



Schlepping Through the Alps: My Search for Austria's Jewish Past with Its Last Wandering Shepherd

Sam Apple

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Hans Breuer, Austria's only wandering shepherd, is also a Yiddish folksinger. He walks the Alps, shepherd's stick in hand, singing lullabies to his 625 sheep. Sometimes he even gives concerts in historically anti-Semitic towns, showing slides of the flock as he belts out Yiddish ditties.

When New York-based writer Sam Apple hears about this one-of-a-kind eccentric, he flies overseas and signs on as a shepherd's apprentice. For thoroughly urban, slightly neurotic Sam, stumbling along in borrowed boots and burdened with a lot more baggage than his backpack, the task is far from a walk in Central Park. Demonstrating no immediate natural talent for shepherding, he tries to earn the respect of Breuer's sheep, while keeping a safe distance from the shepherd's fierce herding dogs.

As this strange and hilarious adventure unfolds, the unlikely duo of Sam and Hans meander through a paradise of woods and high meadows toward awkward encounters with Austrians of many stripes. Apple is determined to find out if there are really as many anti-Semites in Austria as he fears and to understand how Hans, who grew up fighting the lingering Nazism in Vienna, became a wandering shepherd. What Apple discovers turns out to be far more fascinating than he had imagined.

With this odd and wonderful book, Sam Apple joins the august tradition of Tony Horwitz and Bill Bryson. *Schlepping Through the Alps* is as funny as it is moving.

From the Hardcover edition.

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