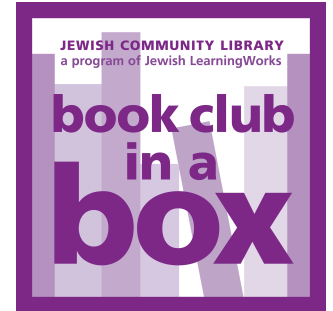


The Jewish Community Library

1835 Ellis Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
415.567.3327 x706
info@jewishcommunitylibrary.org
www.jewishcommunitylibrary.org



Everything you need for a great discussion...including the books! At no charge!

We lend your group 12 copies of a book, along with discussion questions and background information. Go to the website for links to discussion questions, articles, interviews, and other resources.

Alina Adams: **The Nesting Dolls**

(Fiction, 384 pp. 2020)

Moving from Odessa to Siberia to Brighton Beach, this sweeping historical novel portrays three generations of women, weaving their stories of love, sacrifice, family, and survival.

S. Y. Agnon: **A Simple Story**

(Fiction, 246 pp. Hebrew, 1935; English translation, 1985)

By no means simple, this quasi-love story and portrait of bourgeois life by the only Nobel laureate to write in Hebrew renders with deft, comic touches the microcosmic inner workings of a small town in Ukraine at the turn of the 20th century.

S. Y. Agnon: **To This Day**

(Fiction, 177 pp. Hebrew, 1952; English translation, 2008)

This comic tale of a Galician Jew who has lived in Palestine, returns to Europe on the eve of WWI and gets stranded in Berlin evolves into a profound commentary on exile, Zionism, divine providence, and human egoism.

Marjorie Agosín, editor: **The House of Memory: Stories by Jewish Women Writers of Latin America**

(Short Stories, 272 pp. 1999)

These 22 selections from Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, and Costa Rica, paint a rich picture of Jewish women's experiences in diverse settings. The protagonists often struggle to maintain ties with their Jewish heritage while trying to become part of a New World society suffused with Catholicism.

Naomi Alderman: **Disobedience**

(Fiction, 240 pp. 2006)

Ronit, a thirty-something single lawyer living in Manhattan, reluctantly returns to London after the death of her estranged father, a prominent rabbi, where she must face the small, tight-knit Orthodox community she fled many years ago.

Naomi Alderman: **Disobedience**

(Fiction, 240 pp. 2006)

Ronit, a thirty-something single lawyer living in Manhattan, reluctantly returns to London after the death of her estranged father, a prominent rabbi, where she must face the small, tight-knit Orthodox community she fled many years ago.

Isabel Allende: *The Wind Knows My Name*

(Fiction, 272 pp. Spanish original and English translation, 2023)

Two children, half a century apart, are forced to leave their families and homelands for uncertain futures. Samuel escapes on the 1938 Kindertransport from Nazi-occupied Austria to England, and Anita flees terror in El Salvador to an Arizona migrant facility, where she is forcibly separated from her mother. Allende weaves together heartbreaking stories of confusion, fear, and loss at the core of forced migration.

Aharon Appelfeld: *Blooms of Darkness*

(Fiction, 279 pp. Hebrew, 2006; English translation, 2010)

When the Nazis begin to liquidate the Ukrainian ghetto, a mother leaves her 11-year-old son with her best friend Mariana, a prostitute. Confined to Mariana's room by day and locked in her closet by night, the boy clings to family memories while witnessing Mariana's depression, alcoholism, abrupt disappearances, and abuse by visiting soldiers. This haunting coming-of-age novel depicts – with powerfully sparse prose – loss, love, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Maya Arad: *The Hebrew Teacher*

(Fiction, 320 pp. Hebrew, 2018; English translation, 2024)

Three Israeli women, their lives altered by immigration to the United States, seek to overcome crises. Ilana is a veteran Hebrew instructor at a Midwestern college. When a young Hebrew literature professor joins the faculty, she finds his post-Zionist politics a threat to her life's work. Miriam, whose son left Israel to make his fortune in Silicon Valley, pays an unwanted visit to meet her new grandson and discovers cracks in the family's perfect façade. Efrat, another Israeli in California, is determined to help her daughter navigate the challenges of middle school, and crosses forbidden lines when she follows her into the minefield of social media. In these stirring novellas, celebrated Israeli author Maya Arad probes the demise of idealism and the generation gap her heroines must confront.

Jami Attenberg: *The Middlesteins*

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2012)

After thirty years of marriage in the suburbs of Chicago, Richard Middlestein leaves his wife, Edie, as she awaits surgery to address complications of her excessive eating. It is up to their adult children to attend to the crisis, but nobody is up to the challenge.

Ronald Balson: *The Girl from Berlin*

(Fiction, 384 pp. 2018)

Dragged into an Italian property dispute, a couple uncover a handwritten memoir by Ada Baumgarten, a young Jewish violin prodigy in Berlin between the wars. Alternating between present and past, the novel involves murder, deception, and greed as it offers the beauty of music and love, and the possibility of redemption.

Rachel Barenbaum, *Atomic Anna*

(Fiction, 448 pp., 2022)

Returning again and again to right a catastrophic wrong, *Atomic Anna* imagines the length to which Chernobyl's principal architect-physicist would go to undo the meltdown, and the concomitant destruction of her self-worth. When the impact of nuclear forces unleashed by Chernobyl's explosion transports Anna to a remote Armenian mountaintop, she discovers her Soviet apparatchik ex-husband had surreptitiously enabled the completion of her engineering side-gig, an immense, clandestine time machine. Repeated time

travel messes with reality, but becomes increasingly urgent as Anna agonizes to disentangle tightly held family secrets across decades to save her loved ones. Discovering her own humanity is key.

Giorgio Bassani: *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*

(Fiction, 200 pp. Italian, 1962, English translations, 1965, 2007, 2011)

The classic novel chronicles the relationship between the young middle-class narrator and the children of a wealthy, assimilated family in the provincial city of Ferrara. The events take place on the eve of WWII, against the background of the antisemitic legislation and policies of the Italian fascist state.

Louis Begley: *Matters of Honor*

(Fiction, 307 pp. 2007)

Henryk Weiss, a young Polish Holocaust survivor, has reinvented himself at Harvard as Henry White. In a world governed by genteel prejudice and strong class values, both Archie and Sam, his non-Jewish roommates, have secrets of their own. Narrated by Sam, this novel probes the inner workings of self-identity, the cost of pursuing external rewards, and thwarted love.

Saul Bellow: *Seize the Day*

(Fiction, 118 pp. 1956)

A day in the life of Tommy Wilhelm, an unemployed salesman who is estranged from his wife and children, is living in a hotel with his cold and disapproving father, and has given his last dollars to a questionable character for speculation in the commodities market. Bellow's novella paints a memorable picture of the inner turmoil of a man on the brink.

David Bezmozgis: *The Betrayers*

(Fiction, 256 pp. 2015)

The novel spans one momentous day in the life of powerful Israeli politician Baruch Kotler, a former Soviet refusenik. Fleeing to the Crimea in the wake of political pressure and blackmail, he unexpectedly comes face to face with the man who denounced him to the KGB forty years earlier. Evoking biblical themes while casting attention to the plight of Jews in both Israel and Ukraine, *The Betrayers* poses profound questions about ethics and forgiveness.

Rachel Biale: *Growing Up Below Sea Level: A Kibbutz Childhood*

(Memoir, 256 pp. 2020)

Biale's memoir is composed of linked stories about growing up on Kibbutz Kfar Ruppin in Israel's Jezreel Valley in the 1950s and 60s, when children spent most of their time living apart from their parents in a Children's House.

Geraldine Brooks: *People of the Book*

(Fiction, 372 pp. 2008)

One of the earliest Jewish religious volumes to be illuminated with images, the Sarajevo Haggadah survived centuries of purges and wars thanks to people of all faiths who risked their lives to safeguard it. Brooks has turned the sparsely detailed history of this precious volume into an emotionally rich fictionalization that retraces its turbulent journey.

Geraldine Brooks: *The Secret Chord*

(Fiction, 316 pp. 2015)

This inventive re-imagining of one of literature's most iconic and enigmatic figures goes beyond the myth to bring King David the man to life. Brooks traces the arc of his journey from obscurity to fame, from shepherd to soldier, from hero to traitor, from beloved king to murderous despot and into his remorseful and diminished old age.

