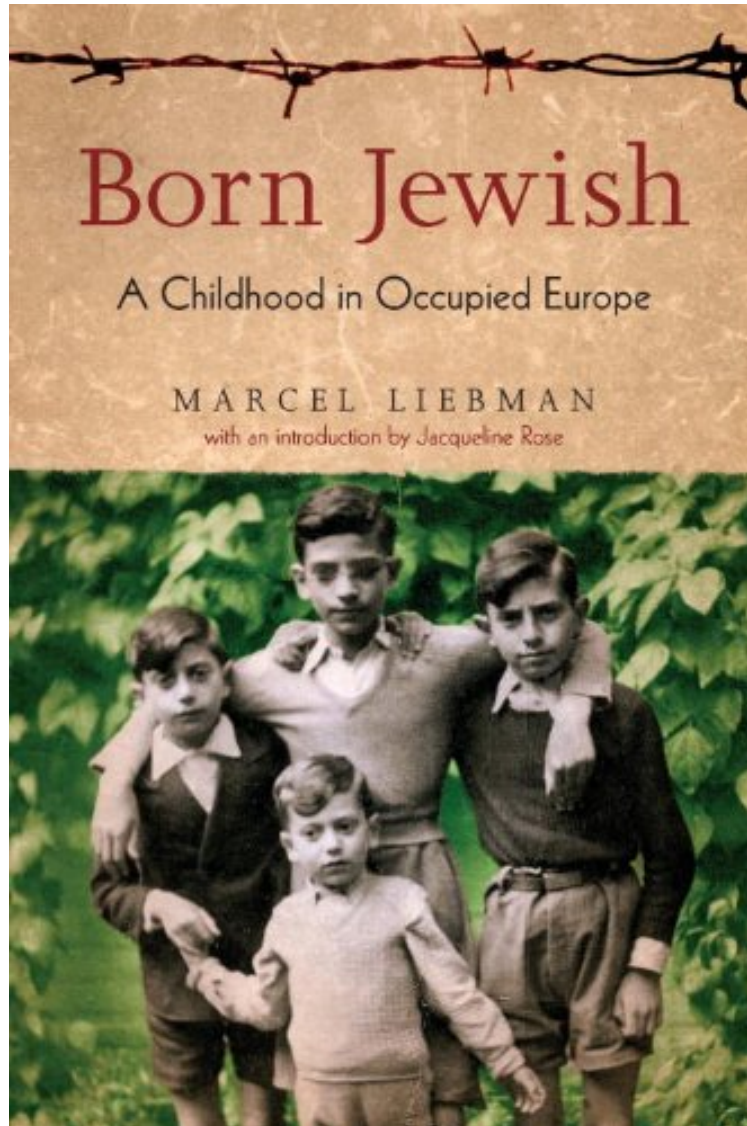


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## Born Jewish: A Childhood in Occupied Europe

*Marcel Liebman, Liz Heron, Jacqueline Rose*  
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**Marcel Liebman, Liz Heron, Jacqueline Rose : Born Jewish: A Childhood in Occupied Europe** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Born Jewish: A Childhood in Occupied Europe:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A New Perspective on Nazi party and HolocaustBy K. KohnThe holocaust is a "popular" topic. I don't mean that in the positive sense, but in the publishing sense. Much has been published on the holocaust, Nazi occupation and the party Hitler hosted. History demands that people write it and people demand to hear "the truth" about the past. "Born Jewish" offers something different, something that isn't

necessarily in demand, but is necessary for the canon of work on the war and aftermath of the holocaust. Marcel Liebman, for anyone unfamiliar with his other work, is a reknowned Marxist/Leninist/Soviet Union historian and historical analyst. This is clearly, his most personal work, but he does not leave his politics or his academic work at the door. "Born Jewish", as he says, "questions history", not in the sense of the accuracy of the event (Liebman writes how dismayed he is that the world did not fully accept Hannah Arendt's accounts of Jewish collaboration with the Nazi's as having actually happened.) but in the sense of the accuracy of historical accounts of it. The new perspective Liebman adds is one often obscured by accounts of Nazi occupation and anti-semitism: that class conflict did not dissolve the day the swastika was raised over Europe's cities. In fact, the Nazi's capitalized on the class difference amongst Jewish populations. For Liebman, the horror of his brother's execution at Auschwitz is intimately connected with the horrors of exploitation and collaboration within the Jewish community. Liebman composes his memories carefully and beautifully, resisting sacrilization of experiences he realizes must answer to history as much as to his own heart, and criticizing the radical Zionism that he was to see flourish during his lifetime. The incredible forward by Jacqueline Rose is a great appetite whetter for the book. She sums up the book far better than I ever could: "Amongst other things, this memoir stands as an extraordinary rejoinder to those who insist that Israel is the only and definitive answer to the genocide of the Jews...It is one of the strenghts of [the memoir] that Liebman can be so unerring in this analysis while at the same time acknowledging the point where understanding trails off into uncomprehending terror, where the most painful part of mourning trumps all rational thought." I highly reccommend this book for anyone who was interested in the slough of memoirs on the subject. It should be read alongside Judith Butler's new book on mourning, violence, 9/11, anti-semitism and the Israel-Palestinian conflict, "Precarious Life".

