



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

March 2025

This month, we are fortunate to have added some varied and interesting books to our collection! We invite you to read the reviews of some of the new books recently received and to come and make your selection from our wonderful collection of books at the Reverend Katz Library. These are some of the interesting new books awaiting you.

Tonia Eckfeld, No one knows their destiny: the Eckfeld records: Inside the Dunera Story HIS ECK

A moving portrait of two Dunera Boys, from Kristallnacht in Vienna to VE Day in Melbourne, that complicates the traditional story of the Dunera.

Popular culture has mythologised the Dunera Boys – but who were the real men who sailed on the infamous ship, and how did the voyage transform their lives?

Art historian Tonia Eckfeld draws on a deeply personal history to tell the story of her father and her uncle, Jewish refugees whose lives were shaped indelibly by their wartime experiences and internment – each to very different outcomes.

In 1939, Reinhold and Waldemar Eckfeld fled Hitler's Austria to Churchill's United Kingdom. There they were unjustly arrested and transported on the Dunera to Tatura prison camp, where it took many months to gain their freedom. Their experiences of internment were often harrowing, riven with violence, deprivation and frustration. Waldemar, who was beaten by British guards aboard the Dunera, found himself entangled in court martial proceedings – the records of which were reportedly destroyed by the British government to hush up a human-rights scandal. Reinhold, classified as an 'enemy alien', joined the Australian Army after release and served the country that would not legally recognise him for so long.

Drawing on a trove of historical artefacts – including previously unseen artworks, photographs and official documents – Tonia Eckfeld takes the reader inside these events as they unfold. Gripping and illuminating, this book asks us to reconsider the conventional narrative of the Dunera Boys, unearthing new perspectives on the impact of war, trauma and legacy on family relationships.

Daniel Huhn, I will come back for you: the undercover Jewish commando who helped defeat the Nazis HOL HUH

A gripping account of hidden identity, military courage, and an against-all-odds reunion.

Four days after Germany's surrender in May 1945, a young British officer took a jeep and headed east into Germany. But this was no ordinary soldier. Manfred Gans was searching for his family. As a Jewish boy in Nazi Germany, Gans had fled to England. As soon as he could, he signed up to fight, serving in the legendary British 'Three Troop', an elite unit made up of German-speaking refugees, and joining in the D-Day Normandy landings. Working undercover, he obtained vital intelligence, helped liberate occupied France and the Netherlands, and saved countless lives on both sides of the front. All the while, he dreamed of being reunited with his family, still trapped behind enemy lines, and with his childhood sweetheart, Anita. As the war ended, chaos reigned in Germany: defeated Wehrmacht soldiers faced columns of American and British soldiers, concentration camp survivors crossed paths with SS guards, and Soviet military roadblocks controlled the route to the east. Manfred overcame all of these, finally reaching the place where his parents had last been seen: Theresienstadt.

Roxanne de Bastion, The piano player of Budapest: A true story of Holocaust Music, Survival and Hope BIO DEB

This is a story about a piano and its most prodigious player - how it, along with him, survived. When her father died, singer songwriter Roxanne de Bastion inherited a piano she knew had been in her family for over a hundred years. But it is only when she finds a cassette recording of her grandfather, Stephen, playing one of his compositions, the true and almost unbelievable history of the piano, this man and her family begins to unravel.

Stephen was a man who enjoyed great fame, a man who suffered the horrors of concentration camps in WWII, a man who ultimately survives, along with his piano. By piecing together his cassette recordings, unpublished memoirs, letters and documents, Roxanne sings out her grandfather's story of music and hope, lost and found, and explores the power of what can echo down through generations.

Naama Shefi, The Jewish holiday table: A world of recipes, traditions and stories to celebrate all year long COO SHE

From Rosh Hashanah and Passover to Hannukah and weekly shabbat dinners, this joyous celebration of all the Jewish holidays offers a treasury of 130 recipes gathered from 30 influential chefs and food professionals around the globe, whose shared stories illuminate the diversity of the Jewish diaspora and its cuisine. For many Jews, the meal is the holiday!