Jennifer S. Brown: *Modern Girls*

(Fiction, 384 pp. 2016)

As an immigrant mother and her modern daughter wrestle with unplanned pregnancies and unthinkable choices in 1935 New York, they are forced to confront their beliefs and the changing world at home and abroad.

Ruth Calderon: *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*

(Midrash, 184 pp. Hebrew, 2001; English translation, 2014)

Knesset member and teacher Calderon offers a passionate reading and literary retelling of seventeen passages from rabbinic literature, with an emphasis on restoring the voices of women. Each chapter begins with the actual Talmudic text, followed by Calderon's imaginative expansion and reflections.

Doreen Carvajal: *The Forgetting River: A Modern Tale of Survival, Identity and the Inquisition*

(Memoir, 320 pp. 2012)

Moving to Arcos de la Frontera in the Spanish province where her father's family had originated, the author explores the fascinating, fraught — and ultimately personal — history of the Sephardic Jews who had been forced to become Catholic converts or exiles.

Talia Carner: *The Third Daughter*

(Fiction, 432 pp. 2019)

In the late nineteenth century, Argentina offered an escape from poverty, pogroms, and the Pale — and held a disturbing secret. Talia Carner's deeply researched novel reveals Russian Jews' degradation under tsarist antisemitism and their desperation to ensure their children's survival. When Batya's father leaps at the opportunity to marry her to a rich, well-spoken stranger, the expectation of passage to an easy life in South America ends at a brothel's door. She becomes one of thousands of Jewish young women trafficked through Argentina's brutal prostitution underworld. The risk of escape is fraught with menace, including the ancillary dangers for her family back in Russia, but it is Batya's only hope.

Michael Chabon: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*

(Fiction, 656 pp. 2000)

Two cousins, one from Prague, one Brooklyn-born, come of age during World War II and spin their fantasies, dreams, and fears into a wildly popular comic book series. See for yourself why this panoramic novel won the Pulitzer Prize.

Michael Chabon: *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

(Fiction, 414 pp. 2007)

It's bad enough that the Jewish mini-state established in Alaska for survivors of Hitler is about to revert to US control after sixty years. Now Yiddish-speaking cop Meyer Landsman has to solve a tragic murder that pits him against his ex-wife boss, an assortment of odd relatives, and a swarm of corrupt Hasidim with apocalyptic dreams.

Catherine Chung: *The Tenth Muse*

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2020)

A brilliant mathematics prodigy, Katherine grows up uncertain about other aspects of her identity. She puzzles over her apparent Chinese and American heritages, while blazing a singular and dazzling path through arithmetic competitions consisting entirely of astonished (and alarmed) males. Katherine discovers the power of outward femininity in securing a precarious place within the old boys network of math

geniuses, even as she struggles for balance between love and integrity. The key to her math mastery is bound up in her family's mysterious legacy.

Shulem Deen: *All Who Go Do Not Return*

(Memoir, 288 pp. 2015)

The author reflects on growing up in, and leaving, New York's Skverer Hasidic community—an escape that ultimately results in his separation from his wife and children.

Roz Chast: *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*

(Graphic memoir, 228 pp. 2014)

The *New Yorker* cartoonist describes the last several years of her aging parents' lives, told through colorful cartoons and family photos. With her signature wit she offers laughs, tears, comfort and profound insights.

Joshua Cohen: *The Netanyahus*

(Fiction, 240 pp. 2021)

Reinventing the Netanyahus' late-1950s Americana period as a college campus satire, Cohen fictionalizes a relationship between Bibi's father, the then-obscure Israeli historian Ben-Zion Netanyahu, and his foil, narrator Professor Ruben Blum, a Bronx-born tax historian who stands-in for Diaspora Jewry. Alternatively hilarious and laboriously rendered, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel acts as a gateway to exploring Jewish identity, the meaning of assimilation, and the myth of place in Jewish imagination.

Edmund de Waal: *The Hare with Amber Eyes*

(Nonfiction, 368 pp. 2010)

The Ephrussis were one of the wealthiest Jewish dynasties in Europe, only to lose nearly everything with the Nazi conquest of Europe. Descendent de Waal traces the family's tale from Odessa to Paris, Vienna, and London through a collection of Japanese netsuke carvings acquired by the family in the 1870s.

Emuna Elon: *House on Endless Waters*

(Fiction, 320 pp. Hebrew, 2016; English translation, 2020)

An Israeli writer reluctantly returns to Amsterdam, the city of his birth, where he discovers the surprising truth about his mother's wartime experience—unearthing a remarkable story that becomes the subject of his magnum opus. Part family mystery, part wartime drama, this novel is a meditation on identity, belonging, and the inextricable nature of past and present.

Nathan Englander: *Kaddish.com*

(Fiction, 224 pp. 2019)

A lapsed Jew returns to the fold and becomes obsessed with redeeming a spiritual mistake made 20 years earlier.

Nathan Englander: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*

(Short Stories, 224 pp. 2012)

In his first collection since *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, Englander offers eight expertly crafted stories that paint humorous, irreverent, and unflinching portrayals of Jewish life in America and Israel.

Lillian Faderman: *Harvey Milk: His Lives and Death*

(Biography, 304 pp. 2018)

Contextualizing the local icon—eloquent, charismatic, and a smart-aleck—in a Jewish milieu, this biography chronicles Milk's upbringing and careers before he was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, positioning himself as a champion of the gay community, racial minorities, women,

working people, the disabled, and senior citizens. His assassination at the age of forty-eight made him the most famous gay leader in modern history.

Jason Fagone: *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies*

(Nonfiction, 464 pp. 2018)

Tells the story of wife-and-husband duo Elizebeth and William Friedman, who were groundbreaking cryptologists. From catching gangsters during Prohibition, Elizebeth went on to crack Nazi spy systems snaking throughout South America and penetrate deeply classified information within Hitler's inner circle. Author Fagone focuses both on their secretive government work and their oft-tested personal lives.

Lion Feuchtwanger: *The Oppermanns*

(Fiction, 380 pp. German, 1933; Revised translation, 2022)

Originally published in 1933 as antisemitic brutality erupted into mainstream German life, the book presents a thinly veiled fictional account of tragic events in real time. It was "intended to sound an alarm," according to the book's new introduction by Joshua Cohen. The fearsome vision of unfolding events anticipated social and cultural revolutions that continue to haunt the current political landscape.

Judith Frank: *All I Love and Know*

(Fiction, 432 pp. 2014)

When domestic partners Matthew Greene and Daniel Rosen learn that Daniel's twin brother and sister-in-law have been killed in a bombing in Jerusalem, and that they have been designated to raise the deceased couple's children in Massachusetts, their relationship faces major challenges.

Michael Frank: *One Hundred Saturdays: Stella Levi and the Search for a Lost World*

(Nonfiction, 227 pp. 2022)

Nonagenarian Stella Levi's chance encounter with Michael Frank, conducted entirely in Italian, piqued his interest in her personal history. He followed up one Saturday afternoon, visiting her Greenwich Village apartment to ask Stella about the Juderia, the Rhodes neighborhood where she'd grown up in a thriving Sephardic community whose rituals contributed to its vibrant identity for half a millennium. It initiated an honest and evocative dialogue in which Levi recounts her spirited youth in the eastern Aegean, continuing through the Rhodes Jewish community's deportation to Auschwitz. Winner of two National Jewish Book Awards and the American Library Association's Sophie Brody Award for best Jewish book of 2022.

Omer Friedlander: *The Man Who Sold Air in the Holy Land*

(Fiction, 256 pp. 2022)

This collection of intimate short stories takes the reader to the narrow alleyways of Jerusalem, to the desolate beauty of the Negev Desert, to war-torn Lebanon, and elsewhere, capturing dimensions of the Israeli experience with characters that spring to vivid life.

Matti Friedman: *The Aleppo Codex: A True Tale of Obsession, Faith, and the Pursuit of an Ancient Bible*

(Nonfiction, 320 pp. 2012)

The 10th century Aleppo Codex, named for the Syrian city in which it was kept, is considered the most accurate manuscript of the Hebrew Bible. However, a large portion of it went missing in the mid-20th century. Investigative journalist Friedman's account of the document's strange path over time feels like a detective thriller, with equal parts history and mystery, conspiracy and convolutions.

