



# 74th National Jewish Book Awards

Program Book

March 12, 2025

# Program

**Elisa Spungen Bildner**  
President, Jewish Book Council

**Joy Greenberg**  
Co-President, Jewish Book Council  
Celebration Co-Chair

**Naomi Firestone-Teeter**  
CEO, Jewish Book Council

**Dani Shapiro**  
Ceremony Host

**Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg**  
Winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award  
*Presented by Elisa Spungen Bildner*

**Danielle Sharkan and Selina Alko**  
Winner of the Tracy and Larry Brown Family Children's Picture Book Award  
*Presented by Jane Weitzman, Immediate Past President*

**Ayelet Tsabari**  
Winner of the JJ Greenberg Fiction Memorial Award  
*Presented by Linda Sterling, Celebration Co-Chair*

**Aaron Lansky**  
Winner of the Mentorship Award in Honor of Carolyn Starman Hessel  
*Presented by Jeremy Dauber*

**Presentation of the 74th National Jewish Book Awards**

See pages 6-31 for detailed information on each winning title

**Lee Yaron**  
Winner of the Everett Family Foundation Jewish Book of the Year Award  
*Presented by David Everett*

# Ceremony Host: Dani Shapiro



photo credit: Beowulf Sheehan

Dani Shapiro is the author of eleven books, and the host and creator of the hit podcast *Family Secrets*. Her most recent novel, *Signal Fires*, was named a best book of 2022 by *NPR*, *Time Magazine*, *Washington Post*, *Amazon*, and others, and is a national bestseller. Her most recent memoir, *Inheritance*, was an instant *New York Times* Bestseller, and named a best book of 2019 by *Elle*, *Vanity Fair*, *Wired*, and *Real Simple*. Both *Signal Fires* and *Inheritance* were winners of the National Jewish Book Award. Dani's work has been published in fourteen languages and she's currently developing *Signal Fires* for its television adaptation. Dani's book on the process and craft of writing, *Still Writing*, has just been reissued on the occasion of its tenth anniversary. She occasionally teaches workshops and retreats, and is the co-founder of the Sirenland Writers Conference in Positano, Italy.

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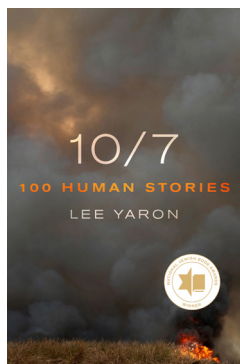


# Winners

# 10/7: 100 Human Stories

## Lee Yaron

St. Martin's Publishing Group



The effects on October 7 fundamentally altered the global Jewish community, and while the extent and impact of the day will take years to understand, the winner of this year's Everett Family Foundation Jewish Book of the Year Award, Lee Yaron's *10/7: 100 Stories*, is a work that gives readers the foundation to begin their own process of learning, grieving, exploring, and thinking.

As a journalist, a chronicler, and a deeply dedicated writer, Yaron provides an account of the day that outlines the facts, but also fills the spaces between those facts with the thoughts, fears, and memories of people who lived it. With focus and infinite care, Yaron offers a multi-faceted, interconnected narrative that delves into the stories that coexist with the tragedy. Yaron's accomplishment is to bring out the personal, intimate, in a visceral way while never losing sight of the enormity of the horror that she is chronicling.

Her work—and the time she spent with survivors, family members, witnesses—offer invaluable insight into the people whose names are now printed in newspaper articles, on stickers, on posters, and countless memorials, while taking the story back further, to the histories and connections that form a bond with not only the people of Israel, but the land itself.

# Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg

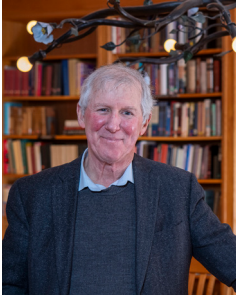


Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg wins a Lifetime Achievement Award on the occasion of the publication of his latest book, *The Triumph of Life: A Narrative Theology of Judaism* (The Jewish Publication Society / University of Nebraska Press). This work, his magnum opus, is a culmination of his many decades of thinking and teaching about Jewish philosophy and theology.

Rabbi Greenberg is a towering figure in Jewish life and education. His work and his teachings have impacted Jewish communities across the United States and globally, from his activism with the movement to liberate Soviet Jews to his leadership as a Modern Orthodox scholar and in the field of Holocaust education to his teachings around a philosophy that encourages a view of Judaism as a unified people.

Through his books and his teaching, Rabbi Greenberg has influenced movements, changed methodologies, and shown by example what it means to be a rabbi and a leader. For countless students, rabbis, Jewish public intellectuals, and those involved in Jewish communal life, Yitz is their “rebbe”, the thinker who has shaped their outlook on Jewish life, theology, and practice, who set people on their course in life, even if they have only met through the written word.

## Aaron Lansky



*photo credit:  
Ben Barnhart Photography,  
courtesy of the Yiddish Book  
Center*

This year, we are pleased to present the Mentorship Award in Honor of Carolyn Starman Hessel to Aaron Lansky, the founder of the Yiddish Book Center. Through decades of work and an ongoing passion and commitment, Aaron has fundamentally reshaped the fate of one of the great Jewish languages' histories, and reintroduced countless readers to the words of Jewish writers who would otherwise have been forgotten.

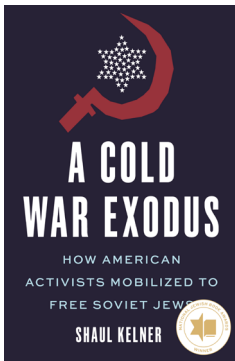
Continuing the work that started with loading books out of dumpsters and rescuing boxes from basements, Aaron has created an institution that combines deep historical research and understanding with unbridled cultural activism. And in addition to his cultural impact on the fields of language and literature, there are vast numbers of Jewish cultural leaders, scholars, and activists who have been directly touched by Lansky's commitment to scholarship, to Yiddish, to refusing to allow history to be forgotten.

As Jews, we speak about *l'dor v'dor* and that is exactly what Aaron has done—bringing the words of past generations forward to present and future generations.

# A Cold War Exodus: How American Activists Mobilized to Free Soviet Jews

Shaul Kelner

NYU Press



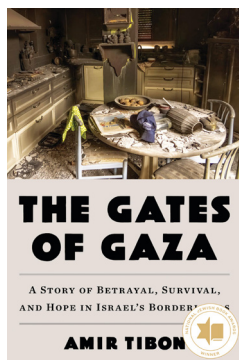
Demanding “Let my people go,” American Jews mobilized for Soviet Jewish emigration. In this deeply researched, gripping analysis, Shaul Kelner illuminates the grassroots of this movement. Inspired by other social movements, American activists invented tactics that became compelling Jewish traditions—a “matzoh of hope” on the Passover table, Americans’ bar and bat mitzvahs twinned with those of Soviet teens, “tourists” heading to the USSR with suitcases stuffed with yarmulkes. The result of this mass movement was the birth of one of the most forceful human rights campaigns of the entire Cold War era. Its legacy lies not only in its contribution to opening the gates for Jews to leave the USSR, but also in a stunning reshaping of late-twentieth-century American Jewish culture.

