

2008 Nat'l Jewish Book Awards Announced

58th Annual Awards Ceremony to be Held March 5th in NYC

Women's Commentary on Torah Wins Top Prize
Benny Morris Garners History Honor for 1948
Fiction Award Goes to Peter Manseau

Study of Jewish American Writers in American Literary Culture
Wins American Studies Award

Priest is Author of Winning Work in Holocaust Category

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New York, NY, (January 14, 2009) – For the second year in a row, the top prize in the oldest Jewish literary award in the nation goes to a book about the Good Book. Last year, James Kugel won that honor with his book, *How to Read the Bible*. **Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss** are the winners of the **Everett Family Foundation Jewish Book of the Year** Award with their pioneering work, *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism).

With distinguished winners in sixteen categories, the **58th Annual National Jewish Book Awards, to be held on March 5th at the Center for Jewish History in New York City**, honors a diverse roster of authors and subjects.

Winners include rabbis and a priest. The current war in Gaza is contextualized with the help of a groundbreaking work on the history of the first Arab-Israeli War. A book that explores the Jewish history of Greece wins the top award in Sephardic Culture. The Torah is also the subject of the winning entry in the field of Jewish Family Literature.

This year's top honorees include **Julian Levinson**, author of *Exiles on Main Street: Jewish American Writers and American Literary Culture* (Indiana University Press), winner of the American Jewish Studies: Celebrate 350 Award; **Benny Morris**, winner of the Gerrard and Ella Berman Memorial Award in History for *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (Yale University Press); **David Patterson**, author of *Emil L. Fackenheim: A Jewish Philosopher's Response to the Holocaust* (Syracuse University Press), winner of the Modern Jewish Thought and Experience prize; and *The*

Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews (Palgrave Macmillan) by Father Patrick Desbois, winner of the award in Holocaust Studies.

The field of Jewish education is enhanced by the winning entry in that category, the exhaustive ***What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice*** (Torah Aura Productions), edited by Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner and Linda Dale Bloomberg. The esteemed Nahum M. Sarna Memorial Award in Scholarship goes to ***The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900*** (Cambridge University Press) by Adam Shear. ***Greece: A Jewish History*** (Princeton University Press) by K.E. Fleming is the winner in the Sephardic Culture category. And rounding out the feminist flavor of this year's winning works, ***A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book***, edited by **Aliza Lavie** (Spiegel & Grau) takes this year's Barbara Dobkin Award in Women's Studies.

The winners of the 2008 National Jewish Book Awards will be honored on March 5th, 2009 at a gala award ceremony to be held at the Center for Jewish History in Manhattan, located at 15 West 16th Street. The awards ceremony, which begins at 7:30 p.m., is free and open to the public.

Please RSVP to Shira Dicker at shira.dicker@sd-media.com or 917.403.3989 so we know you are coming and reserve a seat and press kit for you.

This year, the masters of ceremony for the event are **Ari L. Goldman and Alana Newhouse**. Mr. Goldman, an author and former *New York Times* writer, is a professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Ms. Newhouse, an author and former *Forward* editor, is the Editor-in-Chief of Nextbook.org.

A complete list of winners of the 2008 National Jewish Book Awards follows.

2008 National Jewish Book Award Winners

Everett Family Foundation

Jewish Book of the Year Award

The Torah: A Women's Commentary

Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss

URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism

American Jewish Studies

Celebrate 350 Award

Winner:

Exiles on Main Street: Jewish American Writers and American Literary Culture
Julian Levinson
Indiana University Press

Finalists:

The First to Cry Down Injustice?: Western Jews and Japanese Removal During WWII
Ellen M. Eisenberg
Lexington Books

From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books
Arie Kaplan
Jewish Publication Society

Biography, Autobiography, and Memoir

In Memory of Simon & Shulamith (Sofi) Goldberg

Winner:

Marie Syrkin: Values Beyond the Self
Carole S. Kessner
Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England

Finalists:

The Journal of Hélène Berr
Helene Berr
Weinstein Books

Benjamin Disraeli
Adam Kirsch
Schocken Books/Nextbook

Children's and Young Adult Literature

Winner:

The Diary of Laura's Twin
Kathy Kacer
Second Story Press

Finalists:

Checkpoints
Marilyn Levy
Jewish Publication Society

Memories of Babi
Aranka Siegal
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Torah and Commentary: The Five Books of Moses: Translation, Rabbinic and Contemporary Commentary
Sol Scharfstein
KTAV Publishing House

Contemporary Jewish Life and Practice

Winner:

Conscience: The Duty to Obey and the Duty to Disobey
Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis
Jewish Lights Publishing

Finalists:

Inspired Jewish Leadership: Practical Approaches to Building Strong Communities
Dr. Erica Brown
Jewish Lights Publishing