Matti Friedman: *Spies of No Country: Secret Lives at the Birth of Israel*

(Non-Fiction, 273 pp. 2019)

The four spies at the center of this true story were part of an undercover unit known as the Arab Section, conceived during World War II by British spies and Jewish militia leaders in Palestine, and emerging as the nucleus of the Mossad, Israel's vaunted intelligence agency.

Marra Gad: *The Color of Love: A Story of a Mixed-Race Jewish Girl*

(Memoir, 256 pp. 2019)

Gad reflects on her experiences as an American biracial Jew. Much of the focus is on her caring for her racist great-aunt, who is now suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Invoking the Hebrew word *yerusha* (inheritance), this memoir explores the inheritance of identity, disease, melanin, hate, and love.

Romain Gary (Emile Ajar): *The Life Before Us*

(Fiction, 191 pp. French, 1975; English translation, 1978)

Momo, an orphaned Arab adolescent, has been raised by his ailing surrogate mother, Madame Rosa, a survivor of Auschwitz and former lady of the night. A streetwise kid in Belleville, Paris' immigrant slum neighborhood, Momo narrates a world filled with pimps, prostitutes and witch doctors as he takes care of Madame Rosa. This moving story, told with sensitivity and black humor, won the Prix Goncourt, France's premier literary prize, and was the basis for *Madame Rosa*, the 1977 film starring Simone Signoret.

Assaf Gavron: *The Hilltop*

(Fiction, 464 pp. Hebrew, 2013; English translation, 2014)

Taking on one of the most charged geopolitical issues of our time, this award-winning satirical novel follows the growth of a fledgling Jewish outpost on a rocky West Bank hilltop. Exploiting Israel's byzantine bureaucracies—the government claims the outpost doesn't exist, while the military insists it must be defended—the settlement takes in a motley group of new members and launches iffy schemes under the wary gaze of the neighboring Palestinian village.

Ruth Gilligan: *Nine Folds Make a Paper Swan*

(Fiction, 352 pp. 2017)

Three intertwining voices span the twentieth century to tell the little-known story of Jews in Ireland, in this poignant portrait of what it means to belong, and how storytelling can bind us together.

Peter Godwin: *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa*

(Memoir, 341 pp. 2007)

As journalist Godwin records the collapse of his native Zimbabwe, he is confronted with his father's deathbed confession. The elder Godwin, who had always claimed to have been British, reveals himself to be a Polish Jew whose mother and sister were killed in Treblinka.

Myla Goldberg: *Bee Season*

(Fiction, 275 pp. 2000)

When Eliza Naumann, a seemingly unremarkable nine-year-old, wins her district spelling bee, she captures the attention of her father, Saul, absorbed in his study of Jewish mysticism, and displaces her brother, Aaron, who embarks upon a lone quest for spiritual fulfillment. Meanwhile, her brilliant but distant lawyer mother is having a crisis of her own.

Goldie Goldbloom: *On Division*

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2019)

Surie, a grandmother at fifty-seven living in Hasidic Williamsburg, is stunned to learn that she is pregnant with twins. Ashamed, she is unable to share the news even with her husband, a ritual scribe who is ready

to retire. As she nurses her secret and starts working clandestinely in a maternity clinic, Surie's understanding of her life begins to alter.

Rebecca Goldstein: *Betraying Spinoza*

(Nonfiction, 287 pp. 2006)

Baruch Spinoza, son of Portuguese immigrants to Holland, was excommunicated by the Amsterdam Jewish Community in 1656. Investigating Spinoza's background, education, and his own writings, Goldstein reveals how this yeshiva student became an influential philosopher and possibly the Western world's first secular Jew.

Lev Golinkin: *A Backpack, a Bear, and Eight Crates of Vodka*

(Memoir, 320 pp. 2014)

In the twilight of the Cold War, nine-year old Lev Golinkin and his family cross the Soviet border with only ten suitcases, \$600, and the vague promise of help awaiting in Vienna. Years later, Golinkin, now an American adult, sets out to retrace his family's long trek, locate the strangers who fought for his freedom, and in the process, gain a future by understanding his past.

Amy Gottlieb: *The Beautiful Possible*

(Fiction, 336 pp. 2016)

Spanning seventy years and several continents—from a refugee's shattered dreams in 1938 Berlin, to a discontented American couple in the 1950s, to a young woman's life in modern-day Jerusalem—this novel follows a postwar love triangle between an American rabbi, his wife, and a German-Jewish refugee.

Elizabeth Graver: *Kantika*

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2023)

From Constantinople to Barcelona, Havana, and New York, *Kantika* sings of the joys, hopes, and devastation experienced by twentieth-century Sephardi emigres. Rebecca Cohen's odyssey begins amid a settled, privileged childhood embraced by generations of well-to-do Ladino speakers. It quickly devolves through loss of home, a tragic marriage, and diminishment of family cohesion. Her indomitable resilience, good sense, and traditional values propel her across international boundaries and expectations as she becomes a thoroughly original American.

Max Gross: *The Lost Shtetl*

(Fiction, 416 pp. 2020)

For decades, the tiny Polish Jewish shtetl of Kreskol existed in happy isolation, virtually untouched and unchanged, spared by the Holocaust and the Cold War, until a marriage dispute spins out of control, and the whole town comes crashing into the twenty-first century.

David Grossman: *A Horse Walks into a Bar*

(Fiction, 208 pp. Hebrew, 2014; English translation, 2017)

Winner of the 2017 Man Booker International Prize, this caustic short novel explores the life of a stand-up comic, as revealed in the course of one evening's performance. In the dance between comic and audience, with barbs flying back and forth, a deeper story begins to take shape.

David Grossman: *To the End of the Land*

(Fiction, 576 pp. Hebrew, 2008; English translation, 2010)

Grossman's epic novel follows Ora, the mother of an Israeli soldier on active duty, as she journeys away from home in order to evade delivery of the news that she fears: that her son has been killed in action.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen: *The Liar*

(Fiction, 288 pp. Hebrew, 2018; English translation, 2019)

Unhappy teenager Nofar is working in an ice cream shop when a frustrated customer unleashes a horrible verbal attack on her. Soon, she has inadvertently accused him of sexual assault, and the eyes of her nation and her classmates on her. She relishes the attention, but at the cost of her conscience. If she continues to lie, a man will be wrongly convicted. And if she reveals the truth, she will be vilified.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen: *One Night, Markovitch*

(Fiction, 383 pp. Hebrew, 2012; English translation, 2015)

Two men cross the sea to marry women they have never met in order to help the women escape war-torn Europe for the Jewish homeland. Their changing fortunes take them through war, upheaval, terrible secrets, tragedy, joy and loss. Vital, funny, and tender, this debut novel fuses personal lives and epic history in a story of hopeless longing and the desperate search for love.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen: *Waking Lions*

(Fiction, 352 pp. Hebrew, 2014; English translation, 2017)

An Israeli physician is speeding along a deserted moonlit road in his SUV after an exhausting hospital shift, when he hits a man. Seeing that the man, an African migrant, is beyond help, he flees the scene. His life will take a dramatic turn in this gripping and morally devastating drama of guilt and survival.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen: *The Wolf Hunt*

(Fiction, 383 pp. Hebrew, 2022; English translation, 2023)

Lilach, a longtime Israeli expat, is living a charmed, predictable life in Silicon Valley. She and her tech executive husband are complacent in their close relationship with their now-teenage son, Adam. After a brutal attack on a local synagogue shakes the community's sense of safety, Adam and other Jewish boys enroll in a self-defense class taught by a charismatic former Israeli Special Forces officer. Beyond Lilach's hovering scrutiny, Adam and the teens develop confidence and a deep bond with one another. When their African American classmate dies at a house party, the tragedy sets in motion antisemitism-tinged rumors implicating Adam. Suppressed tensions in the community ignite, exposing dark secrets at the intersection of race, identity, and privilege.

Yossi Klein Halevi: *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*

(Nonfiction, 224 pp. 2018)

This plea for "radical goodwill" in the face of the seemingly intractable bad blood between Israelis and Palestinians is formed as a series of letters to an imagined Palestinian neighbor. Halevi provides concise histories of such topics as the history of modern Zionism and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and stresses the importance of each Arabs and Jews listening to each other's narratives.

