NEW BOOKS FROM ISRAEL
Spring 2014

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Eshkol Nevo was born in Jerusalem in 1971. He studied copywriting at the Tirza Granot School and psychology at Tel Aviv University. Today, Nevo owns and co-manages the largest private creative writing school in Israel and is considered the mentor of many upcoming young Israeli writers. His previous novels have all been top bestsellers in Israel. Nevo has received the Book Publishers Association’s Gold and Platinum Prizes (2005; 2008; 2011), the FFI-Raymond Wallier Prize (Paris, 2008), the ADEI-WIZO Prize (Italy, 2011). Homesick was a finalist for the prestigious Independent Foreign Fiction Prize (UK, 2009), and World Cup Wishes was a finalist for the Kritikerpreis der Jury der Jungen Kritiker (Austria, 2011).

Nevo’s books have been translated to English (Chatto & Windus; Dalkey Archive), French (Gallimard), Italian (Mondadori; Neri Pozza), German (dtv), Polish (Muza), Turkish (Can), Spanish (Duomo; Oceano, Mexico), and Arabic (Kul-Shee). They have been bestsellers in several of these countries.

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OVER 30,000 COPIES SOLD!!

The Lost Solos

a novel
Tel Aviv, Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, 2013. 239 pp.

The Lost Solos, filled with passion and enchantment, weaves together a number of love stories culminating in one outrageous moment. It takes place in an imaginary town in northern Israel called the City of the Righteous, and takes a sly look at the ludicrous, infuriating and touching aspects of real life in Israel, while at the same time it tells a universal tale of loneliness and the need to be understood.

Moshe Ben-Tzuk sees himself as reborn. Raised on a kibbutz, he later served as an officer on a secret army base, but was never at peace. Now, after a deep inner crisis, he is ultra-Orthodox, married with children, living in the City of the Righteous, and serving as a personal aide to the mayor. On the surface, he has found his place in the world. But why does the memory of his youthful love, Ayelet, continually disrupt his peace of mind? A job for the mayor leads to a meeting with Ayelet, seven years after they parted. Will Ben-Tzuk give up his wife and family and choose his love?

Someone who does choose love without hesitating is Na’im, a young Arab building contractor and bird lover. Ben-Tzuk hires him to build a ritual bath house in an area with many immigrants from Russia. But everything goes wrong. Na’im is suspected of spying and is arrested; he manages—by a trick—to get released, and meets the girl of his dreams. Meanwhile, the neighborhood residents turn the bath house (intended for ritual cleansing) into a red-hot trysting place for lovers.

With remarkable narrative charm and his rare talent for bringing us close to his characters, Eshkol Nevo unfolds a story that reads like a contemporary fairy tale.

Foreign rights sold: German (dtv); Italian (Neri Pozza)

A real bonbon! Eshkol Nevo’s writing is as unrestrained and free-flowing as ever.  
Makor Rishon  
I liked the book a lot. I laughed and also wiped a tear, and I even dreamed about it.  
IDF Radio  
Israeliness presented at its best... A magnificent patchwork quilt.  
Mako  
Once again, Nevo chisels into the human soul until he bares it completely.  
Walla
Ayelet Gundar-Goshen was born in Israel in 1982. She holds a BA and MA in psychology from Tel Aviv University. She later studied film and screenwriting at the Sam Spiegel Film School in Jerusalem. Gundar-Goshen has written a number of screenplays, and has produced short films which have participated in film festivals in Israel and abroad. She has also written and co-written a number of TV series. Gundar-Goshen was awarded 2nd prize at the IEMed European short story competition (Barcelona, 2010), the Gottlieb Screenplay Prize (2010), the Berlin Today Award for her short film Batman at the Checkpoint (Berlin, 2012), and the Sapir Prize for Debut Fiction for One Night, Markovitch (2012).

One Night, Markovitch has been published in German (Kein & Aber); forthcoming in English (Pushkin) and Italian (Giuntina).

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Ayelet Gundar-Goshen

Waking Lions

a novel

After an exhausting night shift, Dr. Eytan Green leaves the Beersheba hospital where he works, gets into his luxurious SUV and speeds down a deserted Negev road. When he hits someone, he is horrified to discover that the injured man, an Eritrean migrant, has no chance of surviving, and he flees the scene. He goes home to his wife Liat, a high-ranking police investigator, and their two sons, to carry on with his life as if nothing had happened. But his life turns upside down when, in the morning, a young black woman knocks at the door of his home. She is the dead man’s widow and Eytan realizes that she knows what has happened. At first, he thinks that she wants money but in fact she demands something quite different. In a deserted garage deep in the desert, she forces him to give free medical assistance to sick and wounded people who have infiltrated into Israel from Africa and cannot afford to go to a doctor or a hospital. Eytan’s fate is now in the hands of this beautiful, strong woman who both attracts and repels him.

