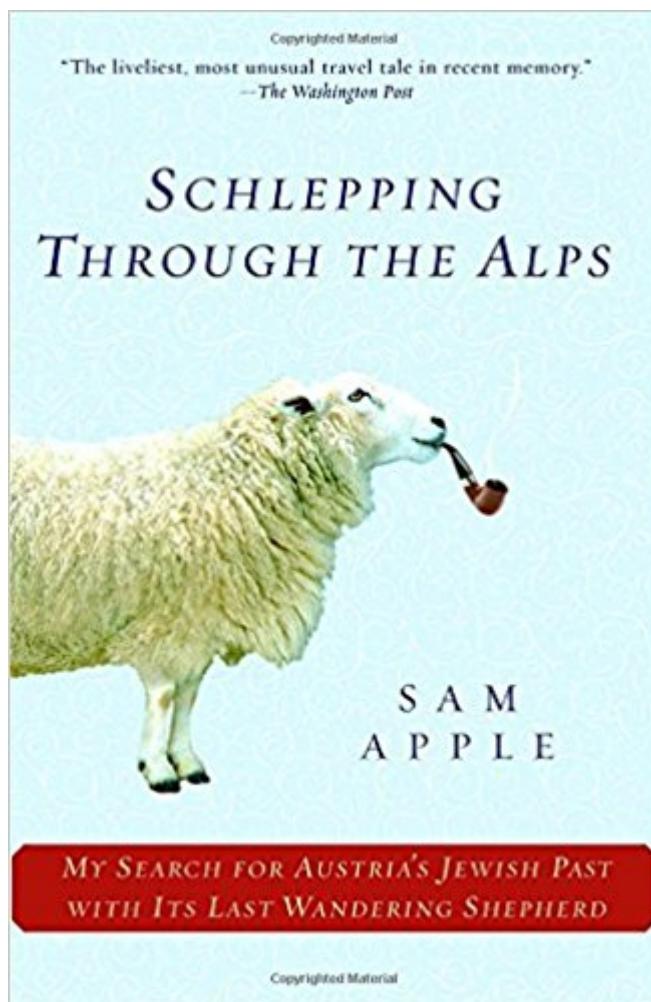


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# Schlepping Through The Alps: My Search For Austria's Jewish Past With Its Last Wandering Shepherd



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

Apple is a Jewish comic writer, and in July 2000 he met Hans in New York. Hans, the son of a Jewish father and Gentile mother, was born in Vienna, became a shepherd, and developed a love

for singing Yiddish songs. The following year Apple joined Hans in "schlepping" through various Alpine locations, tape recorder and sheep in hand. His account of that sojourn is whimsical, often hilarious, and often deeply disturbing. For Apple was not merely interested in an eccentric shepherd or in local folk culture. He was fully cognizant of the long tradition of Austrian anti-Semitism and of the role of Austrians in the Holocaust. So, while recounting delightful episodes with Hans and his sheep, as well as interesting observations on the lost world of Yiddish culture, Apple suggests that anti-Semitism maintains a tenacious hold in many small towns and villages in rural Austria. A funny book making serious points. Jay FreemanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Advance praise for *Schlepping Through the Alps*—“This marvelously alert, one-of-a-kind book fascinates by virtue of its eccentric honesty, humor, warmth, and intelligence. Sam Apple’s writing style sparkles, and the two brilliantly achieved, richly sympathetic characterizations at the heart of the book—the singing shepherd and the author himself—make for a dazzlingly satisfying read. I absolutely loved it.”—PHILLIP LOPATE—“At its best, Apple’s narrative voice is as grave as W.G. Sebald’s while as self-deprecating as a poetic version of Woody Allen’s. Europe in the wake of the Holocaust is risky material. I know of no other American of Apple’s generation writing non-fiction who has attempted as subtle and oblique an approach as this.”—HONOR MOORE, author of *The White Blackbird*—“In this wonderful book, Sam Apple has written a brilliantly comic and very dark pastorale about shepherds, Nazis and Jews, modern-day Austria, love and fidelity, and he has done it with such subtlety—âœwith bright colors at the center and darkness around all the edges—âœthat the effect is quite singular. I have never read a book quite like this, and I loved it; it’s that simple.”—CHARLES BAXTER, author of *Saul and Patsy: A Novel* and *Burning Down the House: Essays on Fiction*From the Hardcover edition.

A chochem is, in Yiddish, a wise person. Sam Apple, the writer, is a lot wiser than Sam Apple, the character he creates, a woody allen-ish hypochondriac awkwardly trying to write a book about a wandering Jewish Austrian shepherd. Apple also scores a literary triumph in his portrait of the one-of-a-kind Hans Breuer, the shepherd. Post-modern in its best sense, the book makes wonderful and surprising connections between the search for justice and reconciliation in post-war Austria, the history of domesticated animals, Yiddish song, sexuality and the fine points of herding 675 sheep through mountains, forests and small towns.I sat down to read for a few minutes and stayed in the

chair for most of the day, following the hapless Sam as he tries to live the life of an alpine shepherd with Hans, Hans' estranged wife and devoted girlfriend, his sons and various eccentric friends like Austria's giant champion scythe-wielding grass-cutter. More is revealed when Sam spends time in Vienna meeting politicians, survivors of the Shoah and anti-racist activists, including the beguiling Irene, a welcome romantic interest whose fling with Sam forms a revealing counterpoint to Hans' tangled love life. Through these varied landscapes, Apple's voice is funny, knowing and refreshingly humble. He gracefully mixes and blends the Jewish, picaresque, storytelling tradition of Sholem Aleichem and S.Y. Agnon with the irreverence of Phillip Roth and the eye for quirky detail of Bruce Chatwin. He's a young writer whose first book jump starts what I imagine will be a surprising and exciting career.

Unique and unusual story. Kept my attention throughout.

Presents a complex situation without drawing "preachy" conclusions. Funny, honest, entertaining. I stayed up the entire night finishing the book. I am considering giving it as a Xmas present. I should take away a star since it made stay up all night ;-)

Well written, but far less funny than the promo made you think it would be. Interesting cultural window, though. I love the title and cover.

A quirky, but also serious tale of a Jewish Sheepherder in Austria. Very insightful about the status of Jews in this country.

"Schlepping Through the Alps" opens a fascinating window for Americans into the little-discussed world of Austria's internal politics. Unfortunately, the view is clouded by Sam Apple's insistence on foisting descriptions on the reader of his neuroses, his sexual adventures with a "hip" Austrian woman, and the banal details of the protagonist's dysfunctional family. Woody Allen worked comic wonders with the neurotic secular Jewish character, but that persona lost its freshness nearly 30 years ago. If a reader may offer advice to Mr. Apple for his next book, it would be to share more of the results of his impressive interviewing and observation skills, and to keep his private life private.

I would have preferred less adolescent self talk about the author and more about the singing Shepherd Hans Breuer. Nice cover.

This was a delightful book that in many ways defies description. How does any modern person know what to expect about guiding sheep through the mountains?

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