Aaron Hamburger: *Hotel Cuba*

(Fiction, 368 pp. 2023)

In the wake of revolutions and the calamities of World War I, two sisters escape the hopelessness of their 1920s Polish shtetl. Pearl reared her many siblings since their mother died a decade earlier, and has developed definite opinions about most things, including teenage Frieda's romantic life-choices. Pearl's sense of decorum is rivaled only by her talent with a needle and thread; Frieda's only goal is reuniting with her fiance across the Atlantic. On the verge of boarding the ship, they hear the U.S. has restricted immigration. They decide Cuba is a close enough temporary destination, but get stuck in colorful and vibrant Havana while awaiting permission to enter the Goldene Medina. Their personal self-discoveries are at the heart of the journey, bringing to life the experiences of the author's family.

Ehud Havazelet: *Like Never Before*

(Fiction, 268 pp. 1998)

Arranged as a series of interlocking short stories, this “broken novel” chronicles three generations of a family in war-torn Europe, the Orthodox communities of Brooklyn, and rural Oregon as they struggle to hold together in the face of “changing cultures and shifting fortunes.”

Zoë Heller: *The Believers*

(Fiction, 352 pp. 2009)

After a prominent civil rights lawyer is left in a coma, his wife of forty years and their two daughters and adopted son are called upon to examine their lives together and their identities as individuals. When a dark secret involving the paterfamilias is revealed, the complex characters in this biting comic novel struggle to rediscover themselves.

David Hirshberg: *Jacobo’s Rainbow*

(Fiction, 341 pp. 2021)

The novel chronicles a New Mexican crypto-Jew's developing self-awareness, emerging from tumultuous 1960s activism for civil rights, free speech, and an end to the Vietnam War, also exposing the mesmerizing sway charismatic leaders exercise on impressionable and idealistic followers. It depicts Jewish young adults from widely varying circumstances who discover joy in the complex bonds of peoplehood and strength in their resolve to challenge casual and systemic antisemitism.

Alice Hoffman: *The Marriage of Opposites*

(Fiction, 384 pp. 2015)

Set in the early 1800s on the lush Caribbean island of St. Thomas, this fictional reimagining traces the complicated life of Rachel Pomié, mother of the impressionist painter Camille Pissarro, and the marriage of passion that scandalizes her Sephardic Jewish community.

Dara Horn: *People Love Dead Jews*

(Nonfiction, 272 pp. 2021)

Horn’s riveting assault on the cloying fascination with useful Jews takes a stand for rethinking the motivations behind universal acceptance of Jews-as-different. Through a series of eloquent and absorbing essays, Horn contextualizes in-your-face personal, historical, and literary encounters with endemic antisemitism, revealing the banal but harrowing conclusion that “hating Jews is normal.”

Howard Jacobson: *The Finkler Question*

(Fiction, 307 pp. 2010)

This brash, irreverent novel tackles the anxiety of Jewish life in Britain today through the lives of two Jewish widowers and their close non-Jewish friend. At times uncomfortable, always witty, this winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize offers a darkly satiric perspective on Jewish identity, antisemitism, shifting attitudes towards Israel, and the nature of male friendship.

Rachel Kadish: *The Weight of Ink*

(Fiction, 592 pp. 2017)

A mysterious collection of papers hidden in a historic London home sends two scholars of Jewish history on an unforgettable quest. Set in London in the 1660s and the early 21st century, *The Weight of Ink* is the interwoven tale of Ester Velasquez, scribe to a blind rabbi, and Helen Watt, an ailing historian determined to uncover the identity of the documents' scribe, the elusive "Aleph."

Mitchell James Kaplan: *By Fire, By Water*

(Fiction, 320 pp. 2010)

As the kingdoms of Spain are being unified under Christian rule at the end of the 15th century, Luis de Santángel, chancellor to the king of Aragon, agrees to finance Cristóbal Colón's imminent voyage to the "Indies." A *converso* examining his complicated relationship with Judaism, de Santángel finds himself increasingly under scrutiny by the Inquisition and attracted to a beautiful Jewish silversmith in Granada, the last part of Spain under Muslim rule.

Sayed Kashua: Dancing Arabs

(Fiction, 227 pp. Hebrew, 2002; English translation, 2004)

This slyly subversive, semi-autobiographical account of Arab Israeli life recounts the story of a Palestinian boy who wins a prestigious scholarship to a Jewish high school but slips into listless malaise as an adult, despising himself, scorning his fellow Arabs, and resenting Jewish Israelis.

Sayed Kashua: Second Person Singular

(Fiction, 352 pp. Hebrew, 2011; English translation, 2013)

When an ambitious Arab lawyer in Jewish Jerusalem unexpectedly discovers a love letter from his wife, his hunt begins for the other man. The creator of the Israeli sitcom, *Arab Labor*, spins a complex psychological mystery, a searing dissection of the individuals that comprise a divided society.

Etgar Keret: Fly Already

(Fiction, 224 pp. Hebrew, 2018; English translation, 2019)

Despite the thread that weaves these stories together—our inability to communicate, to see so little of the world around us and to understand each other even less—the author's love for humanity and our hapless existence shines a bright light through sparking our universal connection to each other.

Etgar Keret: The Seven Good Years

(Memoir, 292 pp. 2015)

The seven years between the birth of his son in the midst of a terrorist attack and the death of his father from cancer are the ostensible subject of Keret's first nonfiction book published in America. The short vignettes and ruminations are filled with wonder and life and love, poignant insights, and characteristically dark humor.

Etgar Keret: Suddenly, a Knock on the Door

(Short Stories, 188 pp. Hebrew, 2010; English translation, 2012)

Keret is the most popular Israeli writer of his generation, with a style and focus that mark a new direction in the nation's literature. The 35 brief stories in this new collection focus on everyday life, leavened with the author's legendary taste for the absurd and the impossible.

Nicole Krauss: Forest Dark

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2017)

This hybrid work of fiction, memoir and literary criticism alternates between two distinct stories about two Americans who travel to Tel Aviv searching for something they cannot articulate: a New York lawyer named Epstein in the final stages of giving away his fortune and a critically acclaimed American novelist named Nicole, suffering a mixture of writer's block, insomnia and restlessness.

Nicole Krauss: The History of Love

(Fiction, 252 pp. 2005)

Covering over 60 years and taking the reader from Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe to present day Brighton Beach, this haunting novel deals with issues of loneliness and the need to fill a void left by lost love.

Nicole Krauss: To Be a Man

(Fiction, 240 pp. 2020)

Set in locales around the globe, Krauss's first short story collection focuses on tensions and challenges in a wide variety of relationships.

Ilana Kurshan: If All the Seas Were Ink

(Memoir, 320 pp. 2017)

At the age of 27, alone in Jerusalem in the wake of a painful divorce, Kurshan adopted the practice of *daf yomi*: reading a page a day of the Talmud. Undaunted by the idea that it would take more than seven years to complete the full text on Jewish law, she adapted to its pace, attuned her ear to its poetry, and discovered her passions in its pages.

Lucette Lagnado: The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World

(Memoir, 352 pp. 2007)

This award-winning memoir by a Wall Street Journal reporter chronicles her Jewish family's traditions, tragedies and triumphs in their epic exodus in 1963 from the splendor of cosmopolitan Cairo, to Paris, and finally Brooklyn.

Aaron Lansky: Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man Who Rescued a Million Yiddish Books

(Nonfiction, 328 pp. 2005)

In 1980, a twenty-three-year-old student set out to rescue abandoned Yiddish books before it was too late. Filled with poignant and often humorous anecdotes from Lansky's travels across the country as he collected books from older Jewish immigrants, *Outwitting History* also shows how an almost-lost culture of Yiddish writers was preserved by the founding of the National Yiddish Book Center.

Lihi Lapid: On Her Own

(Fiction, 336 pp. Hebrew, 2022; English translation, 2024)

Israeli teen Nina seeks adventure beyond the drudgery of her Ukrainian emigre single mother's life, but she has gotten over her head. Fleeing a relationship with a shady older man, she is invited in by Carmela, an addled elderly woman who mistakes Nina for her granddaughter, now living in the United States. While Nina embraces a new identity and cares for Carmela, both her mother and her ruthless former lover are desperate to find her.

Elena Lappin: What Language Do I Dream In?

(Memoir, 310 pp. 2017)

In this rich family mosaic, Moscow-born, London-based writer and editor Elena Lappin explores the impact of her peripatetic, multilingual background on the development of her identity and her sense of home and self. As she reconstructs the stories and secrets of her parents and grandparents, each language — Russian, Czech, German, Hebrew, and finally, English — is a link to a different piece of Lappin's struggle to find a voice in a language not her own.

