine. In the end, what mattered most was a friend when needed. He was ready to face another day, a mission to fulfill.

## North Korea

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Yes the Cheonan sank,  
It was merely a punk,  
Of a badly-humored child  
Whose murky decision fired.  
Aphotic it is, but what is not  
In the country this corrupt,  
Every hope denied,  
Tears long before dried.  
Crepuscular we see today,  
With hope be otherwise or nay.  
Cries of the newborns  
Carry out to those who burns  
Inside to see the day  
Where populace have a say.



## Palestine

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Place of war, from old  
To young, secure the household.  
Where family can rest  
Without a fear of the theft  
Of the land or property  
Of which they are the very.  
Come intifada if you have  
Spirit that roars with crave  
For the Jews' bloods  
But it is the legendary loads  
That continues critically with bullets  
Fired continuously from frets.  
Lead the way, al-Qaeda!  
To blast straight through the plaza.

## South Africa

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Ole! To Nelson Mandela  
Who made it possible for FIFA.  
We can be dithyrambic,  
As long as we aren't barbaric.  
Vuvuzela for the game  
Car horns are definitely the fame.  
Identify those who play  
Mighty goal, moment of the day.  
Wave the flag, of various  
Colors, swarming to the bounteous  
Stadium, full of cheers,  
We are all winners.

## Author's Notes

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I have written this book for the Personal Project, my school assignment.

However, writing has become my personal hobby as I got more into it over time. I hope to add more poems and short stories as I write them, needless to say that I now enjoy writing stories despite it was a school assignment.

And if anyone is interested, they are more than welcomed to comment or advise on the pieces of my writings as they see fit.

Many thanks to you all.

MckShmmt