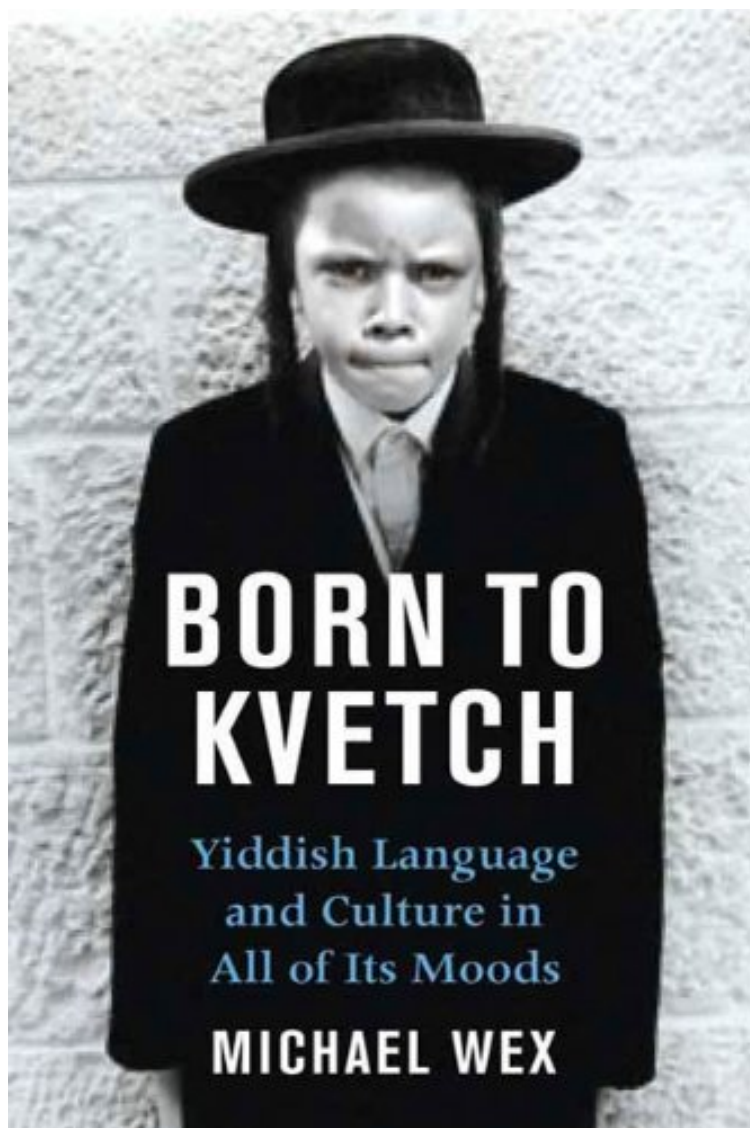


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Born To Kvetch: Yiddish Language and Culture in All Its Moods



Par Michael Wex
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAs the main spoken language of the Jews for more than a thousand years, Yiddish has had plenty to lament, plenty to conceal. Its phrases, idioms, and expressions paint a comprehensive picture of the mind-set that enabled the Jews of Europe to survive a millennium of unrelenting persecution: they never stopped kvetching---about God, gentiles, children, food, and everything (and anything) else. They even learned how to smile through their kvetching and express satisfaction in the form of complaint.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

(which get a chapter all to themselves). Born to Kvetch includes a wealth of material that's never appeared in English before. You'll find information on the Yiddish relationship to food, nature, divinity, and humanity.

There's even a chapter about sex. 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 that both shaped and was shaped by those who spoke it. From tukhes to goy, meshugener to kvetch, Yiddish words have permeated and transformed English as well. Through the idioms, phrases, metaphors, and fascinating history of this kvetch-full tongue, Michael Wex gives us a moving and inspiring portrait of a people, and a language, in exile. From Publishers Weekly Starred . Fortunately, despite its title and cover photo, this is not a kitschy book about a folksy language spoken by quaint, elderly Jews. It is, rather, an earthy romp through the lingua franca of Jews, which has roots reaching back to the Hebrew Bible and which continues to thrive in 21st-century America. Canadian professor, translator and performer Wex has an academic's breadth of knowledge, and while he doesn't ignore your bubbe's tsimmes, he gives equal time to the semantic nuances of putz, schmuck, shlong and shvants. Wex organizes his material around broad, idiosyncratic categories, but like the authors of the Talmud (the source for a large number of Yiddish idioms), he strays irrepressibly beyond the confines of any given topic. His lively wit roams freely, and Rabbi Akiva and Sholem Aleichem collide happily with Chaucer, Elvis and Robert Petrie. Academics, and others, will be disappointed at the lack of source notes, and a few errors have crept in (the fifth day of Sukkot is not Hoshana Rabba, for instance). Overall, however, this treasure trove of linguistics, sociology, history and folklore offers a fascinating look at how, through the centuries, a unique and enduring language has reflected an equally unique and enduring culture. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Revue de presse Wise, witty and altogether wonderful.... (New York Times) Required reading. (New York Post)