Autobiography and Memoir  
The Krauss Family Award in Memory of  
Simon & Shulamith (Sofi) Goldberg

# The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope in Israel's Borderlands

Amir Tibon

Little, Brown & Company



Even though Israel's war in Gaza is still being fought, and the literature of October 7th is still being written, it is already clear that *The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope* in Israel's Borderlands will become central to the way the Jewish community and the world at large understand this historical inflection point. Amir Tibon's astonishing book is far more than a moment-to-moment chronicle of what the author, his wife, and their two young daughters experienced on the day of Hamas' surprise attack on southern Israel. Through scrupulously researched accounts, Tibon also presents a history of Kibbutz Nahal Oz and the broader story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The horror that befell Tibon and his family on October 7, 2023 is deftly interwoven with decades of national, military, political, and cultural history.

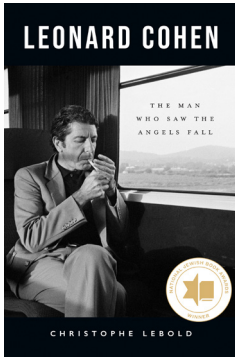
It's one thing to know, objectively, that the individual and the collective are inextricably linked in the state of Israel. It's another thing, emotionally, to read a memoir illustrating that point so masterfully. Tibon's account is propulsive and riveting; even if readers already knew the outline of how Tibon's own father heroically drove to Nahal Oz and rescued his family, they will be amazed at the narrative twists that made the rescue possible. Like the founding of Israel itself, the Tibon family's survival is a modern miracle—and a reason to believe that, *lamrot hakol* (despite everything), Israeli resilience might someday lead to peaceful coexistence in the land.

Biography  
In Memory of Sara Berenson Stone

# Leonard Cohen: The Man Who Saw the Angels Fall

Christophe Lebold

ECW Press



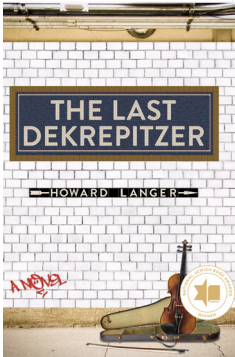
Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” is one of the most covered songs in history. Everyone has a favorite version, whether it’s by Jeff Buckley or Bon Jovi. A plethora of content also exists about Cohen himself, with books released almost annually about his unique life and artistry. For *Leonard Cohen: The Man Who Saw Angels Fall*, author Christophe Lebold, professor of literature at the University of Strasbourg and admitted Cohen fan, spent more than two decades researching his subject. He delivers a masterpiece on the Canadian Jewish bard.

Lebold took literal steps to grow closer to Cohen, traveling to pivotal places in his life—from his birthplace in Canada to the United States to Greece. Eventually, the two men spent time together in LA and grew close. Fan became friend. In recounting Cohen’s personal journeys, both physical and intellectual, Lebold was able to reference his friend’s perspectives on religion, love, God, language, prayer, and darkness. Originally published in Lebold’s native French, the text is a wonderful mash-up of essay, biography, visuals, and poetry, reflecting the multifaceted nature of this complex visionary. The result is a portrait that is honest and unforgettable, the definitive work on Leonard Cohen.

# The Last Dekrepitzer

## Howard Langer

Cresheim Press



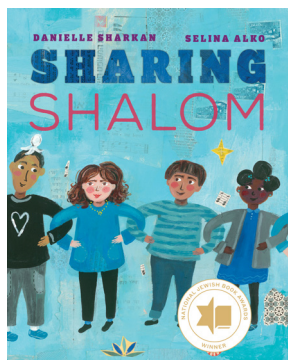
*The Last Dekrepitzer*, a superb debut novel, relates the improbable journey of Shmuel Meir Lichtbencher. Shmuel Meir is the sole survivor of a small Hasidic enclave destroyed by the Nazis. His sect has been led by rebbes who fiddle—their piety and prayers are expressed in nigunim, Hasidic melodies that often lack lyrics. Shmuel Meir is being groomed to lead the group, but, in what turns out to be good fortune, he is taken from his shtetl to be trained at a Moscow Conservatory. He joins the fight against Germany, eventually deserts the Red Army, and makes his way to Italy. There he is adopted by Black American GIs, who, moved by his story and music, take him back to Mississippi at the War's end.

Like countless other immigrants, Shmuel adopts a new identity. In Mississippi, he raises chickens and plays in a blues band. Renamed Sam Lightup, he marries the sister of one of his saviors. Their marriage violates Mississippi law, and they are forced to flee.

Shmuel and his converted wife make their way to New York, where they seek a fresh start. “Who are you, Sam?” his friend and sometime study partner asks. Sam-Shmuel’s quest to answer takes him on a trek where he wrestles with his past, with America’s racial taboos, and perhaps, like Jacob, with God himself. Howard Langer’s deeply moving novel is told in clear and unadorned prose. This book will repay rereadings with new pleasures and insights.

# Sharing Shalom

Danielle Sharkan; Selina Alko, illus.  
Holiday House



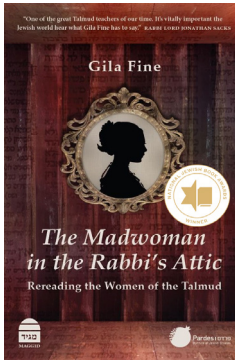
*Sharing Shalom*, written by Danielle Sharkan and illustrated by Selina Alko, is an inspiring picture book that celebrates community, resilience, and the beauty of Jewish life. Young Leila cherishes her Jewish heritage, her Hebrew lessons, and the stories of kings and queens passed down through generations. But when her synagogue is vandalized, the sense of pride that once made her feel special turns into a feeling of being different when she is reluctant to wear her Star of David necklace or eat typically Jewish foods in front of others. Just when Leila begins to question her place, her classmates and neighbors rally together to restore the synagogue, demonstrating compassion and solidarity.

Through their collective effort, Leila discovers a powerful truth: being different is not just okay—it's what makes a community strong and beautiful. With lyrical storytelling and Selina Alko's beautiful, textured collage art, *Sharing Shalom* offers an age-appropriate and hopeful way to discuss antisemitism, inclusion, and the importance of standing together in the face of intolerance. Perfect for children and families, this book fosters conversations about embracing diversity and building bridges between cultures. A very important book for present times.

# The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud

Gila Fine

Koren Publishers Jerusalem



Gila Fine's *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud* belongs in the pantheon of Jewish feminist books along with those like Judith Plaskow's *Standing Again at Sinai*, Rachel Adler's *Engendering Judaism*, and Judith Hauptman's *Rereading the Rabbis*.

Not only is this book beautifully written and accessible to all readers, but it is also an important text for anyone interested in becoming a great and subtle reader of text.

In each chapter, Fine examines one of the classic feminine motifs in Western literature including the shrew, the femme fatale, and the angel of the house. She masterfully introduces the reader to both the nuance of each of these motifs as well as shares an example of a Talmudic story that seems to fit into this paradigm. But then, in a feat of tremendous intellectual talent, she rereads the story, revealing new contexts and additional layers of meaning that dramatically shift our understanding. What is perhaps most powerful about her work is that her rereadings are not simple apologetics trying to find a way to redeem these stories for contemporary readers. Rather, her rereading reveals a more accurate way of encountering these texts and in doing so, reminds us how, as modern readers, we can be blinded by our own preconceived notions.