Michel Laub: Diary of the Fall

(Fiction, 240 pp. Portuguese 2011; English translation 2014)

This Brazilian novel about memory and identity covers three generations: a grandfather who survived Auschwitz and spent the rest of his life trying to forget it; a father in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease who is fighting to remember everything; and the 40-year-old narrator who remains haunted by his role decades earlier in a brutal prank on a fellow student.

Primo Levi: The Periodic Table

(Memoir, 233 pp. Italian, 1975; English translation, 1984)

A complex and beautifully rendered memoir by the author of *Survival in Auschwitz*. A chemist by profession, Levi uses the elements as a frame for stories of his childhood in the Jewish community of Turin, his work with the Partisans, and some extraordinary experiences after the War.

Savyon Liebrecht: A Man, a Woman, and a Man

(Fiction, 256 pp. Hebrew, 1998; English translation, 2001)

This novel by one of Israel's most celebrated writers reveals the complex underpinnings of an adulterous romance. Hamutal and Saul's liaison blossoms unexpectedly in the Tel Aviv nursing home where they come to visit their ailing parents, offering them emotional shelter as they struggle with their relationships with their families.

Eleanor Lipman: The Inn at Lake Devine

(Fiction, 253 pp. 1998)

In this updated screwball comedy, Lipman employs a deft and light-handed manner to tackle antisemitism, intermarriage, and her heroine's quest for inner growth and separation from family.

Michael Lowenthal: The Paternity Test

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2012)

Having relocated from New York City to a cottage in Cape Cod, two men in a long-term relationship enlist a Brazilian Jewish immigrant to serve as a surrogate mother. Complications ensue as this character-driven novel sensitively and humorously explores gay marriage, Jewish identity and continuity, family dynamics, sexuality and fidelity.

Michael David Lukas: The Last Watchman of Old Cairo

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2018)

The story of a Berkeley literature student exploring his Jewish mother and Muslim father's tangled roots in the history of Cairo's ancient Ben Ezra synagogue (home to the fabled Cairo genizah) is intertwined with that of a Muslim orphan centuries ago who becomes the synagogue's watchman and that of British twin sisters Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, who in 1897 depart Cambridge on a mission to rescue sacred texts that have begun to disappear from the synagogue.

Michael David Lukas: The Oracle of Stamboul

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2011)

Set in the heart of the Ottoman Empire during the first years of its chaotic decline, this debut novel follows a gifted young girl who dares to charm a sultan—and change the course of history. As the sultan's interest in her grows, so, too, does her reputation and importance, though Eleonora is unsure if her new role is what she wants from life.

Bernard Malamud: The Assistant

(Fiction, 246 pp. 1957)

Plagued by guilt after taking part in the robbery of a small New York grocery, Italian-American Frank Alpine tries to make good by taking a job helping the struggling shop's poor Jewish owner. As he works through his moral debt and falls in love with the grocer's daughter, Frank undergoes a painful struggle to transcend the base instincts that engendered his criminal behavior.

Bernard Malamud: The Fixer

(Fiction, 352 pp. 1966)

Malamud won both the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for his novel set in Kiev in 1911. During a period of heightened antisemitism, an apolitical, nonobservant Jewish handyman is arrested and

imprisoned for the ritual murder of a young Russian boy. Refusing to confess to a crime that he did not commit, the “fixer” vacillates between despair, outrage, and hope for justice.

Kirsty Manning: *The Song of the Jade Lily*

(Fiction, 480 pp. 2019)

Eleven-year old Romy and her parents flee 1938 Vienna to Shanghai, and in 2016 her granddaughter Alexandra rushes from England home to Melbourne, Australia, to be with her dying grandfather. This historical novel deals with friendship, motherhood, the price of love, and the power of hardship and courage that can shape us all.

Adam Mansbach: *The End of the Jews*

(Fiction, 310 pp. 2008)

In the 1930s, Tristan Brodsky escapes the Bronx, finds success as a novelist, and marries a sensitive poet. Fifty years later, their hip-hop-obsessed grandson, Tris, gets involved with a half-Jewish Czech refugee, who is a photographer for a black jazz band, and starts writing novels too. Tensions arise when the writers make use of each other’s life stories to create new fictions. Exploring the delicate lines between appropriation and exploitation, between blacks and Jews, and between the give and take of artistic partnership, this sensitive novel is a powerful statement about identity in 20th century America.

Anouk Markovits: *I Am Forbidden*

(Fiction, 320 pp. 2012)

This multilayered story is a sensitive consideration of tradition and commitment, and the conflict between individual independence and the obligations of faith. It follows four generations of the Stern family, members of the Satmar Hasidic sect, from Transylvania to Paris and Brooklyn, focusing on the diverging paths of two daughters, close friends until one wants more than her proscribed world can offer.

Alice Mattison: *In Case We’re Separated*

(Fiction, 226 pp. 2005)

Thirteen linked stories imitate in prose the complex poetic form called a sestina, inviting readers into the lives of four generations of a Jewish family, once from Russia and now scattered across North America. Moments of joy, despair, hope, and puzzlement weave through stories that move back and forth in time.

James McBride: *The Color of Water*

(Memoir, 256 pp. 1995)

Ruth McBride Jordan narrates the hardships she overcame as a Polish Jewish immigrant in rural Virginia who chose to marry a black man in 1942 and convert to Christianity. Her account is interspersed in alternating chapters with her son’s struggle to discover his mother’s past and develop his own identity.

James McBride: *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*

(Fiction, 385 pp. 2023)

The mystery revealed in the first pages of *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* foreshadows the rich, knotty, and fantastical legacy marking the downtrodden Jewish and Black community of 1920s Chicken Hill in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. McBride (author of *The Color of Water*) captures the shared vulnerability and humanity—and some cross-cultural angst and superstition—within the interdependent world inhabited by grocery store owner Chona, her impresario husband Moshe, and their Black neighbors. Protecting and rescuing the most at risk among them depends on everyone’s resolve and resourcefulness.

Aharon Megged: *Foiglmán*

(Fiction, 277 pp. Hebrew, 1987; English translation, 2003)

When an Israeli historian agrees to find a translator for a passionate Yiddish poet and Holocaust survivor whom he barely knows, he unwittingly throws his marriage and personal life into tragic confusion. Winner of a Koret Jewish Book Award, this rich novel of ideas concentrates on language and identity to play out the unresolved conflicts between the Israeli and the Diaspora Jew.

Sami Michael: A Trumpet in the Wadi

(Fiction, 244 pp. Hebrew, 1987; English translation, 2003)

Set in 1982 in the Arab quarter of Haifa, the Iraqi-born author's bestseller paints a sensitive picture of a Christian Arab family, one of whose daughters enters into a romance with the Russian Jewish immigrant who moves upstairs. Contending with this unlikely turn of events, the protagonists and their families wrestle with complex questions of loyalty and identity.

Arthur Miller: Focus

(Fiction, 240 pp. 1945)

A reticent personnel manager living with his mother shares the prejudices of his times and of his neighbors, until he begins wearing glasses, and others begin to mistake him for a Jew. Miller's only novel investigates the insidious effects of increasing antisemitism in 1945 New York.

Derek B. Miller: How to Find Your Way in the Dark

(Fiction, 368 pp. 2022)

Recently motherless twelve-year old Sheldon Horowitz survives a suspicious late-night road accident in rural Massachusetts that kills his father. Bereft but resourceful, Sheldon sets out to avenge his death. Miller's novel weaves a story full of murder and mayhem, gangsters and thieves, pranks and revenge, and borscht belt shenanigans on the cusp of WWII—while simultaneously offering serious insights into antisemitism, world events, and the enduring value of close friendships.

Tova Mirvis: The Ladies Auxiliary

(Fiction, 336 pp. 1999)

Narrated from the collective perspective of a synagogue's Ladies' Auxiliary, Mirvis's inspired debut depicts the perceived threat that the arrival of free-spirited Batsheva poses to the insular Orthodox community of Memphis, Tennessee. The intergenerational conflict that ensues illuminates the difficulty of maintaining tradition while honoring personal freedom.

Tova Mirvis: The Outside World

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2005)

This humorously insightful novel follows Tzippy, a 22-year old modern Orthodox woman eager to marry, who unexpectedly falls for Bryan, who, following a year in yeshiva in Israel, has become stringently observant and now calls himself Baruch. The couple moves to the small Orthodox community of Memphis, Tennessee, where they and their parents deal with issues of isolation and assimilation, faith and doubt, destiny and true love.

