

For Discussion

The Union for Reform Judaism recommends two **Significant Jewish Books** each quarter for individuals and book groups. Study and discussion guides are available at <http://urj.org/books>.

Saving Stanley: The Brickman Stories by Scott Nadelson

(Hawthorne Books & Literary Arts, 212 pp., paperback \$15.95)

On the surface, the Brickmans seem like an ordinary middle-class Jewish family living in suburban New Jersey. But in Scott Nadelson's stories, the Brickmans fracture into four distinct individuals—Arthur, the calm, reliable father who is seldom there; Hannah, the compulsively attentive mother; Jared, the chubby adolescent who becomes an obsessed body builder in high school; and Daniel, the younger brother who, according to his grandfather, “doesn't know who he wants to be.” Dipping into their psyches at different times, these stories reveal their separate inner worlds.

Saving Stanley, Nadelson's first story collection, contains eight stories about the Brickmans. In “Young Radicals,” Daniel is fascinated by his Russian-born grandfather who witnessed the October revolution. But by the time Daniel is old enough to ask him about his experiences, he sadly observes, “my grandfather lived almost exclusively in the immediate present and the distant past.... His second wife, Rose, spent most of her time trying to convince him of the things that had just happened to him.”

In “Kosher,” we meet Daniel again as a recent college graduate torn by doubts about his future. He spends a year traveling in Europe, taking odd jobs and hoping to find his direction before returning to live in his parents' home. Meanwhile, his mother, a high school French teacher, despairs about the son who seems so lost: “How could she tell the teachers what her son was doing with his life? A smart Jewish boy who'd given up great opportunities to become a bum.”

Nadelson, who won the Reform Judaism Prize for Jewish Fiction in

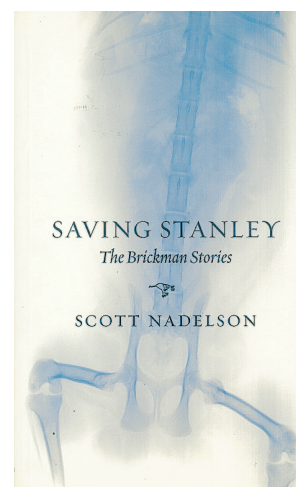
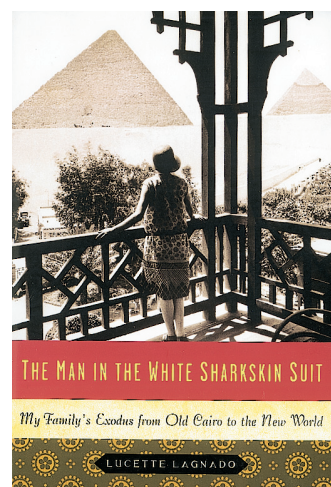
2007 for his subsequent story collection, *The Cantor's Daughter*, comments: “Ordinary lives are never so ordinary; they're full of conflict and mystery.”

The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: My Father's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World by Lucette Lagnado

(Ecco, 340 pp., \$25.95)

Awarded the 2008 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, Lucette Lagnado's elegant memoir (reviewed in *RJ Spring 2008*) recreates her family's life in Cairo until they were forced to flee Nasser's regime in 1962. In her acceptance speech she described Old Cairo as “a glamorous, intensely cosmopolitan city that was multicultural in the true meaning of the term, a society in which Jews and Moslems and European Christians managed to co-exist with a harmony that some in post-9/11 America may find hard to imagine.”

But after World War II, convulsive departures were under way. “One after the other, Jewish communities in Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, and of course, Egypt, dispersed,” she writes in her memoir.



NEW BOOKS | URJ PRESS

A Faithful Spirit: Preparing for Chanukah

Rabbi Benjamin Levy's study text to the medieval midrash *M'gillat Antiochus*—traditionally read during Chanukah in Italian and Yemenite synagogues—explores the midrash's flexible approach to maintaining one's Jewish identity while living in a non-Jewish world.

Israel at 60 Songbook

Thirty-six selections encompass the most significant songs of Israel's 60-year history.

Contact the URJ Press at 888-489-8242, www.URJBooksandMusic.com.

“Nearly one million Oriental Jews scattered to the four winds.”

Her poignant immigration story focuses on her father, Leon, a sophisticated “man about town” in Cairo who never recovers his cultural bearings in Paris or New York, the foreign cities to which he has to adapt in late life. This once proud man is subjected to demeaning treatment by social service agencies, and in old age is reduced to selling fake designer ties on subways.

When Lucette, his youngest and favorite child, develops Hodgkin's disease at age 16, he finds himself powerless to protect her, except through his prayers from “the worn little red prayer book he carried in his pocket at all times.” □