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*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.

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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*.

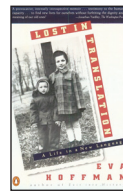
Join us for a reading and discussion series like no other. Led by a local scholar, *Let's Talk About It: Jewish Literature* will feature lively discussion of five books on a common theme in Jewish literature and culture.

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.

## BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

### Stories of Estrangement and Homecoming

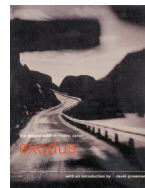
A central tension of the Jewish Diaspora takes on psychological, metaphorical, and even physiological dimensions as writers from Egypt, Brazil, Europe, Canada, and the United States explore what it means to belong.



#### Eva Hoffman **Lost in Translation**

If exile is the hallmark of Jewish experience in the 20th century, then Eva Hoffman is a representative of the age. Born in Krakow, Poland, to a Jewish family that had survived the Holocaust, she emigrated as a child to Canada, where she was thrust into a new language and a new culture. In this intimate memoir, she recalls her struggle to belong in this alien world, and the later challenges to her identity as a student in Texas and a writer in New York.

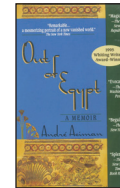
As she tries to reconcile her femininity, her religion, and her intelligence, Hoffman shows how many different "languages" we all have to master, and provides an unforgettable portrait of a Jewish woman's coming of age.



#### Exodus **The Second Book of Moses**

This well-known narrative crackles with tension and drama: a harsh, hasty uprooting from Egypt, a "stiff-necked" people so beaten down by slavery that the notion of freedom leaves them bewildered; a vengeful, capricious god who is unafraid to slay thousands of his chosen people when they disobey. The Israelites wander in a vast, unfamiliar desert for decades, uncertain if all this talk of a promised land will ever turn into reality.

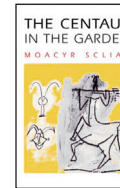
Woven into "the tempestuous, epic myth," as Israeli novelist David Grossman calls it in the book's introduction, is the legal and religious code that transforms the Israelites from a beleaguered clan into a nation. Those forty years spent stranded in the desert remain pivotal, Grossman explains, "a lengthy cocoon stage, the final one before the Jewish people was hatched into history."



#### André Aciman **Out of Egypt**

For Aciman's family, home is a mercurial concept. In 1905, the Sephardic Acimans moved from Turkey to Alexandria, where they flourished financially for decades. But theirs was a life in exile: expecting to be sent to Germany during World War II, the women knitted woolens. As a boy, when asked which country he hailed from, he replied, "France, of course."

Aciman sketches a cast of eccentric characters—from his Ladino-speaking grandmothers to Uncle Vili, an Italian fascist turned British spy—and creates an elegy to a lost culture. Fittingly, his last night in Alexandria falls on Passover; Aciman flees the seder ("I don't want to be in Jerusalem next year"), heading to the waterfront. There, he writes, "I caught myself longing for a city I never knew I loved."



#### Moacyr Scliar **The Centaur in the Garden**

"I am a centaur, a mythological creature, but I am also Guedali Tartakovsky," proclaims the narrator of this affecting novel. Born half-human and half-horse to immigrants from Russia who staked out a new life in Brazil, the boy struggles with his identity.

Much of the book's deadpan comedy arises from the intersection of the mythical with this real Jewish community. When the lonely Guedali finally meets a centauress, there's one problem: She is beautiful, but she is also a gentile.

Tartakovsky is a vivid symbol of the dual consciousness of Jews inspired to leave Europe for South America by philanthropist Baron de Hirsch's utopian vision—forever an outsider, yet uniquely suited to Brazil's farmlands.



#### Allegra Goodman **Kaaterskill Falls**

Set in the mid-1970s, this sweeping novel follows three Orthodox families over two eventful summers spent in the bucolic town where they retreat each June from the grittier confines of Washington Heights. Elizabeth Shulman, perfect wife and mother, begins to long for the secular world's "loose days and weeks." Her neighbor, Hungarian refugee Andras Melish, undergoes a crisis of faith, unable to understand his young wife's piety. Meanwhile, Rav Kirshner, the group's spiritual leader, discovers he's dying and must choose a son—Isaiah, dull but devout, or clever but worldly Jeremy—to take his place.

From their multiple perspectives, Goodman creates an exquisite group portrait that explores how individuals shape their identities within—and against—the seemingly unshakable community laws that define them.