Eshkol Nevo: Homesick

(Fiction, 374 pp. Hebrew, 2004; English translation, 2010)

Narrated from multiple perspectives, this novel follows a handful of neighbors in the town of Mevasseret, just outside Jerusalem, whose Arab inhabitants were displaced in 1948. Nevo masterfully explores the dualities of life in Israel, delicately drawing out the hope and love submerged in the hearts of its citizens.

Eshkol Nevo: Three Floors Up

(Fiction, 304 pp. Hebrew 2015; English translation 2017)

Three tenants in a suburban Tel Aviv apartment building each tell their stories, and in the process explore the connections between identity, memory and loneliness. On the first floor, a retired officer who fought in the First Intifada confesses his obsession about his young daughter's safety. Above him lives Hani, whose husband travels the world while she stays at home with their two children. On the top floor lives a former judge, who tries to reconnect with her estranged son and falls in love with a man who isn't what he seems.

Anne-Marie O'Connor: *The Lady in Gold: The Extraordinary Tale of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*

(Nonfiction, 368 pp. 2012)

Often referred to as the “Austrian Mona Lisa,” Gustav Klimt’s gold-leafed portrait of Jewish art patron Adele Bloch-Bauer has a complicated and controversial history. O’Connor relates the story of the painting, casting light on its creation during the Viennese Belle Epoque, its confiscation under Nazi rule, and the long struggle over its ownership after World War II.

Achy Obejas: *Days of Awe*

(Fiction, 357 pp. 2001)

The protagonist of this semi-autobiographical novel was born in Cuba and grew up in Chicago in a community of refugees who nurtured the hope that they might eventually return to their homeland. When her job takes her back to Cuba, she discovers that her ostensibly Catholic ancestors are actually conversos who converted to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition. Enlightened by a revised understanding of her past and her culture, she uncovers new truths about relatives who struggled with their own identities so long ago.

Julie Orringer: *The Invisible Bridge*

(Fiction, 624 pp. 2010)

In Fall 1937 Andras Lévi leaves Hungary to study architecture in Paris, and his brother Tibor leaves for medical school in Italy. Both men eventually return to Hungary with their wives until the war upends their world. This intricate mélange of historical events and personal drama is an unforgettable story of love, courage, and survival.

Amos Oz: *Between Friends*

(Short Stories, 192 pp. Hebrew, 2012; English translation, 2013)

This group of connected stories set on a fictional agricultural kibbutz in the late 1950s offers revelatory glimpses into the members' secrets, longings, and dissatisfactions.

Amos Oz: *Judas*

(Fiction, 320 pp. Hebrew, 2014; English translation, 2016)

In 1959 Jerusalem, a young biblical scholar finds work as a caregiver for a brilliant but cantankerous old man. In the house is also an alluring widow, the daughter of a deceased Zionist leader. This love story and coming-of-age novel is also an allegory for the State of Israel and for the New Testament tale from which it draws its title.

Amos Oz: *Panther in the Basement*

(Fiction, 155 pp. Hebrew, 1994; English translation, 1997)

It is the summer of 1947 in Palestine under the British Mandate. A 12-year-old Jewish boy befriends a British soldier to improve his English, only to find himself branded as a traitor by his friends. A coming of age novel with a difference.

Amos Oz: *A Tale of Love and Darkness*

(Memoir, 560 pp. Hebrew, 2002; English translation, 2004)

Past and present spiral in this dense memoir of growing up in Jerusalem in the years before and after Israeli independence. Oz's richly colored tales of his European immigrant family trying to recreate itself in an alien landscape allow readers to know the inner workings of a distinguished writer and gain insight into what impelled him toward his craft.

Cynthia Ozick: *The Puttermessa Papers*

(Fiction, 256 pp. 1997)

In a modern urban version of a classic Jewish myth, Ozick offers her take on the Golem. Visionary and malcontent Ruth Puttermessa stars in this surrealistic tale of destruction and rebirth.

Grace Paley: *A Grace Paley Reader: Stories, Essays, and Poetry*

(Short Stories, 400 pp. 2017)

Fifteen of Paley's most famous stories, nineteen essays and thirty-four poems, all dealing with her characteristically large subjects: war, men, marriage, children, life and death.

Edith Pearlman: *Binocular Vision: New & Selected Stories*

(Short stories, 375 pp. 2011)

Spanning four decades and three prize-winning collections, these 34 stories are set around the world: from Jerusalem to Central America, from tsarist Russia to London during the Blitz, from central Europe to Manhattan, and from the Maine coast to a fictional suburb of Boston. These charged locales, and the lives of the endlessly varied characters within them, are evoked with tenderness and incisiveness.

Edith Pearlman: *Honeydew*

(Short Stories, 277 pp. 2015)

Set primarily in a fictional suburb of Boston, this collection of splendidly crafted short fiction reflects Pearlman's mastery in exploring the interior lives of her characters and shining light on the meaning found in everyday existence.

Victor Perera: *The Cross and the Pear Tree*

(Nonfiction, 282 pp. 1995)

Perera, who taught at UC Berkeley, was born in Guatemala City to Sephardic émigrés from Jerusalem. Through the lens of his own family, he tells of Sephardic wanderings from the time of the Expulsion from Spain in 1492, linking Pereras across generations and continents.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin: *Shanda: A Memoir of Shame and Secrecy*

(Memoir, 432 pp. 2022)

In her candid memoir, Pogrebin exposes the fiercely guarded lies and intricate cover-ups woven by dozens of members of her extended family. Beginning with her own long-suppressed secret, she bares the intimate lives of her parents and relatives—revealing the truth about their origins, personal traumas, marital misery, abandoned children, religious transgressions, sexual identity, radical politics, and supposedly embarrassing illnesses. While unmasking their charades and disguises, Pogrebin showcases her family's remarkable talent for reinvention.

Dorit Rabinyan: *All the Rivers*

(Fiction, 288 pp. Hebrew 2014; English translation, 2017)

A young Jewish woman from Tel Aviv and a Palestinian artist from Hebron meet and begin a love affair in New York. The impossibility of their relationship becomes even more apparent when they return home to their families and communities.

Stuart Rojstaczer: *The Mathematician's Shiva*

(Fiction, 384 pp. 2014)

Sasha Karnokovitch and his family would like to mourn the passing of his mother, Rachela, with modesty and dignity. But Rachela, a brilliant Polish émigré mathematician, is rumored to have solved the million-dollar Navier-Stokes Millennium Prize problem, and spitefully taken the solution to her grave. A motley group of socially challenged mathematicians arrives to crash the shiva, vowing to do whatever it takes to find the solution.

Fran Ross: Ore

(Fiction, 212 pp. 1974)

This picaresque novel, deemed ahead of its time and now considered a cult classic, satirically chronicles the adventures of a young woman born to a black mother, in her quest to find her Jewish father in New York City. The myth of Theseus is updated, using a mix of vernacular dialects, bilingual and ethnic humor, inside jokes, neologisms, verbal quirks, and linguistic oddities.

James Ross: Fragile Branches: Travels through the Jewish Diaspora

(Nonfiction, 229 pp. 2000)

Journalist Ross introduces six isolated communities in India, Peru, Brazil, Israel, and Uganda that embrace Judaism despite enormous obstacles. Offering new perspectives, encouraging reexamination of relationships with tradition, and reminding us of the richness and diversity of Jewish life, the book also poses the ever-perplexing question of who, exactly, is a Jew.

Philip Roth: American Pastoral

(Fiction, 432 pp. 1997)

The first in Roth's trilogy of novels exploring the life of American Jews of his generation, *American Pastoral* paints a masterful portrait of the perfectly assimilated Seymour "the Swede" Levov, whose perfectly constructed world falls apart when his daughter gets involved in radical politics.

Philip Roth: Nemesis

(Fiction, 304 pp. 2010)

Bucky Cantor is a vigorous young playground director when a polio outbreak mysteriously begins to ravage 1944 Newark. Faced with an opportunity to leave the city for work in a Catskills summer camp, Bucky is torn between personal safety and professional duty in this modern American morality tale.

Philip Roth: The Plot Against America

(Fiction, 416 pp. 2004)

Roth's stirring work of historical fiction depicts the impact on a New Jersey Jewish family of Charles Lindbergh's defeat of Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 Presidential election.

