

### חדשות האגודה – דצמבר 2021 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy 2021

תל אביב: מועדון הקריאה יעסוק בזוכה פרס גפן "עשרת אלפי הדלתות של ג'ונארי" מאת אליקס א. הארו (תמיר וידיעות ספרים, 2020), ויתקיים ביום חמישי, 23.12, בשעה 19:30. מנחה: דפנה קירש. הקישור יתפרסם בדף האירוע בפייסבוק, ירושלים: לפרטים על המפגשים של המועדון הקריאה ניתן להצטרף לקבוצת הפייסבוק: מועדון הקריאה הירושלמי של האגודה, או ליצור קשר במייל עם מרכזת המועדון בירושלים - גלי אחיטוב, ולהצטרף לקבוצת הוואטס'אפ של המועדון. כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד) לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או בדף האגודה בפייסבוק. Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

#### This month's roundup:

- Book review: "More Zion's Fiction" Part 1
- NOTE: There will be further reviews of "More Zion's Fiction" stories in upcoming issues
- More artwork by Jose Sanchez
- Our usual, interesting tidbits from the Web.
- Your editor, Leybl Botwinik



## MORE ZION'S FICTION

- Wondrous Tales from the Israeli ImagiNation
- Edited by Emanuel Lottem and Sheldon Teitelbaum
- Illustrations: Avi Katz
- Foreword: David Brin
- Afterword: Marleen S. Barr
- Just under 400 pages

<http://zionfiction.com/>

Congratulations to Emanuel Lottem and Sheldon Teitelbaum (L&T) on the release of yet another collection of Israeli SF&F short stories in English: "*More Zion's Fiction*" (launched September 2021)!

I must admit, that it's still too early for me to make an all-encompassing statement regarding the anthology, since I've only just begun getting into it. As with the previous collection, you will have to bear with me as I read through each story, and pass judgement on my feelings and findings – presenting one or two story reviews, periodically, in our monthly issues of CyberCozen.

(\* In my review of Teitelbaum & Lottem's first collection, "*Zion's Fiction*", that contained 16 stories, it took me 13 issues to cover the entire collection (from January 2019 to May 2020). This time, we have 17 stories – so patience, my dear friends, patience!...

I feel, somehow (perhaps) like an archaeologist, who must be very careful in his/her diggings, lest some damage may occur to the overall 'find' – that this exploration may well uncover some historic gem or two, but we shall see...

In the meantime, here are my very first impressions:

#### Cover art

Interesting, but not as interesting and imaginative as the cover of the first anthology (A quick skim through does, however, show Avi Katz' vivid imagination and keen talent in his other sketches throughout the book).

## Forward by David Brin

Very (very) short, at one-and-a-half pages, Brin gives us a very brief overview of other collections of SF by or about Jews or Jewish themes, and an even shorter overview of some of the works in this collection. Sorry to say, that I wasn't terribly impressed.

## Introduction by Emanuel Lottem and Sheldon Teitelbaum

This intro, by the two editors, on the other hand was very interesting and a worthwhile read. I love the way they presented a series of 'issues' that are (or are not) covered in Israeli SF&F. Moreover, rather than just giving their own opinions, theories, and/or 'research results' – they present numerous quotes from the authors themselves, as well as other Israeli SF writers and people in the know. These are all worthwhile reads.

They make a point about "*The Situation*" and "*The Conflict*" – concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and how these themes are virtually ignored/avoided in Israeli SF&F:

*"There seems to be a general reluctance among Israeli SF/F writers, unlike their mainstream counterparts, to deal with any of The Situation's multiple facets. They tend to fixate on other issues, that is to say, on their personal concerns."*

Then L&T seem to step back, and correctly 'realize' that it's not fair to accuse the writers of mostly 'ignoring' THE SITUATION/CONFLICT, and state: "*Instead, they are accused by some – unfairly, we believe – of contemplating their respective navels.*"

They then quote Ehud Maimon, the editor of the annual Hebrew-language series of Israeli SF/F anthologies, "*Once Upon a Future*" – who rightly put it:

*"The younger [generation's] writing has become more personal and less national. It deals with the individual as an individual, not as a representative of a generation or society at large. The focus is on quotidian rather than national issues."*

L&M conclude that Israeli S/F today is more concerned with life and living, than problems that are 'bigger than life', that since we can (rarely) find a solution to them, it may seem best to just let things work themselves out on their own.