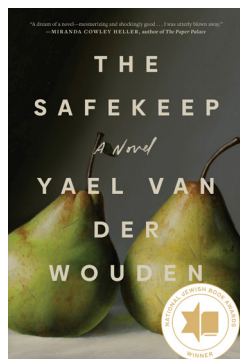
This book is a must-read for anyone interested in better understanding the rabbis' view of women, anyone curious about Jewish literature, and anyone who loves to encounter an author at her very best.

Debut Fiction  
Goldberg Prize

# The Safekeep

## Yael van der Wouden

Simon & Schuster / Avid Reader Press



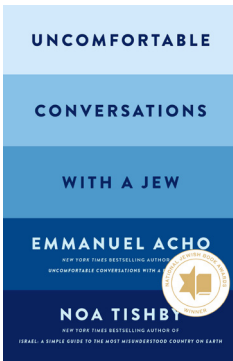
Yael van der Wouden's *The Safekeep* is a gem of a novel. At its heart, it is a love story, rendered with startling precision and depth. The characters are given such dimension, are so carefully, lovingly constructed, that the reader is—in the simplest, profoundest sense—transported. Slowly, assuredly, the author builds a whole world; she weaves desire, fear, guilt, obsession, repression, and delight into what every book aspires to create but few do: life.

It is a love story, but that does not mean its concerns are small. On the contrary, *The Safekeep*, grounded by its fully realized characters and settings, examines the brokenness—visible and invisible; private and collective—in the aftermath of war. Symbolically rich but never bloated or sentimental, the book asks what it is to remember, to possess, to lose, to amend. A startling achievement.

# Uncomfortable Conversations with a Jew

## Emmanuel Acho and Noa Tishby

Simon & Schuster / Simon Element



In *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Jew*, co-authors Noa Tishby and Emmanuel Acho convey their deep respect for one another as they grapple with the complex topic of antisemitism. The authors are piercingly honest as they explore questions so many shy away from. They ask hard questions that are both timely and timeless about antisemitism, and address the complicated history without the usual jargon, making the book both accessible and relevant.

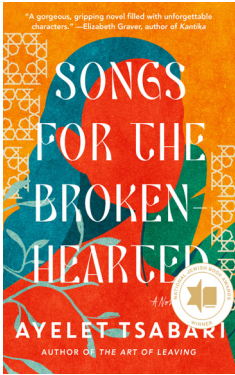
For anyone seeking to digest the intricacies of the last year as the US has experienced a rise in antisemitism; and to explain it in its historical context, this book offers a conversation that offers accessible bites of information about this broad topic. For those looking for deeper understanding of topics which are not as frequently addressed, this book provides a gateway to those, too.

The question/answer format of the book allows the honesty of the authors to come across and creates a medium for readers to readily appreciate what we know, what is unknown, and those topics about which we could know more. Unintended, the book format (which emerged from earlier work by Acho) captures the Jewish spirit of inquiry of *shakla v'tarya*, the asking questions and gathering answers, and invites Jewish readers into the conversations, while at the same time affording readers of any background an accessible read on an-all-too important topic.

# Songs for the Brokenhearted

## Ayelet Tsabari

Random House



In *Songs for the Brokenhearted*, Jewish Yemeni music provides the underlying chords and motifs. This fresh and engrossing novel explores the Yemeni Israeli experience has detailed and complex characters and an absorbing plot. Here two young Yemeni immigrants to early state Israel, Saida and Yaqub, experience forbidden love, entranced by beautiful songs from the culture. They cannot stay together and so drift apart. Saida's daughter Zohara has the typical immigrant child experience of wishing her parents fit in better, that she looked more like her Ashkenazi peers, and that her family conformed more to Israeli norms. Fast forward many years: Zohara ends up adrift and uninspired in a doctoral program in New York when she's summoned home following her mother's death.

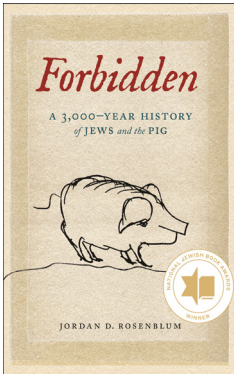
Zohara then discovers a variety of family secrets, including ones that reflect an in-depth (and a little esoteric even now) exploration of the role of Yemeni songs in their lives. These songs empower Saida and the female Yemeni community, and the novel reflects Tsabari's detailed research into their history and unique features. All the main characters develop in the past and illuminate their futures, and their lives entwine with one another's in different ways. Zohara gains the ability to love and understand her mother more, albeit posthumously. All this against the background of Israeli events and history, specifically the murder of Yitzhak Rabin following the promise of the Oslo peace accords and the treatment of and discrimination against Yemeni families.

*Songs for the Brokenhearted* has it all: drama, characters the reader grows to care about, politics, music, elegant prose, and twists as complicated as Israeli history itself.

# Forbidden: A 3,000-Year History of Jews and the Pig

Jordan D. Rosenblum

NYU Press

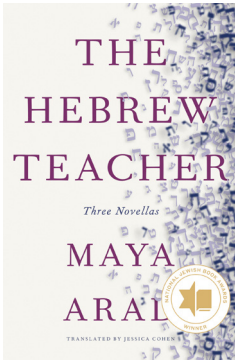


The French writer Brillat-Savarin famously said “Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are.” But as Jordan Rosenblum’s *Forbidden: A 3,000 Year History of Jews and the Pig* shows, there is a surprising amount to be learned about identity from what people don’t eat. In an exploration that is both extensively researched and engagingly delivered, Rosenblum looks at how Jews’ relationship with the pig has evolved across continents and cultures and centuries. From ancient Rabbinic writings to the shocking Judensau imagery of the Middle Ages to modern meat-substitute discomfort (with many fascinating stories along the way), Rosenblum shows how non-Jews have used the pig to signal Jewish otherness, and how Jews have wrestled with what the choices around pork say about what it means to be a Jew. Rosenblum shows how the pig—more so than any other forbidden food—has served as a symbolic touchstone for exploring Jewish identity, assimilation, rebellion, and meaning.

# The Hebrew Teacher

Maya Arad; Jessica Cohen, trans.

New Vessel Press



*The Hebrew Teacher* is a beautifully crafted collection of three novellas that immerse the reader in the lives of Israeli women navigating their experiences in the United States. Each story is so compelling that you find yourself not wanting them to end. The characters are vivid and complex, leaving you eager to learn more about their lives, their choices, and where their journeys will take them.

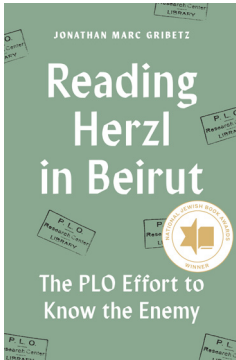
Maya Arad demonstrates a tremendous gift for character development. With subtle yet powerful storytelling, she captures the emotional nuances of cultural assimilation, identity, and some often-overlooked struggles of Israeli immigrants in the US. This book pulls you in from the very first page, offering a powerful glimpse of the challenges and triumphs of its protagonists. It also offers fascinating insights into the shifting perspectives on college campuses about Israel, particularly within Middle Eastern Studies and Jewish Studies departments. Arad's writing takes the reader on a journey—through generational divides, shifting relationships, and the tension between one's homeland and the place where one builds a life. The stories are deeply human, full of quiet revelations that resonate long after you've turned the final page.

