

[Download free ebook] Vilna (Jewish Communities Series)

## Vilna (Jewish Communities Series)

*Israel Cohen*

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**Israel Cohen : Vilna (Jewish Communities Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vilna (Jewish Communities Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Vilna: an excellent history that honors a Jewish population lost in the HolocaustBy Merrily Baird"Vilna" by Israel Cohen was first published in 1943 by the Jewish Publication Society as part of its Jewish Community Series, and it has since been reprinted twice with an added forward that provides a late 20th-century perspective on the decimation of the city's Jewish population during the Nazi occupation of World War II. Also known as Vilnius, Vilna is the capital of today's independent Lithuania, and a sweeping history covering many centuries is provided for both it and the country. As was the case throughout much of Lithuania prior to 1941, Jews composed a significant portion of the city's population, and those in Vilna were widely acknowledged as the most distinguished intellectuals among eastern Europe's Jews. Within the city an estimated 70,000 Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis, and in Vilna today, as elsewhere in the country, remaining Jewish populations are so small as to be listed generally under the ethnic category of "other."For those readers whose family is, like mine, of Lithuanian Jewish background, or others more generally interested in Lithuanian contributions to European culture and politics, two excellent books might well enhance a reading of "Vilna." These are are Stanley Meisler's "Shocking Paris: Soutine, Chagall and the Outsiders of Montparnasse" and Judith Friedlander's "Vilna on the Seine: Jewish Intellectuals in France since 1968." The first book, which focuses on post-impressionist artists, deals with a generation of Jews born in the late 19th century and the second with a more modern generation. Both attest to the continued intellectual and

artistic energy of Lithuanian Jews, even if those attributes were played out in France. 13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating view into an overlooked city By James Ferguson Israel Cohen has presented a fascinating portrait of a city that owes much of its cultural legacy to the Yiddish community that thrived in it from the 15th century onward. Cohen undertook this complex task prior to WWII and wrote an epilogue following the genocide that took place in Lithuania during the German occupation, 1941-3. Cohen's judgement seemed to be reserved due to the fact that the genocide came as such a shock to the Jewish community. Vilna was considered to be one of the few safe havens during World War II for Jews. Vilnius had a remarkable history of being an open city, tolerant of a wide array of cultures and religions, which was what Mr. Cohen chose to focus on. He made no excuses for the genocide but rather illustrated the dynamics of this ever-changing city and how Vilnius, and in turn Lithuania, simply was not able to bear up under the pressures of World War II. He charted the various occupations of the city by the Poles, Russians, Soviets and Germans. Lithuanians seemed to be almost peripheral figures in this dramatic ebb and flow. An essentially benevolent nobility that offered its protection to the Yiddish community and constantly renewed its charters so that it could thrive within the often adversarial climate of the city. All that changed with the Russian occupation in the 19th century. Lithuanian Jews found themselves conscripted into the army just like Jews throughout the Russian empire, but somehow they managed to hold together a tight-knit community that had many leading lights including the most famous Gaon Elijah. The book is well worth reading for it provides a rare glimpse into the dynamics of this Medieval city that was shaped by an astonishing array of forces.

Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania, was the vibrant core of Eastern European Jewish life. Distinguished British historian, Israel Cohen, opens with the legend of the origin of Vilna in 1322 and traces the history of its Jewish community through vivid portraits of scholars, heroes, and leaders. The result is a book based on scholarship, yet full, too, of wonderful unforgettable stories.