Moriel Rothman-Zecher: Sadness Is a White Bird

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2018)

A 19-year-old Israeli soldier whose best friends are Palestinian twins is driven to the breaking point by conflicting loyalties. This passionate, poetic coming-of-age story set in a mine field, brilliantly captures the intensity of feeling on both sides of the conflict.

Ariel Sabar: My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq

(Memoir, 325 pp. 2008)

Ariel Sabar's father, Yona, grew up in the northern Iraqi village of Zakho, a place so remote that the Kurdish Jews who lived there still spoke the ancient language of Aramaic. Ariel, a journalist who grew up in Los Angeles, explores his father's devotion to preserving the stories, folkways, and language of his past.

Mark Sarvas : Memento Park

(Fiction, 288 pp. 2018)

When a Hollywood character actor gets a call about a painting allegedly looted from his family by Nazis in 1944 Budapest, his life is thrown into personal, professional, and spiritual turmoil. Of the many questions asked—about family and identity, about art and history—a central, unanswerable predicament lingers: How do we move forward when the past looms unreasonably large?

Esther Schor: Emma Lazarus

(Nonfiction, 347 pp. 2006)

Scion of a wealthy, assimilated Sephardic family with American roots that pre-date the Revolution, Lazarus was a secular Jew, a feminist, and an early Zionist, deeply committed to the plight of the Eastern European Jews who came to this country after waves of pogroms. While documentation on Lazarus is limited, Schor makes use of recently discovered letters to give insight into the life of this pioneering activist and poet whose words grace the Statue of Liberty.

Moacyr Scliar: The Centaur in the Garden

(Fiction, 216 pp. Portuguese, 1980; English translation, 1984)

An outsider among outsiders, a Jewish centaur narrates his life's journey from his birth on a farm homesteaded by his Russian immigrant family in southern Brazil through his efforts to rid himself of the equine portion of his body and take his place in contemporary Brazilian society. Listed by the National Yiddish Book Center as one of the 100 greatest works of modern Jewish literature, this earthy tale is one you won't soon forget.

Meir Shalev: The Blue Mountain

(Fiction, 378 pp. Hebrew, 1988; English translation, 1991)

This imaginative novel transcends time and place as it depicts three generations of the inhabitants of a rural village in Israel—from the four immigrants pioneering a new life in a new land, to their grandson Baruch, who reflects on the past with nostalgia, curiosity, and ambivalence.

Meir Shalev: The Loves of Judith

(Fiction, 315 pp. Hebrew, 1994, English translation, 1999)

Also published as *Four Meals*, this rich and remarkable novel recounts how, over the course of four meals that take place across several decades, a boy named Zayde learns of his mother's relationships in a rural village in British Mandate Palestine in the 1930s with her three lovers, all of whom consider him their son.

Meir Shalev: My Russian Grandmother and Her American Vacuum Cleaner

(Memoir, 224 pp. Hebrew, 2009; English translation, 2011)

This humorous and tender memoir about the acclaimed Israeli author's grandmother and her obsession with cleanliness richly evokes the idealism and disappointments of the Eastern European Jews who came to Palestine in the 1920s.

Meir Shalev: A Pigeon and a Boy

(Fiction, 365 pp. Hebrew, 2006, English translation, 2007)

During Israel's 1948 War of Independence a young homing pigeon handler, in his final moments, sends off one last pigeon, bearing an unusual gift to his girlfriend. Intertwined is the contemporary story of a middle-aged tour guide who falls in love again with his childhood sweetheart and uncovers a secret connection to the bird handler.

Meir Shalev: Two She-Bears

(Fiction, 320 pp. Hebrew, 2013; English translation, 2016)

This unconventional literary thriller about two murders—one committed as an act of vengeance and the second as an act of retribution—takes place in a rural village in Israel. Spanning three generations in one family's life, this is a tale of love, betrayal, revenge, loss, brutality, and salvation.

B.A. Shapiro: *The Muralist*

(Fiction, 368 pp. 2015)

Seventy years after an American painter working for the Works Progress Administration vanishes in New York City in 1940, her great-niece, working at Christie's auction house, uncovers enigmatic paintings hidden behind works by famous Abstract Expressionist artists and questions whether they might hold answers to her aunt's disappearance.

Dani Shapiro: *Inheritance*

(Memoir, 272 pp. 2019)

Confronted with the stunning news that her father was not her biological father, the acclaimed novelist and memoirist explores the intersections of family secrets, memory, history, biology and identity.

Dani Shapiro: *Signal Fires*

(Fiction, 240 pp. 2022)

Shapiro's novel explores the fluidity and endurance of memory, and the cost of secrets and repressed guilt on family relationships. Anguish erupts after three drunken teens make the fateful decision to drive. The ensuing crash propels a doctor to the scene from his adjacent home; his children and their friend are in the car. The crisis and its secrets suffuse the family's internal dynamics and their relationships with others. Decades later, long after his children have moved away, the father's late-night neighborhood encounters with a stargazing child establish an abiding bond and reveal intermingled fates across time and space.

Sholem Aleichem: *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories*

(Short Stories, 309 pp. Yiddish, 1894-1914; English translation, 1987)

Faced with a household of daughters to marry off, pogroms, expulsions, and the erosion of the traditional ways of the shtetl, why shouldn't a poor dairyman complain? Tevye relates his woes in monologues peppered with wry humor, homespun philosophy, and his celebrated use and misuse of Jewish texts.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: *Enemies, A Love Story*

(Fiction, 280 pp. Yiddish, 1966; English translation, 1972)

Like no other love story you might have read before, this tale of a Holocaust survivor and his three wives in 1950s New York City is presented with humor and pathos in Singer's ironic style.

Isaac Bashevis Singer: *The Slave*

(Fiction, 311 pp. Yiddish, 1962; English translation, 1962)

Jacob, a pogrom survivor who has been sold as a slave to Polish peasants, lives a simple life in a remote village. Contrary to both Jewish and secular law, he falls in love with the daughter of his Christian owner, and together they begin a new life in another shtetl. Set in 17th century Poland, this dark and passionate allegory is often considered Singer's most lyrical and well-constructed novel.

Israel Joshua Singer: *The Brothers Ashkenazi*

(Fiction, 426 pp. Yiddish, 1937; English translation, 1980)

It's not your grandfather's shtetl. This epic novel about the bitter rivalry of twin brothers is set against the development of Lodz, Poland in the late 19th century from a sleepy town into an industrial center. Family and community relationships are transformed by wealth, social divisions, and the politics of a rapidly changing world.

Dalia Sofer: *The Septembers of Shiraz*

(Fiction, 340 pp. 2007)

Just after the Iranian Revolution, Jewish gem trader Isaac Amin is falsely imprisoned for being a spy. His wife Farnaz struggles to keep from slipping into despair, while his young daughter Shirin tries to take matters into her own hands. Far away in Brooklyn, Isaac's son Parviz, though not religious, falls for the pious daughter of his Hasidic landlord. Sofer masterfully captures the small tensions and larger brutalities that sharply impact a family unable to conform.

Ruth Sohn: *Crossing Cairo*

(Memoir, 272 pp. 2013)

Rabbi Ruth Sohn explores the experience of living in Egypt with her husband and children, after having been advised not to share the fact of their Jewish identity. Unexpected discoveries unfold as they seek to cross boundaries of language, culture, and religion to form friendships and find a home among Egyptians.

Alisa Solomon: *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof*

(Nonfiction, 448 pp. 2013)

Theater critic and scholar Solomon details how and why the story of Tevye the milkman, the creation of Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, was reborn as a blockbuster entertainment and a cultural touchstone transcending ethnic and national boundaries.

Anna Solomon: *The Book of V.*

(Fiction, 320 pp. 2020)

Three characters' stories in different time periods overlap and ultimately collide. Lily is a young wife and mother in contemporary Brooklyn, and Vee is the wife of an ambitious young Senator in Washington, D.C. during the early 1970s. Their narratives are interspersed with an imaginative account of characters in the Book of Esther, illuminating how women's lives have and have not changed over thousands of years.

Anna Solomon: *Leaving Lucy Pear*

(Fiction, 336 pp. 2016)

The lives of an abandoned girl's biological mother—a wealthy Jewish pianist—and adoptive mother—a dirt-poor Irish Catholic woman—are juxtaposed with that of their little girl. Set on the New England coast in the 1920s, the novel investigates class, freedom, gender, sexuality, and the meaning of family.