That having been said – they do mention a trend to deal with 'dark issues' including suicide (and death, in general) – possibly proportionately more than expected. Their take on this is worth contemplating. The reverse, they say, is also of note: "*very little humor in Israeli SF/F*". This is not 'traditional' to Jews who count among them some of the most famous – or at least most notorious – comedians in Western culture (Marx Brothers, Mel Brookes, Jackie Mason, Joan Rivers, Carl Reiner, to name just a few).

They mention the fact that almost no short story has Arab protagonists, or mention the Iranian threat:

*"But try as we might, we could find not a single Israeli short story that has this threat as its subject or even as a part of its subtext."*

**(\*\*) I guess they never saw my story "natsyonaler reynikungs tog" [National Cleanup Day] (2007) – Then again, it is in Yiddish © ([http://www.levblsvelt.co.il/2007-NRT-Natsyonaler%20Reynikungs%20Tog-00\\_13.pdf](http://www.levblsvelt.co.il/2007-NRT-Natsyonaler%20Reynikungs%20Tog-00_13.pdf)).**

*"I think many of them are just sick and tired of the Situation and have nothing to say about it." This brings to mind Ludwig Wittgenstein's 7<sup>th</sup> proposition: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."*

– I believe a better quote would be "*Pick Battles Big Enough To Matter, Small Enough To Win*" (Jonathan Kozol) ... Some things are just too big for us.

L&T make some very good and astute arguments – as well as a very good use of quotes from actual Israeli SF/F writers (Well done, guys! I like that). However, the following statement (actually made twice in this 10-page intro), is – in my opinion wrong: "*As noted above, Israel is politically split right through the middle.*" I believe that it's not a two-way split, but rather a multi-faceted cracking –

possibly even a fluid breaking-up and re-shifting – that pits so many different factions against each other, but often makes strange bed-fellows too!

This is very typical of Israeli politics – that’s why we have so many political parties and splinter groups. And so many jokes about this, such as “When two Jews at a street corner argue, they represent at least 3 political viewpoints/parties...” – So much so, that today’s coalition government contains some of Israel’s fiercest/proudest extremes (left-wing Meretz party working together with secular right-wing Yisrael Beyteynu, and Islamist Ra’am, and religious rightists’ Yamina... If that isn’t SF/F ...).

All-in-all, a very well written intro that intrigues at moments, and maybe upsets – but neatly offers up a very good overview of what SF/F writers in Israel are (mostly) writing. It’s good food for thought, and whose quotes and viewpoints will make excellent talking points / topics of discussion, for years to come.

Well done L&T!

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**On a personal note (and I’m probably going to get some flak for this...):**

My main concern about the main Intro is that it is significantly ‘politicized’. True, everyone has an opinion (and sometimes more than one) concerning the Middle East and Israel, but I would have hoped for a more neutral presentation. They have done their best to present more than one viewpoint, but there are many instances of one-sidedness.

For example:

1. “*Palestinian territories, moreover, remain under occupation or siege*”.

My understanding was that they are ‘disputed territories’. In addition – unless I’m mistaken – Jews historically originate from Judea, and Arabs historically from Arabia...

2. “*The Conflict between Israel and the Palestinians*”

Might it not be the other way around (i.e. reverse the order: *The Conflict between the Palestinians and Israel*)? For example, this was very recent “*PA[Palestinian Authority]: Israeli President Lighting Menorah at Cave of the Patriarchs Is ‘Declaration of War’*”..., not to mention the suicide bombers, car rammings, thousands of rockets from Gaza targeting civilians, and more ...

3. “*Muslim and Arab-Christian citizens remain marginalized*”

Israeli Arabs can be found in so many key sectors of everyday Israeli life: doctors and nurses, dentists, pharmacists, as well as TV, film, and other entertainment personalities, policemen, hi-tech professionals, university students<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, and more – right up to parliament members and members of the current reigning government coalition.

**\*\*\* I have personally met, worked with, and studied with many Arabs (both Muslim and Christian) in these last three sectors.**

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**For further reading:**

See their website at “<http://zionfiction.com/>”

The Amazon webpage actually permits you to read a sampling from the book (by clicking the book cover on the left side of the webpage), and this includes **both intros and the first story!** Enjoy!

