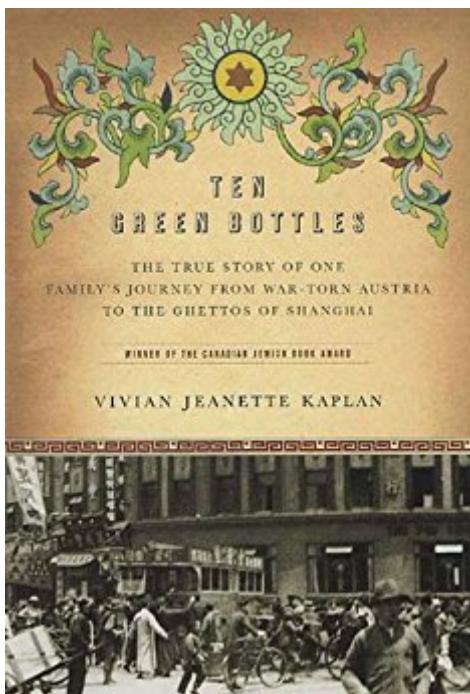


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Ten Green Bottles: The True Story Of One Family's Journey From War-torn Austria To The Ghettos Of Shanghai



Synopsis

To Nini Karpel, growing up in Vienna during the 1920s was a romantic confection. Whether schussing down ski slopes or speaking of politics in coffee houses, she cherished the city of her birth. But in the 1930s an undercurrent of conflict and hate began to seize the former imperial capital. This struggle came to a head when Hitler took possession of neighboring Germany. Anti-Semitism, which Nini and her idealistic friends believed was impossible in the socially advanced world of Vienna, became widespread and virulent. The Karpel's Jewish identity suddenly made them foreigners in their own homeland. Tormented, disenfranchised, and with a broken heart, Nini and her family sought refuge in a land seven thousand miles across the world. Shanghai, China, one of the few countries accepting Jewish immigrants, became their new home and refuge. Stepping off the boat, the Karpel family found themselves in a land they could never have imagined. Shanghai presented an incongruent world of immense wealth and privilege for some and poverty for the masses, with opium dens and decadent clubs as well as rampant disease and a raging war between nations. Ten Green Bottles is the story of Nini Karpel's struggles as she told it to her daughter Vivian so many years ago. This true story depicts the fierce perseverance of one family, victims of the forces of evil, who overcame suffering of biblical proportion to survive. It was a time when ordinary people became heroes.

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Customer Reviews

Eloquently written, beautifully described, Vivian Kaplan penned the biography in honor of her family. The author describes the rise of anti-Semitism in Vienna, and the slow death knell for the Jews as one freedom after another was discarded. Ms. Kaplan relates the fear in the Jewish community and the desperation to escape. The author recounts her familyÃ¢â€¢s eventual departure to Shanghai, an unknown place, but the only city willing to accept Jews without restrictions. Ms. Kaplan writes of her familyÃ¢â€¢s struggles in Shanghai, of the Jewish community in which they lived and of the German pursuit of Jews in Japanese territory. Recommended.

Being Jewish, but lucky enough to be born in the U.K. at the start of WWII, it is particularly horrifying to comprehend the stark reality of life for the upstanding Jewish community in Vienna in the thirties - especially when told in first person. Much less known about but no less shocking is the life that followed in Shanghai, even although it was literally lifesaving... Well written, easy reading of a nightmarish subject, but sometimes I personally found I could only "take" it in small "doses" at a time.

This is the second book I have read written by some of the Jewish refugees of Shanghai. The author of this book is Vivian Kaplan, the daughter of Nini Karpel, her mother, who the story really focuses on. Nini's father died when she was very young, leaving behind her mother, baby brother, and two sisters. Life in Vienna was unremarkable for Nini and her family until the mid 1930's, when anti-Semitism became more and more of a problem. Also in the background was Germany threatening to take over Austria, which meant more persecution of the Jews. In 1938 the Anschluss was complete, with Germany taking over Austria. With all the persecution of the Jews becoming worse and worse, Nini's mother realized they could not stay in Vienna, eventually they would be sent to a concentration camp which they probably not survive. In a moment of desperation, Nini approaches a lawyer, Herr Berger, one of the few Austrian lawyers willing to help the Jews at that time. I don't want to give away the whole story, but I found this a very good book, although I had a bit of trouble getting into it. A good read about a time in history that was never fully explored until recently.

I've read about Jews emigrating to Shanghai before, but Kaplan's book gives a lot more depth and follow up after the Holocaust years. I was fascinated to learn that her family stayed on for many years after the fall of the Reich, only to have problems with the conquering Japanese. I've shared this book with one of my Orthodox friends who has read quite a bit on the subject, and Ten Green Bottles offered a much wider perspective. Great book.

I have read many books about the Holocaust, but this particular one, for me, was the best. It was a true story of a Polish Family who moved to Vienna to escape the horrors of Hitler and then were forced to leave all their extended family, friends, business, money and valuables behind and with nothing but each other, escaped to Shanghai. There they were forced to live in a ghetto with no conveniences and little food, but the family remained close. The book explained the environment in Europe prior to Hitler's take-over, told how he fooled our allies into thinking he wouldn't invade them, and then detailed all the ugly events that completed the Holocaust. Then when the family thought they were safe in Shanghai, the Japanese who were influenced by Hitler against the Jews, continued to make their lives very difficult. This novel could be used as a text book in schools for teaching about that period of history.

I met the author and she ended up giving me her card. When I saw that she is an author I looked her up on the internet. I then ordered and read this wonderful book. I emailed Vivian, "I really do not know you very well from our brief meeting. Your mother, however, is a wonderful friend whom I miss a great deal. That shows what a wonderful job you did in writing your mother's autobiography. My wife, Dottie, also read "Ten Green Bottles" and feels like I do. We have read much about the horrors of the affliction of the Jews under Hitler's demonic regime. The six million murders in an attempt to exterminate an entire race is ghastly to reflect on and it is staggering to realize that we have not known the whole story." You will not be able to put this book down and you will hate it when it ends. We now await Vivian Kaplan's next book.

This book provides an amazing and articulate perspective on a lesser known group of persecuted Jews who left Austria and made a journey to Shanghai. They witnessed atrocities as heinous as those in Europe and survived. How they and their families decided to relocate in Canada summarizes a riveting and well-written book. I strongly recommend it, especially for those who are passionate about WW II.

Although I am Jewish and have read so much about a World War 2 I never knew about people going to Shanghai. I learned about a whole new "ghetto" which was always under a threat. With the war still on, having to live in fear of the Japanese further scarred them but they muddled through. I just hope that this family led an easier life in Canada. Nino told a story of fear, bravery, and a strong will to survive. I couldn't put this book down.

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