



## JEWISH SAGES OF TODAY

*Profiles of Extraordinary People*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Andrea Gollin  
305.733.4530  
andrea@targumshlishi.org

### **WHO ARE TODAY'S JEWISH SAGES? BUY THE BOOK AND FIND OUT!**

*Jewish Sages of Today: Profiles of Extraordinary People*, edited by Aryeh Rubin  
\$16.95, 264 pages, Devora Publishing and Targum Shlishi, 978-1-934440-96-4, November 15, 2009

Miami, FL (September 14, 2009)—Who inspires us, makes us think, gives us hope? Who is making a difference in the Jewish world? *Jewish Sages of Today: Profiles of Extraordinary People*, edited by Aryeh Rubin (Devora Publishing and Targum Shlishi), contains profiles of twenty-seven accomplished individuals dedicated to improving the Jewish world.

#### **Who are the sages?**

The individuals profiled are an eclectic group, drawn from across the U.S. and Israel, from a variety of professions, ranging in religious observance, and representing an age span from their twenties to their eighties. There are fifteen men and twelve women. They include:

- A world-renowned, secular scientist turned Orthodox Jew who left the lab and now explores the nexus of science and religion
- The last Nazi hunter
- A man who has spent his career rescuing and preserving Yiddish books
- An internationally known teacher and Jewish feminist whose doorway into Jewish knowledge has been Shakespeare
- A philanthropist deeply committed to furthering Jewish knowledge, love of Israel, and to encouraging young Jews to meet, marry, and procreate
- A woman who left her high-powered political consulting firm to found a non-profit that advocates for Israel

### **Why buy this book?**

“There is a very real and urgent need in today’s culture for us to be aware of the example being set by those profiled in the book and others like them,” explains Aryeh Rubin, editor of *Jewish Sages of Today* and director of Targum Shlishi. “The people profiled in the book are living exemplary lives and are dedicated to Jewish values. In this dominant celebrity culture, it’s important to draw attention to true heroes, our sages. Our hope is that the book will inspire and motivate its readers to foster positive change in the Jewish world.”

### **How were the sages chosen?**

The good news is that choosing the sages was an excruciating process — there were so many remarkable people suggested that the book could easily have been three times as long. As part of the process, an editorial advisory board was established and several months were spent soliciting names from colleagues, the advisory board, and others and conducting research. The editorial advisory board reviewed the names and the research and contributed to the selection process.

### **You want names, don’t you?**

The sages profiled are, in alphabetical order: Yossi Abramowitz; Rachel Azaria; Michael Berenbaum; Mira Brichto; Ruth Calderon; Debbie Friedman; Yitz and Blu Greenberg; Judith Hauptman; Laurence Hoffman; Tobi Kahn and Nessa Rapoport; Aaron Lansky; Daniel Libeskind; Shalom Lipskar; Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi; Hankus Netsky; Robert Pollack; Dennis Prager; Gary Rosenblatt; Susan Weidman Schneider; Alice Shalvi; Michael Steinhardt; Adin Steinsaltz; Joseph Telushkin; Avivah Zornberg; and Efraim Zuroff.

### **About Aryeh Rubin, editor of *Jewish Sages of Today***

**Aryeh Rubin** is the founder and director of Targum Shlishi, a foundation dedicated to supporting innovative projects that promote positive change in the Jewish world. The foundation concentrates on four areas: education, women’s issues, Israel, and justice for Nazi war crimes. Mr. Rubin’s deep commitment to the survival of the Jewish people drives his desire for innovation and the exploration of new ideas. Mr. Rubin is also the founding partner and managing director of The Maot Group, an investment company. Prior to founding The Maot Group in 1991, Mr. Rubin was in the publishing field, first as the founder and publisher of *Jewish Living* magazine in the late 1970s and then as the publisher of the New York–based KSF Group, a medical publishing company.

