A Glimpse of Daily Life
Jewish Shanghai in Photographs

Tiger Mom vs. Yiddishe Mame
Traditional Education in Chinese and Jewish Culture

Cover art by Davi Cheng
Asian Jewish Life is a celebration of the diversity of the Jewish experience in Asia as well as of Asian Jewry.

We publish a quarterly print magazine that is also available online that seeks to:

• Connect the separate pockets of Jewish life throughout the region by creating a contemporary creative outlet to share thoughts, ideas and promote unity through memoirs, poetry, short fiction, historical pieces, book and film reviews, viewpoint articles, artist profiles, photography and graphic art.

• Help preserve the long history that Jewish life has imprinted on the region.

• Break down common stereotypes about where Jews hail from or what we look like.

• Build bridges with local communities by sharing our celebration of Jewish life in the region with the aim of leading to a broader understanding of the richness of the Jewish tradition and culture.

• Help other Jewish non-profit organizations with a regional focus to grow along with us.

Asian Jewish Life is a registered charity in Hong Kong. Asian Jewish Life is also under the fiscal sponsorship of the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity, a qualified U.S. 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Invest in our vision! Make a donation.

For more information, please email us at giving@asianjewishlife.org or donate online at http://www.razoo.com/story/Asian-Jewish-Life
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Dear Editor:

Shalom and many thanks for your kind response [to my last email request for assistance]. I would like to share a few things with you. Please try to hear with patience.

Regarding aliyah we know that it depends on G-d’s time. In the meanwhile, though, we are seeking help for our youth to join a yeshiva in Israel, if possible. In this regard, we do need help. Ideally, at least five or ten young persons should be given the opportunity to learn and then to come back to teach in the community.

Please let organizations know of our ambition in the hopes that they well come forward to help us. May Hashem bless you and strengthen you spiritually and physically.

With best regards,
Sadok Yacobi

Sadok Yacobi is the spiritual leader of the Bene Ephraim community in the India state of Andhra Pradesh.

You can read more about this community in our Spring 2010 issue at http://www.asianjewishlife.org/pages/articles/spring2010/AJL_Featured_India_Journal.html. For additional information, please contact us directly.
Dear Readers:

A tremendous thank you for our incredible writers who have contributed to this issue. It is difficult to put this issue together and focus on anything other than the destruction in Nepal. Living in the region, most of us have a number of contacts and friends that have been directly affected by the earthquake. Also living in Hong Kong, we are all well aware that many members of our community’s incredible security team are Nepalese. These are the people whom we trust the most, to insure our safety and the safety of our families in a world where safety is certainly no longer to be taken for granted. We will wait for a later issue to further explore the efforts of Jewish/Israeli groups in Nepal.

In this issue, we bring you A Glimpse of Daily Life - Jewish Shanghai in Photographs. These photos were selected from the Werner von Boltenstern Shanghai Photograph and Negative Collection launched by Loyola Marymount University’s William H. Hannon Library. The collection largely focuses on the Jews of Shanghai during World War II.

Another unique glimpse at Jewish life in Asia during the Holocaust, in this issue, is Holocaust Refuge in India which has been excerpted from Eleven Years in India by Elise Braun Barnett. The publication of this fascinating excerpt was made possible by the Leo Baeck Archives’ LBI Memoir Collection.

Also out of India, we present The Jews of Cochin - Recording Community History by Bala Menon. Bala Menon is one of the co-authors of Spice & Kosher - Exotic Cuisine of the Cochin Jews which was showcased in our last issue.

We are also proud to present Wedding Day Bliss by Sophie Judah, excerpted from Tales of Grandpa Eli. This chapter works well as a stand alone piece, or short story, detailing an amusing story about a fictional Bene Israel wedding.

And if it is stories of love you are yearning for, Susan Blumberg-Kason interviews Susan Chan in Escape to a World of Happily Ever After focused on her book The Reluctant Brides of Lily Court Lane.

The incredible Susan Blumberg-Kason also has interviewed author Leza Lowitz this issue in At Home in the World. Leza’s work was featured in Asian Jewish Life, Issue 12. This interview looks at a few of Leza’s books with a special focus on her heartfelt new release, Here Comes the Sun: A Journey to Adoption in 8 Chakras (Stone Bridge Press, 2015).

Like Leza, writing from Japan, we feature a touching reflection piece by Melissa Uchiyama titled My Hope, Less Fears - A Homecoming Halted.

In continuing our series on traditional education, Tiberiu Weisz has contributed Part II: Traditional Education in Chinese and Jewish Culture, titled Tiger Mom vs. Yiddishe Mame.

Our book reviews look at two books that focus on Victor Sassoon. We have also included a summer reading list of books we are particularly excited to explore this summer.

Last, but most certainly not least, a special thank you to Davi Cheng for her artwork that appears on the cover of this issue.

Enjoy your summer and thank you for reading!

Erica Lyons
Editor-in-Chief
I love studying Jewish texts, and have been doing so almost every week for the past 18 years at the Torah study class at my shul. Because I am a visual person, I see images as I read these texts. I also love to create art, and along the way I began to create art from Torah texts. I started out just sketching and doodling scenes from the Torah, but when my synagogue Beth Chayim Chadashim (http://www.bcc-la.org) decided to create stained glass windows for the sanctuary, my illustrated design based on the parting of the sea (and other Jewish symbols) was chosen.

More recently, I was honored and excited to be accepted into the Women of the Book project – a visual, midrashic Torah scroll created by 54 Jewish women artists from around the world. My piece is from the Torah portion Pekudei where the glory of God fills the Mishkan in the form of clouds. It was also heavily inspired by my Hong Kong childhood superhero and images of Chinese clouds. (www.womenofthebook.org)

I’ve also long had a fascination with calligraphy, especially Chinese characters, its strokes and meanings. For many of my recent pieces, I have used a bamboo brush and ink as my medium, and I have continued with the Chinese and Jewish themes. You can see this in my depiction of the Ram. As it is the Chinese Year of the Ram, I was instantly reminded of the shofar. The sounding the shofar during the Days of Awe resonates deeply with me so I wrote the Chinese character “ram” (羊), drew the head of a ram and a shofar, and noted the three New Years that I celebrate — Jewish, secular, and Chinese.

The cover of this issue of Asian Jewish Life, also shows how I incorporate my identity into my work. I thought about Moses and the burning bush, and thought it would be interesting to put the actual Chinese character for “fire” or “flame” (火) on some branches, and I used the colors of the flame instead of black ink.

I see my art as a means for me to express how the many pieces of me — the Jew, the Chinese, the lesbian — come together and become one.
At Home in the World

Interview with Leza Lowitz
Asian Jewish Life: You have written over a dozen books on a wide range of topics, from young adult fiction to memoir to yoga poetry to travel guides, multicultural mothering anthologies, and many more. Did you always know you wanted to be a writer? And how did you get your start in publishing?

Leza Lowitz: As a child, I loved reading (still do!), and started writing at age eight. I didn’t publish my first book until I was thirty, after going to Japan to seek out poets who debunked the myth of the “docile” Japanese woman. Stone Bridge Press published my anthology of contemporary Japanese women’s poetry in 1995.

AJL: Your forthcoming memoir, Here Comes the Sun: A Journey to Adoption in 8 Chakras (Stone Bridge Press, 2015), is certainly not your first book. Was it more difficult to write this one than the previous books because memoir is so personal? What was the most difficult part about writing this book?

LL: I’m interested in ideas of identity and history. How is culture shaped, and how are we (particularly women) shaped by it? I spent the first part of my writing career exploring these issues as they pertain to my adopted home of Japan. When I turned forty, I decided to turn the lens on myself. All of my more personal books deal with notions of finding home. We all long to belong somewhere, after all.

Yoga Poems: Lines to Unfold By deals with finding a home in one’s body. Yoga Heart charts the path to finding a home in the spirit. Jet Black is an adventure story about a biracial girl seeking to find home in another country, and in herself.

Here Comes The Sun is about finding a home in each other and in the world.

Here Comes the Sun charts my quest for motherhood across two continents, two decades, and two thousand yoga poses. It was definitely the most difficult to write, being so personal. In the memoir (and in my life), I had to ask myself questions many mothers never consider. Why did I want to be a mother? This question led me on a pilgrimage from the U.S. to Japan and to India. Here Comes the Sun is my meditation on the answer.

AJL: In your memoir, you explain that it’s unusual to adopt in Japan because Japanese culture places such a high importance on lineage. Have you noticed any changes in attitudes about adoption in Japan since you brought your son home?

LL: Japan was closed to the world until 1868, and considers itself a homogenous country, though there are indigenous tribes and races. In Japan, your lineage and bloodline define you. America is still a young country, and it values the individual, celebrates one’s ability to invent or re-invent oneself, regardless as to where one “comes from.”

Visiting Amma’s Ashram in India helped me understand that bonds do not always come from bloodlines. Even though Amma (the “hugging saint”) is not a biological mother, she is one of the most maternal presences I’ve ever met. That experience transformed me, as did living abroad.

I realized I would never become Japanese, nor did I want to. So who was I? Away from a familiar language and cultural norms that might otherwise define me, I had to define myself. Every day brought challenges, but hitting walls helped me grow in ways I might not have had I stayed in the U.S. I eventually realized I didn’t want to have a child so much as to be a mother. And then my child came.

In Japan, people historically adopted for financial reasons — to have an heir or to continue a family line. It is rare to adopt for love. But we did, and more and more others are doing so, too.

When I shared our story, people encouraged me to write a book. In a country with such a prevailing single narrative, I wanted to inspire people to write their own stories. And I hoped that love could be the new bloodline.