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A vivid memoir of one man's childhood tale of Nazi control, familial struggle, and the betrayal he faced from more powerful Jews

By Midwest Book Review

Born Jewish: A Childhood In Occupied Europe by graphically authored by Marcel Liebman and deftly translated by Liz Heron is a vivid memoir of one man's childhood tale of Nazi control, familial struggle, and the betrayal he faced from more powerful Jews in times already hard. As a revealing and historically important biographical account of international history during the second world war, Born Jewish is an invaluable documentation which is very highly recommended for historians and laymen alike, as each and all may take some interest and understanding in this book. Born Jewish is a compelling and valued addition to the growing library of Holocaust literature so fundamentally necessary if the world is never again to experience genocide on such a massive and methodical scale.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. wonderful read except for last chapter (and intro by Jacqueline Rose)

By Leucippe

This is a spellbinding account of a Jewish teenager in Belgium, during the war. The second of four boys in a loving Jewish family in Brussels, Liebman gives density and texture to the anxieties, terrors, and perils of life under the Nazis. Always on the run, sometimes together, sometimes apart, Liebman is a superb observer of the venalities and kindnesses that accompany him through these tragic days. It is also a compelling coming of age story. All except the last chapter, which takes advantage of his survivor's status to mount a soap box against racism, with a special target being Zionism (hence Jacqueline Rose's breathless intro). Even aside from its polemics, the chapter feels like it is tacked on to what is otherwise a superb addition to Holocaust memoirs.

This fierce memoir is both elegiac and indicting. Marcel Liebman's account of his childhood in Brussels under the Nazi occupation explores the emergence of his class-consciousness against a background of resistance and collaboration. He documents the internal class war that has long been hidden from history how the Nazi persecution exploited class distinctions within the Jewish community, and how certain Jewish notables collaborated in a systematic program of denunciation and deportation against immigrant Jews who lacked the privileges of wealth and citizenship. An eminent anti-Zionist and Marxist, Liebman tells the story of his family's struggle to survive in the face of persecution, terror and constant evasion, an existence observed with acuity, humor and lyricism.

From Publishers Weekly

The late Liebman (*Leninism Under Lenin; The Russian Revolution*) tells of his middle-class WWII-era Belgian upbringing, concentrating on the disparities among Belgian Jews, most notably how the wealthy treated those lower on the social ladder as sacrificial lambs. "They made me suffer an injustice which, in the very midst of Jews as a persecuted group, made distinctions between the affluent and the poor (the latter handed over defenceless) and set its notables...against the immigrants, the undesirable plebs," writes Liebman, whose older brother, Henri, was killed at Auschwitz and whose family separated to escape the Nazis, landing Liebman and his surviving brothers in the care of Catholic nuns, among other hideouts. Heron's sometimes wooden translation does not diminish the poignancy of Liebman's stories of brotherly bonding in times marked by worry, grief and the boredom of lying low. Liebman directs his anger about the crimes against European Jews not toward the people who inflicted them but the racism that fueled their actions, and promises his murdered brother that although "racism hacked out a void that will never be filled," he will "fight against it mercilessly" to ensure that such horrors are never visited upon anyone again. Though the stories of evasion are harrowing, what makes this book such an unusual and worthwhile read is Liebman's perspective, which lacerates ideas, not individuals. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of

Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist This is a personal account of Liebman's life as a child in Nazi-occupied Belgium. His brother, Henri, was deported to Auschwitz at the age of 15 and died there. The author and the rest of his family survived. In her introduction to the book, Jacqueline Rose writes that at the outbreak of World War II, Liebman took from his father a fervent Belgian patriotism, somehow unmitigated by the fact that they were a family of immigrant Jews. As children they had been taught to hate communism, and they abhorred Germany and fascism. When the author and his younger brother returned to school in 1945, only one teacher noticed that Henri, the eldest of the three, was no longer there. One of the most funereal parts of the memoir is diary extracts on one "S.V.," a member of the Jewish Council who welcomed the instructions from the Nazis to "clamp down on the Jewish problem." When S.V. died years after the war, he was still "one of the most prominent leaders of the Jewish community in Brussels." George Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved An engrossing and moving yet coolly dispassionate memoir. Going against the grain of Holocaust orthodoxy, Liebman depicts Jewish life under occupation in all its hues including the craven complicity of the Jewish councils as well as the many, if still too few, acts of solidarity by Belgian workers, Communists and enlightened Catholics. Norman Finkelstein