His opinion pieces have appeared in *Jewish Week*, the *Jerusalem Report*, and *Moment Magazine*, and he has been profiled in articles in several publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Daily Business Review*, and the *Jewish Star Times*. Mr. Rubin received a bachelor of arts degree from Yeshiva University. He is married, has three daughters, and lives in Florida.

### **About the *Jewish Sages of Today* website and curriculum**

A website ([www.jewishsgesoftoday.org](http://www.jewishsgesoftoday.org)) for *Jewish Sages of Today* and a curriculum are both being developed. The website will supplement the book by including work by each of the individuals profiled — examples include audio and video of lectures and music performances, images of art, and book chapters, along with audio excerpts from interviews conducted for the

book and links to relevant websites and web resources. The website will also have a curriculum posted, applicable to students in grades eight through university.

### **About Targum Shlishi**

Targum Shlishi is dedicated to providing a range of creative solutions to problems facing Jewry today. Premised on the conviction that dynamic change and adaptation have historically been crucial to a vibrant and relevant Judaism and to the survival of its people, Targum Shlishi's initiatives are designed to stimulate the development of new ideas and innovative strategies that will enable Jewish life, its culture, and its traditions to continue to flourish. For more information on the foundation, visit its website at [www.targumshlishi.org](http://www.targumshlishi.org).

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*Profiles of Extraordinary People*

### ***Jewish Sages of Today: Profiles of Extraordinary People* edited by Aryeh Rubin (Devora Publishing and Targum Shlishi)**

#### **In Their Own Words: Today's Sages Speak**

“It’s amazing what you can achieve if you know what your aims are — what ideal you are striving for — if you succeed in enlisting as many people as you can to join you in the act, in the struggle to bring about the changes.” — **Alice Shalvi, PhD**

“The most important thing that we as Jews can do is to use the gifts that God has given us to help the people around us.” — **Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman**

“If children got their highest praise for when they performed kind acts, we’d raise a generation of people who most liked themselves when they were doing kind things. It would have the capacity down the road to elevate Jewish life and American life.” — **Rabbi Joseph Telushkin**

“You may be born Jewish, which means you have it in your genes, in your brain in some form, but it won't express itself naturally, except in extraordinary places. When I teach people, it's like teaching them to talk, to walk. I'm teaching them to get to their potential.” — **Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz**

“I want to be remembered not for all the many songs I wrote, but for helping people to feel and be empowered, to know their strengths and to know that special thing about themselves, that they are the most significant and holy being in the world, and that the person next to them is, too.” — **Debbie Friedman**

“Each one of us is an emissary of God [created] to fulfill a unique purpose of creation. We each have a fundamental, monumental mission that is incredible and that touches on the core of our being, and that gives us the single most important reason for existence, and which gives us passion for existence.” — **Rabbi Sholom Lipskar**

“My mantra in the past five years has become: What you have to remember is that the Holocaust was not a tsunami, an earthquake or a volcano. It didn't come down from heaven. It was done by human beings to other human beings.” — **Efraim Zuroff, PhD**



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### **Advance Praise for *Jewish Sages of Today: Profiles of Extraordinary People* edited by Aryeh Rubin (Devora Publishing and Targum Shlishi)**

“Today it is commonplace for observers to lament the sense of purposelessness that seems to preoccupy our private and public lives. And indeed, there is a pedigreed list of thinkers for such a claim. It is for this reason that Aryeh Rubin’s compilation of biographies of individuals in the contemporary Jewish world is so refreshingly welcome. These are diverse personalities who have made a notable difference in their effect on communal Jewish life. In illuminating for us these accomplishments, Rubin in his own right has provided models of ‘human beings of action’ that will surely have a salutary effect on those who aspire to wanting to make a difference by seeking guidance from those who live exemplary lives.”

—Ivan Berkowitz, New York

“How wonderful to share the stories of these inspiring and diverse Jewish thinkers and leaders with readers around the world.”

