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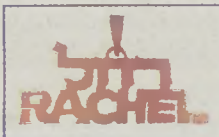
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## Israeli Author Meir Shalev to Visit Charlotte

Wednesday, March 26, Gorelick Hall, 7:30 PM

Shalev is considered the "Woody Allen of Israel." Here is a review of his latest book from the Jewish Book World, a publication of the Jewish Book Council. *A PIGEON AND A BOY* Meir Shalev; Evan Fallenberg, trans. Schocken Books, 2007. 311 pp. \$25.00 ISBN: 978-0-8052-4251-5

Review by Michael Hoschander Malen

From *The Odyssey* onward, the search for home has been a compelling literary theme, but few have done it with more style than Meir Shalev in his latest novel, *A Pigeon and a Boy*. Shalev explores the meaning and the essence of home in a story both unusual and

beautiful, that positively soars.

Protagonist Yair Mendelson is a tour guide escorting visitors the length and breadth of his homeland, Israel. His mother has emphasized from his earliest childhood that nothing is more important than a home of one's own in which to express oneself fully and with satisfaction. "Hello, house" he was taught to say when he walked through the door at the end of the day and then to await the house's answer of welcome. Alternating flashback chapters follow a character nicknamed the Baby, perhaps because he nevergrows up to have a home of his own. The Baby trains homing



Meir Shalev

pigeons for use by the fledgling Israeli army during the War of Independence. Through his job as pigeon handler, the Baby learns that homing pigeons (and people, too) must love their home if they are to return to it. This theme echoes and re-echoes throughout the book in ways both large and small from the War of Independence establishing a homeland to the joys of home renovation. It is home, the author makes us understand, that is the source of all things good. Friendship, security, love, passion, optimism and hope, all these are rooted in the nest one builds and feathers and to which one returns when day is done.

The connection between Yair and the Baby is a unique and unexpected plot twist that I will allow the reader to discover for him—or herself. Suffice it to say that this lyrical tale flies high above the crowd. ☆

Michael Hoschander Malen is a librarian and editor of reference books. Review reprinted with permission from the Jewish Book World, a publication of the Jewish Book Council.



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