<https://www.amazon.com/More-Zions-Fiction-Wondrous-ImagiNation/dp/0578969440?asin=B09D7TQ66I&revisionId=c5a4326a&format=I&depth=1>

By the way, there is a very nice piece about the book and about the two editors here:

<https://www.israelhayom.com/2021/10/01/adventures-in-israels-science-fiction-scene/>

**Look forward to more reviews of “*More Zion’s Fiction*”  
in our upcoming issues**

## Reader remarks:

Hi, Leybl,

Many thanks for the book reviews. You seem to have found some very different stfnal volumes to review. Given your review of The Frozen Rabbi, have you seen Harry Turtledove's Alpha and Omega? It is a respectful treatment of religious traditions, taken to be entirely true.

Stay well,

George

Thanks, George - not familiar, but I'll look into it.

... [LATER]:

I read a couple of reviews - and it sounds intriguing!

Take care,

Leybl

Hi Leybl,

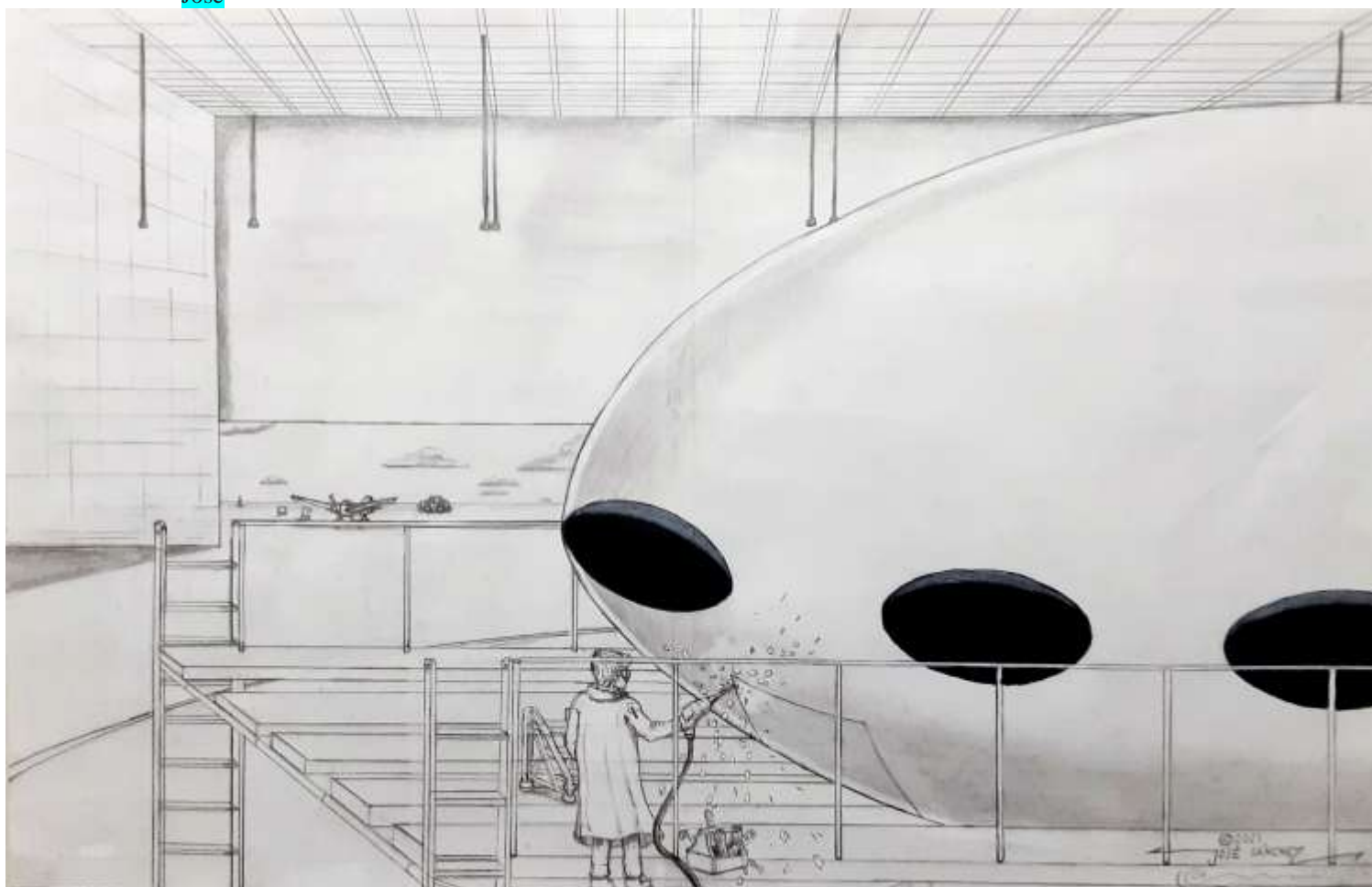
I thought you might be interested in this video (<https://youtu.be/z6kqC4LEHyE>).