Interlaced with extortion and power struggles, this is a suspenseful social and moral drama; a story of intimacy at the heart of alienation, and of erotic attraction between opposites. But it is also the story of a single choice at a particular moment that leads a man to open his eyes and to ask, “Who am I, actually?” Ayelet Gundar-Goshen takes an unrelenting look at the darkest corners of Israeli society and of the human soul. The reader, whoever he or she may be, will ask, “What would I do in this situation?”

Foreign rights sold: English (Pushkin)

Captivating, complex characters...very stirring.
Kol Israel 1

An ultra-topical social novel... suspenseful, stormy and magnificently constructed.
Maariv

A terrific book.
IDF Radio

Enthralling and intriguing.
Saloona
Haim Be’er

Their New Dreams

a novel

Alma Weber, a 40 something divorcee and the author of a bestselling novel, returns to Tel Aviv after a brief writing holiday, only to discover that her lover, Gideon Sorek, a senior Mossad official, has disappeared in England. This is the beginning of Be’er’s dizzying, erudite book which combines a love story with the search for an elusive, secret-shrouded mother in Germany, and the powerful desire to write a novel.

Alma makes a living from a lab that converts old cassettes into digital discs. Gideon, a customer, has brought her old tapes found among his late mother’s belongings. The two become friends and then lovers, and Gideon asks Alma to help him realize his dream: to write a historical novel about the anxious time in Palestine when people feared an invasion by the German army under Rommel. Alma persuades Gideon to switch subjects and to write instead about his mother, Lotte Struk, who was born in Leipzig, left for Palestine in 1934 and enlisted in British intelligence. Gideon wonders whether his mother ever interrogated German prisoners in Egypt, but his friends in British Intelligence refuse to open Lotte’s still-classified file.

Together, Gideon and Alma visit Leipzig, but although they uncover family secrets as well as the story of Leipzig’s Jews, Gideon has writer’s block. So he flies to England, holes up in a remote village in East Hampshire and at last is able to write. Then he can come back to life—and Alma is waiting for him.

Be’er’s novels have been published in English (Brandeis Univ. Press), German (dtv; Berlin Verlag), Italian (Giuntina), Dutch (Vasallucci) and Chinese (Shanghai Translation).

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Nathan Shaham

Dormant Account

a novel

Menashe Shahar, divorced and living in Tel Aviv, owns a publishing house with a glorious past and a shaky present. He decides to publish a book in memory of his grandfather, Aharon Zvi Morgenstern, an enigmatic, complex man who founded a Hebrew-language publishing house in Warsaw in the early 20th century. The plot moves between the grandfather's story and that of his grandson, who inherited the firm. Morgenstern, a man of vision as well as a legendary businessman, fostered Hebrew writers as well as publishing the best European literature in Hebrew translation. An admirer of German culture, he later moved his publishing house to Germany, which he saw as the most enlightened country in Europe. Morgenstern's life ended in a death camp in Poland. Years after, his grandson discovers that he had money in an unclaimed Swiss bank account.

Like in a detective story, Menashe traces his grandfather's personality and his fortunes. But the novel also aims higher, tackling the complex relations between Israelis and Germans today: Menashe cooperates with a German publisher who wants to publish a bilingual series about Jewish intellectuals in German culture. During this project, Menashe also experiences new romance: a mysterious woman comes to his home, claiming to be a member of the Morgenstern family, and the two have a brief affair until the German publisher's sexy daughter makes her appearance.

Dormant Account, a book permeated with a love of Hebrew literature, examines the tragic love of educated German Jews for the nation that rejected and wanted to erase them.

Lucid and thought-provoking... The future of Jews and Germans shines through in all its intellectual intensity. 

Haaretz

A fascinating book...up-to-date and fresh...Shaham is elegiac and cynical, clear-cut and tortuous, yet everything combines harmoniously.

Ynet

Brings the Europe that ceased to exist in 1939 back to life [with] impressive dramatic power.