—Rabbi Leon Morris, executive director, Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning

“This is a must-read for all those involved in Jewish leadership and education. Aryeh Rubin has done an outstanding job of bringing together Jewish leaders from a wide variety of backgrounds. The book is a wonderful combination of the inspirational and visionary stories of the true Jewish heroes of this era. In this day and age of erosion of the hero's place in the Jewish world, this book is a breath of fresh air, driving positive change in the Jewish world. I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in contemporary Jewish leadership.”

—Gal Golod, executive vice president-Legal Affairs, Microheat, Farmington Hills, Michigan

“Thank you for the beautiful book on *Jewish Sages of Today*. What a great idea...Keep up the excellent work.”

—Rabbi Joshua Elkin, executive director, Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education

“A truly impressive cast of characters.”

—Gary Retelny, managing director, MSCI Inc.

“Thank you so very much for the *Jewish Sages* book—it’s spectacular!”  
—Ena Heller, executive director, Museum of Biblical Art, New York

“This well-done volume will help me in my work and my teaching.”  
—Cindy Chazan, vice president, Alumni and Community Development, The Wexner Foundation

“Many thanks for sending me a copy of *Jewish Sages*. It's wonderful to read about so many Jewish luminaries.”  
—Mark Verman, Larry and Leonore Zusman Professor of Judaic Studies, Wright State University

“I was truly inspired by reading about these people’s dedication to improving the Jewish world. Although I knew of some of these people before, my appreciation of their impressive and diverse endeavors was enhanced by the book. I have already shared some of the contents of the book and I certainly plan to share it with family and colleagues. Congratulations on your achievement of compiling these inspiring profiles and thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn from them.”  
—Eleanor Frankel, development officer, Teaneck, New Jersey

“*Jewish Sages of Today* was waiting for me on my desk when I returned from a pilgrimage to Auschwitz. Nothing could have been a more powerful contradiction to the devastating grief I felt than to be inspired by a cadre of deeply rooted, courageous and out-of-the-box Jews, who have made it their life’s mission to keep Judaism’s flame burning mightily in the world.”  
—Hedy Schleifer, MA, LMHC, Miami Beach, Florida

“When I first saw the title of this book, I expected a treatise on old men with long gray beards who study and peer over obscure texts all day. What I found was a refreshingly innovative approach to defining what is critical to determining how leaders impact and change society and values. For all the talk of *tikkun olam* as a popular mantra these days, who is it within the Jewish community that not only ‘talks the talk’ but also ‘walks the walk’? Here is where THESE sages make—and will continue to make a difference.

“Take for example Efraim Zuroff, who has quietly (and not so quietly) tracked down the most evil men of the past century and helped bring them to justice. His example is one of activism that will have a lasting effect on generations yet to come who will be able to look back and see how the perpetrators of the Holocaust managed to hide as ordinary people and how looks and appearances often shield very ugly behavior. Or Dennis Prager, whose focus on ‘ethical monotheism’ can be heard every day in a wonderfully stimulating, intelligent, and thoughtful radio presentation that breaks the mold of traditional talk shows and turns drive-time into a learning experience. The book also considers Gary Rosenblatt, a newspaper editor and writer in New York, a sage who impacts the community by taking often courageous looks into what are difficult to accept issues within the community.

“But this book also takes scholars who fit the old, traditional mold of sage and looks at their contributions as well. Blu and Rabbi Yitz Greenberg are sages both in the traditional sense and in the newer definition that Aryeh Rubin, the editor of this collection, has invoked to define what leadership really consists of. By reaching beyond the conventional to find today's ‘sages,’ this book tries to identify the type of person—and the type of activism—that will help set the tone for leadership and ultimately the future agenda of the Jewish nation. It is precisely the type of book that will have people (after perhaps first wincing a bit at what a ‘sage’ is) look into themselves and ask what they would like to see their children, their friends and themselves do as part of a proud and righteous people.”