Whether you are interested in immigrant narratives, strong female characters, or simply well-told stories, *The Hebrew Teacher* is a literary treasure that combines relatable struggles with universal themes. Thought-provoking and deeply engaging.

# Reading Herzl in Beirut: The PLO Effort to Know the Enemy

Jonathan Marc Gribetz

Princeton University Press



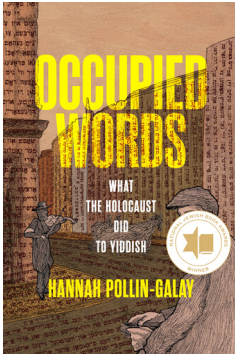
*Reading Herzl in Beirut* reveals a crucial missing part in the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The book explores the fascinating activities of the PLO research center in Beirut and the studies produced there. It demonstrates, for the first time, the level of curiosity of the PLO towards Israel and how the PLO tried to understand their primary foe. *Reading Herzl in Beirut* shows the depth of knowledge and research of Israeli society, culture, history, internal politics, and religion. The book illuminates the components of the research center analysis and their responses to current events.

In this incredibly rich account, Jonathan Gribetz meticulously reads the research products out of Beirut but also places them in the context in which they were written: as a continuous attempt to evaluate the intellectual strength of Israel and Zionism, appraise its ability to harness military power, and assess the necessity of violence in a struggle for national liberation.

# Occupied Words: What the Holocaust Did to Yiddish

Hannah Pollin-Galay

University of Pennsylvania Press



How did Yiddish-speaking victims and survivors of the Holocaust understand and respond to the Nazi onslaught through the prism of their *mameloshn*, and how did Yiddish itself respond to the terror and trauma of its speakers' lived experience?

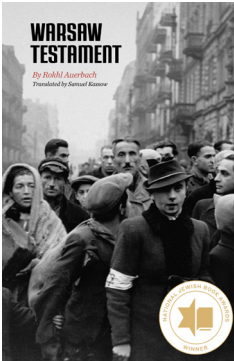
In this shattering, landmark study of “What the Holocaust did to Yiddish,” Hannah Pollin-Galay brilliantly excavates what she calls “*Khurb Yiddish*” from the works of diarists and memoirists, poets, novelists, librettists and even self-appointed lexicographers immediately after the war to show us how new words were forged in extremity and how old words were infused with new and monstrous meaning.

Profoundly original, meticulously researched, and beautifully written, *Occupied Words* stands alone in its unique contribution to Yiddish and Holocaust Studies, revealing over three thousand new Yiddish words with excruciating consequences for our understanding of how Yiddish shaped the experiences of Holocaust victims then—and how it shapes our memory and understanding of the Holocaust now, eighty years later.

# Warsaw Testament

Rokhl Auerbach; Samuel Kassow, trans.

White Goat Press



*Warsaw Testament* is among the most fascinating, engaging, beautifully written, and important books on the subject of the Warsaw Ghetto and is highly deserving of this year's prize. Every page makes the reader pause and consider its immense value as a teaching tool to scholars, educators, and lay readers alike.

Rokhl Auerbach was a journalist. Her keen ability to note vivid details of her surroundings and her remarkable skill in sharing precise observations of individuals—coworkers, friends, colleagues, and passers-by—make the Warsaw Ghetto, its soup kitchens, and its fascinating inhabitants come alive for today's readers. This is contemporaneous history that documents the day-to-day work Auerbach undertook and helps us to understand the meticulous contents of the OynegShabes archive, to which she contributed her writings.

Auerbach continued to write after the Uprising, and though she tried to be factual about what she had seen and experienced, she realized that was not possible and instead poured out her raw emotions and observations nightly after only a few hours of sleep. We are the beneficiaries of her painful recollections and her powerful evidence, as well as her clear-eyed reflections on her Ghetto writing years later.

Translator Samuel Kassow writes a thoughtful and necessary introduction that is both a biographical overview and a history lesson. We are greatly indebted to both Auerbach and Kassow for this remarkable book.

# Finn and Ezra's Bar Mitzvah Time Loop

Joshua S. Levy

HarperCollins

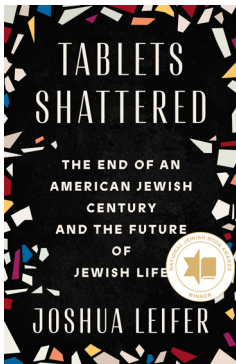


Sometimes all you want out of a book is for it to deliver exactly what's promised by the title. *Finn and Ezra's Bar Mitzvah Time Loop* does precisely that—and with humour, heart, mystery, and a personality as big as both of its two leads put together. Like the heroes of any time loop adventure, the titular characters must learn valuable lessons about themselves in order to escape, but author Joshua S. Levy takes a premise that could easily skew didactic, and instead delivers a fast-paced adventure that's big on belly laughs and slim on soapboxes. Yes, Finn and Ezra are two very different Jewish boys, using the day of their greatest engagement with Judaism to learn about each other, themselves, and the Jewishness of their lives. But they're also two boys thrown together for an absolutely wild ride, and any reader going on their adventure with them will have a blast doing so. In times like these, that feels more valuable than ever.

# Tablets Shattered: The End of an American Jewish Century and the Future of Jewish Life

Joshua Leifer

Penguin Random House / Dutton

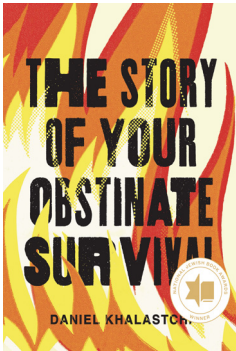


Written immediately prior to October 7, 2023, *Tablets Shattered* is an erudite, clear-eyed, and almost prophetic account of the present transitional moment in American Judaism. Combining historical analysis and personal narrative, Joshua Leifer compellingly shows how Americanism, liberalism, and Zionism came to organize Jewish life in the second half of the twentieth century. Leifer considers how these pillars shattered in the wake of growing national and geopolitical crises, particularly the Israel–Palestine conflict. Finally, he charts potential courses for the community as it attempts to rebuild and reorient itself in the wake of these profound changes. Engagingly and fluidly written, Leifer acts as a superb guide for illuminating where American Jews have been, how they got to where they are today, and where they might go tomorrow.

# The Story of Your Obstinate Survival

Daniel Khalastchi

University of Wisconsin Press



*The Story of Your Obstinate Survival* is a boldly imaginative collection of poems set in the apocalyptic present, where faith and faithlessness coincide in a speaker “eager for belief” who nevertheless wrestles with the “legacy of lost belief” and the loosening of “familial obligation / in favor of modern growth.”

