

Shelf Awareness

January 2024

There are so many ways to keep Judaism alive such as celebrating Shabbat and saying Kaddish. Even the little things like “mazal tov” on hearing good news is a reminder that rich customs reach back thousands of years.

Many writers have given us stories about Jewish life (so terribly important) that help us remember who we are.

Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916) from Russia, tells us amazing stories from his childhood. He was a central figure in Yiddish literature, the vernacular language of nearly all East European Jews, and produced over forty volumes in Yiddish. *Tevye the Dairyman* was published in 1894. Aleichem's narratives were notable for the naturalness of his characters' speech and the accuracy of his descriptions of shtetl life.

Sholem Aleichem died at his Bronx apartment in 1916 and is buried in the main (old) section of Mount Carmel Cemetery in Queens, New York City.

Chiam Potok (1929-2002) born in Brooklyn to parents who emigrated from Poland, started writing fiction at the age of 16. In 1949, at the age of twenty, his stories were published in the literary magazine of Yeshiva University. In 1950, Potok graduated summa cum laude with a BA in English Literature. After four years of study at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he was ordained as a Conservative rabbi.

In 1964, the Potoks moved to Brooklyn, where Chaim became the managing editor of the magazine *Conservative Judaism* and joined the faculty of the Teachers' Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary and In 1967, Potok published *The Chosen*.

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