

## Decisions, decisions, decisions. June 2021

- Check any books that interest you.
- Give each a score of 1, 2, or 3, (3 being strongest.)
- If a selection does NOT appeal to you at all, mark it with X

	Author	Title	Suggested by:	Yes/Score
Judy	Batalion	The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos	Moshe	
Saul	Bellow	The Victim (A novella)	Tamar suggested Bellow.	
Tracy	Chevalier	The Single Thread	Chaim	
Jeffrey	Eugenides	Middlesex	Shelly	
Judy	Foley	The Guest List	Chaim	
Alice	Hoffman	The Dove Keepers	Nomi	
Rubie	Namdar	The Ruined House	Chaim	
Emmanuel	Navon	The Star & the Scepter	Nomi	
Michael	Oren	The Night Archer and Other Stories	Moshe	
Delia	Owens	Where the Crawdads Sing	(Past list)	
R. Jonathan	Sacks	Morality	Arlene, Shelly	
Lisa	See	The Island of Sea Women	Chaim	
A.B.	Yehoshua	The Tunnel	Ruth, Shelly	
Carlos Ruiz	Zafon	The Shadow of the Wind	Tamar	

**Batalion: THE LIGHT OF DAYS: THE UNTOLD STORY OF WOMEN RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN HITLER'S GHETTOS** - The author, raised among Holocaust survivors and immersed in their stories, wondered why she hadn't heard about these women heroes before.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/06/books/review/light-of-days-judy-batalion.html>

**Bellow: THE VICTIM** - As in many Bellow stories, Asa Leventhal is a young, introspective, Jewish man struggling for security in a gentile world. He is self-doubting, but well-meaning person. So, when Leventhal meets up with a past acquaintance who accuses him of ruining his life, Asa is thrown into doubt and confusion.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/saul-bellow/victim-2/>

**Chevalier: THE SINGLE THREAD** - Historical fiction: women in post WWI England cope with loss and explore their new-found independence; they find sustenance in a cooperative of artisans.

"Chevalier masterfully portrays the bleak lives of the "surplus women" left to carry on after a generation of young men—their potential husbands—were killed in World War I. Telling the tale of the Lost Generation from a woman's perspective..."

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/oct/04/a-single-thread-by-tracy-chevalier-review-womens-struggle-for-freedom>

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/tracy-chevalier/a-single-thread/>

**Eugenides: MIDDLESEX** - A *Coming-of-Age* story, combined with historical references and scientific implications. The adolescent protagonist, Callie, suspects that she is not like other girls....and in fact she is not. The explanation "takes us out of suburbia- back before the Detroit race riots of 1967, before the rise of the Motor City and Prohibition, to 1922, when the Turks sacked Smyrna and Callie's grandparents fled for their lives." *Middlesex* brought Eugenides the Pulitzer Prize. Please read more:

<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/jeffrey-eugenides>

**Foley: GUEST LIST** - Several weeks on Best Hardcover Fiction NYT. "Is it really a good idea to have a wedding on a possibly haunted island full of ancient bodies buried in the peat, especially with a major storm brewing?" In *The Guest List*, Foley shows readers what can go wrong when worlds collide in a distant and hard-to-escape place." <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/13/books/review/the-guest-list-lucy-foley.html> and

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/books/summer-reading.html>

Hoffman: **THE DOVEKEEPERS** - Women who escape to Masada tell their stories: Biblical history, politics, nature (and the supernatural), family issues, and love. Please read further:

Kirkus Review likes it.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/alice-hoffman/dovekeepers/>

The New York Times not so much. (But neither are they fans of Josephus' history.)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/books/review/the-dovekeepers-by-alice-hoffman-book-review.html>

Namdar: **THE RUINED HOUSE** - Portrait of a slick Mr. Cohen in present-day Manhattan with undertones of Temple Days. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/books/review/ruby-namdar-ruined-house.html>

Navon: **THE STAR & THE SCEPTER** - Navon explores Israel's foreign policy over millennium - from early Hebrew civilization to the modern Zionist movement. For more:

<https://fathomjournal.org/book-review-the-star-and-the-scepter-a-diplomatic-history-of-israel/>

Oren: **THE NIGHT ARCHER AND OTHER STORIES** - "A medieval slave-turned-sultan, an alien who declines to visit Earth, a prophet who dares to ask 'Is God funny?' and a ghost who fears the living- among the terrifying, tragic, passionate, and comic characters who animate Oren's stories. Crisscrossing genres, they explore the outer bounds of imagination and artistic freedom." See more:

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/culture/michael-orens-night-archer-hits-the-bulls-eye-640964> (Not broadly reviewed.)