AJL: Your young adult novel, Jet Black and the Ninja Wind (Tuttle, 2013) was co-written with your husband, Shogo Oketani. How did you come up with the idea of this story?

LL: Jet Black and the Ninja Wind was born from a discussion we had after Memoirs of A Geisha came out. We wanted to tell a story about a strong Asian woman, not someone shuffling ten
steps behind her man in a tight kimono.

So we wrote a novel about the last living female ninja. You might think of ninja as B-Grade assassins, like I did. But Shogo felt that ninja could have been tribal people who developed secret arts to protect themselves against powerful invading forces. Women were skilled fighters, too.

I was interested in that history; Shogo loved Native American culture. We connected Japanese indigenous lore with the story of some modern warriors— the Navajo Code Talkers. The Navajo and Emishi tribes come together to save an ancient treasure. The legend of King Solomon plays a part in the story, too.

Shogo did the hard work — conceiving of the book, then writing, researching and translating his Japanese draft into English. I did the relatively fun part, editing the book and finding a publisher.

**AJL:** Do you plan to write more young adult novels?

**LL:** I have two solo YA books coming out — *Up From the Sea*, a novel in verse about a biracial teen who finds a new community after he loses his family and home to the 2011 tsunami (2016) and *Salvage*, a love story between a Japanese boy and American girl (2017), both from Crown/Random House.

I never imagined I’d be writing for young adults, but reading saved my life when I was a teenager, and I feel blessed to be able to write for teens.

**AJL:** How did you first decide to move to Japan? Like many expats who stay, did you go to Japan thinking you would only be there a short time?

**LL:** I practiced meditation and martial arts as a teenager, and also did my M.A. in Japanese literature. I had a longstanding interest in Japanese culture, but I never thought I’d live here forever — I still don’t. I first came to Tokyo in 1989 to edit the anthology of contemporary Japanese women’s poetry I mentioned above, on a grant from the NEH. In my mid-twenties, I worked as a journalist and lecturer at Tokyo University. After five years, I was ready to leave. One night I went to a jazz club and saw my future husband across the room. I left anyway; moved back to California. He followed me. Ten years later, he returned to Tokyo. That time, I followed him.

**AJL:** As a Jewish woman who has lived in Japan for more than 15 years, do you think you have become more conscious of your Jewish identity because you live in a country with a relatively small Jewish community? Does Judaism figure into your everyday life at home?

**LL:** Living in a foreign country (especially a notoriously “closed” one like Japan) and adapting to another culture with an entirely different set of rules and beliefs, makes you an outsider. The upside of being on the margins is that you become conscious of your own core beliefs and values. Judaism had shaped my inner life in ways I wasn’t even aware of until I left home.

In Japan, I missed the rituals that had shaped my childhood — lighting Shabbat candles, celebrating the High Holidays with extended family. But it wasn’t until our son came that I found a wonderful Jewish community in Tokyo. Their values reflected underlying beliefs I wanted to pass down — selfless service, interconnectedness, charity. This helped me appreciate and reconnect to my Jewish roots. And when I did, it felt like home.

**AJL:** A major part of your work in Japan centers around yoga. Is yoga popular in Japan with locals, or do you see more expats than locals in your studio? Yoga has certainly become more popular in the West over the last decade or two. Have you noticed a similar development in Japan?

**LL:** When I moved back to Japan in 2003, people told me it was crazy to open a yoga studio in the country of Zen, but I didn’t listen. I wanted to offer California-style yoga, partner yoga, community classes for charity, and restorative yoga. I’d been warned that community classes wouldn’t fly in status-conscious Japan. Again, I didn’t listen.

The yoga boom hadn’t happened here yet, so my timing was good. Now, yoga is as almost as popular here as it is in the West. We’ve been open for twelve years, and have students from all over Japan and the world.

Yoga, like indigenous teachings, teaches that we have an innate unity and connection to nature, to each other, and to the planet. That’s a common thread between yoga, ninjutsu, and Judaism, too. All spiritual practices offer a path to help us move from “me” to “we” so we can be at home wherever we are in the world. 

For more about Leza, check out her website: www.lezalowitz.com
A Glimpse of Daily Life
Jewish Shanghai in Photographs

Shanghai Jewish Youth Association / Kadoorie school on Kinchow Road, Shanghai, China
Jewish kindergarten, Shanghai, China

Jewish wedding, Shanghai, China

Jewish kindergarten, Shanghai, China

Jewish community Pander Bellkchoff theatrical performance, Shanghai, China
Feature

Japanese soldier in navy uniform with an armband, Shanghai, China

Jewish temple, Shanghai, China

Jewish men wearing armbands in front of Monon Cafe on East Seward Road, Shanghai, China

Jewish children gathering, Shanghai, China
Recently, the William H. Hannon Library (http://library.lmu.edu/) launched the Werner von Boltenstern Shanghai Photograph and Negative Collection, which contains, most notably, images of Jewish Holocaust refugees and other Jewish communities already living in Shanghai in the 1930s-1940s. From daily work life to weddings to soccer games in ghettos, these images capture a wide range of the Jewish experience as well as show the deep imprint Jewish culture has had on Shanghai’s history.

Currently, the Hannon Library is seeking more information about this rich collection. Inquiries so far have resulted in numerous replies from across the United States, Australia, France, Germany, Shanghai, Great Britain, and Hong Kong. Such quick responses help to illustrate what is already known about this collection; it has tremendous historical, cultural and, likely for people who were there, personal value. To participate in this project or just to see the collection visit http://dh.lmu.edu/shanghai-collection-crowdsourcing. For more information, please contact Melanie Hubbard, Digital Scholarship Librarian at melanie.hubbard@lmu.edu.

The William H. Hannon Library is located at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California.
The Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong
is planning a trip to Myanmar (Burma)

5 - 11 November 2015

The trip will include Shabbat at the synagogue in Yangon (Rangoon), followed by an optional excursion to Bagan and Inle Lake.

**COST**
The estimated cost per person (excluding airfares) is as follows:

- **Shabbat in Yangon**
  - HKD 5,300 (single supplement HKD 2,325)

- **Shabbat in Yangon + Optional extension**
  - HKD 14,900 (single supplement HKD 5,425)

**ESTIMATES INCLUDE:**
- Accommodation at Sule Shangri-La Hotel (Yangon) - 2 nights for basic tour;
- Amazing Bagan Hotel (Bagan), Amata Garden (Inle Lake) - 6 nights total for extension.
- Meals (all vegetarian except Shabbat dinner).
- All boat rides, entrance fees.
- All transfers (if flying with the group on Dragonair) and internal flights (for extension).

**ESTIMATES DO NOT INCLUDE:**
- Air fare Hong Kong/Yangon, visa fee, tips, insurance, drinks, personal costs.
- Optional balloon flight over Bagan.

As numbers are strictly limited, if you would like to join us, contact Susan Raymond on +852 2589-2660 or at jhshkg@yahoo.com.

*We hope you will be able to join us on this amazing trip!*
My husband, Isaac, recently presented me with an affectionately inscribed Israeli cookbook, a coffee table book, cloth-covered, with gorgeous print type. Every page is a lush getaway. It was a Mother’s Day gift from him, my son who can’t stop kissing me, and my daughter who feels everything, dances and sings her ideas out. This cookbook stirs-up old memories and desires. I want to make the lemony leek meatballs and learn the trillion ways to use chickpeas. What ingredients can I collect here, in this land of seaweed, mushrooms, renowned fish, cooking with mirin?

I open the book and picture myself again in the Old City marketplace, the shuk on the inside cover. I want saffron and date palms. I want my husband home earlier on Friday nights, not working his way to the bone, the cultural norm here in Japan. I imagine the thick intrigue of a Hebrew accent though I instead have a bundle of Japanese vocabulary.

When Isaac and I got married, we knew we would have to leave our eastern seaboard of the US, but for which...
country? Marrying a non-US citizen was to be bound-up with a host of decisions for navigation, and we thought about Israel but Isaac was Japanese, and it seemed the least safe, least sensible thing to do. So as I sit in my home in Japan, when I think of a pull eastward, I still dream of Israel and the idyllic homecoming I had missed years before.

I was in Israel just once, eleven years ago, when I was 24. I was there for ten days, touring the country in a bus full of my closest friends, my rabbi and his wife. I arrived in Ben Gurion Airport, laughing with my jet-lagged friends, but sensing the grand momentum of traveling to the Jewish state, the state created after the Holocaust, the state which called to young Zionist everywhere. Even my mom years earlier had spent months in that desert landscape which blossomed and bloomed under the faithful toiling of its settlers. This was the place many of my friends would later take in exchange of their cozy American language and lifestyle, even enrolling in the Israel Defense Force combat units. They inevitably got their noses pierced, and possessing a palpable buzz. I felt sick to my stomach. This “home” was not quite ready for it yet.

I tried to be laid-back, interested in all those young IDF soldiers backpacking and meeting up with friends, everyone in either the army’s combat boots or the civilians’ leather sandals. My friends had gone boy-crazy for this place, it its entirety! I tried to only taste zatar and mint, the nuttiness of felafel, but fear gripped me when our tour guide pointed-out where terrorists’ blasts had ended lives. It was the very café I was currently admiring, noting the relaxed café culture and that its outdoor musicians, shwarmas and pita shops, boutiques, and Judaica shops with jewelry and candles. Coffee shops with bistro chairs out front like Paris. A group of kindergarteners passed with their teachers, each child gorgeous and tender in a sometimes volatile place. Café Hillel had been the target of a major terror attack in 2003, just one year earlier. Glass from the sandwich case had shattered everywhere, colliding with walls, tables, chairs legs, and all the people who had been relaxing there moments before—people like those now sitting in front of the café. So many casualties. This was the reality, as real as the Shoa, or Holocaust. This is Israel? A place you could get blown-up in? Not just facts from the Bible or from the Six-Day War; intifada had blown-up here and continued to rage and reverberate, though this main street was alive, hopping and possessing a palpable buzz. I felt more in-tune with danger, to which my body started to respond.

