



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

Michael Wex

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As the main spoken language of the Jews for more than a thousand years, Yiddish has had plenty to lament, plenty to conceal. Its phrases and expressions paint a comprehensive picture of the mind-set that enabled the Jews of Europe to survive persecution: they never stopped kvetching about God, gentiles, children, and everything else.

In *Born to Kvetch*, Michael Wex looks at the ingredients that went into this buffet of disenchantment and examines how they were mixed together to produce an almost limitless supply of striking idioms and withering curses. *Born to Kvetch* includes a wealth of material that's never appeared in English before.

This is no *bobe mayse* (cock-and-bull story) from a *khokhem be-layle* (idiot, literally a "sage at night" when no one's looking), but a serious yet fun and funny look at a language. From *tukhes to goy*, *meshugener to kvetch*, Yiddish words have permeated and transformed English as well. Through the fascinating history of this kvetch-full tongue, Michael Wex gives us a moving and inspiring portrait of a people, and a language, in exile.

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