



# **Memories of Two Generations: A Yiddish Life in Russia and Texas (Jews and Judaism: History and Culture)**

*Alexander Z. Gurwitz*

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In 1910, at the age of fifty-one, Alexander Ziskind Gurwitz made the bold decision to emigrate with his wife and four children from southeastern Ukraine in Tsarist Russia to begin a new life in Texas. In 1935, in his seventies, Gurwitz composed a retrospective autobiography, *Memories of Two Generations*, that recounts his personal story both of the rich history of the lost Jewish world of Eastern Europe and of the rambunctious development of frontier Jewish communities in the United States.

In both Europe and America, Gurwitz inhabited an almost exclusively Jewish world. As a boy, he studied in traditional yeshivas and earned a living as a Hebrew language teacher and kosher butcher. Widely travelled, Gurwitz recalls with wit and insight daily life in European shtetls, providing perceptive and informative comments about Jewish religion, history, politics, and social customs. Among the book's most notable features is his first-hand, insider's account of the yearly Jewish holiday cycle as it was observed in the nineteenth century, described as he experienced it as a child.

Gurwitz's account of his arrival in Texas forms a cornerstone record of the Galveston Immigration Movement; this memoir represents the only complete narrative of that migration from an immigrant's point of view. Gurwitz's descriptions about the development of a thriving Orthodox community in San Antonio provide an important and unique primary source about a facet of American Jewish life that is not widely known.

Gurwitz wrote his memoir in his preferred Yiddish, and this translation into English by Rabbi Amram Prero captures the lyrical style of the original. Scholar and author Bryan Edward Stone's special introduction and illuminating footnotes round out a superb edition that offers much to experts and general readers alike.

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