—Irwin J Mansdorf, PhD, Ra’anana, Israel

“Thank you for sending me *Jewish Sages of Today*, which I’m reading with great interest. I especially enjoyed the chapter about Yitz Greenberg.”

—Herbert Gold, author of several books including *Still Alive, Fathers: A Novel in the Form of a Memoir*, and *Haiti: Best Nightmare on Earth*, San Francisco, California

“The method in which you strive to strengthen the Jewish community, namely by highlighting Jewish prominent figures, is a unique way to reach people’s hearts and minds. Upon reading your book we have received tremendous insight into your mission and have found that this is truly an effective means to achieving this objective. This [book]...is sure to improve the Jewish community as a whole... We wish you the utmost success as your book begins to circulate throughout Jewish communities nationally.”

—Daniel Rothner, founder and director, Areyvut, Teaneck, New Jersey

“A heartfelt congratulations on an excellent piece of work. I am certain that the volume and its soon to be released curriculum will be of tremendous value to the field.”

—Dr. Chaim Y. Botwinick, president/CEO, Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), Miami, Florida

“Today’s news headlines are as ominous as the economy. And the Jewish/Israel news stories are most often ones which highlight conflict. We need some good news, things to be happy about. And be proud of. Then comes your volume on Jewish sages. So first, I glance through the table of contents to see who you included. And like a kid flipping through baseball cards, I found myself saying, ‘Got him. Got him. Don’t got him,’ etc. You picked some great people. Then I started pondering who you missed... And then I smiled, because you can judge a book by its cover! Instant joy. Instant pride. Our community of scholars and role models is alive and well. I am exploring ideas as to how we might make good use of this resource in our shtetl...”

—Robert A. Seltzer, Esq., executive vice president, Jewish Federation of Atlantic and Cape May Counties, New Jersey

“An enlightening, personalized description of diverse Jewish personalities in a contemporary, pluralistic Jewish world. The editor, Aryeh Rubin, has brought together a fine collection of

Jewish personalities in American and Israeli society, who have made distinctive contributions to Jewish culture. Perhaps the best known of these is Adin Steinsaltz, an eminent Talmudist and Kabbalist, whose distinctive journey is profiled. Other Israeli figures of note include but are not limited to Avivah Zornberg, only the second Orthodox woman after Nechama Leibowitz to publish a Torah commentary, as well as Ephraim Zuroff, who is one of the last important Nazi hunters. These interviews evoke in the reader a desire to read each of the subject's books and memoirs, and for those already familiar with them to read further. What all of the figures profiled in this book have in common is an aversion to dogmatism, either Orthodox or anti-Orthodox. In this sense, it is more than a matter of looking for common ground. It is a matter of showing that distinctive contributions can be made from very different directions. The American personalities profiled are too numerous to mention individually, but include encounters with Michael Berenbaum, who worked for years as a central figure in establishing and guiding the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., Blu and Irving Greenberg, who have worked to make modern Orthodoxy more inclusive, and Michael Steinhardt, the major donor and guiding force behind the Revolutionary Birthright Israel program that has met with so much success. The book is congenial reading and promotes rather than forecloses further discourse.”

—Richard I. Sugarman, professor of religion, University of Vermont

“Thank you for spearheading this imaginative project...Glancing at the table of contents I am delighted to see that three master teachers who I have been privileged to learn with—Judith Hauptman at JTS and Adin Steinsaltz and Avivah Zornberg in Yerushlayim—are included among the sages. Several of the sages are people I have respected for years, but am unfamiliar with quite a few the others. I really am looking forward to my Shabbos afternoon reading!”—Ben Fireman, Hollywood, Florida

“It’s certainly a very enlightening and interesting book. It has opened my eyes about all the possibilities a Jewish person can contribute to Jewish survival in today’s world.”—Isaac Rosenberg, Aventura, Florida

“WOW, so incredibly impressed with this book. Kol Hakovod! An amazing effort by your team!”