SofHashavua
Agur Schiff was born in Tel Aviv in 1955. He is a graduate of St. Martin’s School of Art in London and of the Rijks Art Academy in Amsterdam. Before turning to writing, he won critical acclaim as a filmmaker: he received the Silver Dragon Award at the Cracow Film Festival, and, for his film Gentila, a prize at the Haifa Film Festival (1997). Schiff started publishing fiction in the early 1990s and has published two collections of stories and four novels. He is a senior lecturer at the Bezalel Academy of Art & Design in Jerusalem where he teaches creative writing, screenwriting and cinematic concepts. Schiff has been awarded the Prime Minister's Prize (2010).

**The Latecomers**

*a novel*

Tel Aviv, Am Oved, 2013. 369 pp.

It is summer 2006, and the Second Lebanon War is underway. Liora Kerem, a retired teacher who lives by herself, attempts to assassinate the Israeli army’s Chief of Staff, but fails. She is confined to a mental institution where Dr. Yirmi Bloch, a police psychiatrist, has a series of sessions with her to try and fathom the reasons for her extreme act. Did she really mean to kill the Chief of Staff, or merely to attract attention? Was she driven by ideology or were her reasons personal?

Some 40 years earlier, during the Six Day War, Liora’s husband Miki was shot in the head. After being in a coma for several weeks, he regained consciousness, but was no longer the man that Liora had married. His body had healed but instead of the confident, life-loving, womanizing kibbutznik, the man who returned to her was a cringing weakling without sex drive, who admitted that he had lost his masculinity. Was Liora seeking revenge through the man who symbolized the army that had ruined her life? In tracing her motives, the novel examines, through a woman’s eyes, the masculine virtues that are glorified in Israeli society, the heroism and the militarism which casts its shadow over the country.

The plot shifts between two eras, two wars, and contrasts Israel drunk on victory in 1967 with the country humiliated in 2006, which woke up too late from its euphoria.

Schiff tackles an important subject… [with] intriguing and sympathetic characters... An interesting writer.

**Haaretz**

Clever, funny, sad… presents complex situations in a fresh way… Schiff’s novel is attractive and challenging… at times brilliant.

**Maariv**

Likely to challenge people on both sides of the political barricade.

**Sefshavua**
Sarit Yishai-Levi

The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem

a novel
Tel Aviv, Modan, 2013. 448 pp.

This Israeli bestseller is a multi-generational saga of Jerusalem extending from the early 20th century when the Turks ruled Palestine, through the years of the British Mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel, to the early 1970s. It is the story of the Ermoza family, respected Sephardic Jews who own a delicatessen in the Jerusalem market. The narrator is Gabriela, the wild, rebellious daughter of Luna, known as “The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem.” Gabriela gradually reveals the family secrets and lies, but mainly the inner strengths that family members have to summon in order to overcome the ups and downs of life along the way.

A curse seems to hang over the Ermoza family, for the men know great love but have to give it up and marry women they do not love. Rafael, Gabriela’s great-grandfather, fell in love with a mysterious, blue-eyed Ashkenazi girl—shameful!—but was prevailed on to marry frigid Merkeda who did not attract him at all. His handsome, clever son Gabriel is forced to marry Rosa, an ugly and illiterate orphan, and Rosa’s daughter Luna, courted by all the young men in Jerusalem, picks David who cannot forget his love for a girl that he met in Italy during World War II.

A colorful, rich and enjoyable novel in which Jerusalem and its historic events during the last century play a leading role.

Sarit Yishai-Levi, a journalist and author, was born in Jerusalem in 1947 to a Sephardic family that has lived in the city for seven generations. She studied at the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio and later at Tel Aviv University. Before turning to journalism, Yishai-Levi acted in theater and film for several years. Later, she was a correspondent for various Israeli newspapers and magazines, including At, Monitir, HaOlam HaZeh and Hadashot, as well as hosting Hebrew TV and radio programs in Los Angeles. At present, she is a senior correspondent for Olam Ha’Isha magazine and hosts TV shows on tourism and lifestyle. Yishai-Levi has published four non-fiction books. The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem, a bestseller in Israel, is her first novel.

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Beautiful, sweeping...an enchanting, moving book...
The characters stayed with me, as if they were still living in Jerusalem.
Haaretz

The surprise of the year, if not the decade... Everything is so alive...What marvelous writing...what insight and passion!
Marmelada

This is the Sephardi version of Amos Oz’s A Tale of Love and Darkness...Superb.
Nana 10

A gripping plot full of secrets, lies, loves and disappointments...A pleasure.
La’Isha
Gabriel Bensimhon was born in Sefrou, Morocco, in 1938, and came to Israel with his family at age 10. An author and filmmaker, he studied literature and Biblical studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and later at the Sorbonne, where he received a PhD in theater and film studies. Bensimhon taught at Tel Aviv University until 2006, in the departments of film / TV and theater arts. He has also been a visiting professor at UCLA, USC, NYU and Cornell University. He is now Professor Emeritus. Bensimhon has published plays, screenplays, poetry, short stories, novels and a book on the Fellini’s cinema. His play, A Moroccan King, produced by Israel’s Habima National Theater, won the Lieber Award for Classic Jewish Drama (1978) and has been translated to English and French.

