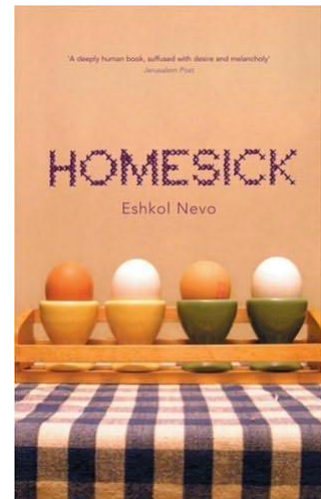


ISRAELI READING

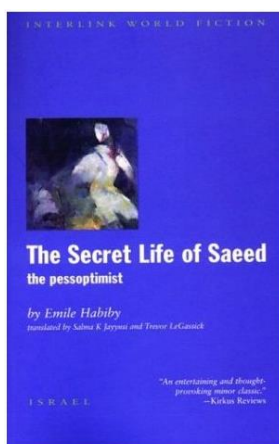
What Should I Choose?

Eshkol Nevo – Homesick

This heart-warming, charming and clever first novel dips into the lives of each of the inhabitants of a village in Israel. It is 1995 and Noa and Amir, a student couple, have decided to move in together and choose a small apartment in a village in the hills, midway between the two cities. Originally called El-Kastel, the village was emptied of its Arab inhabitants in 1948 and is now the home of Jewish immigrants from Kurdistan. Not far from the apartment lives a family grieving for their eldest son who was killed in Lebanon. The younger brother left behind, Yotam, forgotten by his parents, turns to Amir for support. Further down the street, Saddiq watches the house while he works at a building site. He knows that this house is the one from which his family was driven by the Jews when he was a boy. This enchanting and irresistible novel offers us windows into the characters' lives. Each comes from somewhere different but we gradually see that there's much about them that's the same. Homesick is a beautiful and moving story about history, love, family and the true meaning of home.



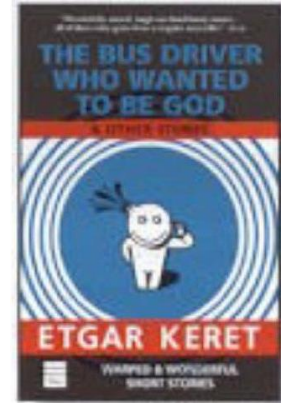
Emile Habiby – The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist



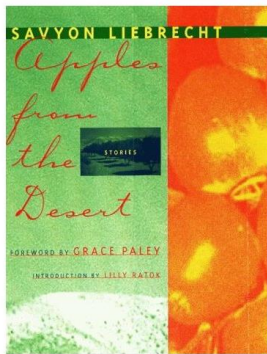
Habiby's novel about a Palestinian man, Saeed, who remains in Israel after its creation and becomes an informer for the state, is sure to attract attention. Written in 1974 but appearing for the first time in the U.S., the tale is told in the form of letters written to an unnamed correspondent after Saeed has escaped to outer space with the help of an extraterrestrial friend. Saeed's experiences are comic and tragic, triumphant and defeated. He tries to gain favour by being the best informant, but his bad luck and dim wit guarantee his failure; his life is lived in constant fear, yet he is never without hope. Habiby's blending of fantasy and reality intentionally obscures our sense of what is real and what is not, but it heightens our awareness of the complexity of the political conflict in the Middle East. As an Arab in Israel (and one-time member of the Israeli Parliament), Habiby has strong views on the conflict, but even readers who disagree with him will find this strange novel to be thought-provoking on a number of levels.

Etgar Keret – The Bus Driver who wanted to be God

Brief, intense, painfully funny, and shockingly honest, Keret's stories are snapshots that illuminate with intelligence and wit the hidden truths of life. Hilarity and anguish are the twin pillars of his work. Heret covers a remarkable emotional and narrative terrain - from a father's first lesson to his boy to a standoff between soldiers caught in the Middle East conflict to a slice of life where nothing much happens.



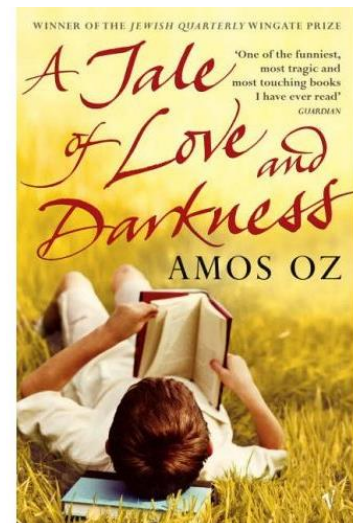
Savyon Liebrecht – Apples from the Desert



This collection of stories offers a broad panorama of contemporary Israeli society that reveals the passionate and intense layers underneath ordinary lives of people from different ethnic backgrounds. The stories concern Arab-Israeli relations from a woman's view.