—Sherri R. Heller, Esq., Miami, Florida

“I look forward to reviewing [Jewish Sages of Today] and using it as a reference.”—Abraham H. Foxman, national director, Anti-Defamation League

“I enjoyed the book very much for two reasons. First, I found the individual chapters well written and easy to read. The book offers interesting insight to the achievements of a broad group of Jewish doers around the world. Secondly, while I have heard about many of the individuals, it provided an introduction to me to important Jewish people to whom I would generally not be exposed. I found their backgrounds, what motivates them and their achievements inspiring. To the extent I knew about some of the people written about, it provided new information that only



further reinforced their high standing in the Jewish community and the world-at-large.”

—Lenny Wolfe, principal, The Cornerstone Group, Miami, Florida

“*Jewish Sages of Today* is a must-read for Jewish teens and adults. This incredible collection of visionaries from all areas of Jewish life is a treasure to be shared with all generations.”

—Jeanne Epstein, Florida regional director, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

“I very much look forward to reading and sharing this publication with our staff. I know that it would also be a very welcome addition to our library.”

—Joan Rosenbaum, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director, The Jewish Museum

“Very interesting selection of sages, fascinating reading. Finally a traditional Jew recognizes the intellectual contribution of scholars from all the denominations and spectrums of Judaism. In one volume you have a broad range of the scholars and sages of our generation, some obvious, some not. Would recommend to anyone that is interested in a bird’s eye view of current Jewish thinkers.”

—Peter Neustadter, Jerusalem and New York

“*Jewish Sages of Today* offers the reader insights into twenty-seven remarkable individuals through their inspirational stories. They are the Jewish heroes of today who through their activism are impacting current and future Jewish values.”

—Richard Bloom, Palm Beach, Florida

“This book identifies some very fascinating, and in some cases, lesser known personalities in the Jewish intellectual world. Considering their creative and rule-breaking approaches to millennia-old Jewish questions is both enlightening and consistent with the historical dialectic of our sages of old. This ought to be required reading for the next generation of Jewish aspirants.”

—A. Berkowitz, New York

“This is a very readable compendium of interesting biographies—each profile is about ten pages. These are useful interviews with more than aphoristic lessons. This is a worthy read for anyone (Jews and Non-Jews) who are interested in learning why people dedicate their lives to their culture. These “New Yorker”-type interviews are in themselves informative. Additionally, for those who don’t know who are the important thought leaders in the modern Jewish world, this is a must.”

—Keith M. Rosenbloom, managing member, CARE Capital Group, New York

“Thanks so much for editing and publishing *Jewish Sages of Today*. It is terrific. I love the very idea of the book, I love the agenda. It is fascinating, well-written and above all, inspirational. I read it non-stop, and enjoyed every minute of it. For me, it was exciting to see how many of the people I know who are your sages, and even more surprising were the people I knew nothing

about! I will pass the book around.”

—Matty Monheit, founder, Gemara Berura, Tel Aviv

“This is an inspirational and elegant book. I’m planning to buy several copies as holiday gifts.”—Jane Thibault, MA, MSSW, Ph.D., clinical gerontologist and clinical professor of family and geriatric medicine, University of Louisville School of Medicine

“This book has me re-inspired about working in the field of Jewish education, which I left after many years. Reading this book spurred me to think seriously about ways that I personally can help address some of the weaknesses in Jewish education, perhaps as a consultant.”—Jodi Freedman, middle school teacher, Oakland, California

“What a wonderfully written book. This book is so important to anyone inspired by Jewish History and its great leaders. To learn about the modern sages and their extraordinary accomplishments is an inspiration to all. This is a great book for everyone, especially our youth, because it should instill in them a great sense of pride in the Jewish people and their heritage. A fine piece of work and kudos to Aryeh Rubin and his staff for putting this important work together for all of us to relish, learn and enjoy.”—John Tentrees, Boston, Massachusetts