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A Girl in a Blue Shirt

a novel
Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2013. 330 pp.

A Girl in a Blue Shirt is a remarkable love story that takes place in the 1950s, the first decade of the State of Israel. Yonatan Marciano, a young immigrant from Morocco, is in love with the beautiful Israeli-born Nurit Stav, who looks strikingly like al-Kahina, an ancient Jewish Berber queen. Nurit, however, is in love with Bolush, a Holocaust survivor from Poland. In order to win her, Yonatan turns to his Uncle Amram, who was a famous exorcist in Morocco. He also uses his own skill as a storyteller, like Scheherazade—telling exotic tales of Morocco, whose colors and smells are unknown to her.

The novel is written as a diary that Yonatan keeps from the age of 14 until after his army service, at age 21. In it, he writes of his longing for his beloved whose father owns a movie theater in Haifa, and about the consolation he finds in watching movies. For in those days, it was clear who the heroes were and who the villains, who would draw his weapon quicker, and who would win the beautiful heroine at the end. Of course, Yonatan wants to draw first and to be a hero like Gary Cooper, but the only weapons he has are his imagination and words.

Later on, when he is called “a poet” at school, his father buys him a typewriter and sits him down to write the family story, in order to perpetuate the memory of a world that was once full of life and is now fading away.

A collage of rich and colorful characters...This book should be read slowly, every detail dwelt on, and the power of each character wondered at.

Maariv NRG

A very moving Israeli tale...told with great charm and superb literary ability...A charming love story between a boy and a girl, that will intrigue and fascinate.

Nana10

The magical realism that weaves reality with imagination makes me want to find Bensimhon and hug him for this beautiful book.

Mako
Ori Rom

English Summer

a novel

In this short, compact novel, Ori Rom powerfully evokes the scenes, colors and odors of the rural Land of Israel under the British Mandate, between World War I and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Against the backdrop of established colonies in the Galilee and around Lake Kinneret, he weaves a powerful and intricate family drama that has an almost Faulknerian quality. At the center of the drama are a tough but tormented farmer; his beautiful, tender-hearted artist wife who feels alien to the local landscape and culture, and their two sons. Their eldest, Shimshon, is sensitive and soft and much loved by his mother; the younger brother, Otniel, is unloved and eventually becomes an abusive husband, cut off from his family and living in Alexandria, Egypt. Echoing the legendary drama, Otniel is like Cain and Shimshon like Abel, but it is Abel who takes the role of the killer.

The disaster takes place one summer, when two British police officers turn up at the family home and flirt with the mother, enabling her to escape from her unsatisfying, provincial life for a little while. Shimshon, then a young boy, sees this and is jealous. Later on, the bullet-riddled bodies of the two Englishmen are found and an investigation begins. Although the identity of the murderer is never discovered, the father decides to send Shimshon far away. Years later, during the shiv’at week of mourning after the mother’s death, Shimshon returns to the family home for a fraught reunion with his aged father, his unfriendly brother and the girl he loved in his childhood, now married to Otniel.

Brilliant, innovative and stirring...Rom’s language fuses the prosaic and the poetic, the violent and the refined, the local and the universal.

Haaretz

An original book...Uri Rom doesn't invent a language, but rather begets it in pain...His images are absolutely unique.

Yedioth Ahronoth

Simply enthralling. Full of poetry and color and feeling and thought and passion and love.

Kol Israel 1
Avirama Golan was born in Israel in 1950. She studied literature at Tel Aviv University and French literature in Paris, working as both correspondent and then editor for the daily Davar. In 1991, she moved to Haaretz, where she became senior correspondent on social and cultural affairs and a member of the editorial board. Golan also hosts a weekly literary magazine on Channel 2 TV. In 2012 she became director of the Center for Urbanism and Mediterranean Culture in Bat Yam. Golan has published novels, non-fiction and children’s books. She has also translated many children’s classics and written screenplays for children’s TV. Her first two novels were bestsellers in Israel. Golan’s books have been translated to French (Galaade), German (Suhrkamp) and Italian (Giuntina).

