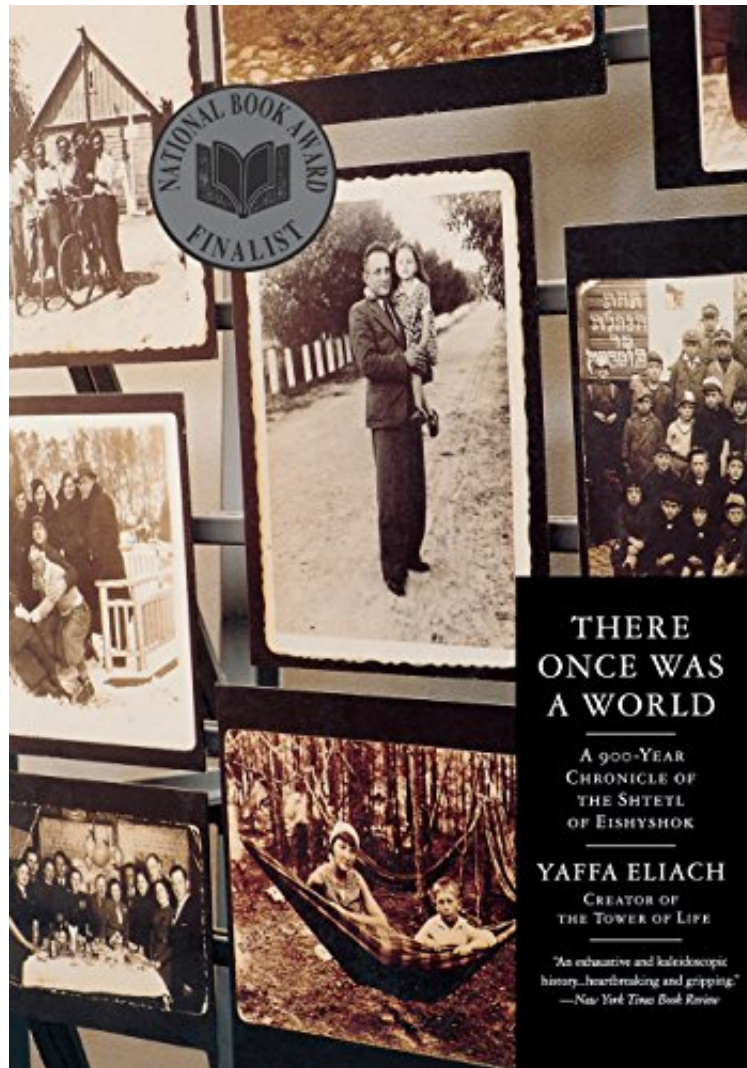


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# There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok

Yaffa Eliach

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**Yaffa Eliach : There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A book that is richly-detailed and gives compelling insights into a lost world By Z Hayes Yaffa Eliach's "There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok" is a

compelling book of a lost world -the Jews of Eishyshok who were mostly murdered in massacres carried out by the Nazis and their collaborators between Sep 25-26th, 1941. In this book, Eliach documents the richness of Jewish life in Eishyshok, Lithuania - the day-to-day lives of ordinary people, their unique way of life, providing intimate glimpses into a vanished world that no longer exists after the Holocaust. The book reads a lot like a novel, and I was so absorbed that I finished the book in less than three days. There are numerous photographs throughout this book, and it is amazing that a lot of them depict people who had either perished during the Holocaust or survived. It shows the great amount of effort that must have gone into compiling all the information to trace the fates of most of the people pictured in this book. It is heartrending to read the stories in here, and yet it made me realise how very important this work is - it stands as a testament to the rich Jewish culture that flourished for 900 years in Eishyshok, and of the decimation of that very culture at the hands of monsters. This is a must-read for anyone interested in the Holocaust.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A major historical effort by an author who was both ...By Herbert Belkin  
A major historical effort by an author who was both personally and professionally committed to its writing. Well researched, well written.  
15 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Dr. Eliach's proof that history can defy the destroyers.  
By Customer  
In a world where Holocaust studies often dwell upon the profundity of loss, Dr. Eliach brings a brilliant historical perspective, rich personal attachment, and splendid prose style to the task of making the village of Eishyshok come alive. In so doing, she reveals 900 years of history ...social, economic, religious and national history with a luminosity that captures the reader, and preserves the flame of the lives that the Nazi's sought to, but failed to destroy. Dr. Eliach thus asserts the Jewish tradition of "Yiskor Books," where death is rescued from its chasm, by assembling the documents, papers material remains that lend evidence of a life once lived. This wonderful book, in 900 pages of text and photographs, is not some cobwebbed memory of the past....but is a lovely flowering of life. Its story is a tale of survival through nearly a thousand years of hardship and pogroms; a tale of people sustaining one another, as in Zborowski and Herzog's "Life is with People," a voyage of self-discovery and family roots, as in Theo Richmmond's "Konin," and a rapture that can only be shared by those of us who lack such roots, through the artistry of Izzy Singer or Chaim Grade, or the photographs of Roman Vishniac. I recall the moment when my 9 year-old son, having plodded through the Holocaust Museum, entered into the cavernous room filled with the simple photographs of the people of Eishyshok, at work and play, in portraits and celebration...from the personal collection of Dr. Eliach. He turned to me and said....."All of these people used to be alive?" In telling who they were and how they lived, Dr. Eliach gives meaning to the unfathomable loss of a world and its people. It is fitting that the book is designed with the same love and attention as its author has given to its text. This will hopefully be a popular Bar\Bat Mitzvah present, and a coffee table book that will gather no dust, and set the highest standard for Holocaust studies and future works of history and passion. I thank the author for her unique use of intellect and sensitivity, and for rescuing the literature of the Holocaust from academicism and mourning, creating a universal work of affirmation and elegance.