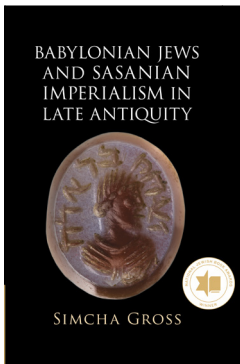
Khalastchi’s poem titles are as hard to pin down as the poems themselves, from “The Imminent Decline of Everything We’ve Understood to Be What Governs Our Privileged Daily Lives,” to “A Formidable Plan to Address the National Convention.” The latter opens with the speaker in a South Florida grocery store, where he is being cross-examined by women who “don’t believe // I’ve bought enough to eat”; he soon finds himself in one of their kitchens, where “the range is // electric because gas is how their / parents died.” In “Oh, I Think About the Dead,” a rabbi who “fell in-/ to a gravesite” has been “communing” with the dead: “Every day / she calls the congregation’s / phone tree and talks of // whose departed she’s gone far with.”

Hilarious and heartbreaking, *The Story of Your Obstinate Survival* is a witty, tender tour de force of contemporary Jewish poetry.

# Babylonian Jews and Sasanian Imperialism in Late Antiquity

Simcha Gross

Cambridge University Press

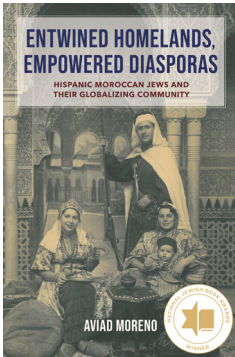


Simcha Gross's *Babylonian Jews and Sasanian Imperialism in Late Antiquity* is a forcefully argued, deeply learned, and lucidly written study that changes the way we understand Jewish political attitudes in a formative era for Judaism. Bringing the Sasanian Empire from the “distant backdrop” of the Babylonian Talmud to an object of rabbinic interest in its own right, the book situates Jewish life in the empire alongside that of other religious minorities, both to contextualize the Jewish experience within the larger whole and to reveal what was distinctive about it. Equipped with an impressive array of languages, Gross deftly weaves together sources from Jews’ contemporary cultures and settings to cast familiar material in a fresh light. The result is a new understanding of late antique history, and a vigorous appreciation of the Babylonian Talmud as both a product of and a project within the world of the Sasanian Empire.

# Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and Their Globalizing Community

## Aviad Moreno

Indiana University Press



*Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and their Globalizing Community* by Aviad Moreno is a groundbreaking exploration of Sephardic identity, history, and migration. This book offers a fresh perspective on diaspora studies, particularly for understanding Sephardic and Mizrahi communities in the modern era.

Through meticulous research, Moreno traces the journey of Hispanic Moroccan Jews across the globe over the past 150 years. From Morocco to Latin America, Israel, Europe, and North America, the book uncovers how this community sustained itself through shared narratives and cultural connections. By examining the intertwined histories of Spain and Morocco—not only as ancestral homelands but also through the lens of Spanish colonialism in North Africa—Moreno reveals a unique story of postcolonial migration and identity formation.

The book's innovative framework redefines diaspora-making, emphasizing hybridity and interconnectivity. It challenges traditional notions of isolated Jewish communities by showing how Sephardic Jews navigated transnational networks and maintained a dynamic connection to their roots in the Hispanophone world. Moreno also highlights the role of language and cultural adaptation in sustaining this globalizing community.

Beyond its contributions to academia, the book has far-reaching implications for how we understand Jewish identity and belonging in an interconnected world, offering valuable insights for anyone interested in global migration, cultural resilience, and the enduring power of shared heritage.

# 101 Treasures from the National Library of Israel

Raquel Ukeles, Hezi Amiur, Yoel Finkelman, Stefan Litt, and Samuel Thrope, eds.

Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers



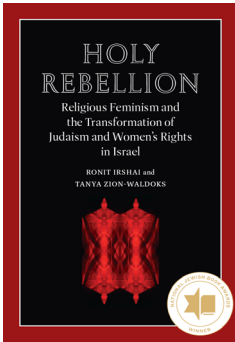
This remarkable volume celebrates the vast and diverse collections of the National Library of Israel, one of the world's most significant repositories of Jewish and Israeli heritage. Published to coincide with the opening of the library's stunning Herzog & de Meuron–designed building, *101 Treasures from the National Library of Israel* presents a carefully curated selection of the library's most precious items, spanning over 1,500 years of history. Edited by the library's curators—Raquel Ukeles, Hezi Amiur, Yoel Finkelman, Stefan Litt, and Samuel Thrope—the book features manuscripts, photographs, maps, musical scores, and more paired with captivating stories that illuminate their historical and cultural significance. Highlights include a tenth-century Hebrew Bible codex from the Damascus Crowns, rare documents from the Afghan Geniza, Maimonides' autographed Commentary on the Mishnah, poetry by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, theological ruminations by Isaac Newton, the Orit, the sacred scriptures of Ethiopian Jews, the ledger of the Jewish community of Frankfurt am Main, rare cantorial manuscripts, and musical scores.

Each artifact reflects the library's dedication to preserving Jewish and Israeli heritage while embracing the contributions of other cultures. The book invites readers into a vivid tapestry of history, art, music, and culture. Richly illustrated and thoughtfully contextualized, *101 Treasures from the National Library of Israel* is both an intellectual and visual feast—a must-have for lovers of history, art, the written word, music, archives, and the enduring human story.

# Holy Rebellion: Religious Feminism and the Transformation of Judaism and Women's Rights in Israel

Ronit Irshai and Tanya Zion-Waldoks

Brandeis University Press



Even the full title of this book hardly conveys its depth and scope; in *Holy Rebellion*, coauthors Ronit Irshai and Tanya Zion-Waldoks probe into all corners of a religiously observant feminist's life and make sophisticated, social scientific analyses of the religious feminist revolution.

The authors cover everything from private bedroom behaviour in observance of niddah [laws governing sex and ritual purity] to issues of modesty in dress, to authority in rabbinic ordination of women, to legislative power in civil and religious courts, to enhanced roles for women in communal prayer settings, to the proliferation of Torah study institutions for girls and women, to locating the aguna issue in Jewish divorce law in the context of injustice and as paradigm of the male–female power struggle. They not only identify large changes but also understand the significance of miniscule ones.

Backlash against feminism is not surprising, and as insiders, the authors are uniquely equipped to address it head-on. They knowledgeably supply the halakhic underpinnings of religious women's behaviour, savvily trace changes and developments in the law over time, and, simultaneously, strive to maintain a religious community. This book will likely become a classic in the ever-growing field of

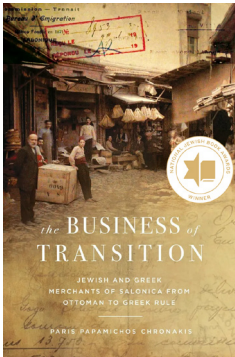
religious feminist literature. Although it focuses on Israeli Judaism in particular, the work will also serve other religious groups grappling with issues of tradition and change. The authors have created not only a useful paradigm for other faiths, but also a useful tool, the “narrative-ripeness test,” to predict when the state will intervene to enable or hinder what feminists define as progress.

Who knows but that the labors of the scholarly, activist, religious, feminist authors will help to bind up Israel with other nations of the world . . .

