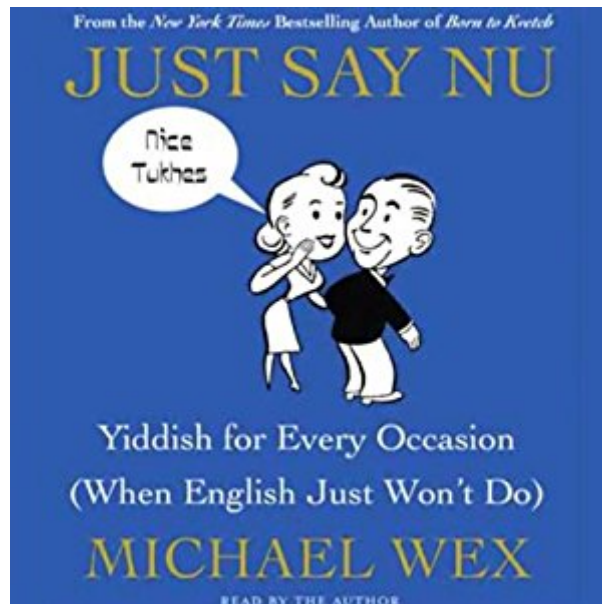


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# Just Say Nu: Yiddish For Every Occasion (When English Just Won't Do)



## Synopsis

Just say Nu is a practical guide to using Yiddish words and expressions in day-to-day situations. Along with enough grammar to enable readers to put together a comprehensible sentence and avoid embarrassing mistakes, Wex also explains the five most useful Yiddish words: shoyhn, nu, epes, takeh, and nebakh. He explains what they mean, how and when to use them, and how they can be used to conduct an entire conversation without anybody ever suspecting that the listener doesn't have the vaguest idea of what anyone is actually saying. Listeners will learn how to "shmooze" their way through such activities as meeting and greeting, eating and drinking, praising and finding fault, maintaining personal hygiene, going to the doctor, driving, parenting, getting horoscopes, committing crimes, going to singles bars, having sex, talking politics, and talking trash. People have finally started to realize that there's nothing in the world that can't be improved by translating it into Yiddish. Just say Nu is the audiobook that will tell them how.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 37 minutes

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Version: Unabridged

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Language: English

ASIN: B000XE3XHU

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Languages #2284 in Books > Reference > Foreign Language Study & Reference > Instruction

## Customer Reviews

Oy, Shprintse, what a book! It's a lecture on Yiddish, no doubt, and also on religion as the essential part to understand what's going on in the language. And it's so funny on such a high level that one may think the jokes will be missed -- but that's what I feared when I read "Born To Kvetch" already which has turned into a hit instead. Wex is not resting on the success of BTK (don't even think of Dennis Rader or the Bulgarian Telecommunications Company). JSN risks to introduce its own transliteration on top of YIVO's. But, hell, it works and turns pronunciation into fun! This is not a Yiddish for Dummies. Kvelling on scholarship, life and love, Just Say Nu manages to unite science,

fun and understanding of a language that -- and this book proves it -- has SURVIVED hell.

With Just Say Nu, Michael Wex has again given us something rare in popular literature about Yiddish, a laugh out loud synthesis of scholarship and humor. It's an entry point to Yiddish that I wish had been around when I started studying the language as an undergraduate. In fact, Just Say Nu should probably have been published before Born To Kvetch. It covers the basics that Kvetch (which covers much more advanced cultural contexts of Yiddish life) skipped over. Just Say Nu literally starts at the beginning, covering the nuances of language basics (like greetings and interjections) and delves into the many non-verbal aspects of Yiddish conversation. Just Say Nu will give you the conversational tools to handle any Jewish situation, whether it's running into Rabbi Goldberg at the burlesque house or getting your pain in the ass brother or sister to pass the milk at the table. I only have one quarrel with Mr. Wex. He claims that Yiddish is unique in that it can diminish human misery without providing a concomitant increase in happiness. Yiddish brings me closer to the entirety of Jewish experience, both the good and the bad, the cursed and the blessed, the happy and the reserved. Just Say Nu, and the richness of Yiddish within it, did indeed provide an increase in happiness.

This is a great book with all of the idioms of "real" Yiddish, that you will never learn at a YIVO class. The author describes the "zaftike" expressions of "poylishe yidn" with great talent. Frankly there were one or two places where his etymology is suspect (at least to me) and his transliteration system takes some getting used to (even for those of us who speak Yiddish fluently.)

Notwithstanding these minor shortcomings it is an excellent work that deserves to be in the bookshelf of every serious Yiddish student, teacher, and speaker. A lot of these expressions are dying out even among the Yiddish-speaking Orthodox communities, where subtle language shift is taking place, and some of the racier expressions are never used by them in any case. Familiarizing yourself with these idioms will make it a helluva lot easier to read Isaac Bashevis Singer (and others) in the original. It is less "cutesy" than "Born to Kvetch", which I also recommend highly.

Wex points out that in Yiddish one tends to go for the negative more than the positive. And in fact this work which aims to help us learn how to speak Yiddish also provides insight into the 'Yiddish mentality and culture'. It has a small dictionary at the end, and also a small grammar section. It has sections on 'Greeting and Meeting' 'Stages of Life' 'Food and Drink' 'Family Life' 'Protective Phrases' 'Madness, Fury and Driving' 'Health and Illness' 'Love and Sex' 'Happiness and

Pleasure'. It has much humor and taken small bits at a time, as no sherei it is a truly enjoyable and instructive work. However in the spirit of the book I will register a few complaints. How after all could one learn to speak Yiddish without learning how to complain? The spelling is not the spelling, and the pronunciation not the pronunciation of the world of my childhood. That does not make it wrong, it makes it irritating for me. I too found myself again and again less interested in new words and concepts than in my memory of old ones. And also, perhaps above all learning the 'meaning' of 'words and phrases' I heard in childhood but did not know the meaning of. I was surprised at how many Yiddish words I know because of my knowing Hebrew. And it seems to me Wex does not emphasize enough the Hebrew origin of much in Yiddish. On the whole however I will do what should be done here, and 'fargennen' 'praise and compliment this wonderful 'sefer'. And this of course said with the memory and knowledge in mind of what happened to the great share of those for whom Yiddish was truly their mameloshen. May God preserve their memory and their souls.

This is an instructive and entertaining audio book. That being said, it would make more sense to read the print edition first. Doing so would enable a person to (1) see how Yiddish words are spelled and (2) recognize cognates in other languages, for example, German. Both of these advantages would yield a derivative benefit, namely, an increased likelihood of actually remembering the Yiddish words and phrases that the author discusses.

I really liked it. Some of the expressions and situations he chose were really funny. I wish they'd have been written in Yiddish in addition to having been transliterated. Also, the dialect/accents in which he transliterated isn't the one I'm used to...but that's just a personal thing. I can adapt most of it, and speaking like a Galitzianer sometimes is fine too. But the book's hilarious and educational. I recommend it.

Some of the phrases I already knew (nu?), and some I didn't. Had lots of fun with friends remembering older relatives who are now gone, by the things they used to say when we couldn't understand them.

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