Collected by the Jewish Food Society, an organization dedicated to preserving Jewish cuisine around the world, the 135 recipes and accompanying stories in The Jewish Holiday Table are a dazzling expression of all the ways we celebrate through what we bring to the table.

Discover menus for a Persian Rosh Hashanah feast, a Ukrainian Mexican Seder, an Iraqi spread for Purim. And a memorable Hanukkah tale of grandmothers competing in a doughnut duel, with one's Moroccan sfenj recipe challenging the other's Egyptian zalabia. Reflecting three thousand years of love and loss, culture and change, each dish captures the soul of what's served in a Jewish home on a Jewish holiday.

Talia Carner, The boy with the silver tattoo F CAR

From acclaimed author of The Third Daughter comes an epic historical novel of ingenuity and courage, of love and loss, spanning postwar France when Israeli agents roamed the countryside to rescue hidden Jewish orphans—to the 1969 daring escape of the Israeli boats of Cherbourg.

1942: As the Vichy government hunts for Jews across France, Claudette Pelletier, a young and talented seamstress and lover of romance novels, falls in love with a Jewish man who seeks shelter at the château where she works. Their whirlwind and desperate romance unfolds, before he must flee and leaves her pregnant and terrified.

When the Nazis invade the Free Zone shortly after the birth of her child, the disabled Claudette is forced to make a heartbreaking choice and escapes to Spain, leaving her baby in the care of his nursemaid. By the time Claudette is able to return years later, her son has disappeared.

Unbeknown to his anguished mother, the boy has been rescued by a Youth Aliyah agent searching for Jewish orphans.

1968: When Israeli naval officer Daniel Yarden recruits Sharon Bloomenthal for a secret naval operation in Cherbourg, France, he can't imagine that he is the target of the agenda of the twenty-year-old grieving the recent loss of her fiancé in a drowned submarine. Sharon suspects that Danny's past in Youth Aliyah may reflect that of her mysterious late mother and she sets out to track her boss's extraordinary journey as an orphan in a quaint French village all the way to Israel.

As Danny focuses on the future of his people and on executing a daring, crucial operation under France's radar, he is unaware that the obsessed Sharon follows the breadcrumbs of clues across the country to find her answers. But she is wholly unprepared for the dilemma she must face upon solving the puzzle.

Joan Leegant, Displaced persons: Stories LIT LEE

Set half in Israel and half in the States, the stories in this prize-winning collection explore the experience of exile, belonging, and what it means to call a place home. A visiting professor from Boston forms an unlikely bond with an Israeli born in Iraq. Two teenage tourists are startled out of their naiveté in a restaurant in Jerusalem's Old City. A gifted yeshiva student spiraling into mental illness takes refuge in the poetry of Walt Whitman. An aged widower returns after sixty years to the Bronx neighbourhood of his youth to make amends with a first love he abandoned to go to prison. Shimmering with insight and compassion, *Displaced Persons* is a profound, exquisite collection that illuminates pivotal moments of transition, longing, and hope.

Joanne Fedler, The whale's last song F FED

Once upon a time, a young girl ventured into a dark forest, looking for a cure for her much-loved elder sister ... A touching, tender and lyrical fable about what we do for the ones we love, and the beauty and mystery of being alive in a world in which we are part of everything, and everything is part of us.

As a terrible pandemic rages through the country, a young girl, Teo, leaves her small village and sets off into the forest, in search of a cure for her sister who is infected with the pox. Her father Merdocai has surrendered himself to the evil Marquis to be experimented upon for the Greater Good; and with her mother long-dead, all Teo has to keep her going is the love of her sister, her father and her friend Rodrigo, a stuttering poet.

As Teo ventures deeper into the forest, she encounters creatures and teachers who hold the answers to all the questions she has about who she is, and where she has come from. Meanwhile, out in the depths of the ocean, a whale is returning to the place he was born, to exhale his last breath. While Teo does not know this, he too holds secrets that belong to Teo's story.

The Whale's Last Song is a tender, sweet and wise fable, on what we are prepared to do for those we love; a celebration of the beauty and mystery of being alive in a world in which we are part of everything, and everything is part of us; and a love song to the natural world. It is *The Alchemist* meets *The Princess Bride* meets *The Little Prince*. It is a little gem.