# The Business of Transition: Jewish and Greek Merchants of Salonica from Ottoman to Greek Rule

Paris Papamichos Chronakis

Stanford University Press

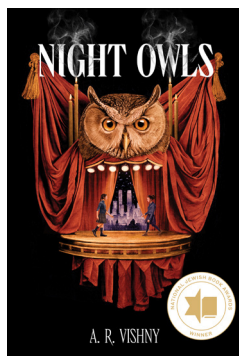


Based on extensive research in dozens of archives in five countries and three continents, *The Business of Transition: Jewish and Greek Merchants of Salonica from Ottoman to Greek Rule* by Paris Papamichos Chronakis explores the history of Salonica and its merchants during the seminal decades marked by the disintegration of the multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman Empire and the rise, in its place, of new nation-states. Chronakis brilliantly demonstrates that the transformation of Salonica from a multiethnic thriving port city with a majority Jewish population under Ottoman rule into a Greek border town, on the margins of a new nation-state, involved more than a demographic shift. Through meticulous archival research, Chronakis illuminates the shifts in power dynamics and identity formations of merchants. He examines not only “what it meant to be a Jew, a Greek” but also what it meant to be “a Salonican and a bourgeois (man).” Chronakis forces us to reconsider the concepts of “minority” and “majority” and rethink the formation of modern identities not only through the lens of a nation but also through the lens of commerce and class. *The Business of Transition* calls attention to the “changing relationship between class and ethnicity” as Jews and Greeks, two marginalized ethnic and religious groups under Ottoman rule, renegotiated their place in a new nation-state.

# Night Owls

A.R. Vishny

HarperCollins



Molly and Clara are Estries, owl-shifting vampires embarking on their second century as Jewish teenage sisters and feeding on men to survive as necessary. Assisted by the perpetually unreliable Boaz (who happens to be the newest member of his Syrian family to be able to see spirits), they run a historic movie theatre in the East Village. But Molly has a secret: she's been breaking Clara's "no falling in love" rule with her secret girlfriend, Anat. When Anat disappears, Molly's forced to come clean, and Clara has no choice but to embroil Boaz, who might be a little more likable than she'd originally allowed herself to believe. Unfortunately, getting closer to Boaz puts Clara's own secret in jeopardy, and confusion, betrayal, and unwanted feelings ensue in a fascinating, romantic, and haunting adventure steeped in Jewish culture, history, and lore.

The most impressive thing about Vishny's debut is that for a book about a people whose standard joke is "two Jews, three opinions," there's an incredible number of dualities at play to provide something for everyone: Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, monster and human, realistic and fantastical, earthly and spiritual, and—perhaps the most Jewish interweaving of all—contemporary and historical. *Night Owls* wholly immerses readers in the world of the legendary Yiddish Theatre, giving them welcome exposure to a tremendous aspect of American Jewish tradition through a thoroughly modern, urban tale that will keep them riveted through every twist and turn.

# Named Awards

Naming an award is a fitting way to honor a special person or remember a loved one. Thank you to all of the individuals and foundations that have supported the National Jewish Book Awards and Jewish Book Council programming and resources.

#### **Jewish Book of The Year Award: Everett Family Foundation Award**

Endowed by the Everett family in 2003, this prestigious award honors the best nonfiction book of the year.

#### **American Jewish Studies: 350 Award**

The Celebrate 350 Committee commemorated the 350 years of Jewish life in America and conducted a year-long series of celebrations. This award provides the opportunity to remember the event and honor books that will contribute to the next major milestone.

#### **Autobiography and Memoir: The Krauss Family Award in Memory of Simon & Shulamith (Sofi) Goldberg**

This award was dedicated to the memory of Simon and Sofi Goldberg by their daughter, Carmel Krauss.

#### **Biography: In Memory of Sara Berenson Stone**

Born in Bogalusa, Louisiana, Sara Berenson Stone (1915–2018) was a devoted philanthropist and voracious reader. One of a handful of Jewish students at Duke University, she graduated in 1935 and moved to New Orleans, where she began her eighty-year long advocacy for Jewish causes. A prolific reader of fiction and nonfiction, Mrs. Stone had a particular interest in biographies pertaining to the Jewish experience. This award honors writers whose work has elucidated the lives of those, past and present, who exemplify what it means to live, work, and think as a Jew. By the high quality of their writing, our award winners have given their subjects and themselves an honored place in our literary canon.

#### **Book Club Award: The Miller Family Award in Memory of Helen Dunn Weinstein and June Keit Miller**

The Book Club Award recognizes an outstanding work of fiction or nonfiction that inspires meaningful conversation about Jewish life, identity, practice, or history, and which has the potential to nurture Jewish continuity. The award recognizes the power of books to promote Jewish community and thought-provoking discussions.

#### **Children's Picture Book: Tracy and Larry Brown Family Award**

An illustrated story or nonfiction book designed to be read aloud to children ages 3 to 8 years old or a board book intended for children 0–3 years old. This category should also include early readers and chapter books if they are intended for readers in the same age-range. The award will be shared by the author and illustrator.

#### **Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice: Myra H. Kraft Memorial Award**

This award is dedicated to the memory of JBC Board member Myra H. Kraft by Robert Kraft and family. Myra loved to read, and for many years served as the leader of the Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice Award panel.

#### **Debut Fiction: The Goldberg Prize**

This prize is supported through a generous grant by the Samuel Goldberg & Sons Foundation.

### Education and Jewish Identity: In Memory of Dorothy Kripke

Dorothy Kripke was a prominent writer of books for Jewish children, including the *Let's Talk About . . .* series, stimulating interaction between children and parents. This award, created by her family, cherishes the memory of Mrs. Kripke.

### Fiction: JJ Greenberg Memorial Award

The Fiction Award is endowed by Jewish Book Council past president and board member Blu Greenberg and her husband, Rabbi "Yitz" Greenberg, in loving memory of their son, JJ Greenberg. This is an eternal tribute to JJ's love of reading, especially Jewish fiction.

### Food Writing & Cookbooks: Jane and Stuart Weitzman Family Award

This award recognizes a cookbook or work of food writing — including, but not limited to, memoir and history — that explores Jewish identity, history, and culture through a culinary lens.

### Hebrew Fiction in Translation: Jane Weitzman Award

A work of contemporary Israeli fiction, originally published in Hebrew, that has been translated from Hebrew in the current judging year.

### History: Gerrard and Ella Berman Memorial Award

The Bermans, lovers of Jewish history, endowed this award to ensure the continued study of our glorious past and to honor outstanding books in the field.

### Holocaust: In Memory of Ernest W. Michel

This prize honors writers who produce exceptional books on the subject of the Holocaust. Ernest Michel, born in Mannheim, Germany, survived six years in forced labor camps, including two and half years in Auschwitz. He and two friends escaped from a death march from Auschwitz four weeks before the end of World War II. He was the only survivor to serve as a correspondent for the German news agency DANA at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial in 1945. After arriving in America, he began to speak about his life experience and started working for the United Jewish Appeal. He served as Executive Vice President of New York UJA from 1970 to 1989, served as the organizer and chairman of the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in 1981, and was a founding trustee of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. In 1993, he published his memoir, *Promises to Keep: One Man's Journey Against Incredible Odds*.

