



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

July 2025

Winter is a wonderful time to read interesting books from the Reverend Katz library. Come to the library and make your selection from our wonderful and varied collection of Jewish themed books.

Gilbert Achcar, *the Arabs and the Holocaust: the Arab – Israeli war of narratives* MID ACH

The Arab–Israeli conflict goes far beyond the wars waged on Middle East battlefields. There is also a war of narratives revolving around the two defining traumas of the conflict: the Holocaust and the Nakba. One side is charged with Holocaust denial, the other with exploiting a tragedy while denying the tragedies of others.

In this path-breaking book, political scientist Gilbert Achcar explores these conflicting narratives and considers their role in today's Middle East dispute. He analyses the various Arab responses to the Holocaust, from the earliest intimations of the genocide, through the creation of Israel and the occupation of Palestine, and up to our own time, critically assessing the political and historical context for these responses.

Achcar offers a unique ideological mapping of the Arab world, in the process defusing an international propaganda war that has become a major stumbling block in the path of Arab–Western understanding.

Yair Agmon and Orly Mevorach, *One day in October: Forty heroes, forty stories* MID AGM

One Day in October is an ambitious and unique literary project, offering readers an intimate look at our lowest, most vulnerable moment in history, and how heroes emerged.

All the stories take place within those twenty-four hours, in the same beautiful region. Once you start reading, you won't be able to put the book down.

Unforgettable heroes. Unimaginable stories. Amidst the chaos and sorrow, these narratives offer forty true heroes, told in their own voices.

Forty heroes—men, women, religious, non-religious, civilians, soldiers, Jews, non-Jews, and even children—compose this mosaic of heroism. Heroism in this book is understood broadly and generously. Alongside stories of soldiers who eliminated terrorists, you will find different kinds of heroism; an elderly man who sat in his chair and sacrificed his life to save his family; a mental health patient who survived five days in Shuja'iyya; a midwife who turned her home into a field hospital; a child who tried to save her family; a ZAKA volunteer who insisted on preserving the dignity of the fallen; and a United Hatzalah volunteer who made sure a love letter found in a fallen soldier's pocket reached its destination.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, *The wolf hunt* F GUN

Award-winning author Ayelet Gundar-Goshen returns with a powerfully compelling thriller about a mother who begins to suspect her teenage son of committing a terrible crime

Lilach has it all: an enviable home in Silicon Valley, a happy marriage and a close relationship with her sweet, shy teenager, Adam. But her peace is shattered when an attack on a local synagogue compels Adam to join a self-defence class run by a mysterious former army officer.

Lilach watches her son change overnight, and when Adam falls under suspicion for a classmate's death, she must face the terrible question no parent wants to ask: do you ever really know what your child is capable of?

Reuven Fenton, *Goyhood: a novel* F FEN

Reuven Fenton's novel *Goyhood* is a brilliant debut about a devoutly Orthodox Jewish man who discovers in middle age that he's not, in fact, Jewish, and embarks on a remarkable road trip to come to grips with his fate.

When Mayer (née Marty) Belkin fled small-town Georgia for Brooklyn nearly thirty years ago, he thought he'd left his wasted youth behind. Now he's a Talmud scholar married into one of the greatest rabbinical families in the world - a dirt-poor country boy reinvented in the image of God.

But his mother's untimely death brings a shocking revelation: Mayer and his ne'er-do-well twin brother David aren't, in fact, Jewish. Traumatized and spiritually bereft, Mayer's only recourse is to convert to Judaism. But the earliest date he can get is a week from now. What are two estranged brothers to do in the interim?

So begins the Belkins' travel through America's Deep South with Mom's ashes in tow, plus two tagalongs: an insightful Instagram influencer named Charlayne Valentine and Popeye, a one-eyed dog. As the crew gets tangled up in a series of increasingly surreal adventures, Mayer grapples with a God who betrayed him and an emotionally withdrawn wife in Brooklyn who has yet to learn her husband is a counterfeit Jew.

Etgar Keret, *Autocorrect: Stories* LIT KER

From one of the most acclaimed masters of the short story form whom the New York Times calls "Genius," a darkly funny collection of stories explores themes of identity, reality, and meaning.

Etgar Keret is the world's most famous living Israeli writer, known for writing short stories that are lean and accessible in style, and whimsical, surrealist, and darkly funny in subject. His work explores life's smallest, most unremarkable interactions in ways that are profound and unusual. The characters populating his fiction have relatable work and relationship problems. They live in a world of ever-advancing technology, but it is always degraded by the baseness of human passions and brutality: a character's partner is a reality show contestant from a parallel dimension; another finds the asteroid they paid to have named after their wife is scheduled to collide with earth; and an elderly widow convinces a popular AI program to commit suicide.

These stories speak to our current moment in time: the uncertainty and fragility—full of misunderstandings and miscommunications—while looking for reasons and the strength to find

hope. His stories reveal the fault lines and uncomfortable truths in our society in a style that is memorably his own.

Maya Wilkinson, Lublin LIT WIL

Elya is the lad with the vision, and Elya has the map. Ziv and Kiva aren't so sure. The water may run out before they find the Village of Lakes. The food may run out before the flaky crescent pastries of Prune Town. They may never reach the Village of Girls (how disappointing); they may well stumble into Russian Town, rumoured to be a dangerous place for Jews (it is). As three young boys set off from Mezritsh with a case of bristle brushes to sell in the great market town of Lublin, wearing shoes of uneven quality and possessed of decidedly unequal enthusiasms, they quickly find that nothing, not Elya's jokes nor Kiva's prayers nor Ziv's sublime attitude, can prepare them for the future as it comes barrelling down to meet them. Absurd, riveting, alarming, hilarious, the dialogue devastatingly sharp and the pacing extraordinary, Lublin is a journey to nowhere that changes everything it touches.

Nachman of Bratslav, The Podolian nights: essential tales LIT NAC

Nachman of Bratslav, descended from the founder of the Hasidic movement, carved a unique path as a Jewish spiritual leader. Towards the end of his life, he lost his young son, prompting him to turn increasingly inward and seek consolation from the world of the creative imagination.

The result was the thirteen fascinating tales in this collection. A landmark in Jewish literature, they depict a surreal world where princes bleed jewels and princesses sail the seas in men's clothing, leaving destruction in their wake. In a sparkling new translation, Nachman's skewed fables reveal strange and profound depths, prefiguring the modern sensibilities of Gogol and Kafka.