Art Spiegelman: *Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

(Graphic memoir, 295 pp. Vol I, 1986; Vol II, 1991)

This Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, incongruously told in the form of a comic strip, is a haunting story within a story, of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his aging father's history.

Ilan Stavans, editor: *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories*

(Short Stories, 493 pp. 1998)

Fifty-two stories from eighteen countries, originally written in ten languages, allow your group to explore the global reach of modern Jewish literature. A great way to discover new writers for future discussions.

Jennifer Steil: *Exile Music*

(Fiction, 432 pp. 2020)

A sheltered and refined 1930s Vienna childhood, suffused with music and the looming but unacknowledged threat of Nazi occupation, ends abruptly when Orly's family flees Europe to the

mountains of Bolivia. Music is a constant refrain as the uprooted narrator relates her family's interludes of fear, grief, longing, and ultimately, hope, amid the people, culture, and towering vistas of the Andes.

Abby Stein: *Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman*
(Memoir, 272 pp. 2019)

A coming-of-age memoir of a tenth-generation Hasidic Jew, descended from the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidic, destined to become a rabbinic leader who — despite the consequences — embraces her identity as a woman.

Milton Steinberg: *As a Driven Leaf*

(Fiction, 480 pp. 1939)

This classic historical novel, written by an American rabbi, draws readers into the era of the great rabbis of the Talmud. At its center is the renegade sage Elisha ben Abuyah, whose doubts lead him to search for answers in the Greek and Roman world, with dramatic consequences.

Steve Stern: *The Frozen Rabbi*

(Fiction, 362 pp. 2010)

Beginning in 1999 when a teenager discovers Rabbi Eliezer ben Zephyr in his parents' freezer in suburban Memphis, Tennessee, this uproarious romp then jumps to 1899 to explain how the rabbi became encased in ice in the Jewish Pale. Through a series of surreal misadventures by a cast of comic and cosmic characters, this lovingly irreverent novel explores a century of the diaspora.

Chanan Tigay: *The Lost Book of Moses: The Hunt for the World's Oldest Bible*

(Nonfiction, 368 pp. 2016)

In 1883, Moses Wilhelm Shapira—archaeological treasure hunter, inveterate social climber, and denizen of Jerusalem's bustling marketplace—arrived unannounced in London claiming to have discovered the world's oldest Bible scroll. Tigay, a journalist, follows every lead, no matter how unlikely, in his attempts to find the treasure and solve the riddle of the brilliant, doomed antiquities dealer accused of forging it.

Ayelet Tsabari: *The Art of Leaving*

(Memoir, 336 pp. 2019)

This memoir in sixteen personal essays by a young writer, born in Israel to a large family of Yemeni descent, shares her vivid memories as she travels the world, from New York to India, searching for love, belonging, and an escape from grief following the early death of her father.

Ayelet Tsabari: *The Best Place on Earth: Stories*

(Short Stories, 272 pp. 2016)

These eleven stories, set between Israel and Canada, feature mothers and children, soldiers and bohemians, lovers and best friends, all searching for their place in the world. Tsabari's Mizrahi characters grapple with love, violence, faith, the slipperiness of identity, and the challenges of balancing old traditions with modern times.

Anya Ulinich: *Petropolis*

(Fiction, 324 pp. 2007)

Chubby, biracial teenager Sasha Goldberg continually disappoints her overbearing mother until she manages to escape the confines of her bleakly named Siberian town, Asbestos 2. She first lands as a mail-order bride in Phoenix, then ditches her husband and makes her way to suburban Chicago where a wealthy family adopts her as their pet. Her search for her father takes her to the mean streets of Brooklyn and back to Russia in this smart, darkly humorous, satire about coming of age in the 20th century.

Angel Wagenstein: *Isaac's Torah: Concerning the Life of Isaac Jacob Blumenfeld Through Two World Wars, Three Concentration Camps and Five Motherlands*

(Fiction, 304 pp. Bulgarian, 2000; English translation, 2008)

Tragedy is overlaid with Jewish humor as an affable tailor survives war and nationalism in Central Europe between World War I and the death of Stalin. This darkly ironic novel, peppered with Yiddish jokes, fables from the Kolodetz shtetl, and the unorthodox comments of sometimes atheist Rabbi Shmuel Ben-David, offers profound insights into life's absurdities.

Helene Wecker: *The Golem and the Jinni*

(Fiction, 496 pp. 2013)

An immigrant tale that combines elements of Jewish and Arab folk mythology, this inventive historical novel describes two supernatural creatures who arrive separately in New York in 1899. They work to create places for themselves in this new world until they meet, becoming friends and soul mates.

Helene Wecker: *The Hidden Palace*

(Fiction, 480 pp. 2021)

In this sequel to *The Golem and the Jinni*, set in New York City in the early years of the 20th century, the golem Chava Levy and the jinni Ahmad al-Hadid renew their relationship and confront unexpected new challenges in a rapidly changing human world.

Jennifer Weiner: *Mrs. Everything*

(Fiction, 496 pp. 2019)

From the 1950s to the present, sisters Jo and Bethie Kaufman struggle to find their places—and be true to themselves—in a rapidly evolving America.

Isabel Wilkerson: *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*

(Nonfiction, 496 pp. 2020)

Linking the historical experiences of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Wilkerson explores how American society has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings.

Noa Yedlin: *Stockholm*

(Fiction, 384 pp. Hebrew 2016; English translation, 2023)

Tel Aviv professor Avishay Sar-Shalom is a prominent contender for the Nobel Prize in Economics, but a friend finds him dead a week before the award's announcement. His four closest friends conspire to conceal Avishay's corpse until the Prize's recipient is revealed. They do so in the interest of seeing Avishay honored—except that each of the friends has a more selfish motivation. Yedlin explores mortality and the bonds of friendship with psychological insight and dark humor.

A.B. Yehoshua: *The Liberated Bride*

(Fiction, 568 pp. Hebrew, 2001; English translation, 2004)

Yehoshua focuses on the family and professional life of a Haifa professor of Near Eastern Studies to reveal a web of relationships linking characters from diverse sectors of Israeli society. Rich in detail and humor, the novel deftly explores the deep divides in a complex country, illuminating the struggles of Jews and Arabs and husbands and wives to live together in peace.

A.B. Yehoshua: *The Only Daughter*

(Fiction, 336 pp. Hebrew, 2018; English translation, 2020)

This suspenseful and poignant story of a Jerusalem family coping with the sudden mental decline of their beloved husband and father – an engineer who they discover is involved in a secret military project – explores issues of identity, independence and loss.

A.B. Yehoshua: *The Tunnel*

(Fiction, 336 pp. Hebrew, 2018; English translation, 2020)

This suspenseful and poignant story of a Jerusalem family coping with the sudden mental decline of their beloved husband and father – an engineer who they discover is involved in a secret military project – explores issues of identity, independence and loss.

Anzia Yeziarska: *Bread Givers*

(Fiction, 297 pp. 1925)

Bread Givers gives voice to the immigrant Jewish woman's struggle as, in unadorned prose, the harsh world of a young woman without resources or external support is graphically represented. We cheer, we sigh, and we shake our heads in disbelief as our heroine pushes the boundaries of culture, religion, and family to survive.

Sarit Yishai-Levi: *The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem*

(Fiction, 384 pp. Hebrew 2013; English translation, 2016)

Set against the golden age of Hollywood, the dark days of World War II, and the swinging '70s, Gabriella recounts the story of her mother, Luna, uncovering shocking secrets, forbidden romances, and a family curse. This intergenerational saga, following unforgettable women as they forge their own paths through times of dramatic change, has been filmed for Israeli television.

Gabrielle Zevin: *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*

(Fiction, 416 pp. 2022)

A chance hospital encounter as b'nai mitzvah-age kids over Super Mario Bros. sparks Sam Masur's and Sadie Green's lifelong bond. Their friendship builds on an abiding intellectual intimacy, initiating a partnership transcending distance, disability, self-doubt, conflicting loyalties, estrangement, and tragedy. Together, as brilliant game designers, they create perfect immersive electronic worlds while imperfectly navigating the pitfalls of the real one. Their story highlights the redemptive possibilities in play, and above all, the need to connect: to be loved and to love.

Markus Zusak: *The Book Thief*

(Fiction, 560 pp. 2006)

An orphaned girl, who steals books even before she knows how to read them, comes to live with a foster family, who turn out to be hiding a Jew in their basement.