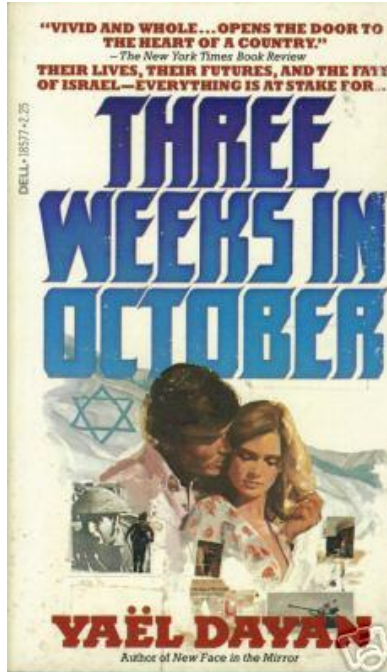
Amos Oz – A Tale of Love and Darkness

Love and darkness are just two of the powerful forces that run through Amos Oz's extraordinary, moving story. He takes us on a seductive journey through his childhood and adolescence, along Jerusalem's war-torn streets in the 1940s and '50s, and into the infernal marriage of two kind, well-meaning people: his fussy, logical father, and his dreamy, romantic mother. Caught between them is one small boy with the weight of generations on his shoulders. And at the tragic heart of the story is the suicide of his mother, when Amos was twelve-and-a-half years old. Oz's story dives into 120 year of family history and paradox, the saga of a Jewish love-hate affair with Europe that sweeps from Vilna and Odessa, via Poland and Prague, to Israel. Farce and heartbreak, history and humanity make up this



magical portrait of the artist who saw the birth of a nation, and came through its turbulent life as well as his own. This is a memoir like no other, and one that cries out to be read and wept.

Yael Dayan – Three Weeks in October

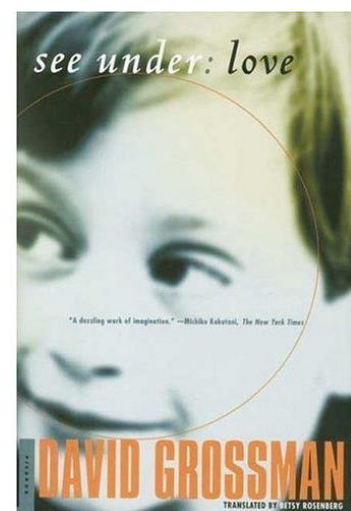


After the Egyptian attack on Yom Kippur, 1973, Amalia Darom rushes to a Tel Aviv hospital to volunteer to tend the wounded that start quickly piling in. And in her burn ward, there's a horribly burned soldier without identification. Meanwhile, Amalia's husband Daniel, ostensibly a reservist but actually a member of Israeli intelligence, goes off to the Sinai front, where he joins a unit about to enter Suez City - and is soon sent on a mission to find an operative whom he himself recruited years back; he can't find him in Suez, and while there he's wounded in an ambush. Back in Tel Aviv, Amalia's unknown soldier finally dies. Eventually these two strands meet: the unidentified dead soldier was "Phoenix," Daniel's operative. Not surprisingly, Dayan (Moshe's daughter) has easy authority when writing both about intelligence and military operations; Amalia's psychological shock reads less well. Yet even if Dayan is neither a fine writer nor much of a psychologist - not an

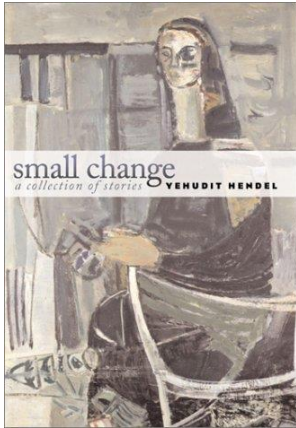
Amos Oz or a Yehoshua - she grabs and releases the catharsis of quick death, the concentrated fear and mourning and national apprehension that Israel faced in '73. This is clearly a book for overseas consumption, with lots of background explanation, but the impact is sharp and often heartbreaking.

David Grossman – See under: love

In this powerful novel by one of Israel's most prominent writers, Momik, the only child of Holocaust survivors, grows up in the shadow of his parents' history. Determined to exorcise the Nazi "beast" from their shattered lives and prepare for a second holocaust he knows is coming, Momik increasingly shields himself from all feeling and attachment. But through the stories his great-uncle tells him-the same stories he told the commandant of a Nazi concentration camp-Momik too, becomes "infected with humanity." Grossman's masterly fusing of vision, thought, and emotion makes See Under: Love a luminously imaginative and profoundly affecting work.



Yehudit Hendel – Small Change



"Small Change" is Yehudit Hendel's story about an Israeli woman named Rutchen, who lives a life traumatized by a dysfunctional family life and time spent unnecessarily in a prison. The story is told to a narrator, a neighbor of Rutchen's. By the end of the story, she loses her grip on reality. The story reverts back and forth in time from the present to the past, as Rutchen recalls important events. Set in Israel and Switzerland, the story was written in 1999 by Hendel, a noted Israeli woman author.

Shifra Horn – Four Mothers

Five generations of Jewish women suffer through personal and political turmoil in this Jerusalem-set novel, a bestseller in Israel. When relatives correctly predict that her husband will leave her after their son's birth, Amal inquires into the origins of her matriarchal family's curse of the disappearing husband. Her research takes her back a century, to the day matchmakers marry her great-great-grandmother Mazal to a young shopkeeper. By the time Amal, Geula's daughter, marries, the novel has explored just about every family drama imaginable, including incest, rape, single motherhood, disease and death. Horn vividly brings to life Jerusalem's residential neighbourhoods, and her characters are epic heroines. Horn's unique visualization of 100 years of one family's women in Jerusalem gives a personal perspective to that city more often defined by its historic and political headlines.