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That night, from my single room with a balcony overlooking the Mount of Olives, I thought my heart was truly truly giving out. I called my mother on the phone. She helped me breathe through what was most likely a panic attack. “It feels real, Mom! What if my heart just stops? My veins are blue, so blue in my hand!” They looked like webbing; everything throbbed and nothing was clear, not even in the bathroom light. Was blood backing up? I needed proof...
to confirm I was okay, a quick medical intervention.

“Honey? Can you go outside? Talk to me while you get some nice breaths of fresh air. Slowly breathe,” she coached. I paced on the terrace outside the room’s sliding doors. We overlooked The Temple Mount, its golden dome catching the nighttime lights. Rapidly sipping, skimming air, struggling for oxygen, I saw the Mount of Olives. “Sweetie, I love you. You are okay,” she assured. She gave me relaxation exercises and it was enough to get me through that night. I called her back a few times to hear her reassuring voice.

The next day, instead of lunching and praying with my friends at the Kotel, with its Bar Mitzvahs and wrapped tefillin, prayer shawls, and folded-up squares of paper whispered in chants and tucked between stone, my day was spent in Hadassah Hospital.

I had a very unique look into a premier hospital, vigilant in treating victims of terror. Those doctors and nurses had plucked out bits from buses as thin as tin foil from organs, the makings of suicide bombs from fragile lobes of the brain, treating Arabs, Christians, everyone in their gauzy gowns with the Magen David printed on the back.

I donned my own hospital gown upon admittance and looked around at the sick, the well, a mom checking-in to deliver her baby boy. This was Israel as much as the Kotel, as much as planting a tree, which we also did. I was in Israel, in their hospital, little me, taking in the kindness, the restraint, the loud and funny lilts of Hebrew and Russian with Amharic sprinkled in. Later, I checked-out as if paying a restaurant bill. I carried all the files and EKG squiggles that said I had a floppy valve, something I was told that I needed to follow-up with when I returned to the US. It hadn’t just been a panic attack after all.
Later, I walked over to the Kotel and found my group joyful and ready to move on. Brenda and Janet, Christiana and Gloria, all of my tanned friends wearing the respectful long skirts at The Wall, welcomed me with boisterous hugs. It was like walking out of a movie theatre, after a matinee, and discovering the whole world had been going on. Bright. We walked Ben Yehudah Street with sunglasses and hats.

I strolled. This was Israel, we collectively applauded this earth when we had landed coated in a dreamlike aura. But it was supposed to feel like home, and it had instead scared me. A country’s realities are not listed in the tourism brochures. You also can’t quite predict how you will feel when you finally reach ‘home’.

Years later, my four-year old daughter asks if we can visit Israel. I think she expects to see Grover from our Shalom Sesame videos. I want safety for my children. I want to feel the grooves of Jerusalem stone, want us to stroll in freedom, want my little guy to wear his toddler kippah without my fear. I long to see the people of Israel protected, stable, and secure like Mount Zion, to see us, free to express our faith and heritage without the need for fear. I post anger at anti-Jewish hate. I cannot quell the need for truth to prevail. I dream again of Israel. And even so, violence comes.

Israelis I meet encourage me to just talk about Israel, about life there. There is no apartheid; there are, however, displaced people. There are people who don’t want land; they just want Jews dead. I can support families, support soldiers, congregations, ministries that promote peace, organizations that fit terror victims with new hands and titanium legs. I can find people in and between the walls, see peace in my memories and in the welcome mat that is Israel. Seek peace and pursue it, the Torah says,
wherever you are. Sometimes I am a terrific motivational speaker. Sometimes I feel dread, new and lingering anxiety.

My husband comes home to find me weeping at the laptop, where I’ve become an expert on the Sbarro attack and Hillel Cafe where I’ve just learned so much about the dear Applebaums and the responsible parties of evil terrorists exchanged for our soldier. He says that when I feel this anxiety and read of new reports of terror, the best thing to do is pray. Just pray. And when it happens again? Pray. He lived there, in Jerusalem in the year 2000, when The Second Intifada began and bombs could make any bus blow up. Bombs and human bombs went off very close by. He says that eventually, praying becomes automatic. It won’t have to be a conscious step, but something you just do, a new response. Also, you learn to keep moving. Life can’t stop, shouldn’t stop. This is what a friend in Jerusalem also says. She works in Hadassah’s Labor and Delivery Unit. “Yes”, she says, “It is true that Israelis are also tough. They have to be. Growing up in Israel, you grow up in the threat of terror all the time. At certain times, you have to be more careful,” she explains, “but you learn to continue your life.” I feel this, too, when I’m flying through turbulence just days after another missing plane. I felt this in the March 11 Japan disaster. You have life waiting, the irresistible need to stay the course with power. It is faith in the world, your family needs you. Generations need me to stand up and keep moving. She says Israelis learn to mix sadness with happiness. That’s a lot to think about. I want to be tough, yet I don’t want to loose my innocence, my belief in the world’s goodness, my inner-Narnia. I want to keep a sweetness and not let it all seep out like syrup on its side, cap left off. I think of the word, “sabra,” the cactus native to Israel, so prickly, but tender on the inside. This is a fitting moniker for Israelis.
I choose to be tough, to model more of an unbreakable spirit, though I have a fragile start. I fret over the issue of international travel, living in Tokyo, where we fly from to see family back in South Florida. My heart goes off in warning shots with every emergency news brief, every social media post and serious blurb on Huffington Post and serious blurb on social media. We really do have reason to be fearful, but not so easily scared. There are kids now, a new generation that will need land and a plan and real eyes to peer into the land, from Japan or America or wherever we’ll be. I see through the ogre’s mask and into my heart, the one with the floppy valve that can let junk in. I am David with slingshot, Miriam with a tambourine. I shake my voice, hold it out in the wind. The uncertainty of moments sheltered and cupped by the Eternal. Hashem, G-d, stays the same, but I know, with a gleam, I’ve changed.

What will I say next time to my daughter when she again points to my cookbook and asks me to take her there too? I say, “Get out.” I’ll pretend to chuck some dried-up soybeans at them and yell, “Get out. Only blessings belong here!” I can’t run from the news and I shouldn’t, but I can decide how to respond.

There are a good number of our friends living their lives in the Holy Land, raising kids, throwing bridal showers, enjoying a Shabbat stroll, and an enchanting week of living in a sukkah. There are very real threats, there are sirens, and yes, sometimes very real fears. But they choose to go on living in a place that knows tremendous joy in addition to pain. If I go back, I’ll choose to cultivate faith, to stay long enough to see that dried-up soybean land and sprout.

I smile now as I think back to my trip to Israel. Every time I tell my kids about the ancient Temple, about Moses and the people wanting, hungering, being satisfied, I grow decidedly stronger. I am tougher than before, not so easily scared. There are kids now, a new generation that will need land and a plan and real eyes to peer into the land, from Japan or America or wherever we’ll be. I see through the ogre’s mask and into my heart, the one with the floppy valve that can let junk in. I am David with slingshot, Miriam with a tambourine. I shake my voice, hold it out in the wind. The uncertainty of moments sheltered and cupped by the Eternal. Hashem, G-d, stays the same, but I know, with a gleam, I’ve changed.

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Escape to a World of Happily Ever After

Interview with Susan Chan
Author Susan Chan lives in San Diego, California, and recently published her first romance novel, *The Reluctant Brides of Lily Court Lane*. Susan is Jewish and married a Chinese man since the early 1970s. Asian Jewish Life recently sat down with her to discuss writing, the joys and struggles of starting a Chinese-Jewish cross-cultural family, and diversity in literature.

*Asian Jewish Life:* Your romance novel, *The Reluctant Brides of Lily Court Lane* (2014), includes a wide mix of characters, including Jewish and Chinese ones. When you set out to write this book, did you make a point of including a couple that is like you and your husband, a Chinese man from Hong Kong?

**Susan Chan:** That’s an interesting question. I never thought about it. All the characters are based on people I’ve known and their experiences, so perhaps my subconscious mind was fulfilling a wish. Jay’s mother died when he was a youngster so I never had a mother-in-law like Dorothy. As a matter of fact, we had a rough first three years of marriage as both his father, and then my mother, died. They were both immigrants whose lives were tragically cut short by cancer.

*AJL:* How did you decide to write a romance novel as opposed to women’s lit, or chick lit? Have you always been a big reader of romance novels?

**SC:** I believe human beings, whatever their differences, have one thing in common – the need for love. I want to give readers an opportunity to escape to a world filled with love and where ‘happy ever after’ can be happen – as can be found on Lily Court Lane. I discovered romance novels as a young mother – because of their size! I love to read and I found there was never enough time to do so. Browsing in my neighborhood bookstore, I discovered some very thin books that I could slip into a pocket book or diaper bag, so I decided to give them a try. I have always read before bedtime and I hate to put down a book in the middle of a chapter, so I guess that also explains why I like to keep my chapters short. I enjoy science-fiction (but not fantasy) and legal thrillers, but I don’t feel I have enough background to write in either genre, although one day I might even consider working on an interspecies love story.

*AJL:* Besides the Jewish and Chinese characters, *The Reluctant Brides of Lily Court Lane* also includes a character whose family comes from Mexico. There’s a big push in young adult literature to become more diverse. Do you think there is a need for the same in the romance genre?

