

## Anna's Promise, new book by local author

by D.G. Schulman

Slipping between early twentieth century Poland and modern American life, *Anna's Promise* weaves together the story of one Jewish family across three generations. The novel follows the journey of Anna, Dovid's daughter, a young woman who endures the hardships and persecution of WWI Poland to keep a promise made to her father. In 1975, through her relationship with her grandson, Anna discovers the strength of her own convictions as the family battles gangsters, the law, and faces the ultimate test of love and loyalty.

*Anna's Promise* offers an engrossing look at Jewish life in 1915 Poland, where survival depended upon escaping religious persecution, violence, and poverty. One of the central themes of the book is assimilation. By 1975, Anna's family enjoyed social and economic integration in America, able to host lavish bar mitzvah celebrations at the most elegant and popular venues. Yet, Anna looked back and wished she'd made some different choices.

*Anna's Promise*, by local Ann Arbor author D.G. Schulman, is available locally at Schuler Books and for preorder at Amazon, BarnesandNoble.com, and booksellers nationally and worldwide. Publication: May 1 2023.

### Excerpt from Anna's Promise, Chapter Twenty — The Wager

Siedlce, Poland

Dovid emerged from the shadows of the portal and bolted for the stockade door. The lock held it tight. Adrenaline surged through him, and he thought only of his daughter Sora and prayed that he was not too late. He gripped the lock in his muscular hands and twisted it until it bent, released, and dropped to the dirt. He slammed his shoulder into the door, and it flung open. Sora was curled in a fetal position on the crate, sobbing and shaking. He wrapped her in the brown wool coat and scooped her into his arms as though she were still five years old. Concealed in the shadows, he stole through the streets, carrying his daughter home.

Chana and Esther were picking up broken dishes when Dovid returned with Sora. "Thank God you're back!" His wife kissed Sora's tear-streaked face and swept back her disheveled hair. "Are you hurt?"

"Not hurt, Mama." Sora suddenly let go and vehemently sobbed. Tears streamed down her face. "I feel filthy from him touching me." Her lips trembled, and she wiped her mouth with the sleeve of her coat. "If not for that officer ... he wouldn't have stopped." She shivered uncontrollably. "Tatty, why do they hate us so?"

"Sorale, that is a long story for another time. Esther, take the children to your sister's at once." Dovid pushed their coats toward them. "Stay out of sight and move quickly."

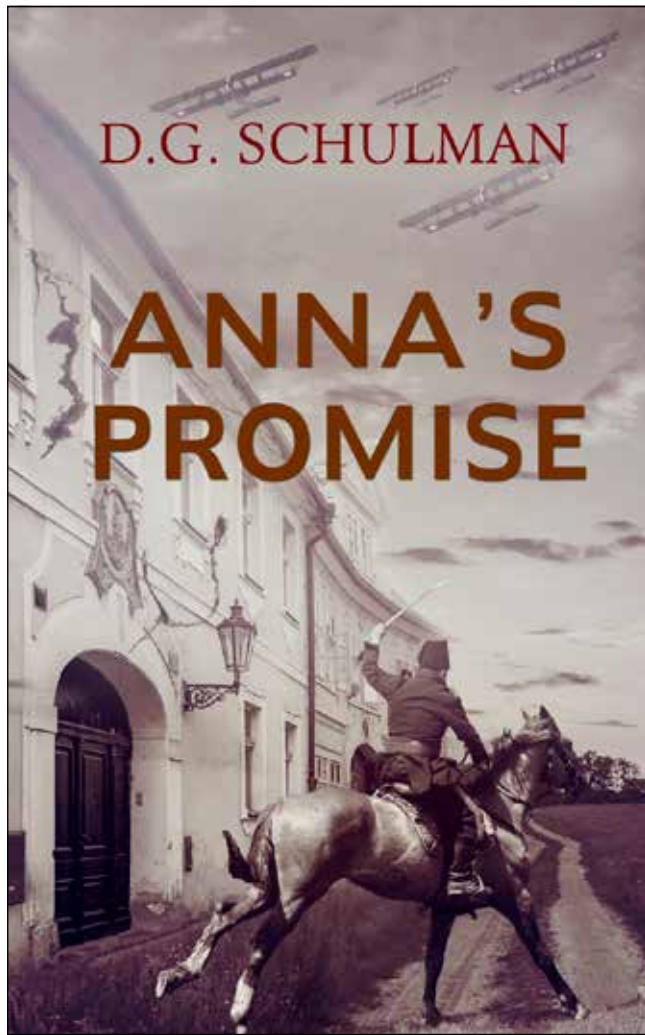
"Not without you!" Esther wiggled the sleeping children into sweaters and coats.

"Don't argue!" Dovid's jaw was set firm. He kissed each sleepy child's head and forced them into the street.

He knew Aleksandrov would be back for Sora when she was not where he left her. His appetite was whet and not satisfied. Dovid pushed down his fury, drew a deep breath, and paced as he planned a scheme to confound the commandant. While the plan was thin, it was all he had. He dropped into his seat at the head of the table, waiting for the Cossacks to return.

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The cock crowing alerted Dovid to the first light. The dragoons hurled open the door and lined up on either side of the entry at attention as



Aleksandrov stomped forward like a feral beast.