### Holocaust Memoir: In Memory of Dr. Charles and Ethel Weitzman

A nonfiction book that recounts an individual's experiences during the Holocaust, including memoirs written by survivors, co-authored books in which a survivor works with a writer to tell his or her story, accounts of a survivor's experiences written by a member of his or her family (such a child or grandchild), or by another author that has access to and uses primary documents. A recently discovered or recovered diary or memoir written by someone who did not survive the Holocaust is also eligible.

### Modern Jewish Thought and Experience: Dorot Foundation Award in Memory of Joy Ungerleider

### Poetry: Berru Award in Memory of Ruth and Bernie Weinflash

The Berru Award for Poetry is dedicated to the memory of Ruth and Bernie Weinflash, who were respected leaders in their northern New Jersey community for over fifty years. A dynamic couple with both substance and style, they were not just avid readers, but also were astute critics, honing in on what spoke to both them and to the world at large. The arts were an important part of their lives. Ruth, a former actress and a lively and gifted orator, chaired the Cultural Arts Committee for many years at the JCC on the Palisades in Tenaflly, New

Jersey. She also designed programs in local schools, introducing children to the lives of famous historical activists in order to spark interest in working to make this a better world. Bernie, an active member of many boards, served for over twenty years on the board of the Jewish Book Council. A true humanitarian, he believed that when people came together for a communal purpose, positive momentum would be ignited. With intellect, compassion, and vision, both Ruth and Bernie immeasurably enriched the Jewish community, understanding the important relationship between Jewish culture and Jewish survival.

#### Scholarship: Nahum M. Sarna Memorial Award

Dr. Nahum M. Sarna was a leading biblical scholar who touched many lives through his work at Brandeis University, and through the written word in his books. His family, headed by sons Jonathan and David, established this award in his memory.

#### Sephardic Culture: Mimi S. Frank Award in Memory of Becky Levy

Mimi S. Frank, a past JBC Board member, endowed this award in memory of her grandmother, Becky Levy, who shared with her Sephardic recipes, a love of cooking and baking, and her culture from Tekirdag, Turkey.

#### Women's Studies: Barbara Dobkin Award

This award honors a leading figure in Jewish philanthropy and an outspoken advocate for Jewish women's rights. This award was established by Barbara Dobkin's friends, who wish to honor her extraordinary devotion to this cause.

#### Writing Based On Archival Material: The JDC-Herbert Katzki Award

This award honors a book of modern historical writing published in English based on archival material that includes footnotes and bibliography.

# About JBC

# JEWISH BOOK MONTH

NOVEMBER 24-DECEMBER 24, 2024

כ"ד חשוון - כ"ד כסלו תשפ"ה חודש הספר היהודי

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Artwork by Sammy Harkham

# Jewish Book Council

Jewish Book Council, founded in 1943, is the longest-running organization devoted exclusively to the support and celebration of Jewish literature. For over seventy years, we have worked closely with Jewish authors and their books, and used literature to bring people together for meaningful discussions around Jewish life, identity, and culture. We facilitate over 1,400 author events across North America annually; provide resources to more than 2,800 book clubs; publish an annual print literary journal; and give out over twenty annual literary awards, including the National Jewish Book Awards.

Jewish learning embodied in the printed word has played a crucial role in the development and strengthening of Jewish communities throughout the world. Jewish Book Council is proud to carry on this important tradition.

## Major Programs

- **Jewish Book Month:** This special month on the Jewish calendar is traditionally observed during the thirty days before Hanukkah. As part of the celebration, JBC advises local communities on exhibits, fairs, book clubs, author speaking tours, and book-related programs. JBC also prepares educational and promotional materials.
- **Jewish Literary Conferences:** JBC sponsors an annual conference for writers of adult books and another for writers and illustrators of children's books. Both conferences are designed to assist aspiring writers.
- **JBC Book Clubs:** This is the central address for over 3,000 of Jewish book clubs. It offers book clubs a one-stop shop to improve their reading experiences and enhance their conversations. JBC Book Clubs provides reviews, discussion questions, and reading lists. In addition, it offers features designed just for book clubs, such as guides to starting a new club, a personalized book recommendation service, and the opportunity to "host" authors through video chats.
- **JBC Network:** The JBC Network serves as a coordinating hub for book tours for Jewish authors and Jewish-interest books, sending nearly 300 authors to over 130 communities across North America each year, as well as providing year-round resources and support for program coordinators.
- **JBC Read On:** This program is a speakers' bureau for authors who have previously participated in the JBC Network. Read On connects these authors to additional venues.
- **Natan Notable Books:** Natan Notable Books is a twice-yearly award for non-fiction books on Jewish themes. The award highlights vital books and authors, and brings innovative and important ideas to the attention of diverse audiences.
- **National Conference Support:** Jewish Book Council serves as a resource for national conferences directed at the Jewish community, providing speakers, arranging book displays, and organizing book sales at events.
- **National Jewish Book Awards:** Conferred annually since 1950, the awards are presented by category, and are intended to recognize authors of outstanding English-language books of Jewish interest and to encourage the reading of quality books of Jewish content.
- **Jewish Book Marketing Grants:** Jewish Book Marketing Grants are a new initiative to provide marketing and promotional support to book projects from the very beginning, before they have even reached a publishing house

- *Paper Brigade*: A collection of articles, interviews, fiction, poetry, and visual arts, JBC's annual literary journal reflects today's diverse Jewish literary landscape in America and abroad.
- PB Daily: The digital arm of Paper Brigade, PB Daily, provides daily updates on the world of Jewish literature from around the web, including information on new Jewish-interest books, reviews, feature articles, interviews, and videos.
- Unpacking the Book: Jewish Writers In Conversation: Unpacking the Book is an annual literary series, administered in partnership with the Jewish Museum in New York City and Tablet magazine, that brings together Jewish-interest authors for conversations about contemporary Jewish life and identity.
- Website: [www.JewishBookCouncil.org](http://www.JewishBookCouncil.org) features thousands of book reviews, reading lists, book club questions, event listings, information on JBC programs, and more.