**SC:** Now that you’ve mentioned it, my answer would definitely be yes. I remember my first reader. Dick and Jane didn’t match any children in my neighborhood, with their mother and father, dog, and a garden to play in. But that’s not why I write about Dallas Cruz. I live in San Diego which is very close to the border with Mexico and we have a large Spanish speaking population. I write about what I know and the women I’ve met, so it seemed only natural to include Dallas.

*AJL:* The Ming character in your book comes from a traditional Chinese family that lives in the US. In real life, you have been married to a Chinese man for almost forty-five years. Times were so different back when you got married. What obstacles did you face when you told your families about your engagement?

**SC:** Looking back in time I can now smile at my mother’s reaction – but not at the time. She said, “But he’s not Jewish.” You notice she didn’t say, “But he’s Chinese.” My mother bore the brunt of prejudice when neighbors called her to report they had seen her daughter out with a “Chink.” Not to excuse their prejudice, merely to explain it – this time period (1968-1971) was the height of the Vietnam War and the admission of Communist China to the United Nations, so there was a lot of anti-Chinese sentiment. To avoid upsetting my mother even further, we did not date in the traditional fashion but instead spoke for hours on the phone. By the time we decided to marry we had discussed and agreed on all issues that affect married life – from the number of children we wanted, to how we’d raise them, religious practices, and so forth.

*AJL:* You and your husband raised your children Jewish. Was it difficult to explain Jewish customs to your husband’s
family, and how did they take to your decision to have a Jewish household?

SC: We never discussed it with them. Jay is the youngest of seven with loads of brothers, sisters, and an extended family of aunts, uncles, great aunts, cousins, and so forth. To them my religion was just another oddity about this white girl he was bringing into their midst. I think I would have had a far more difficult time if Jay was Christian but as he’d told me when he lived in Hong Kong, he was a “rice Christian,” going to church so he could be fed. His family fled from South China to Hong Kong by twos and threes; and weren’t together until they came to New York City. They “accepted” his marriage as one of the perils of living in a new and strange country but never fully embraced me.

AJL: What are some of the Chinese customs that you taught your children? Was that difficult in the 1970s and 80s when people in the United States cared more about assimilation than embracing their ethnicities?

SC: I think the most important traditions are respect for elders and the importance of family. As parents, we are gratified by the love our children have for each other. We never set out to teach them to be Chinese or Jewish, they just were because we were and they could see how important it was to us. On Saturday we’d go to Chinatown for dim sum, and then to Chinese school. As they grew older, we felt the school curriculum was too rigid and did not serve our purpose so we hired a lovely lady to tutor them. She took them to exhibits and museums, festivals and so on, so they would develop an appreciation for their Chinese heritage. Then on Sunday off to Hebrew school while I volunteered in the school office.

AJL: Do you have any words of wisdom for couples that are raising multicultural children in a Jewish home?

SC: Develop their love for their culture and religion. They can decide when they’re older if they want to follow any particular belief or practice any cultural traditions but how can they make an informed decision if they haven’t been properly exposed? Don’t hold one in higher esteem than another, but I must say I don’t know how this can be done if one parent is Jewish and the other Christian. I remember one family we knew at Hebrew school solved this dilemma when the father would bring his son to Temple while his wife brought their daughter to church. I wonder how that worked out for them.

AJL: Do you have any advice for writers who are just starting out?

SC: Just go for it, write, write, write. And as is always said, write from what you know. To this I’d add that if you don’t know something, do some research. Your readers trust you to be truthful so don’t lie to them. I have to point out, though, that I’m just starting out myself. I’m not particularly good at multi-tasking, so it wasn’t until I reached a time in my life that I could sit and write to my heart’s content that I finally became an author.

AJL: What are you working on now?

SC: I’ve always envisioned Lily Court Lane as a series of books finding romance for each of the women friends living on the Lane. I’m working on Book 2, tentatively entitled “Lies of Omission,” focusing on Cindy finding her birth family. There has been such a positive response to her romance with Ming that I’m planning to write more about his Chinese culture. There’ll also be a new character, Danny, a Jew from Ireland who’ll provide an interesting mystery for our readers. If all goes well, Book 3 is in the planning stage, and I also plan a prequel to answer the question of why these women moved to Lily Court Lane.
This article is the first in a series of articles that will touch on the Jewish experience in India during the Holocaust. The history of Jewish Holocaust refugees in India is one that is little explored.

The excerpt published in this issue has been taken from a larger text written by Elise Braun Barnett. The publishing of this text is made possible through assistance from the archives of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York.

Ms. Barnett’s sojourn to India as a Holocaust refugee was one of three trips that she made there. Each one made a lasting impression. Born in Vienna in 1904, her first trip to India was for professional advancement and a spirit for adventure, something rather uncommon for a young woman of her time. After two years, she reflected that, "I had time to reconsider the purpose of my life. I realised that I was not meant to stay in India, away from Western culture, my friends and family."

She however returned to India to flee the Nazis in 1938, relying on contacts she had made there previously. She stayed for nine years and was able to secure visas for her daughter, husband and parents as well, saving them all from the horrors of Europe.

She eventually emigrated to the United States where she continued to excel in the field of music education. She made a third trip to India later in life, which she referred to as her "red carpet" visit, where she was essentially a tourist in a place she had once called home and that had so deeply guided her professional career.

She authored a memoir detailing her connection to India, "Westward through the Orient: Glimpses, Impression & Recollections" (1965) as well as other books on music education, music theory and Indian music.
The events of 1938 in Austria put an end to our happy life. We foresaw these events most strangely only ten days before the Anschuluss. I then wrote to my friend Kitty, who was married to an Indian politician in Delhi, and implied that we might have to leave our homeland. She answered with a cable with the news that a visa for my husband, my child and myself had been sent. Luckily, I was offered a job as a Montessori teacher at a newly opened school in Rajghat, near Varansi, because one of the teachers had a sabbatical. We left Vienna with heavy hearts, leaving my parents behind. We were penniless because we were not allowed to take any money along. But we knew that in India we would have dear friends. We stayed for a few days in Bombay with Nehru, now married, Krishna Hutheesingm her husband and two little boys with whom Heidi (our daughter) made friends. Kitty had sent 100 rupees—what a blessing this money was. The transportation that was necessary to go from Bombay to Varanasi had been cut off by the Nazis with the advice that “one can walk”! We arrived in Varanasi and were met at the station by some of my old students, now quite grown up and were garlanded by them. What a change from the hostilities of Vienna.

We were given a little bungalow on the school compound. I was in charge of little boys and girls, three to six years old, who were day scholars. The Montessori classroom was beautiful indeed. It was in the building erected by an architect of Shanti Miketan, Rabindranath Tagore’s school. It was on the banks of the river Ganges. My daughter, the only European child, attended the school. She and I walked on the banks of the Ganges every evening. The impression of the river, naked holy men besmeared with ashes, temples half sunken into the river water, huge pipal trees and the wonderful atmosphere, are in my memory. Broken remnants of old temples, which we found, are precious antiques. My daughter uses one of them as a paperweight.

The Rajghat school was a wonderful one. It followed the highest ideals of education. We had frequent teacher’s meetings. Once when Hedi saw a group of birds sitting on the ground, she exclaimed, “Look Mummy, the birds are having a teacher’s meeting.” During this time, Indira Gandhi, then a young woman, came to visit the Rajghat school; she recognised me from Allahabad, where I had visited her home so often, and she was very kind to me.

Unfortunately there was no chance for my husband, an engineer, to find work in the holy city of Varanasi. He went to Calcutta and soon found work at Phillips, the Dutch firm. It was sad to be separated, but we were better off than other refugees. Meanwhile, our furniture, piano included, arrived in Varanasi. Our things had been packed under the supervision of the S.S. after we had left Vienna. We sold our dining room set to a Maharaja, which aided our survival. I practiced the piano, and during one of our visits to Calcutta, I auditioned for the radio station there. I got a contract for a broadcast, which enabled me to travel to Calcutta and see my husband.

Meanwhile, the situation in Vienna had deteriorated. The wish that my husband and I had was to get my parents and other friends out of that hell. To get a visa to India was very difficult; however, we found friends to guarantee it, and
in 1939 my parents arrived in Calcutta. They stayed with my husband, since the Rajghat school had no accommodation for them. At this time, I had to think of giving up my wonderful job at the school because Hedi could not stand the climate, and was constantly sick. She had malaria and other ailments. By this time, Britain had declared war on Germany. British factory managers who were living in India were most concerned by this, since many of them had children attending British boarding schools. They started a school in Darjeeling with staff from England and called it the “New School”. I was the only non-English teacher, but due to my training in England. I was asked to join the faculty. I have described Darjeeling as my Shangri-La.

When Holland was overrun by the Nazis, my husband lost his job. In addition, my father was arrested as an “enemy alien”. There was great confusion among the British Police. My father was very upset at having been put together with the Nazis, whom he had fled. My husband was arrested as well, but released when he promised not to leave the house, except between 2 and 4 p.m. These restrictions were later abolished, but we were only able to travel five miles without permission of the Police Commissioner who allowed me to accept contracts for my radio broadcasts, and go to Calcutta once a month for a weekend to see my husband and parents, and give my radio broadcast.

Luckily, my husband found a job in a factory near Calcutta which was operated by Baghdad Jews. The owners were very educated people members of the Elias and Jacob families. They had come to India at the beginning of the 19th century. My husband air-conditioned their factory with materials made locally, and even my father got a job in the lumber yard. We all became friends with the Elias and Jacob families. Now all the members of the family have left India, the factories are in Indian hands, and they live in England, Israel and America.