Owens: **WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING**

Mega-successful first novel written by a scientist who is accustomed to going solo in the wild. Young girl survives the abandonment of her family. We observe her "from "six to 25 as she grows up alone in a shack in the swamplands of North Carolina," Her isolation is not permanent and the novel continues beyond it. More:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/21/books/where-the-crawdads-sing-delia-owens.html>

Sacks: **MORALITY: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times.**

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/a-rabbis-final-call-for-a-commitment-to-the-common-good/2020/11/25/127943fe-2d95-11eb-bae0-50bb17126614\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/a-rabbis-final-call-for-a-commitment-to-the-common-good/2020/11/25/127943fe-2d95-11eb-bae0-50bb17126614_story.html)

See: **THE ISLAND OF SEA WOMEN** - "Set on a Korean island (the novel) draws on the centuries-long history of the *haenyeo*, female divers who have effectively created a matrifocal society" - they are the breadwinners, while their husbands attend to domestic duties." Describes period (three years after Japan surrendered occupation of Korea), in which a communist insurgency was brutally suppressed by S. Korea while the U.S. looked on. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/05/books/review/island-of-sea-women-lisa-see.html>

Yehoshua: **THE TUNNEL** A retired engineer, the former director of the Israel Roads Authority and his wife of 48 years "cope with the initial news that from now on, everything is going to be different. Zvi has a small atrophy on his frontal lobe, a harbinger of dementia." Please check it out:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/books/review/tunnel-ab-yehoshua.html>

Zafon: **A. THE SHADOW OF THE WIND** - A ten-year-old boy named Daniel, whose mother has died some years earlier, is taken by his father to the "Cemetery of Books" to select a volume. The expectation is that readers who retrieve books will extend the books' influence and that the readers will be influenced in turn.

Reviews paint this novel as a combo: literary thriller, historical fiction, and coming of age story. Check it out:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/jun/06/fiction.features>

Second review: <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/25/books/in-the-cemetery-of-forgotten-books.html>

Dear Readers -

Attached is a list of 14 books - with short blurbs and links to book reviews. The list includes recent suggestions from: Ruth, Moshe, Tamar and Nomi - and from the selection Committee - Chaim, Cheryl and me. We included some new titles and a couple from past lists. You'll note a murder thriller, Biblical historical fiction, contemporary fiction, Jewish philosophy, Israeli politics, an American classic - Israeli authors and English-language authors. Something for everyone, we hope.

**We are looking for more volunteers for the next go-around!**

We ask that you *please* review this list and read a little about the titles. Then please EMAIL your preferences to me. When you review the list, PLEASE:

- Check any book that interests you.
- Give each a score of 1 to 3 (3 being strongest)
- If a selection does NOT appeal to you at all, mark it with an X.

This will help us decide what we'll be reading for the next few months. (Although, new suggestions for outstanding, favorite reads are always welcome.)

A NOTE ABOUT AVAILABILITY

After some research, we learned:

All the books on the list are available at Book Depository and Amazon.

Only three are available locally:

*Where the Crowds Sing* and *The Tunnel* (Adraba); *Morality* (Steimatsky)

I'd like to suggest the following:

1. Let's choose one of the above for our August meeting.
2. Let's test the waters and try ordering some future selections online.

THANKS ALL! HOPE TO HEAR FROM YOU SOON.

**Next meeting: Sunday, July 11 at 4:30 pm in Ruth's garden, 12 Yisrael Eldad.**