



Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature

WRITER TAMAR YELLIN WINS \$100,000 IN JEWISH BOOK COUNCIL'S INAUGURAL SAMI ROHR PRIZE

The Jewish Book Council, administrator of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish literature, announced today that **Tamar Yellin** of England, author of *The Genizah at the House of Shepher* (Toby Press), is the first recipient of the \$100,000 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, the largest-ever Jewish literary prize given, and one of the largest literary prizes in the nation.

The two runner-up awardees, who will receive the Choice Award and will each receive \$7,500, are **Amir Gutfreund**, author of *Our Holocaust* (Toby Press, translated by Jessica Cohen), from Israel, and **Michael Lavigne**, author of *Not Me* (Random House), from San Francisco. All three winning authors will be celebrated at a gala event to be held May 21 in Manhattan.

"This was a tremendously difficult and rewarding process as all five finalists were extraordinarily talented, each with a compelling story to tell, and the talent to tell it well," said Geri Gindea, director of the program, which operates as a department of the Jewish Book Council. In making the selections, the judges considered the book, the author and the writing's contribution to Jewish literature. Reflecting on the choice of Tamar Yellin, Rebecca Goldstein, novelist, professor of philosophy, a Fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute and one of the competition's five judges, said, "Yellin combines formidable Jewish scholarship with soaring lyricism. And, if scholarship and lyricism aren't enough, she also displays a wonderfully quirky sense of humor. This is a writer who can do it all, bring history lovingly into the present and conjure an art of beauty and light out of the ardors of scholarship."

In addition to Goldstein, the judges, whose names were undisclosed until today, are Jeremy Dauber, associate professor of Yiddish language, literature & culture at Columbia University; Daisy Maryles, executive editor, *Publishers Weekly*; Jonathan Rosen, novelist and editorial director, *Nextbook*; and Ruth Wisse, professor of Yiddish and comparative literature at Harvard University.

The Prize was established by Sami Rohr's children and grandchildren to celebrate Mr. Rohr's 80th birthday--and to honor his lifelong love of Jewish writing. The annual award will recognize the unique role of contemporary writers in the transmission and examination of Jewish values, and is intended to encourage and promote outstanding writing of Jewish interest.

Each year, a prize of \$100,000 will be presented to an emerging writer whose work, of exceptional literary merit, stimulates an interest in themes of Jewish concern.

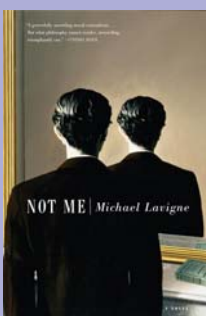
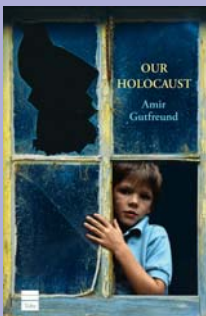
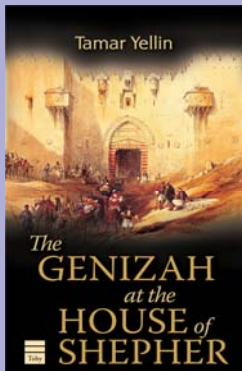
In order to fully nurture quality Jewish writing, the Rohr family will also establish—in conjunction with the Sami Rohr Prize—the Sami Rohr Jewish Literary Institute, a forum devoted to the continuity of Jewish literature. The Institute, also run under the auspices of the Jewish Book Council, will convene a biennial gathering, creating an environment in which established and emerging writers can meet and exchange ideas and perspectives.

"Writers often express the desire to connect and share experiences with other writers and the Institute will be an ideal forum for that purpose," Gindea said. "Through the Institute, we hope to create a literary community that will further inspire emerging writers to continue creating Jewish literature."

Each year, an independent panel of judges will convene to select the winner of the Prize and two Institute Fellows. Fiction and non-fiction books will be considered in alternating years.



Tamar Yellin



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