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Avirama Golan

A Strange Woman

a novel

What links Mali, a prominent Tel Aviv attorney, to Slava, the illegal Ukranian worker who cleans her house? On the surface, nothing. But Avirama Golan’s novel reveals surprising similarities between the two women, as well as the subtle empathy and admiration that grows between them. The drama that connects their two worlds plays out during a murder trial at the Tel Aviv District Court. Mali, divorced with two grown children, is having a futureless affair with Yoav, the married judge of the murder trial which she is prosecuting, and the two are careful to keep their relationship secret. Slava too has her secrets: she is pretending to be a legal Jewish immigrant; she has a small daughter in the Ukraine, whom she hasn’t seen for six years, and she supports her whole family there. But Mali doesn’t know all this. Slava is torn between her love for her daughter and her dream of going to university, which could come true in Israel. Mali, on the other hand, can’t heal the breaks in her own life: her son has left Israel to live in Holland, and her estranged daughter is leaving to study in Berlin. Her loneliness, and the hopelessness of her relationship with Yoav, lead her to reflect on the choices she has made in her life, her career, and her relations with her mother, a strong, optimistic woman originally from Tunis, who has always been there for her.

Slava, Mali, Mali’s mother, and even Rivka, accused of murdering her husband, all turn out to be fascinating women whose stories shed light on one other.

A wonderful book! The encounter between Russian and Hebrew sets off fireworks. Simply superb.

Channel 1 TV

Contains deep insights, intriguing characters, treachery, a tempestuous trial, the pain of parting...These seethe slowly as the plot is cleverly built up [until] everything comes to the boil in a series of excellent scenes.

Maariv NRG

We are dying to know what’s going to happen...The characters are vivid and real in a thick and juicy story.

Yedioth Ahronoth
Yoram Kaniuk

Angels

an essay
Tel Aviv, Yedioth Ahronoth, 2014. 120 pp.

This is Kaniuk’s last book, completed not long before he died in 2013. Angels had always interested him, he said, as had devils, and he worked on the book for ten years.

Angels is an associative, ironic essay that includes philosophical reflections, incidental details drawn from the scriptures, and references to literature and art as well as to personal experiences. Kaniuk tells of angels that are mentioned in Jewish and Christian writings and dwells on the discrepancy between the positive, pure image of the angel and the destructive divine missions carried out by many of those that appear in the Hebrew Bible. Although they are all sexless males, Kaniuk tells of angelic women he has known whose qualities are many times greater—for example, the woman who was his life companion, filled with beauty and compassion, totally devoid of egocentricity or wickedness.

Kaniuk also admits his failure “to create” an angel in painting. In 1948 he was on the crew of a ship bringing Jewish refugees from Europe to Israel. When it docked in Naples, he met an emaciated, hungry young prostitute named Angelina. Her name and appearance contradicted her occupation, and when Kaniuk, living in New York, painted Icarus, he tried to give him Angelina’s face. It didn’t work and the painting remained unfinished, but his obsession with solving the mystery of angels remained with him from then on.

Fascinating and touching...
Kaniuk was a religious man. Not in the narrow, establishment sense, which he despised and saw as sinful, but in a deeper, numinous sense, which entails exaltation, awe and a sense of non-existence. It is from these feelings that Kaniuk wrote Angels, an essay possessed, which contains many moments of raw beauty and love – love for writing without hope, love for the muses that have slipped away.  

Haaretz
Dror Burstein contemplates works of art from various cultures—Europe, the Far East, Israel, ancient Mesopotamia—that portray animals which are caged, suffering or dead at the hands of humans. In clear but delicate language that appeals to the eye and the heart, Burstein writes about the still-life paintings, sculptures and photographs in which the treatment of animals is an outrage. The images depict animals that have been dismembered at the butcher’s or in abattoirs; hunted birds; fish laid out at a London market; chained apes in Antwerp’s port; a lion hunt by an ancient Assyrian monarch; various biblical scenes, such as the Binding of Isaac with the ram caught in the thicket, and more. Among them, Burstein also seeks out images that protest the way in which animals are used by humans, whether they be artists, cooks or diners. They show a different relationship between man and beast: one that is harmonious and not violent.

The book makes incisive statements about human responsibility, solidarity, the meaning of death, suffering and art. It offers cultural, artistic and literary enrichment to the vegetarian and vegan conversation underway in the world, as well as an activist look at the fine arts that will intrigue anyone interested in art and art criticism. There are also animal poems written by various poets.

First review
A book that is heartening and gratifying to encounter…Evokes respect…This is a book that satisfies, reminding us that writing about art can be profound.

Yedioth Ahronoth