



Yiddish: A Nation of Words

Miriam Weinstein

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About a thousand years ago, European Jews began speaking a language that was quite different from the various tongues and dialects that swirled around them. It included Hebrew, a touch of the Romance and Slavic languages, and a large helping of German. In a world of earthly wandering, this pungent, witty, and infinitely nuanced speech, full of jokes, puns, and ironies, became the linguistic home of the Jews, the bond that held a people together.

Here is the remarkable story of how this humble language took vigorous root in Eastern European shtetls and in the Jewish quarters of cities across Europe; how it achieved a rich literary flowering between the wars in Europe and America; how it was rejected by emancipated Jews; and how it fell victim to the Holocaust. And how, in yet another twist of destiny, Yiddish today is becoming the darling of academia. *Yiddish* is a history as story, a tale of flesh-and-blood people with manic humor, visionary courage, brilliant causes, and glorious flaws. It will delight everyone who cares about language, literature, and culture.

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