



THE SAMI ROHR PRIZE
FOR JEWISH LITERATURE

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CONTACT: STEFANIE SHULMAN

STEFANIE@JEWISHBOOKS.ORG

212-786-5158

Ilana Kurshan, “If All the Seas Were Ink” named 2018 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature Winner

New York, June 5, 2018 – **The Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature**, a program of the Jewish Book Council, is pleased to announce that **Ilana Kurshan**, author of “If All the Seas Were Ink: A Memoir” (St. Martin’s Press, 2017), is the winner of the 2018 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature. An impressive and inspiring memoir, Kurshan draws upon her personal story and pursuit of studying Talmud to offer insights into its arguments – both for those already familiar with the text and for those who have never encountered it.

The largest literary prize of its kind – an award of \$100,000 – the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature honors emerging writers who explore the Jewish experience in a specific work of non-fiction and fiction in alternating years. **Sara Hirschhorn**, author of “City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement” (Harvard University Press, 2017), was named the Choice Award winner and awarded a prize of \$18,000. The three remaining presentations of \$5,000 each were awarded to Sami Rohr Prize Fellows **Yair Mintzker**, **Shari Rabin** and **Chanan Tigay**.

“The extraordinary work of each of these five emerging authors is a blessing to the Jewish world. We are delighted to be a part of this well-earned recognition” said George Rohr.

This year’s prize winner, Ilana Kurshan noted, “I am honored and humbled to have been selected for this prize, and I am so grateful for the extraordinary generosity of the Rohr family. I hope that my book will inspire more people to study Jewish texts and to take part in the ever-evolving Jewish literary tradition.”



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Choice award winner Sara Hirschhorn added, "I am deeply humbled that my book *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* has been honored by the judges and I am sincerely grateful to the Sami Rohr Prize, the Rohr Family, and the Jewish Book Council for recognizing the leadership potential of Jewish literature and empowering early career scholars to take part in serious and critical conversations about Jewish ideas."

"The day I make the call to notify award recipients is the highlight of the year, as I know how much of a difference it will make for them. The Sami Rohr Prize recognizes these writers whose work demonstrates a fresh vision and evidence of future potential" said Carolyn Starman Hessel, Director Emeritus of the Jewish Book Council and now Director of its Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature.

The 2018 Sami Rohr Prize Fellows are:

Yair Mintzker, author of *The Many Deaths of Jew Süß* (Princeton University Press, 2017), a groundbreaking historical re-examination of one of the most infamous episodes in the history of anti-Semitism, the trial of Joseph Süß Oppenheimer.

Shari Rabin, author of *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth Century America* (New York University Press, 2017), a religious history of the United States that follows early Jewish settlers from eastern cities and into the American frontier.

Chanan Tigay, author of *The Lost Book of Moses* (Ecco, 2016), a gripping account of one man's quest to find the oldest Bible in the world and solve the riddle of the brilliant, doomed antiquities dealer accused of forging it.

All five authors will be celebrated in Jerusalem this July in a "Conversation with the Authors" program moderated by **Rabbi David Wolpe**. This dialogue will be open to the public and will be held at Mishkenot Sha'ananim.

Jewish Book Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting Jewish interest literature. With over 250 touring authors each year; 1,400 book clubs; 1,100 events; its new annual print publication, Paper Brigade; the National Jewish Book Awards; the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature; the Natan Book Award; and a vibrant digital presence, JBC ensures that Jewish-interest authors have a platform, and that readers are able to find these books and have the tools to discuss them with their community.