

[Free] Life is With People : The Culture of the Shtetl

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Mark Zborowski, Elizabeth Herzog

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Mark Zborowski, Elizabeth Herzog : Life is With People : The Culture of the Shtetl before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Life is With People : The Culture of the Shtetl:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Poignant and InformativeBy CustomerThis book was recommended to me as something every Jewish person from Eastern Europe who is at all interested about their past should read. Since I fit the description, I decided to give it a try. It was not disappointing. This book is written as a work of anthropology, where the authors make an attempt to describe the worldview of the shtetl as fully as possible, and to describe what it was like to live in the shtetl. Some parts of the book read like a primer on Judaism, which is necessary to understand the context behind the shtetl life. But, it is by no means a primer on Judaism. It is a description of the main aspects of shtetl life, such as religious celebrations, marriage, education, men's and women's roles, etc. The book is written in a lively voice that shows the enthusiasm and interest of the authors. The best part of reading this book for me was recognizing the "voices" of my grandparents in quotes from interviews with former shtetl residents, which were a main source for this book. Apparently, classic gems such as "Woe is me, you're out without a hat again! You'll put me into an early grave!" and "No evil eye!" have a long shtetl pedigree. I also think that it let me better understand certain parts of the American Jewish culture, particularly Jewish political preferences and attitudes towards charity and education. One thing that I think the authors could've done better is to differentiate between uniquely Jewish aspects of the culture and the non-Jewish culture of Eastern Europe. Some cultural aspects described

as Jewish actually belonged just as easily to the Ukrainians or the Poles, or so I understand from living in that part of the world. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A treasure of a book that should be brought back to print. By Morton Hertz This is an amazing account of what life was like for the Jews who lived in Poland and Eastern Europe for so many centuries before being murdered and decimated by the Nazis. It is a deeply thoughtful and philosophical reflection of how life attains the highest level of meaning and purpose through being intimately and intricately connected with the culture you are born into. The authors, sociologists from Columbia University have produced a beautifully written and scholarly work that was a pleasure for me to read. They explain how daily life and Judaism were so interwoven into the fabric of the lives of these people. The explanations of Judaism and how it is a blueprint for living through their example is truly excellent. As a child of Holocaust survivors, this book supplied a lot of answers to questions my parents were not able to adequately answer and I am very grateful. It is almost unbelievable that it was written sixty five years ago shortly after the end of World War II and such a shame that it is out of print. I was glad to at least be able to get this used copy through . I wish that it could somehow be brought back to print in a new edition. It greatly deserves being widely read. I just finished it and am already thinking of reading it again, there is so much in it to learn and relearn. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Life is With People : The Culture of the Shtetl By Sunny Day This book is an old favorite which I keep giving away so others can share the enjoyment. Since I feel the need to own a copy at all times, I am always looking for it again. It tells in fascinating detail of a destroyed and lost world about which little is known, that of the Jewish people living in tiny settlement villages in Eastern Europe and in constant peril from their violent, bigoted neighbors. It is not a dry history book, however, but inhabited by very real, often charming characters whose stories should resonate with American Jews, most of whom are descended from such people.

Over many hundreds of years the Shtetl, the small-town Jewish community of Eastern Europe, developed a way of life uniquely its own, bearing witness to the rich creative powers of the Jewish people and its faith. Today the Shtetl no longer exists. 'Life is With People' is a study of this rich but vanished past.