For 900 years the Polish shtetl was a home to generations of Jewish families. In 1944 almost every Jew was murdered and with them died a way of life that had survived for centuries. Yaffa Eliach has written a landmark history of the shtetl.

.com Eishyshok, in Lithuania, was for nine centuries a center of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, where Jews lived "under all the various governments that had fought for control of it: Lithuanian, Polish, German, Russian, and Soviet." But as a result of the Holocaust, writes Eishyshok native Yaffa Eliach in this rich, vastly detailed history, "nearly a millennium of vibrant Jewish life had been reduced to stark images of victimization and death." Eliach offers his chronicle by way of a memorial to those lost citizens and their disappeared history, working through archives, family photo albums, and the memories of survivors. It is a fine and fitting memorial indeed, one that ranks alongside the important work of Raul Hilberg and Lucy Dawidowicz. --Gregory McNamee  
From Publishers Weekly  
It's hard to imagine that one Jewish town could keep a reader enthralled for so many pages, but Eliach pulls it off. Equal parts history and memoir?the author survived the Holocaust in Eishyshok as a child?the book focuses on the rich lives built by the Jews in the community, which, depending on the year, was under Polish, Lithuanian, Russian or German control. After detailing the central role that the synagogue and religion played in shtetl life, Eliach uses oral history, written documents and numerous photos to describe how Eishyshok's Jews went about their daily affairs. The Brooklyn College professor deftly demonstrates how the Jewish population reacted to forces outside the shtetl. Some of these forces were political?the 1648 Chmielnicki massacre, the Russian takeover of the town as a result of the final 18th-century partition of Poland?while others were intellectual?the Jewish Enlightenment and the growth of Zionism, both of which modernized life in the town. What results is a case study that sheds light on the entire Eastern European Jewish experience. While Eliach goes to great lengths to focus on the world that the Jews created, the book's most moving moments come in its final chapters, as some of Eishyshok's residents, including the author herself, struggle for survival in the face of genocide. As in her "Tower of Life" exhibit on Eishyshok at the United States Holocaust Museum in D.C., Eliach revives a people and a place that seemed irrevocably lost. 430 bw photos. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
Every town has its history, and even though Eishyshok was a

small Polish community, it reflected the trends and tendencies of the wider world. Eliach (Judaic studies, Brooklyn Coll.; *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, LJ 10/1/82) has spent 17 years researching the Jewish community where her ancestors were among the first settlers and where she spent her early years. Although Jewish history there had a grim finale in the Holocaust, Eliach set out to write a book celebrating the town's robust and creative past. What she has accomplished is a scholarly masterpiece for the informed lay reader. The double-columned pages and extreme length of the work may be daunting to some, but the endlessly fascinating stories will soon captivate. The photographs, an essential element, are taken from "Tower of Life," the permanent exhibit Eliach created for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Biographies, historical movements and episodes, local folklore, religious culture, and more are addressed in this prodigious study. Highly recommended for libraries with holdings on Jewish studies. ?Paul M. Kaplan, Lake Villa Dist. Lib., IL Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.