



Born To Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All of its Moods

Michael Wex

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A delightful excursion through the Yiddish language, the culture it defines and serves, and the fine art of complaint. Throughout history, Jews around the world have had plenty of reasons to lament. And for a thousand years, they've had the perfect language for it. Rich in color, expressiveness, and complexity, Yiddish has proven incredibly useful and durable. Its wonderful phrases and idioms impeccably reflect the mind-set that has enabled the Jews of Europe to survive a millennium of unrelenting persecution . . . and enables them to kvetch about it! Michael Wex—professor, scholar, translator, novelist, and performer—takes a serious yet unceasingly fun and funny look at this remarkable kvetch-full tongue that has both shaped and has been shaped by those who speak it. Featuring chapters on curse words, food, sex, and even death, he allows his lively wit and scholarship to roam freely from Sholem Aleichem to Chaucer to Elvis. Perhaps only a khokhem be-layle (a fool, literally a "sage at night," when there's no one around to see) would care to pass up this endearing and enriching treasure trove of linguistics, sociology, history, and folklore—an intriguing appreciation of a unique and enduring language and an equally fascinating culture.

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