

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

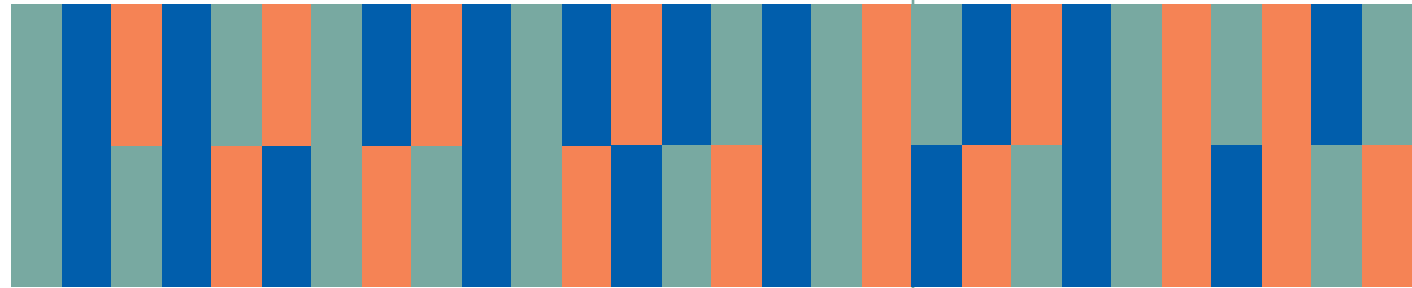
Be a part of our  
upcoming *Let's Talk About It:*  
*Jewish Literature* series.

**"We are always looking for the  
book it is necessary to read next."**

SAUL BELLOW

## JEWISH LITERATURE

*Identity and Imagination*



### **Let's Talk About It:**

#### ***Jewish Literature—Identity and Imagination***

is presented by Nextbook, a gateway  
to Jewish literature, culture and ideas,  
and the American Library Association.

Jeremy Dauber, Atran Assistant Professor  
of Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture  
at Columbia University, serves as the  
project scholar.

**A READING AND  
DISCUSSION SERIES IN  
AMERICA'S LIBRARIES**

*Presented by Nextbook and the American Library Association*

nextbook >



Millions of people at thousands of libraries across the country have gathered for *Let's Talk About It* programs since its inception in 1982. Now, the American Library Association and Nextbook partner to bring *Let's Talk About It* reading and discussion series to new audiences through *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature—Identity and Imagination*.

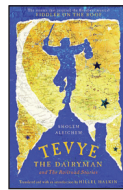
Join us for a reading and discussion series like no other. Led by a local scholar, *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* will feature lively discussion of five books on a common theme in Jewish literature and culture.

Visit [www.nextbook.org](http://www.nextbook.org) to learn more about Jewish literature. The site features author interviews, essays on Jewish culture and history, and a daily cultural news digest with links to stories and reviews from around the world. The site also allows to visitors to search annotated reading lists and to keep up with other Nextbook programs.

## A MIND OF HER OWN

### Fathers and Daughters in a Changing World

"I carried her in my arms," sighs Tevye, as another daughter goes her own way—and so begins a literary tradition of Jewish fathers and daughters who get carried away with politics, money, sex, religion, and, above all, one another.



#### Sholem Aleichem **Tevye the Dairyman**

Sholem Aleichem's most famous character is an educated workingman in tsarist Russia, struggling to make a living, marry off his many daughters, and—despite a wife who raises cursing to an art form—live an old-fashioned life. Instead his children present him with all the troubles of a world in transition. Tsaytl's insistence on marrying for love is hard enough on Tevye, but his younger daughters' romantic entanglements bring more serious ills—antireligious socialists, class struggle, superstitious ignorance, and finally the anti-Semitism that drives the Jews from their shtetl homes.

Tevye believes unshakably in his special connection to the Master of the Universe, and remains optimistic even when irony is the only kind of joke he can sustain. Why, he asks himself, if God loves the Jews so much, does he make their lives so bitter?



#### Anzia Yezierska **Bread Givers**

Yezierska, who emigrated from Poland to America in 1890, tells the story of Sara Smolinsky, the youngest of five daughters living on the Lower East Side's Hester Street in the 1920s. Sara's father is a rabbi, a learned man who studies undisturbed while his wife and daughters struggle to cobble together a meager existence. After her father marries each of her sisters off in loveless (and often dubious) arrangements, Sara flees home, desperate to escape the same fate and determined to breathe in "the new air of America."

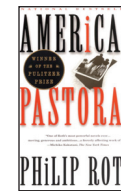
Yezierska's autobiographical novel remains a classic, a compelling depiction of the struggles of Jewish immigrant life, particularly for women, in the early 20th century.



#### Johanna Kaplan **O My America!**

A provocative and aggressively charming social critic, Ezra Slavin quotes De Tocqueville, Marx, and the rabbinic Ethics of the Fathers with equal measure. When he dies, his daughter Merry—product of the first of many marriages and affairs—must make sense of her father's life.

Skipping back and forth in time—from the 1940s, when Merry's mother, Pearl, a Polish immigrant socialist drowned Ezra "in diapers and Palestinians," to the 1960s, when he talked politics with Upper West Side psychoanalysts—Kaplan creates a colorful, cacophonous portrait of a man and his milieu. The novel brims with capacious wit and intelligence: "Ez, with that first-generation disease, had believed himself to be self-generated," Kaplan writes. "He had put all his money on an idea of America he had just gone and made up."



#### Philip Roth **American Pastoral**

"Being wrong about people is how we know we're alive," Nathan Zuckerman, Roth's recurring narrator, muses after discovering exactly how wrong he was about the golden-haired idol of his youth. Fifty years after high school, Zuckerman can see that Seymour "Swede" Levov's charming façade obscures complicated and tragic depths. Swede marries a beauty queen and runs his immigrant grandfather's prosperous company only to see his daughter become a bomb-throwing fugitive.

Swede embodies the promise and glory of postwar America—as well as the tragic loss of that paradise. This first installment of Roth's American Trilogy explores themes of loyalty and betrayal against a backdrop of social and political ferment.



#### Myla Goldberg **Bee Season**

Nine-year-old Eliza, the least impressive member of the brainy Naumann family, amazes everyone by winning the local spelling bee, then the state contest. When she nearly prevails at nationals, her father, a cantor, introduces her to the works of medieval mystic Abraham Abulafia in hopes that understanding the world "in alphabetical terms" will help her win it all next year. As Eliza gallops towards enlightenment, she outshines her geeky older brother, Aaron; no longer the family star, he turns his back on his family and faith.

With equal measures of deadpan humor and lyricism, Goldberg chronicles an extraordinary year in the life of a seemingly ordinary family. She unflinchingly details the awkwardness of Eliza's pre-spelling days and evokes the pure pleasure afforded by her spiritual quest.