After several years in Agarpata, my husband took a job with a British firm, who had a land-rolling factory. By that time my father had passed away. The war was over and the New School was closed, since the British children had returned to England. Hedi attended another school in Darjeeling, and I was able at last to stay with my husband and mother near Kamarhati, near Calcutta where the factory was located. I was offered a job as the Director of Western Music at All India Radio, a job which was most exciting. It consisted of auditioning artists, giving them contracts, playing piano broadcasts once a month, accompanying artists and scheduling the playing of recordings. I performed with the Symphony Orchestra once every season. I was invited to play in other cities: Luchnow, Delhi, and Lahore, which is now in Pakistan. I took Hedi along and on this occasion we visited the Taj Mahal, one of the World’s Wonders.

However, we felt that our time in India had come to an end.

I owe India many wonderful experiences, and I will always be grateful to fate, to have been connected to it.
Wedding Day Bliss
From Tales of Grandpa Eli
Eli and Joe roared into the village of Pipri in a cloud of dust. Children dropped whatever they were doing and chased the bike down the unpaved dusty road. Chickens and ducks scattered before them and dogs joined the children, mingling their barks with the excited childish voices. Eli and Joe had dressed in khaki clothes since they expected to be covered with dust. The village elders however mistook them for policemen and ran into their houses and shut the doors. The houses had no numbers and the streets bore no names. The two boys rode around the entire village twice before they decided to ask for directions. Joe remained with the bike while Eli knocked on one of the doors. He had to knock for some time and shout at the top of his voice before a middle aged man opened the door a crack and said, "We don’t know anything. Go make your enquiries somewhere else."

"You don’t know where the Kandlekar house is?" he asked. "We have come from Jwalanagar for the wedding this evening."

"Why are you wearing khaki and riding a motorcycle?" he man asked. The door opened a tiny bit wider.

"What colour is better than khaki in dusty streets?" Eli asked.

This rhetorical question needed no answer. The man stepped out of his house and gave the needed directions. He pointed in the general direction of the house and asked them to hurry. "You have only half an hour to get ready. We will see you at the synagogue."

Eli and Joe had to bathe in the village square at what they were informed was the only well in the area of two square miles. They had to draw water in buckets and then wrap cotton towels around their waists and squat on a flat stone before they could wash the dust and dirt of the journey off their bodies. The village people passed without a glance in their direction. This was a comedown for the two show-offs who considered themselves handsome examples of male beauty. They did not realize that a bather at a well was a common sight that no considerate person would stare at. For the girls it was a question of modesty too. Eli and Joe took their indifference as a personal affront.

"We must teach these ignorant villagers a lesson," Joe said. "Just imagine! They cannot appreciate fine city lads like us."

"Boors," Eli agreed. "They are absolute jungles (a word used in Hindi to describe a person with no manners, or respect). We will have to educate them a little, show them a bit of culture before we leave."

Joe nodded.

The wedding ceremony was exactly like the weddings in Jwalanagar. The bride was dressed in white and her head was covered with a white veil. She held a bouquet of white Easter Lilies. Two young bridesmaids dressed in pink frocks followed her. They held the end of the veil to prevent it from dragging on the floor. The entire village attended the wedding. The women’s section upstairs held women from different faiths along with the Jewish ones. One traditional Hindu woman had covered her face with the pallo of her sari in the form of a ghoonghat out of respect for her father-in-law and elder brother-in-law who sat below with bright orange pugrees on their heads. A couple of Muslim women were in burkhas with the veils thrown back since they were among women and the men were not supposed to turn around to stare at the women’s section. Eli saw all this and muttered "Boors," once again. According to Bene Israel tradition, weddings are the time when
families sit together in the synagogue. Segregation of the sexes is for other times devoted to prayer. Eli decided that the villagers were living in the Stone Age. There were women and children in the men’s section too but Eli noticed them only after a young girl behind him said, "Proud city peacocks. They want to dance and swagger without realizing that they have the ugliest legs among all the birds. The tail they are so proud of is the source of their ruin. It hangs low from the branch they think they are safe on and the tiger jumps and catches them by it."

Eli was stung. He turned around in anger and saw a girl dressed in a mauve salwar and kameez. The muslin dupatta was drawn over her head out of respect for the holy place they were in. She was not beautiful but her face showed character and determination. She turned to another girl beside her and whispered something into her ear. Eli was sure she was making fun of him. He turned around and met his mother’s eyes. He realized that she had heard and was laughing at him too.

"Met somebody who will not stand your nonsense?" she asked. She whispered but joy at his discomfort was palpable in her soft words.

After a simple dinner of rice, mutton curry, potatoes and a vegetable salad, that was served to the entire village, the bride and groom were placed in a small horse-drawn cart and taken around the village streets. Many people carried lanterns so the procession was a spot of light and noise in the dark village streets. A man with a drum preceded them and women followed singing wedding songs. "Can’t they have a decent band and carry a tune. Singing was the surest way of getting people to ridicule him. He grabbed Joe’s hand. "Let’s go to bed. I’ve had enough," he said.

At the house, the boys discovered that they had to sleep on the floor in a large room that had been divided by a wooden partition. The women would sleep on one side and the men on the other. It was hot and mosquitoes kept whining around their ears. Eli could not sleep. The village had no electricity so there were no fans hanging from the ceiling like the ones he had grown accustomed to in Jwalanagar. Joe found a palm-leaf fan and used it to fan himself. Eli tore a piece of cardboard from a box in which some sweetmeats had been kept before the reception. A smell of ghee mixed with rose water wafted past his nostrils with every wave of this primitive fan. "Let’s tell a few jokes," Joe suggested.

"Speak in English," Eli suggested. "I know what kind of jokes you tell and the villagers do not understand English."

They started with rather innocent jokes before they graduated to ones of the rowdier kind. As time passed, the things they said became filthier and filthier. Around three o’clock in the morning a sweet, feminine voice floated over the wooden partition. "Will you gentlemen please go to sleep and allow us to sleep too," it requested in perfect English. Eli was shocked and ashamed. "Good night boys," he said and covered his head with a sheet in spite of the heat. He made up his mind to leave early next morning before he saw anybody else. He could not bear to think that the women had understood every word of what he had said. He had fallen to a particularly low level and said horrible things about women. He could not bear to face them again.

Eli left a note for his parents. He said that he had to report for work on the second shift that day. If he left early he would reach the factory in time. This was a lie but comforted himself that they would never know. Joe asked about the hurry and Eli waited till they were a few miles down the road before he told Joe that he would never be able to face the girl in the mauve salwar kameez again. "I wonder what she thinks about me?" he said.

"You don’t have to worry about that. She is used to it. She will understand it as ‘the way men are’ and not give it a thought."

"How do you know?" Eli asked.

"She is my cousin."

"You bastard!" Eli shouted as he hit Joe across the shoulder. Joe lost control of the motor bike. It careened and they fell into a ditch beside the road. "You did not tell me that she understood English and let me make a complete ass of myself."

"I forgot about her," Joe said. "Her name is Malka. She is an English teacher in a girls’ school in Nagpur so we see very little of her. You cannot blame me for not remembering someone I hardly ever see. Now help me to pick this motor bike up and get it on to the road."

This should have been the end of the story but it was not. Three and a half years later the girl came to visit her relatives in Jwalanagar. By this time the motor bike had been sold. Joe had joined a shipping company at Calcutta and gone to sea. He was now considered a ‘steady boy.’
Eli was less wild but still as unthinking as before. This came out clearly in the ‘Puri Competition’ he held. Nobody had given him permission to do so and he had not asked. The competitors did not have to agree to compete. There were no prizes and he had appointed himself the sole judge. In his conceit he considered himself an expert in the puris that Bene Israel women make around Yom Kippur time. This involves a lot of work. The pastry has to be flaky. In the absence of food processors and mixers this means hours of hard work. Some puris are stuffed with choi, which is a mixture of coconut, almonds, raisins and pistachios. Poorer Jews use semolina and raisins for the stuffing. Eli had never made puris but was convinced that the women would love to compete with each other. He was sure of it. It would be a pride and joy for them to be considered the best makers of this Jewish delicacy. Their husbands would praise them because they would be the envy of the entire community.

It is also the custom among the Bene Israel to visit each other before Yom Kippur to ask for forgiveness. After the fast, they visit each other once again. First the families in mourning are visited and then the older people of the community. Puris feature large at this time. The mourners do not make sweets so everybody takes them a few pieces. In the rest of the homes, guests are always offered this delicacy. Eli strutted around from house to house tasting the puris while the women watched him anxiously. He flattered himself that they were waiting for his judgment.

This particular year he arrived at the Penkar house hoping to eat something good. The door was opened by a girl whose face seemed vaguely familiar although he could not remember where he had seen her before.

"How was the fast?" Eli asked Mrs. Penkar and a few of her many children who were around.

"Fine, fine," Mrs. Penkar said. "Meet my cousin’s daughter. This is Malka David. This is Eli Jacob Bhonker."

Malka held out a tray with a cup of tea and some fried bhajiya on it. Eli looked surprised.

"No puri this year?" he asked.

"No," Malka said before Mrs. Penkar could say a word.

"Not for you," Malka said. "Have you any idea what your insensitivity and conceit does to people? You go around telling the whole jamaat, the entire community, whose puris you think are the best and then everybody descends on the family like a horde of locusts. We do not want to be a part of whatever competition you have set up in your mind. The Penkars are a poor family. They have saved for..."
many months in order to give their children special kinds of food during the festivals. Being the best puri maker is a dubious honour. You men do not do any of the work involved and then think you are praising us by giving us more work and more expense. Eat your bhajiya and go home parde likhe, phatphati walle, shehari babu."

Eli flushed scarlet. She had called him the educated city man who owned a motor bike. He realized that she had not only said the truth but that she had seen him at his worst. He drank his tea and ate his bhajiya in an attempt to keep up the appearance of normality. Malka disappeared somewhere inside the house. After a few minutes of small talk he left feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself.

