



Brooklyn Local: Essays on Growing up Jewish in the 1930s and '40s

Mordecai Rosenfeld

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Introduction by the author (from the back cover): These original essays describe growing up in the 1930s and '40s in a Brooklyn home devoted to Judaism. But the author was less a Believer than his parents, and that soft friction gives these pieces their edge. Strangely, his Jewish Midwood neighborhood was his self-imposed boundary, and he rarely ventured beyond to where people of other backgrounds and faiths lived; Manhattan, just a 5-cent subway ride away, was as distant as China. Although he may have questioned the religious rules, he was dutiful: He went to services every Sabbath; he never ate anything non-kosher (not even a hot-dog at Ebbets Field); he attended Hebrew School three-times a week (although his grades and knowledge were meager); and he never sang Christmas carols in his public school class (his father, over his protests, wrote the same strong note to his teacher every year). One thing he never understood was the power of prayer. Although he recited all the words by heart, he was never quite sure what they meant; and he doubted that he, or even his father, ever managed to reach the Almighty. His teenage rebellion was subdued by Fourth of July standards, but he was proud that he was allowed to switch from Hebrew High School (three times a week, all Hebrew) to Sunday School (once a week, all English). His father was upset, but his mom was more forgiving.

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