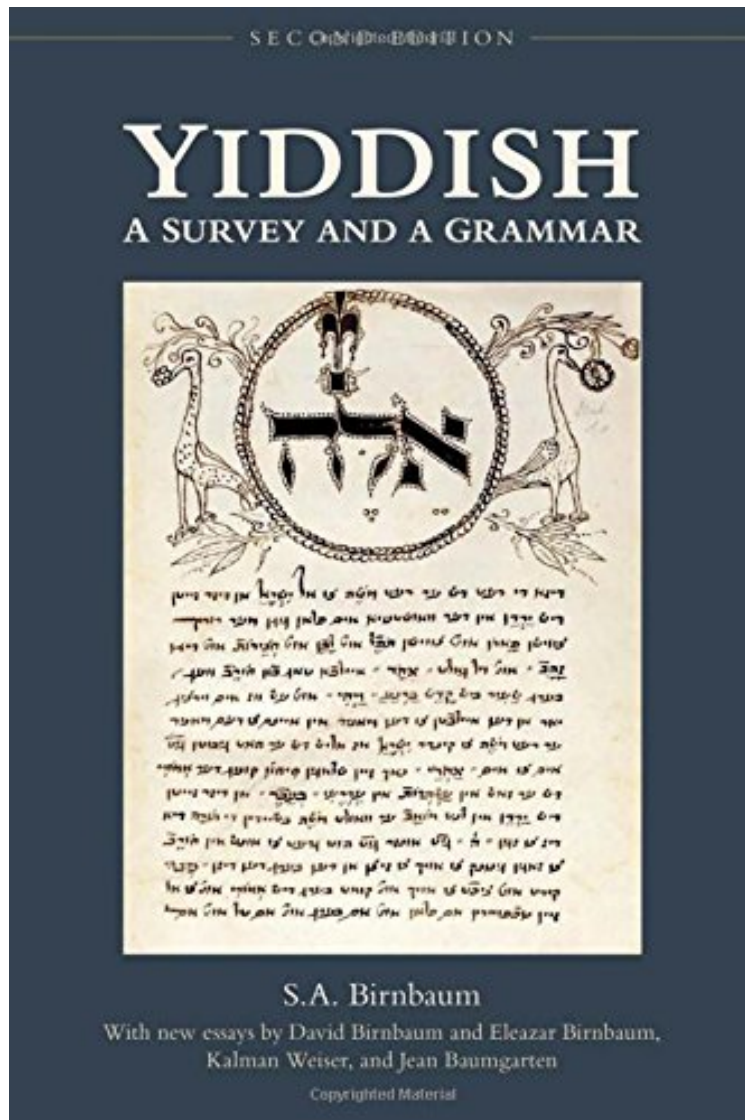


(Get free) Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar, Second Edition

Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar, Second Edition

S.A. Birnbaum

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S.A. Birnbaum : Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar, Second Edition before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar, Second Edition:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A great disappointment--A groyse antoyshungBy M. J. SweetI've been an amateur Yiddishist for many years, and read the language fluently; I bought this book on the strength of a glowing description on a usually reliable Yiddish studies website. It claims to be an alternative to the many Yiddish grammars and textbooks based on YIVO spelling and pronunciation, which take as the standard the NE ("Litvak") dialect, minus some of its unusually features. This form of standard Yiddish was used by the mostly secular Jewish

intellectuals in pre-war Vilna and elsewhere in the Jewish world, and is the language taught in college and other courses in N. America. S.A. Birnbaum, all honor to his memory, was a great Yiddish scholar and teacher; himself Orthodox, he opposed Max Weinreich and others who followed the YIVO system, and advocated teaching of Yiddish based on the Southern or Central dialect, essentially the language of the Polish Jews before WWII, and similar to the Yiddish used by contemporary Kharedi (Chassidic) speakers. A noble goal. However, this book is unusable, at least for non-linguists; it is full of phonological detail and abstruse grammatical terminology (and I'm not unfamiliar with grammatical terms). Furthermore, almost all of the Yiddish readings and examples are not presented in Yiddish script, but in Birnbaum's own transliteration system; it is unclear why he had to invent such a system, when the YIVO transliteration can perfectly well represent the Polish dialect, or if he found this too *treyf*, the neutral IPA would have sufficed. Instead it is a weird-looking system of his own, that I imagine few people will take the trouble to learn. As a way of learning Yiddish, this book is quite unsuitable for the non-linguist; besides its crabbed style it is poorly laid out and organized. Weinreich's *College Yiddish* remains a good way to learn basic Yiddish grammar and reading, despite the old-fashioned nature of many of its readings. There are more recent textbooks, e.g. Sheva Zucker's two volume "Yiddish" that are more entertaining to the contemporary learner, and Dovid Katz's "Grammar of the Yiddish Language" is lucid and readable. It would be wonderful if someone would write an as accessible textbook-grammar based on the Polish or Kharedi dialects--perhaps Birnbaum's book would provide some useful raw material for such a work.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Renee Miller
important Yiddish book...don't miss it!
7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Great reference book for Central Yiddish dialect - not for learning Yiddish
By rm
Note: I have older copies of this book, so I'm not sure what changes were made in the new one. Assuming that there were no major ones, I give this book five stars, but with a caveat. In my opinion, everything that the previous reviewer M. J. Sweet said, is absolutely true. You cannot use this book to learn Yiddish. It is an older text, an advanced reference book, and the phonetic system used is not for the faint of heart. That being said, it is the only textbook I've ever seen that focuses on the Central Yiddish accent, which is a particular interest of mine. I also really like the sampling of different Yiddish texts from the last millennium but as the other reviewer noted, they are given in Birnbaum's transliteration. I have studied and studied his transliteration system and have yet to master it. I love this book and consider it a treasure, but that is because it addresses my specific interests. It's one of a kind, to be sure. I wish you luck in your Yiddish studies!

One of the great Yiddish scholars of the twentieth century, S.A. Birnbaum (1891-1989) published *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar* in 1979 towards the end of a long and prolific career. Unlike other grammars and study guides for English speakers, *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar* fully describes the Southern Yiddish dialect and pronunciation used today by most native speakers, while also taking into account Northern Yiddish and Standard Yiddish, associated with secularist and academic circles. The book also includes specimens of Yiddish prose and poetic texts spanning eight centuries, sampling Yiddish literature from the medieval to modern eras across its vast European geographic expanse. The second edition of *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar* makes this classic text available again to students, teachers, and Yiddish-speakers alike. Featuring three new introductory essays by noted Yiddish scholars, a corrected version of the text, and an expanded and updated bibliography, this book is essential reading for any serious student of Yiddish and its culture.

About the Author
S.A. Birnbaum was a pioneer in the academic study of Yiddish. The first person to hold a teaching post in the study of Yiddish at any university in the world, he taught at the Universities of Hamburg and London. Eleazar Birnbaum is a professor emeritus in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. David Birnbaum is the Director of the Nathan and Solomon Birnbaum Archives, Toronto. Kalman Weiser is the Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at York University, Toronto. Jean Baumgarten is Directeur de recherche at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Centre d'études Juives, Paris, France.