The next day Mrs. Penkar dragged Malka to Eli’s house to apologize. She brought a packet containing a few puris as well. Eli was not at home. His aunt from ‘next door’ was also with his mother at the time. They sat on the floor in verandah with a pile of rice on a cotton durri in front of them. They were removing stones and bits of dirt from the rice that his mother had bought as part of their ‘monthly rations.’ Mrs. Penkar and Malka picked up brass thalis and began to help with the work.

"I have brought my niece to apologize to Eli," Mrs. Penkar said.

"This is something new. I am used to having my son apologize to the whole world. He is the one always in trouble," Eli’s mother said.

"What happened?" his aunt asked.

"I don’t think I should have to say ‘sorry’ for telling him that he was wrong but I’ll do it to please my aunt," Malka said.

"I like your spirit but tell us what happened," his mother asked.

Slowly the whole story came out. "Don’t you dare apologize to him. What you said is true. Come on taste my puris now. They are not as good as yours but I am proud of them. Eli shall not receive a single puri from you. He does not deserve it," his mother said. His aunt agreed.

When Mrs. Penkar and Malka left Eli’s aunt made a suggestion. "Ruthie," she said. "Why don’t we ask for Malka’s hand in marriage for our Eli? He has met his match in her. Whenever I scold him and say that some day he will meet his match he answers that when he does he will marry her. This girl will keep him straight and drum some sense into his head."

"I think you are right," his mother replied. "I’ll speak to Eli’s father tonight and take him to see the girl tomorrow or the day after."

The result of all this was that Eli’s parents liked Malka. The problem was that Malka did not like Eli. It took a lot of persuasion and convincing on the parts of both families to get her to change her mind. Eli was convinced that she would not have him. She had too poor an opinion of him. He was surprised when she agreed. When he got the opportunity he asked her how she could marry him after seeing the worst side of his nature.

"Your conceit and failure to think before you speak will be something I shall have to put up with. It is bad but it is better than the best part of some men I have met. If that is the worst, I have little to fear," she replied.

And a match was made. The rest is family history.

Sophie Judah was born in 1949 in Jabalpur, in Central India, to Bene Israel parents. In 1972 she moved to Israel where she later studied English Literature at the Bar-Ilan University. In 2007, she published a collection of short stories, *Dropped from Heaven*, that chronicles life in a mythical Indian town, Jwalanagar, which is not unlike the Jabalpur of her youth.
The Jews of Cochin
Recording Community History
One of the tiniest and most ancient of all Jewish communities in the Diaspora is the Cochinim or the Cochin Jews in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala. They trace their history on the Malabar coast to approximately 2,000 years ago, first landing on those pristine shores as sailors in the fleets of King Solomon to purchase spices, apes, peacocks and precious metals.

Songs and oral traditions of this community give us a glimpse of their early settlements in Malabar in places like Paloor, Madai and the port of Cranganore (today’s city of Kodungalloor), soon after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. They call this the ‘First Diaspora’. One of the stories suggests they are descendants of Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the 6th century BCE and came to India after being freed by the Persian king Cyrus the Great.

The community is today disappearing quickly with only about 40 left in Kerala state, seven in the town of Mattancherry in Kochi and the rest spread around the city of Ernakulam and surrounding areas. There are no services or prayers although one of the most famous of the synagogues, the Paradesi in Mattancherry, is still open and functional during festival days when Israeli tourists gather or when a Chabad Rabbi visits from Mumbai. Most members of the seven Jewish congregations emigrated en masse for Israel during the 1950s with the stragglers following them in the ensuing decades.

Recorded history shows that Jews were present in Kerala in 849 CE. Hebrew names were engraved on copper plates granted by a Kerala Hindu King Ayyan Adikal Thiruvaridikal of Venad (near modern-day Kollam or old Quilon) to Syrian Christian settlers, led by one Mar Sapir Iso, who were part of a trade guild called Manigramam. The Jews signed these Tharissapalli plates as witnesses, along with others who signed in the Pahlavi and Kufic languages. The plates were given on behalf of the Chera ruler Sthanu Ravi Varman.1

In 1000 CE, the legendary Kerala emperor Cheraman Perumal Kulashekhara Bhaskara Ravi Varman, from his palace at Mahodayapuram in the Cranganore area, is-sued two copper plates to a Jewish merchant Issappu Irrappan (Joseph Rabban), believed to be of Yemeni descent. The plates conferred on the Jewish community 72 proprietary rights equivalent to those held by the Nairs, the then nobles of Malabar.2 This was during the 100-year war between the Kerala Cheras and the Imperial Cholas of the Tamil kingdoms and it is believed that the Jewish community contributed men and material (especially naval forces) to help the Chera emperor in the war efforts.3

Replicas of these plates were presented to a delighted then-Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres on September 9, 1992, when he visited India - a heart-warming piece of evidence that there was a safe haven for Jews in this little corner of India, centuries before the dream of Israel became a reality.4

The original copper plates are preserved in the magnificent 460-year old Paradesi Synagogue in Cochin, the oldest functioning synagogue in the Commonwealth. (Israeli president Eizer Weizman visited the synagogue in January 1997, hailing Cochin as a “symbol of the persistence of Judaism and of aliyah ... I pay tribute to India for taking care of the Jews and their places of worship ...”).5

The copper plate inscriptions mention that several land rights and other honours were being given to the Jews in perpetuity “as long as the earth and the moon remain”. Rabban was also made chief of a powerful trade guild called Anjuvannam. (Many early Western writers believed Anjuvannam to be a princely state.) Thus began the privileged existence of the Jews in Kerala. For almost five centuries, they thrived in their major settlement of Cranganore as traders and artisans.
By the 17th century, there were 11 congregations with their own synagogues – three in Mattancherry (Kadavumbhagam, Thekkumbhagam and Paradesi), two in Ernakulam (Kadavumbhagam and Thekkumbhagam – yes, same names!), one each in Chennamangalam, Mala, Paloor, Muttam and Tirutur, and a splendid one in Paravur (at that time under the control of the King of Travancore). Cochin Jewish songs also tell of a synagogue in a place called Southi (this has not yet been identified). 6

In his 1920 book Jews of Asia, Sidney Mendelssohn tellingly wrote: “While the Jews of Europe, from the 10th to the 16th centuries, were living under conditions, which, for a portion of the period, were stigmatized by Milman as the ‘Iron Age of Judaism’, and while persecutions drove the scattered race in turn out of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland and Germany, as well as other less important regions, their brethren in the Far East, in the lands of the ... potentates of India, were living a life of peace and plenty, far away from the bigots, the robber kings, the conversionists, the Inquisitors, and the Crusaders.” 7 It is of interest to note here that in the late 18th century, Cochin was more important to the Jews than New York.

Walter Fischel, a scholar of Oriental Jewry, wrote: “Cochin, one of the oldest Jewish settlements on Asian soil, had a much larger Jewish community than New York and surpassed it not only numerically, but also culturally. The Cochin Jewish community in 1792 had about 2000 Jews... and 9 synagogues of considerable antiquity, while New York had only 72 Jewish families and only one synagogue.” 8

Today, there are several flourishing Cochin moshavim (settlements in Israel) - Nevatim and Shahar in the south, Aviezer, Mesilat Zion and Taoz near Jerusalem and Kfar Yuval in the far north. (Mesilat Zion boasts signs like Rehov Cochin and Rehov Malabar - rehov means street in Hebrew - dating to the early 1950s.) Sizeable numbers of Cochinis live in Binyamina, Petah Tikva, Rishon Le Zion, Ashdod, Jerusalem and Haifa. Moshav Nevatim also boasts a beautiful Cochin synagogue. The interior is a copy of the Kadavumbhagam synagogue of Ernakulam and the Holy Ark and the Torah scrolls were all brought from various synagogues in Cochin. A Cochin Heritage Museum has been set up near the synagogue.

3 M.G.S. Narayanan, Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, p.3 4.
5 From video of Weizman’s visit to the Paradesi Synagogue. In possession of Bala Menon.
6 This was documented by a delegation of Jews from Amsterdam, led by Moses Pereyra de Paiva, that visited Cochin in 1685. Pereyra wrote about this visit in his Nostesias os Judeos de Cochin in 1687. (The synagogues of Paloor, Muttam and Tirutur have disappeared - believed to have been abandoned or destroyed.)

Photography by Erica Lyons

Bala Menon is the co-author of Spice & Kosher - Exotic Cuisine of the Cochin Jews, along with Essie Sassoon and Kenny Salem, Tamarind Tree Books Inc. (June 14, 2013), 222 pages. See Asian Jewish Life, Issue 14 for some of the beautiful recipes from this collection. The book includes about 200 recipes and fascinating notes about the history of this unique 2,000 year-old community.

You can find more of Bala Menon’s work on his blog http://jewsofcochin.ca
Tiger Mom vs. Yiddishe Mame
Part II: Traditional Education in Chinese and Jewish Culture
The rigidity of the traditional Chinese education and the flexibility of Jewish education has come into sharp focus in modern times. In her book *Battle Hymn of Tiger Mother* (Penguin 2011) the author Amy Chua, a woman of Chinese descent and a professor at Harvard, married to a Jewish husband, also a professor, created quite a stir with the way she raised her two daughters. She raised her children in a fashion that was strict by even traditional Chinese standards. With seemingly little input from her Jewish husband, Tiger Mom conceded: “even though my husband’s not Chinese, I tried to raise my two daughters the same way my parents raised me.” With one slight difference: like sons.