"Where's my daughter?" Dovid jumped to his feet and confronted Aleksandrov, filling the silence before Aleksandrov could speak. "What have you done to her?" Dovid willed his heart not to pound and his palms not to sweat while concealing that he knew his daughter was safe. The broken glass on the warped plank floor cracked beneath his boots.

Aleksandrov looked confused. His icy eyes darted around the apartment. "Where is your family?" he shouted in Russian. He flung open the bedroom doors and scanned every crevice. The Cossacks flew in all directions, overturning furniture and emptying closets and cupboards.

"I want my daughter back," Dovid repeated, pretending he was not the one who rescued her.

"Are you a gambling man?" Aleksandrov smiled.

"I'll make you a wager." Dovid sized up Aleksandrov. "We arm wrestle, and if I win, you back off, and I get my daughter back." He stood resolute as though unaware that he was outnumbered and outgunned.

"And if I win, what do I get?" Aleksandrov's nostrils flared, and he smiled with amusement.

"My other daughter." Dovid stood eyeball to eyeball with Aleksandrov. Neither backed down.

The dragoon gathered around the table, and broken glass screeched beneath their boots. Aleksandrov removed his saber and his tunic. Hairy as a bear, he stepped close to the table with his right foot forward and placed his el-

bow on the table.

Dovid removed his wool coat and rolled up the sleeves of his white shirt. While physical strength mattered, he knew this was as much about positioning as strength. He placed his elbow on the table, tightened his core muscles, and opposed Aleksandrov. The two men gripped each other's hand. The goal was to pin the other's arm onto the surface of the table, the winner's arm over the loser's.

Mikola slammed his palm on the table, and the wrestling began. In an instant, merriment filled the room, and the Cossacks began their howls of encouragement and support for their commandant. Aleksandrov tried to rotate his hand over his opponent, and Dovid rotated his shoulder and body in the direction he wanted Aleksandrov's arm to go. Aleksandrov twisted his wrist toward his chest and applied pressure. Dovid recognized the classic top roll and countered with a pulling motion and moved Aleksandrov's hand toward him, applying force with his back and shoulders. Both men grimaced, and Aleksandrov grunted.

Dovid visualized Sora and Chana frozen in time as children playing in the park and laughing with gaiety and innocence. A surge of strength rose up in him. As Aleksandrov pushed in one direction, Dovid pulled in the other. Slowly, Aleksandrov's arm inched closer to the table's surface. Dovid curled his thumb underneath to secure a tighter grip and continued to pull, drawing strength from his back and shoulders, until Aleksandrov was pinned to the table.

Aleksandrov's nostrils flared, and then his expression quickly changed to joviality, and he slapped his opponent on the back.

"Where's my daughter?" Dovid demanded, concealing that he had knowledge of her whereabouts.

"I let her go when I was finished with her," Aleksandrov sneered, acting like he was in control. "If she comes home, she's yours." He wiped the sweat from his chest and buttoned his tunic. Then he secured his belt with the saber. With a single motion of his hand, his soldiers sprang to attention and marched behind him into the street.

Dovid slammed the door, threw his head back, and raised his arms above his shoulders in a punching motion. But within a moment, wariness and disbelief consumed him. Why did he think Aleksandrov would honor any deal? He grabbed his coat and rushed out the back, taking a circuitous route to reunite with his family. ■

## AA Orthodox Minyan in April

For information about all events, please visit [annarborminyan.org/announcements](http://annarborminyan.org/announcements) or contact [rabbayael@annarborminyan.org](mailto:rabbayael@annarborminyan.org)

### Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat Maariv Service

Every Friday evening, beginning 20-30 minutes before sunset. Michigan Hillel.

### Shabbat Morning Service

Every Saturday morning, 9:30 a.m. Michigan Hillel.

### Parsha Party with Morah Milka

Children's programming for "walkers and talkers." Every Saturday morning, 10:30 a.m. Michigan Hillel.

### Shabbat Mincha Service

Every Saturday afternoon, approximately 30 minutes before sunset. Michigan Hillel.

### Daily Minyan

Shacharit services are held jointly with Chabad Monday-Friday at 7:30 a.m. and Sunday at 8:45 a.m. Weekday Shacharit is at Hillel on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and at Chabad on Sunday, Monday and Friday. Mincha and Maariv are normally held Sunday-Friday at Hillel, at times that vary throughout the year.

### Parsha Lunch and Learn

April 19 at 12:30 p.m. to explore themes of the weekly Torah portion in the Book of Exodus. On Zoom.

### Women's Rosh Chodesh Group

April 22 at 4 p.m. for Shabbat afternoon tea, text study and shmoozing ■

## Pardes Hannah events in April

Please check the Pardes Hannah website (<https://pardeshannah.org/>) for the latest information, including location of in-person events, registration links for Zoom, and other details on these or any of our services, rituals, circles, or teachings, or call Renee Robbins at 734-904-5459.

### Shabbat Morning Services

Saturday, April 1, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

### Study Session on the Shema

Saturday, April 15, 3–5 p.m.

### Rosh Chodesh Online Minyan

Friday, April 21, 9–10:15 a.m.

### Rosh Chodesh Iyyar Circle

Monday, April 24, 7–8:30 p.m. ■