



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

February 2019

The committee of the Reverend Katz Library invite you to come in to our wonderful library to make a selection for some stimulating reading during 2019.

We hope that you enjoy this month's selection of books.

Ariel Burger, *Witness lessons from Elie Wiesel's classroom.* BIO WIE

WINNER OF THE NATIONAL JEWISH BOOK AWARD—BIOGRAPHY

Elie Wiesel was a towering presence on the world stage—a Nobel laureate, activist, adviser to world leaders, and the author of more than forty books, including the Oprah's Book Club selection *Night*. But when asked, Wiesel always said, "I am a teacher first."

In fact, he taught at Boston University for nearly four decades, and with this book, Ariel Burger—devoted protégé, apprentice, and friend—takes us into the sacred space of Wiesel's classroom. There, Wiesel challenged his students to explore moral complexity and to resist the dangerous lure of absolutes. In bringing together never-before-recounted moments between Wiesel and his students, *Witness* serves as a moral education in and of itself—a primer on educating against indifference, on the urgency of memory and individual responsibility, and on the role of literature, music, and art in making the world a more compassionate place.

Burger first met Wiesel at age fifteen; he became his student in his twenties, and his teaching assistant in his thirties. In this profoundly thought-provoking and inspiring book, Burger gives us a front-row seat to Wiesel's remarkable exchanges in and out of the classroom, and chronicles the intimate conversations between these two men over the decades as Burger sought counsel on matters of intellect, spirituality, and faith, while navigating his own personal journey from boyhood to manhood, from student and assistant, to rabbi and, in time, teacher.

"Listening to a witness makes you a witness," said Wiesel. Ariel Burger's book is an invitation to every reader to become Wiesel's student, and witness.

Deborah Lipstadt, *Antisemitism: here and now.* HIS LIP

'Deborah Lipstadt is that rare person, able to play a leading part in events and to fathom their meaning. Having triumphed in a court-case brought by an anti-Semite, she now explains anti-Semitism to us, and thus performs a double service. This is a valuable book, containing many lessons.'

ANTHONY JULIUS, DEPUTY CHAIR OF MISHCON DE REYA, AND AUTHOR OF TRIALS OF THE DIASPORA

A timely analysis of the new antisemitism, by the historian who defeated Holocaust denier David Irving in court.

What is antisemitism? Does it come from the right or the left? Is anti-Zionism the same as antisemitism? Are there different kinds of antisemites? And what can be done to combat this extremely damaging racist ideology?

Antisemitism has been on the rise worldwide for the last ten years. From violent white-nationalist protests in Charlottesville, USA, to attacks on synagogues across Europe and the US, and from the targeting of Jewish students at American universities to the antisemitism row raging in the British Labour Party, does this resurgence of anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence mark a return to the brutality of the 1930s?

In this penetrating and provocative analysis, Deborah Lipstadt connects distinct currents in contemporary culture, such as the resurgence of racist right-wing nationalisms, left-liberal tolerance of hostility to Jews, the plight of the Palestinians, and the rise of Islamic extremism, to explore how contradictory forces have found common scapegoats.

Lucid and convincing, *Antisemitism* will calm the fearful, rouse the complacent, and demand a response from readers.

Eugene Tannenbaum, The great war letters of German and Austrian Jews 1914 HIS TAN

In the mud and bloody filth of the trenches, and in the bullet-saturated air above the Eastern and Western fronts, Jewish soldiers and airmen went to fight for their country. They did so pushing against a wave of discrimination from the country they were born into, and whose cause they were absolutely convinced was just. Neither did they doubt that Germany would triumph and lead Europe and the Jews into a better world. 120,000 of them would die on the front lines for their country.

Available in English for the first time, we read the heart-warming, moving and intensely personal letters that the young soldiers wrote home from the battlefield. The uniquely Jewish viewpoint they express, and the strong traditional elements in their religion, bring the conflict between the inhumane war, and religious belief into sharp contrast. The young men's attempts to adhere to their faith and rituals during the violent horror of trench warfare are touching, and often tinged with self-deprecating humour. The immense pain, the keenly-felt loss of comrades and a yearning for home and loved ones shine through the soldiers' words. One great leitmotiv runs through the letters: the hope for equality. The war letters are a unique insight into life, battle and death on the enemy front lines, and the extraordinary Jewish experience in particular.

Dov Alfon, A long night in Paris. F ALF

From a former Israeli intelligence officer, comes the most realistic, thrilling and authentic thriller of the year.

When an Israeli tech entrepreneur disappears from Charles de Gaulle airport with a woman in red, logic dictates youthful indiscretion. But Israel is on a state of high alert nonetheless. Colonel Zeev Abadi, the new head of Unit 8200's autonomous Special Section, who just happens to be in Paris, also just happens to have arrived on the same flight.

For Commissaire Léger of the Paris Police coincidences have their reasons, and most are suspect. When a second young Israeli is kidnapped soon after arriving on the same flight, this time at gunpoint from his hotel room, his suspicions are confirmed – and a diplomatic incident looms.

Back in Tel Aviv, Lieutenant Oriana Talmor, Abadi's deputy, is his only ally, applying her sharp wits to the race to identify the victims and the reasons behind their abduction. In Paris a covert Chinese commando team listens to the investigation unfurl and watches from the rooftops. While by the hour the morgue receives more bodies from the river and the city's arrondissements.

The clock has been set. And this could be a long night in the City of Lights.

