

# Author tells stories within stories



Leora Freedman

**BILL GLADSTONE**  
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

While in the final stages of completing her third novel, Toronto author Leora Freedman realized there were many pieces she had written for the book that would not find a place in the finished manuscript.

Her solution – and the solution of many writers seeking new ways to communicate with readers in the Internet age – was to start a blog, posting many of the stories that did not survive the novel's final cut on the web.

With her novel, *The Daughter Who Got Away*, scheduled for publication later this year by Yotzeret, a small Jewish publishing house in St. Paul, Minn., Freedman is hoping to build interest and an online readership by putting a series of very short stories on her website, jewishshortstories-

online.com.

"While working on this project, I realized that there was a whole genre that I had never explored, called flash fiction," she said. "There are a lot of people writing these stories that are no more than 300 to 500 words, and there are literary journals devoted to this form. I realized that's what I was doing when writing this book. It's almost like writing a prose poem in a way. I'm telling a whole story in a very compressed space."

Born in New York City and raised in Connecticut, Freedman attained a master's degree in fiction writing at the University of Arizona and spent about a decade in Israel, teaching English at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan University. For the past 10 years, she's been living in Toronto, where she works as an English instructor and consultant at the University of Toronto.

Set in the 1980s, *The Daughter Who Got Away* tells the story of an adventurous mother and daughter. The 70-ish mother is a New York-area artist, and the daughter, in her late 30s, has gone to live in the wilds of British Columbia.

"The mother is going through a crisis in her life and decides to take a trip to visit her daughter," Freedman explains. "The book revolves around this journey, which is also like an inner journey for her. The mother has recently lost her partner and is going through a re-evaluation of self."

The Canadian aspect of Freedman's "life-affirming" novel is "very important, I think, because the mother is coming from New York, and she's experiencing life in a small Jewish community [as well as] life in the bush for the first time, and this is a very powerful experience for her," Freedman said.

Through the technique of stories embedded within stories, the book explores the family's past in 1920s Palestine and as

immigrants to America. Freedman based the character of the mother on her own late mother-in-law, with whom she conducted hours of taped interviews.

"With the blog, I've been going further with the flash fiction idea. I'm experimenting with how much I can tell in a very small space, and I sometimes enhance the stories with some historical background. For one story on Yiddish theatre, for example, I did a little research in the YIVO

[Institute for Jewish Research] archives and tried to give the readers a little more context for the personal stories."

Freedman's first novel, *The Ivory Pomegranate*, focuses on university students exploring their Jewish identities while struggling with a wave of anti-Israelism on campus. Her second novel, *Parachuting*, deals with a teenage girl's struggles with her Jewish identity in urban America in the 1970s. ■

**THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS**

**CJN**

SEPTEMBER 11, 2014 • 16 ELUL, 5774