#### A Special Thank You To:

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We wish to publicly acknowledge and thank the people who served on the panels of judges for the 74th National Jewish Book Awards program:

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**Wishing a huge Mazel Tov to the  
winners and a giant thank you to  
the judges of the 74th National  
Jewish Book Awards!**

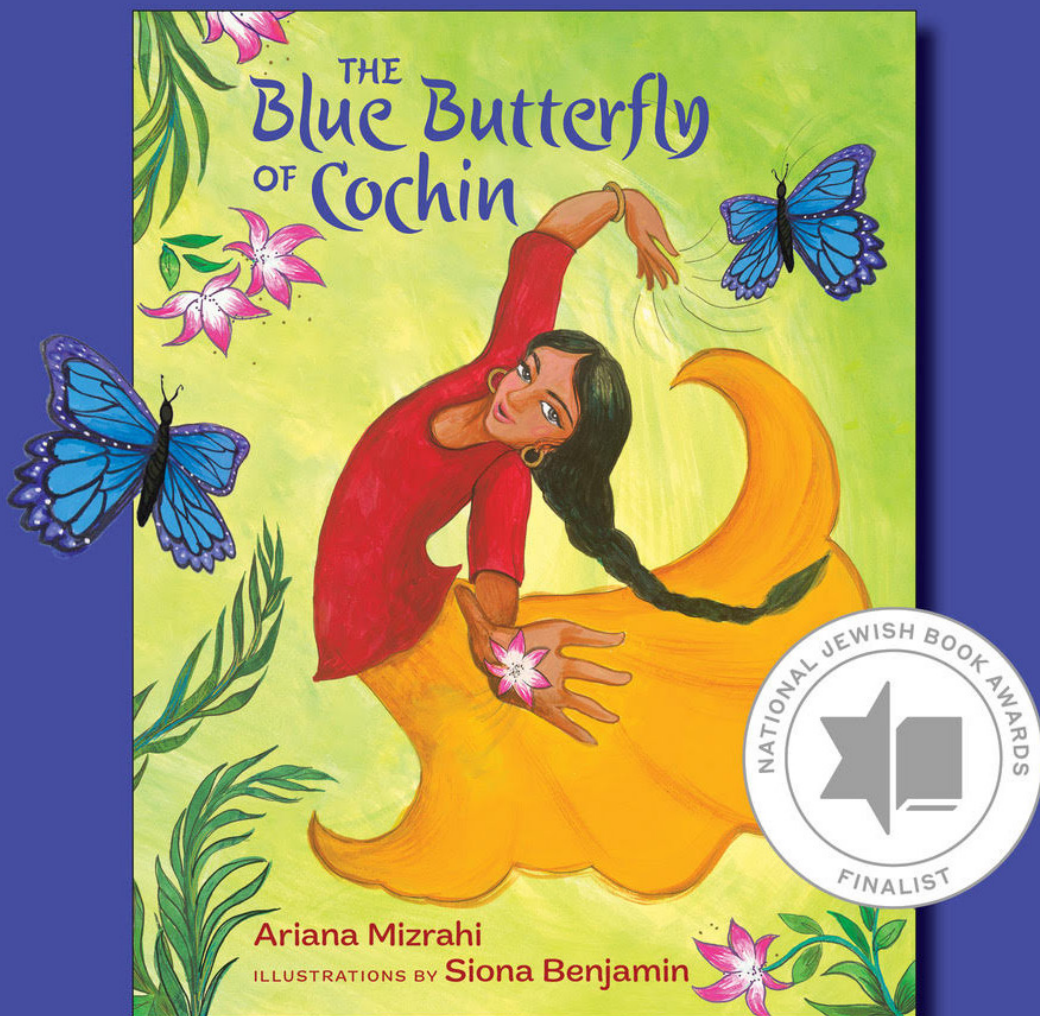
**Etta and Raymond Zimmerman**

Congratulations  
to all the finalists!



[www.zibbymedia.com](http://www.zibbymedia.com)

Thank you to the  
Jewish Book Council for this honor  
and congratulations to author Ariana Mizrahi  
and illustrator Siona Benjamin



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Congratulations to all of the 74th National Jewish Book Award winners on your incredible literary achievement!

Jewish Book Council is a nonprofit that supports writers and readers through awards, year-round events, editorial initiatives, book club resources, and so much more. Please consider supporting its continued work to promote great literature, ideas, and conversation in our community.

With gratitude,  
Elisa Spungen Bildner  
President, Jewish Book Council

**Mazel Tov to All of the  
Winners!**

**Jane and Stuart Weitzman**

**Congratulations from the 74th NJBA  
Visual Arts committee to**

**Raquel Ukeles, Ann Brener,  
Izzy Pludwinski, and Josh Tuininga,  
the winner and finalists for the 74th National  
Jewish Book Awards Visual Arts Award!**

**We thank you for your hard work and  
scholarship!**

**Winner:**

*101 Treasures from the National Library of Israel*

**Finalists:**

*Books Like Sapphires: From the Library of Congress Judaica Collection*

*The Beauty of the Hebrew Letter: From Sacred Scrolls to Graffiti*

*We Are Not Strangers*

**Kol Hakavod and heartfelt  
thanks to Naomi and Marc, as  
well as the outstanding  
members of the Staff  
for all their hard work  
on behalf of the  
JEWISH BOOK COUNCIL.**

**Carmel and Eugene Krauss**

**Heartfelt Congratulations to the  
Winners of the  
74th National Jewish Book Awards!**

**Our family extends our enthusiastic  
congratulations to the talented  
authors who have been honored  
tonight at the 74th National Jewish  
Book Awards. You've made eloquent  
and insightful contributions to Jewish  
literature, enriching our  
understanding and appreciation of  
Jewish culture and experiences.**

**Special Recognition to the Jewish  
Book Council Team!**

**Lilian Stern and Family**

Congratulations and sincere appreciation goes to Elisa, our outstanding president, for everything you do, and to Joy and Linda for their creative efforts and organization in arranging, together with the JBC Staff, this 74th Anniversary Awards Gala.

Carmel and Eugene Krauss

**Congratulations to the  
winners of the 74th National  
Jewish Book Awards!**

**And a big thank you to Jewish  
Book Council's board, for  
continuing the important  
work of promoting and  
celebrating Jewish authors!**

**Becky and David Schamis**

**Mazel Tov and warmest best  
wishes to Yitz Greenberg on  
your tremendous lifetime  
achievement and success.**

**Wishing you and Blu good  
health and strength.**

**The Krauss Family**

**Congratulations to Yael van der  
Wouden, Allison Alsup, and Toby  
Lloyd, the winner and finalists  
for the 74th National Jewish Book  
Awards Debut Fiction Award  
Goldberg Prize!**

**We thank you for your contribution  
to the world of Jewish literary  
fiction, and we can't wait to see  
what your future contributions to  
the world of Jewish literature will  
be!**

**Sincerely,  
Rachel and William Schultz**

**Mazel Tov and Kol Hakavod to  
Lee Yaron  
on winning the prestigious  
Everett Award.**

**Our very best wishes to you.**

**The Krauss Family**

Congratulations to all the award  
winning authors of the National  
Jewish Book Awards and their  
meaningful contributions to  
Jewish literature.

A special thank you to  
Naomi Firestone-Teeter and JBC's  
staff, as we celebrate  
Jewish Book Council's ongoing  
mission to inspire and bring together  
authors and readers across Jewish  
communities through out the world.

Joy and Alan Greenberg

**Congratulations to the  
winners for their outstanding  
contributions to the literary  
world!**

**And thanks to Naomi and our  
wonderful staff for all they do!**

**Linda and Brian Sterling**

Our profound admiration, thanks,  
and warm congratulations to Amir  
Tibon for the outstanding retelling  
of his Kibbutz' harrowing experience  
and his family's miraculous  
survival on October 7th at Nahal Oz,  
in the book *The Gates of Gaza*,  
winning the Krauss Family Award for  
Autobiography and Memoir in  
Memory of Simon and  
Shulamit Goldberg.

The Krauss Family

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Guidelines and submission forms for the 75th  
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See You Next Year!