How did Chinese mothers raise daughters in traditional China? The general rule was that girls had no business learning even the rudiments of the written language. Chinese sages expressed their views that “Women without cultured ability are virtue itself.” Nonetheless, clever and resourceful mothers circumvented this traditional limitation. They taught daughters directly, focusing on four accomplishments: Virtue, Deeds, Words and Work. These four goals constituted the general knowledge expected from Chinese women and wives.

The mothers focused on teaching their daughters practical things, ideally how to be good wife, a good mother, and her duties at home were to be obedient, chaste, hardworking and Confucian. Hardworking refers to household chores. In addition they were to observe the traditional hierarchy of dependences: dependence on father before marriage, dependence on husband after marriage, and dependence on sons if widowed. Though mothers’ influence on sons was indirect and subtle, on daughters it was exactly the opposite, direct and in your face. In either case, mothers’ wisdom mattered: it was deeply rooted in daily life, human emotions in addition to being practical.

Slightly different in method, were the Jewish mothers who also played similar roles in education. Though the Mishna and Talmud devoted an entire chapter to the status of women in Judaism, they both relegated women to subservient roles to their husbands. Jewish sages, like their Chinese counterparts, had little to say about the education of women, and less on learning. They simply banned women from studying in heder (study hall). One of the Talmud sages said that “a girl’s place is at the spinning wheel” while another commented that: “If a girl can read a little, pray a little, then she is a real ‘intellectual’”. Not surprising, both Jewish and Chinese cultures treated females as another “mouth to cloth and feed.” Their place was to attend the family and home.

Despite these restrictions, the reality was that Jewish women were industrious, strong willed and the ones who managed the household. On top of that they quite often established a business of their own to support the family financially. To their assistance came their daughters who helped both at home and in business. Jewish mother’s greatest concern for their daughters was to maintain these four accomplishments: chastity, morals, reputation, and virtues. These attributes also were considered vital for a good match.

Pragmatism taught both Jewish and Chinese mothers to excuse their sons from the daily activities. Sons needed to study. For a Jewish mother, an accomplished son was a “learned student and clever businessman” or in the words of the Talmud: “worldly gain is good and worldly loss is bad.” Or as my mother used to say: “Man makes money and not money makes the man”. Traditionally, the ideal male role in Jewish family was the scholar, the diligent, promising yeshiva student. With the exception of the very young, the very old and the very learned, everyone was expected to make a living in addition to learning. A Jew without knowledge of the Torah was considered incomplete, and parents would bend the sky to educate their son. Jews valued more an educated son than an ignorant priest, as the Talmud said: “Better a learned bastard than an ignorant priest”. The Torah cemented Jews together and its study was essential.

The ideal Chinese man was one who passed the imperial examination and got “degrees and honors” (see Asian Jewish Life, Issue 15). Building wealth was the logical outcome of officialdom. Unlike in Judaism where the scope of schooling was for the sake of learning, the scope in China was to pursue recognition, honors and social status. As Confucius
(c. 551-479 BCE) said: “Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.” Chinese believed earnestly that history repeated itself and learning the past was the key to the future. Those who mastered the ancient tradition of writing and passed the examinations became officials who were to shape the course of China, a trait that is still prevalent in China today. Those who failed to attain a degree were often disillusioned and turned to teaching, to assure a steady “rice bowl” (income). And those who went into trade or business had a very rudimentary education, far below the required standard. Farmers and craftsmen had nothing to do with schools.

Both Jewish and Chinese mothers took an active role in “guiding” their sons towards success. But success was defined differently in the two cultures. Beginning with birth, a newborn Jewish child developed a special bond with the woman who attended his mother at his birth, usually a midwife. That bond followed the child throughout life, and manifested itself in visits giving her gifts (income). And those who went into trade or business had a very rudimentary education, far below the required standard. Farmers and craftsmen had nothing to do with schools.

A similar tradition existed in China. Beginning at birth, Chinese mothers relied on the centuries-old superstitions called Old Mothers Encyclopedia (Mama Da Chuan). It was an unofficial guide to new mothers orally transmitted only and never ever in print. One of the most common superstitions made Chinese mothers very choosy as to who should be the first person let into the room after the baby was properly cleaned and wrapped? Auspicious was if a clever/sm art boy came in and performed the ceremony called cai sheng or “stepping on the birth” hoping that the new boy baby would be smart too. This superstition was not practiced with baby girls.

Cultural beliefs as such bound mothers of the two cultures and it reflected in their names. A Jewish mom was called Yiddishe Mame, a Yiddish word with East European roots that radiated an overprotective mother with endless self-sacrifice. A Chinese mother was called huma or Tiger Mom a Chinese term that described an overambitious mother who raises her children in the strictest of strict discipline. The term is often synonymous with fierce ambition to help her children conquer, overcome and finally to succeed in professional life. Only recently did this term come to the attention of Westerners with the publication of Amy Chua’s book. Both the Yiddishe Mame and Tiger Mom strived for the same goal, to nurture the child to adulthood, to make him a mentsh, “a man as a man” in Judaism and a ren, “a man above man” in China.

Mentsh is a Yiddish term that means to attain the status of an accomplished human being, a whole person, a real adult with all the responsibilities and obligations. A Yiddishe Mame was proud if sons did well in secular schooling but prouder if they could also recite a passage from the Torah to their father. Schooling was important, grades and outside activities were secondary to Jewish learning. Jews pursued learning with no specific goal in mind, it was for the sake of learning. Yiddishe Mame’s greatest joy was to see her sons performing the mitzvot (good deeds) for the sake of mitzvot, culminating in being recognized as a mentsh in his community.

Ren is the most basic character in the Chinese language, literally means, “man”, yet its meaning changes significantly in context. Chinese sages struggled with the question of “How can one become a man [and benefit from it]?” (qi nenewei ren 舛能为人). Some defined ren (man) as: “Rites and righteousness are what makes a man above other ren.” Others as “the fulfillment of all filial duties and social obligation,” while modern interpretations offered some context “to be not as an ordinary person but as a ren, a man above man in society at large.” Each of these definitions carried their connotations. The first was to fulfill the ceremonial and public obligations; the second emphasized the obligations of children to parents, family and by extension the country. The last one came closer to the meaning of mentsh in Judaism, but not quite.

The definition of ren contained an inherent difference from mentsh. Just as ma nishtana differed from the Chinese how can I know [to gain from it] (see Asian Jewish Life, Issue 15), so did mentsh complement ren, just as yin and yang. In Judaism, a mentsh grew up in a classless society with allegiance to a code of conduct of an invisible and immortal deity called God. Every Jew was required to read the Torah (Law) or His words. That by itself required a basic education to each and every Jew, herein the name “people of the book.” In addition, each individual was in charge of his destiny, and every individual male Jew was equal both in the eyes of the Torah and in the community.

Not so in China. A ren grew up in a traditional class conscious society composed of junzi, “gentlemen” representing the ruling class and the xiao
ren “the little people” or commoners. The junzi included the nobility, and by virtue of social mobility also the “mandarins” who acquired their status through education. At the head of this social pyramid was the Son of Heaven (emperor) who was considered a deity in China, but a mortal human being by Jewish standards. The xiao ren “commoners” were the masses, either with a rudimentary education of shu yuan, (see Asian Jewish Life, Issue 15 for a discussion on book halls) or not educated at all. Subsequently the junzi were privileged and often above the law while the commoners were subject to the law. Such a social distinction highlighted the unbridgeable gap between the class-conscious ren and the classless Jewish mentsh.

Tiger Mom brought this distinction into sharper focus. Initially she thought that perhaps a traditional upbringing with a modern education could combine the Chinese ren, “a man above man” with something like the Jewish mentsh. But first she had to face the low status of women in the traditional Chinese hierarchy. She skillfully weaved an understanding of the hierarchy of dependencies with modern Western education, and treated her daughters the same way as she would have treated sons. Her daughters were expected to attain the highest achievement in the field of study, or rather in the mother’s field of choice. The daughters had no say in their upbringing, only a mother’s ambition mattered. In addition, she taught her daughters that traditional Chinese values for girls: Virtue, Fate, Fengshui, Confucianism (religious merits) and Dushu (reading) could enhance their aspiration to succeed, but they had to aim higher than that to obtain
their highest potential. If an artist, be an accomplished artist, recognized in the field. If a scholar, be an academic with the highest ranking schools. If married, be a ren first and only then follow the traditional Chinese values for wives.

Trying to weave the concept of ren with the Jewish mentsh offer insurmountable challenges. Yiddishe Mame saw her responsibility for the total physical way of life of a “real Jew.” Her rules were more flexible, more in sync with real life situations. She made sure that the dietary laws were observed, that the food was kosher, milk and meat were separated, and that she kept the family harmony. Disciplining a child was more a reflection of the domestic climate, rather than the offense. Tiger Mom on the other hand applied the traditional upbringing for sons to raise her daughters “if you expect the child to be healthy, you must allow him thirty percent of hunger and the same percentage of cold. Experience has taught parents that if you give him too much to eat and too much to wear the child gets indisposed through the faults of the parents.”

Puzzling however was the limited Jewish education of their daughters. “Bat Mitzva was Jed’s [her husband] terrain,” said Amy Chua. The daughters “read from the Torah seamlessly at Bat Mizva,” and the father “also approved the choice of ‘Hebrew Melody’ for violin at his daughter’s Bat Mitzva recital.” But beyond this, their Jewish upbringing was secondary. Tiger Mom Amy Chau followed what she knew best, the traditional Chinese Way that was handed down to her from her great, great, great... grandfather, the royal astronomer appointed by chief military staff in 1644. She imposed harsh rules on her daughters even by Chinese standards. Her rules:

“School work always came first
An A- minus is a bad grade
Your children always must be two years ahead of your classmates …
You must never compliment your children in public
If your children disagree with a teacher or coach, you must side with the teacher or coach
The only other activities your children should be permitted are those in which they can eventually win a medal
That medal must be gold.”