The Book of New Israeli Food: A Culinary Journey
Janna Gur
Schocken Books

Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe
Lisa Alcalay Klug
Andrews McMeel Publishing

Education and Jewish Identity

Winner:

What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice

Roberta Louis Goodman, Paul A. Flexner, Linda Dale Bloomberg, eds.
Torah Aura Productions

Finalists:

Family Matters: Jewish Education in an Age of Choice

Jack Wertheimer, ed.
Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England

Back to School : Jewish Day School in the Lives of Adult Jews

Alex Pomson and Randal F. Schnoor
Wayne State University Press

Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity

Leonard Saxe and Barry Chazan
Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England

Fiction

Winner:

Songs for the Butcher's Daughter: A Novel

Peter Manseau
Free Press

Finalists:

Light Fell

Evan Fallenberg
Soho Press

Memory: A Novel

Philippe Grimbert
Simon & Schuster

People of the Book: A Novel

Geraldine Brooks
Viking Adult

History

Gerrard and Ella Berman Memorial Award

Winner:

1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War
Benny Morris
Yale University Press

Finalists:

The Lost Spy: An American in Stalin's Secret Service
Andrew Meier
W. W. Norton

Holocaust

Winner:

The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews

Father Patrick Desbois
Palgrave Macmillan

Finalists:

Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosua, 1940-1945
Marion A. Kaplan
Museum of Jewish Heritage

Ghettostadt: Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City
Gordon J. Horwitz
Harvard University Press

Illustrated Children's Books

Winner:

The Mysterious Guests: A Sukkot Story
Eric A. Kimmel; Katya Krenina, illus.
Holiday House

Finalists:

As Good as Anybody: Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom
Richard Michelson; Raul Colon; illus.
Knopf Books for Young Readers

Hanukkah Haiku

Harriet Ziefert; Karla Gudeon, illus.
Blue Apple Books

Jewish Family Literature

In Memory of Dorothy Kripke

Winner:

Genesis-the Book with Seventy Faces: A guide for the Family
Esther Takac
Pitspopany Press

Finalists:

A Time to Every Purpose: Letters to a Young Jew
Jonathan D. Sarna
Basic Books

Modern Jewish Thought & Experience

Dorot Foundation Award In memory of Joy Ungerleider Mayerson

Winner:

Emil L. Fackenheim: A Jewish Philosopher's Response to the Holocaust
David Patterson
Syracuse University Press

Finalists:

Rabbi and the CEO: The Ten Commandments for 21st Century Leaders
Thomas D. Zweifel and Aaron L. Raskin
Select Books

My People's Passover Haggadah: Traditional Texts, Modern Commentaries
Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman and David Arnow, eds.
Jewish Lights Publishing

The Beast That Crouches at the Door: Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, and Beyond
Rabbi David Fohrman
Devora Publishing

Scholarship

Nahum M. Sarna Memorial Award

Winner:

The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900
Adam Shear
Cambridge University Press

Finalists:

Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought
Joshua A. Berman
Oxford University Press

Sephardic Culture

Mimi S. Frank Award in Memory of Becky Levy

Winner:

Greece: A Jewish History
K.E. Fleming
Princeton University Press

Finalists:

Iraq's Last Jews: Stories of Daily Life, Upheaval, and Escape from Modern Babylon
Tamar Morad, Dennis Shasha, Robert Shasha, eds.
Palgrave Macmillan

Memories of Eden: A Journey Through Jewish Baghdad
Violette Shamash; Mira and Tony Rocca, eds.
Forum Books

Women's Studies

Barbara Dobkin Award

Winner:

A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book
Aliza Lavie, ed.
Spiegel & Grau

Finalists:

New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future
Rabbi Elyse Goldstein
Jewish Lights Publishing

Writing Based on Archival Material

The JDC-Herbert Katzki Award

Winner:

Robbing the Jews: The Confiscation of Jewish Property in the Holocaust, 1933-1945

Martin Dean

Cambridge University Press

About the Jewish Book Council

Since 1943, the Jewish Book Council has been the only organization in the American Jewish community exclusively devoted to promoting Jewish literature. An autonomous agency since 1994, the Council, which maintains a national Executive Board of Directors, currently headed by president Lawrence J. Krule, serves as a catalyst for the writing, publication, distribution, reading and public awareness of books reflecting the rich variety of Jewish experience. The publisher of *Jewish Book World*, the Jewish counterpart of *Publishers Weekly*, the Council is also responsible for coordinating the nation-wide celebration of Jewish Book Month, traditionally held in the thirty days preceding Hanukkah, and for maintaining the Jewish Book NETWORK.

For further information on the 58th Annual National Jewish Book Awards, on the winners of this year's awards, or on the Jewish Book Council, please contact Shira Dicker at 212.663.4643, 917.403.3989 or at shira.dicker@sd-media.com or visit www.jewishbookcouncil.org.