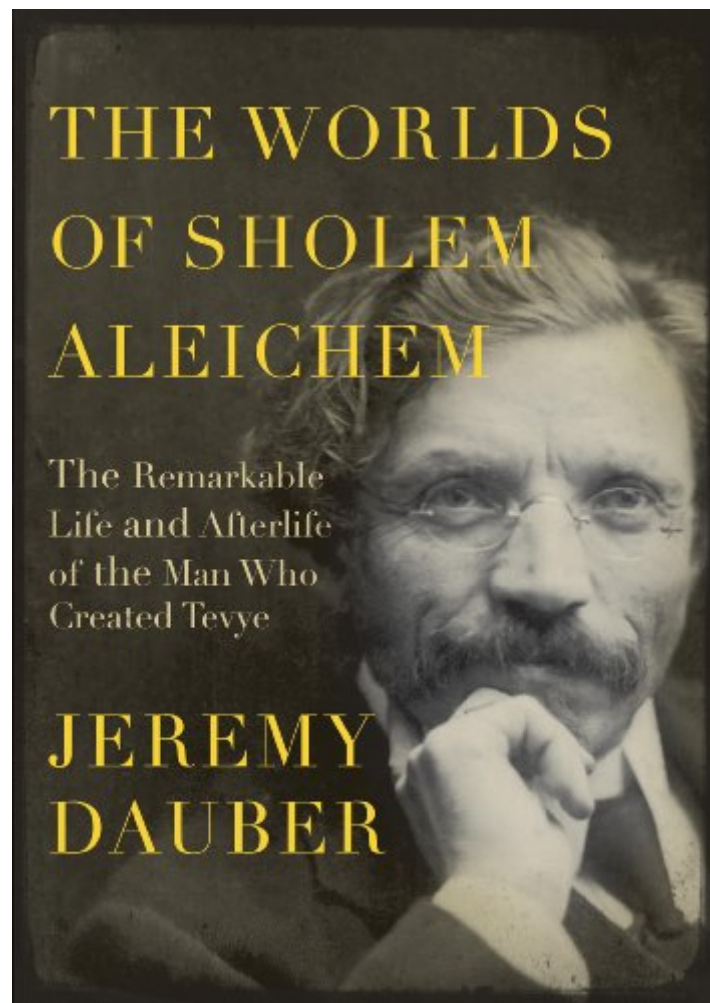


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The Worlds Of Sholem Aleichem: The Remarkable Life And Afterlife Of The Man Who Created Tevye (Jewish Encounters Series)



Synopsis

Part of the Jewish Encounters series
The first comprehensive biography of one of the most beloved authors of all time: the creator of Tevye the Dairyman, the collection of stories that inspired Fiddler on the Roof. A Novelist, playwright, journalist, essayist, and editor, Sholem Aleichem was one of the founding giants of modern Yiddish literature. The creator of a pantheon of characters who have been immortalized in books and plays, he provided readers throughout the world with a fascinating window into the world of Eastern European Jews as they began to confront the forces of cultural, political, and religious modernity that tore through the Russian Empire in the final decades of the nineteenth century. A But just as compelling as the fictional lives of Tevye, Golde, Menakhem-Mendl, and Motl was Sholem Aleichem's own life story. Born Sholem Rabinovich in Ukraine in 1859, he endured an impoverished childhood, married into fabulous wealth, and then lost it all through bad luck and worse business sense. Turning to his pen to support himself, he switched from writing in Russian and Hebrew to Yiddish, in order to create a living body of literature for the Jewish masses. He enjoyed spectacular success as both a writer and a performer of his work throughout Europe and the United States, and his death in 1916 was front-page news around the world; a New York Times editorial mourned the loss of "the Jewish Mark Twain." But his greatest fame lay ahead of him, as the English-speaking world began to discover his work in translation and to introduce his characters to an audience that would extend beyond his wildest dreams. In Jeremy Dauber's magnificent biography, we encounter a Sholem Aleichem for the ages. (With 16 pages of black-and-white illustrations)

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Customer Reviews

I love reading about the nineteenth century so I was inclined to purchase this book. This is far more interesting and engaging than I anticipated. First off, you learn about the vicissitudes of Sholom Aleichem's life. Second, the author, Jeremy Dauber, summarizes aspects of Jewish and world history so that you understand the context within which the events of Sholom Aleichem's life unfolded. This is a good way to review all the history that you "learned" in college when you were really sleeping through lectures. Weren't you? There are footnotes, but the prose is not bogged down in research or in overly complicated academic language. The author summarizes many of Sholom Aleichem's works and analyzes their significance in the canon. I forgot that I stashed a collection of Sholom Aleichem's work in my office when the library was getting rid of extra/old books. Now I will be able to use Dauber's discussions to choose which stories to read first. The final section explains how his works were slightly changed depending on the politics of who was presenting them at a specific time. All in all, the book explains why the cliché line from "Sunrise, Sunset" is a great summary of Sholom Aleichem's perspective on life -- "One season following another, laden with happiness and tears." I enjoyed reading this book and I learned a lot from it.

If you read one more book, it should be Jeremy Dauber's, *The Worlds of Sholom Aleichem*. If you have already read it, then you will agree that if you read only one more book, you should read this one again. Insofar as Jews were at the center of modernization of the western world, Sholom Aleichem was at the center of that Jewish experience. Dauber explains Sholom Aleichem in a clear narrative, deftly relating biographical details to details in Sholom Aleichem's stories and essays, all in a style that echoes Sholom Aleichem's own engaging literary style and humane sensibility. It is as though the reader encounters Professor Dauber on a train, and Dauber says, "Yesterday, I met a man who asked me to tell you about the most extraordinary person . . ." Few will read Sholom Aleichem in the original Yiddish. Thankfully, Jeremy Dauber is available to all the world.

Sholem Aleichem was a humorist. He had a serious side to be sure, but the great pleasure from

reading his short stories and some his novels (not so much his plays, which are of inferior quality) is that they are FUNNY. That does not come out from reading Dauber's biography. Furthermore he insists on explaining every thing Sholem Aleichem wrote in terms of what was going on in his personal life or in the current events in the society in which he lived. Writers have creative minds that do not work this way. In my opinion, Dauber is a better biographer than he is a literary critic. That said, my four star rating means that is still an excellent book and being the only biography of Sholem Aleichem, there is nothing else to compare it to. Hats off (or on, if you are observant) to Dauber for completing this project.

The subject is interesting but I found the endless run-on sentences to be confusing and distracting and the folksy tone to be annoying. I don't know how this got in print with its poor writing style. Such a shame as the topic deserved much much better.

Great piece. Eminently readable. Good picture of the man without all of the heavy, philosophical clutter that, often in books like this, obfuscate the picture of the man and his times.

Sholem Alechem is a one of a kind look into the heart of a man that was advanced far beyond anyone I know. Deep,, Loving, and spirited is how I see this book and writer. I wish I would have known Sholem Aleichem but this book allows me to know him through his life's journey and I speak Yiddish so believe me he is a lighthouse and the writing is beautiful. Leon

The detailed history of this man, and the way in which "Fiddler On The Roof" was written and produced was not only enlightening, but also gives a very large insight into the history of the times.

Excellent and authoritative book. Very well written by a brilliant Yiddish literature scholar. I await Prof. Dauber's future masterpieces. Prof. Dauber brings a breath of fresh air to our appreciation of Yiddish literature.

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