It talks about the TR-3B Black Manta antigravity craft and is by the Cousins Brothers on their Youtube channel "Thirdphaseofmoon". You can check them out on YouTube. Also, in this particular episode, they showcased some of my artwork...(bashful...☺...)

Hope you like it,

Later,

Jose



Eyewitness Sighting Series Picture # 4 – Jose Sanchez © 2021



## Help sought about a story:

Subject: [ha-Safran] looking for a Jewish science fiction story

This is posted on behalf of a former Jewish community colleague.

It has me stumped, but sci fi isn't really my forte.??

\*\*\*\*\*

Decades ago I recall reading a science-fiction short story about a Jewish man who tried to volunteer for an one-way mission to outer space. He had no qualifications for the task but he was adamant that he be chosen. When he was asked why it was so important to him he explained that he was a Kohain, and as a member of the priest tribe he was forbidden to step foot inside a cemetery. Since the Second World War, the ashes from the death camps had risen into the air and had encircled the globe. All of the earth was a cemetery and so he had to leave.

\*\*\*\*\*

I told him that our "hive mind" is often very effective at finding answers.

Steven M. Bergson, editor of Jewish Comics Anthology Toronto, Canada

### Editor's note:

For those who don't understand that person's dilemma: The current Jewish people are divided into 3 tribes (or groups). The majority are the 'common' tribe of "Israel", then there are the 'Levites' and an off-shoot 'Cohanim' [or as in the email: Kohain]. A male Cohen "member of the priest tribe [is] forbidden to step foot inside a cemetery", or to be near dead people, etc. (I'm not a Cohen, so I don't know **all** the laws).

So, the protagonist's claim was, that due to the German/Nazi crematoriums, the air was filled with the ashes of dead Jews. The ashes settled and now the entire planet Earth is one big cemetery – so he wants to escape it... Interesting idea, only that historically Jews have been burnt alive since before the Crusades, during the Spanish Inquisition, in later Pogroms, etc.... so his (the story-writer's) argument is weak at best – not to mention the millions of burnt people's ashes over the ages from natural or unnatural causes... Sorry – Learn your history...

**If anyone knows anything about the story, we'd appreciate hearing from you.**



- **TR-3B : The Silent Floaters – Jose Sanchez © 2021**

## Fun from the Web

- Moon's top layer alone has enough oxygen to sustain 8 billion people for 100,000 years  
<https://www.space.com/moon-surface-oxygen-8-billion-people>
- Smithsonian FUTURES exhibit examines space artifacts of the future  
<https://www.space.com/smithsonian-futures-exhibit-space-artifacts>
- Wormholes may be viable shortcuts through space-time after all, new study suggests  
<https://www.space.com/wormholes-may-be-stable-after-all>
- A new era of planetary exploration: what we discovered on the far side of the moon  
<https://www.space.com/a-new-era-of-planetary-exploration-what-we-discovered-on-the-far-side-of-the-moon>



- On Course ... (aka Space Wolf) Jose Sanchez © 2021

### TV&MOVIES:

- Read an exclusive excerpt from Titan's relaunched 'Trek' magazine 'Star Trek Explorer'  
<https://www.space.com/star-trek-explorer-magazine-titan-publishing>
- 'Snoopy in Space' season 2 blasts off on Apple TV Plus with 'The Search for Life'  
<https://www.space.com/snoopy-in-space-the-search-life-apple-tv-season-two>
- Disney Plus Day: 1<sup>st</sup> look at Obi-Wan Kenobi's new 'Star Wars' spinoff series  
<https://www.space.com/star-wars-obi-wan-series-sizzle-reel-disney-plus-day>
- 'The Expanse' dials the space drama up to 11 in new full trailer for Season 6  
<https://www.space.com/the-expanse-season-6-full-trailer-amazon-prime>

***We'd love to hear your thoughts on the above topics and with your OK, we may publish them!***

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