In other words, no boyfriends, no sleepovers. Total respect for parents; daily drilling in math and Chinese from early age; and speaking Chinese at home. In addition there were daily school homework, hours of music practice, and reading. Expectations were so high that any grade below an “A” would invoke additional discipline. Her daughters went through the “ten years of ku, or bitterness. As the Chinese proverb says: “To be a man above men, you must endure the bitterest of all bitterness.”

Such expectations were contrary to the aspirations of the Yiddishe Mame. Learning was just part of becoming a mentsh and wealth was a close second, though due to the economic and historical circumstances the two became contenders to higher social recognition. The ideal mentsh was learned in the ways of the Torah, generous and interacted easily in the community. Wealth was not necessary, but it certainly elevated the status of a mentsh. A learned man automatically belonged to the recognized status no matter how poor he was. Similarly, a wealthy man with little learning also belonged to the recognized class provided he used his wealth in accordance with the law of the Torah, and donated generously.

Tiger Mom justified her strict disciplinarian methods by pointing to the success of her daughters. They became accomplished academics and musicians according to the traditional Chinese Way. They became scholars, and successful in their own rights. The daughters attained the social standing, recognition and honors in the fields that Tiger Mom carved for them. They endured years of ku (bitterness) to become “men above men” in Chinese eyes. With the addition of two Jewish traits, that of generosity and interaction in the community, they could have also become mentsh in Jewish eyes. 


This article is Part II of a discussion on how the traditional Chinese education served as the driving force behind the Chinese Tiger Mom and how the Diaspora shaped the Yiddishe Mame. See Asian Jewish Life, Issue 15 for Part 1 (No Bread No Torah - No Degrees No Honors).
Lit Picks for the Summer Holidays

An enjoyable summer to me is measured by the number of books I have read. There are a number of books on our shelves lined up for this summer and ready to review for the fall issue, namely Tracy Slater’s The Good Shufu. That’s top on my list for certain.

In addition, there are a number of others that are worth adding to your summer reading lists. Firstly, one of my all time favourites, Peony: A Novel of China (1948) by Pearl S. Buck. I’ve always been a big Pearl S. Buck fan (hooked when I first read The Good Earth as a child). Peony is interestingly set in the 1850s in the Jewish community of Kaifeng, China. The book is readily available in print and electronic formats.

Another older book that makes for an interesting read based on its setting is Shulamith (1975) by Meera Mehadevan. The novel is focused on a Bene Israel Indian family who struggles as they are pulled between worlds: Israel and India, modernity and traditional culture, Jewish observance and the non-Jewish world. In many ways the struggle of this family echoes dilemmas still faced today by people pulled between two worlds. Shulamith is no longer in print but it is fairly easy to find used copies online.

And as I tend to be drawn to the somewhat obscure, I recently was also able to track down a copy of From Tokyo to Jerusalem - The Autobiography of a Japanese Convert to Judaism (1964) by Abraham S. Kotsuji. This is an absolutely fascinating read about a life most uncommon. Not surprisingly, this too is no longer in print but used copies are also available.

Newer titles on our list include Pepper, Silk & Ivory (2014) by Marvin Tokayer & Ellen Rodman, Ph.D. This book pulls together stories of some of the most interesting and captivating characters from the Jewish Far East into one fascinating read. We will explore this tittle in depth in a forthcoming issue of Asian Jewish Life.

Another of my personal favourite is The Girl from Foreign (2009) by Sadia Shepard. We spoke with Sadia back in 2010. You can find this Asian Jewish Life article, Rescuing Shipwrecked Ancestors - A story in three generations, online (http://www.asianjewishlife.org/pages/articles/autumn2010/AJL_Feature_Rescuing_Shipwrecked_Ancestors.html ) but if you haven’t read her book it is certainly one to add to the list.

As a huge fan of Middle Grade and Young Adult literature (and likely perhaps not coincidentally the parent of children of readers in this age range), no summer list would be complete without a couple of books for children/ young adults.

Long overdue is an in-depth Asian Jewish Life review of Orchards (2011) by Holly Thompson. There are so many things that I loved about this book starting with the fact that there is a wonderfully written multi-cultural protagonist (Japanese and Jewish), that it is set in Japan and it is written in verse. I do caution however that the book is centred around a suicide of a teen so please use your judgement before recommending this to younger children. Hopefully we will continue to see a number of other authors, not unlike Thomson, working multicultural characters into their stories.

Another book to add to the list is Anya’s War (2011) by Andrea Alban Gosline. What I enjoyed most about this coming of age novel is the setting, Shanghai during World War II. The story is inspired by the author’s father’s Jewish childhood in Shanghai during this time. She is able to weave pieces of her family’s true story into a compelling fictional narrative. Anya’s War is a great way to interest younger readers in this unique episode in Jewish history.

Happy Reading!
Victor Sassoon’s Shanghai in Life and Literature

Two new books published this year are set in Shanghai during World War II and touch upon the Jewish community there. In *Tea on the Great Wall: An American Girl in War-Torn China* (Earnshaw Books, 2015), Patricia Luce Chapman writes of her childhood in China. Born Patricia Potter, she lived in Shanghai with her parents, older brother Johnny, and a handful of servants.

Although the Booker family was not Jewish, a good portion of Patricia Luce Chapman’s memoir includes aspects of Jewish life in Shanghai in the 1930s and 40s. She writes lovingly of Sir Victor Sassoon, the great Shanghai philanthropist who hosted children’s parties every year at his Cathay Hotel. She describes one party in particular that was garden themed and to which she wears a tailored dress fashioned after a rose.

Patty, as she was called in her younger years, attended the Kaiser Wilhelm German School while her brother, Johnny, attended the Shanghai American School. Her observations of one party in particular that was garden themed and to which she wears a tailored dress fashioned after a rose.

The atmosphere at school suddenly becomes even more frightening when her once friendly classmates start attending Hitler Youth programs. As an American, Patty is not expected to join them, nor would she be accepted. The Hitler Youth activities were all held in secret at night.

Although Patty’s family is open-minded and sympathetic to people from all backgrounds, they inadvertently hire a German nanny who supports Hitler. Although Patty’s family is open-minded and sympathetic to people from all backgrounds, they inadvertently hire a German nanny who supports Hitler.

By the fall of 1938, most of the non-German students leave Patty’s school. Yet she remains and is soon the only American at the school. Her parents are still oblivious about the changes in Germany and how they are affecting Patty’s education. In class, the students celebrate the Anschluss and are taught that new, dogmatic teachers who support the recently installed Nazi regime in Germany. Nazi banners are hung at school and the students salute Hitler each morning. Parades, marches, rallies, and meetings all become commonplace.

When Patty tells her parents about these changes, they tell her to wait and see what will happen.

The father finally understands what’s going on and is relieved Patty won’t be attending school there anymore. She starts the 1939 autumn semester at Johnny’s Shanghai American School.

The family’s last nanny is Erika, a Jewish refugee from Austria. Patty’s parents hire Erika as a favor to some Jewish friends in Shanghai and the children soon take to Erika as one of the family. Erika sometimes brings Patty to her family’s home, where Patty learns about what it’s like to be stateless and lose everything: jobs, money, possessions, property. Patty keeps in touch with Erika even after both leave Shanghai.

Although the Bookers do no want to leave Shanghai during the war, a brutal murder of a loved servant leaves them with no choice but to take their children out of China. Patty and Johnny go to the US with their mother while their father stays in Shanghai, where he is eventually imprisoned by the Japanese.

Life in America isn’t easy for Patty. Her new classmates make fun of her British accent and no one understands the life she left in Shanghai. That is until she meets Henry Luce III, whose father was born in China and was the publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines. The two marry and end up divorcing in the 1950s, but Patricia Luce Chapman goes on to remarry and continues to live in the US.

Another book that pertains to Jews in Shanghai during the war is Stuart Archer Cohen’s new novel, *This Is How It Really Sounds* (St. Martin’s Press, 2015). Victor Sas-soon also appears in this book, as Cohen writes in the opening pages of his book. “It was Victor Sassoon’s Shanghai: the real estate tycoon had built nearly all the signature buildings of the era. His dark art deco skyscrapers still gathered a sense of strange gothic foreboding about them.” (page 20-21).

The story is set in the United States and Shanghai, and centers around two characters both named Peter Harrington. One, goes by Pete and is a famous rock musician who stirs up trouble on tour in 1992 Shanghai when he publicly supported the students at Tiananmen. The other, known as Peter, is a notorious Bernie Madoff-type investor who took millions from clients and wreaked havoc on the US economy. Peter Harrington moves to Shanghai and dabbs in new investments there but basically lives a free and easy life as a pampered expat.

One of Peter’s victims is none other than Pete Harrington, the rock musician. So to get back at the investor, the musician hires former CIA hit man Charlie Pico to bring the two together so the musician can punch the investor to get revenge. Charlie Pico, in his eighties, is eager to return to Shanghai. He spent time there in 1946 as a young spy who took revenge on a Nazi officer who had destroyed the family of a Shanghai Jewish refugee.

Cohen romanticizes the mélange of characters in present day Shanghai that Pico and the two Harringtons encounter as “taxi dancers and bar girls, bankers and businessmen, traders, veterans, hustlers, police: people who at this moment looked as modern as they had looked in 1946, still unexamined by the curious backward gaze of the future.” (page 63).

Early parts of *This Is How It Really Sounds* tend to drag a bit, but all in all it’s an entertaining story and one that includes an important part of Jewish history during World War II.
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