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## ABSTRACTS \*

*Shalom Luria*

### Reb Elye Bakhur and his Poem on Bovo the Knight

Hebrew readers and scholars know of Elye Bakhur the grammarian, but few know that he also wrote chivalric romances in Yiddish in ottava rima rhyme. Even fewer know that the familiar expression “bobe mayse” (‘old wives’ tale’) derives from the name of the knight Bovo d’Antona. The present article discusses the author and his poem, the *Bove-bukh*. A plot-summary of the poem is given at the end. The bibliography appended illustrates the range and depth of scholarship on Bovo d’Antono/Bevis of Hampton.

*Shmuel Werses*

### From Change of Words to Change of Meaning: The Play *Saul’s Kingdom* in Yiddish

The essay examines the Yiddish translation of Joseph HaEfrati’s Hebrew play, *Saul’s Kingdom* (1794), a central work in the literature of the Hebrew *haskala* (‘Enlightenment’). First printed in 1801, the Yiddish translation was reprinted seventeen times in the nineteenth century and was more widely distributed than the Hebrew original. Each edition had its own quality, its own flavor and tone, taking on dialectal and stylistic features designed for its particular readership. In the process of translation, the play was gradually transformed from a maskilic to a traditionalist work. The antagonistic relationship between Saul and David was reversed and the name of the author ceased to be mentioned. Ample excisions were made in the Hebrew text to

\* Edited and translated by Prof. Leonard Prager.

conform the play to the translator's outlook and to the literary taste of the Yiddish-reading public. In moving from Hebrew to Yiddish, the play's very style emphasized its alteration from a maskilic to a religious-traditionalist work.

*Alysa Quint*

### Abraham Goldfaden's Play *Bar-Kokhba*

This essay discusses the content of Goldfaden's historical drama, *Bar-Kokhba*, much debated over by Goldfaden scholars. Following a series of ironic-satirical plays with strangely awkward characters like Kuni Leml and Shmendrik, Goldfaden planned to write and stage two historical-national dramas, *Shulamit* and *Bar-Kokhba*. He searched for the kind of material his audience liked and saw that in the oppressive 1880s an historical-dramatic theme would find favor. Kalman Shulman's *The Ruins of Betar* supplied him with the material he sought. Goldfaden does not present the problematic historical theme in a one-sided or superficial manner, but is sensitive and probing.

*Mendele Moykher-Sforim*

### A "Purim-shpil" Woven Into a Play [Selection from the play *Der priziv* ('Military Service')]

On a number of occasions Mendele introduced a seemingly unrelated Purim shpil into a larger work so as to artistically achieve an ironic effect. We see an example of this in "In the Days of Reb Shmelke" in the sixth chapter of *Dos vintsh-fingerl* ('The Wishing Ring') and another instance in the play *Der priziv* ('Military Service'). The latter Purim shpil is given here as it appears in the first version of the manuscript of *Keminhag yid* ('According to Jewish Custom').

*Zev (Velvl) Tshernin*

## Simon Samuel Frug – Between Russian and Yiddish

Simon Samuel Frug (1860-1916) was an accomplished poet in two languages, in both of which his verse was Jewish – bilingualism was not unique in the second half of the nineteenth century. Frug excelled in writing melodious lyrics which did not imitate the popular Yiddish folk song; he was original and introduced an important theme into Jewish literature. Critics such as Dubnow held that his Russian verse was better, deeper and fuller than his Yiddish verse. In the latter he sounded the depths of national-historical motifs inspired by the Bible and the Talmud. A thorough analysis of Frug's poem on the golden calf (in Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew) illustrates the poet's art.

*Ber Borohov*

## At the Grave of Simon Frug

Ber Borokhov's eulogy at the graveside of his beloved poet in two languages points up qualities in the personalities of both men: the lyrical and gentle, the composed and profound poet and the forthright thinker, scholar, critic and fighter for his people in the spirit of socialist Zionism. At the same time that he expresses his love and respect for Frug, Borokhov criticizes his approach to Yiddish, the language of the people and the language in which he had composed such lovely poems. He greatly regrets Frug's opposition to the living stream of cultural awakening in Yiddish.

*Micha Joseph Berdichevski*

“From Military Service” [Original and Hebrew translation]

On Micha Joseph Berdichevsky's Story  
"Fun der sluzhbe"  
(‘From Military Service’)

“From Military Service” was written in December 1904, at the height of M.J. Berdichevsky’s short career as a Yiddish writer. Created in immediate response to an invitation by Abraham Reisen, the editor of the short-lived weekly journal *Dos Yudishe Vort*, it was published only seven years later in the first edition of Berdichevsky’s collected Yiddish writings. It corresponds with the general tendencies of Berdichevsky’s Yiddish writing in its empathic representation of a simple folk-character whose instinctive desires can be fulfilled only by breaching the norms of traditional Jewish society.

The story develops a persona of the pretending-innocent narrator, who seems to identify with the communal point-of-view only to mock and ridicule it. This ironic pattern emphasizes the criticism against the spirituality of the portrayed society, one that celebrates the ideal of abstract learning while denying bodily needs. A bold subterranean plot concerns the sexual discrepancy between man and wife that derives from the faults of the match-making system. The author fully supports the protagonist who eventually gathers the strength to rebel against this system and demand his right for a more satisfying sexual match.

The story shapes an original Berdichevskian perspective on the draft of Russian Jews for military service: its hero’s army years are shown not as forced duty or disaster, but as personal salvation. The military environment suits his simple nature better than does the religious, scholarly life for which he was destined. The story thus approves the author’s views on the need to find ways for Jews to satisfy instinctual needs suppressed for generations in the diaspora.



*Miriam Trinn*

## Anticipation of the Shoah in the Poetic Works of Aaron Zeitlin

The article attempts to provide a detailed answer to the question of how valid it is to speak of concrete anticipation of the Shoah in literature. The affirmative answer suggested here results from an examination of Aaron Zeitlin's poetry written and published in the 1920s and 1930s.

Literary interpretation unveils in Zeitlin's verse an entire field of symbols which demonstrate that pre-World War II Yiddish literature arose in an apocalyptic atmosphere and was created out of a feeling of uncertainty about the Jewish future.

Zeitlin's striking symbolism is particularly interesting as it reflects a rich cultural vocabulary. The poetical language ties the historical and political spirit of the time to a traditional way of interpreting reality within a Jewish existential and mystical framework.

*Bilha Rubinstein*

## Poetic Duality: "Gimpel Tam" and "Mayse Tishevits": Two Sides of I. Bashevis-Singer's Narration.

These two first-person stories represent two categories in Bashevis-Singer's work: the Human and the Fiendish. The point of departure of the comparative reading is the nature of both narrators – the man and the fiend – and the implied thematic and poetic features of each of them. The double meaning of the word *tam* (fool and/or innocent) is the key to Gimpel's story. The people of Frampol make fun of Gimpel, regarding him as a fool, while the rabbi thinks he is an innocent man, in contrast to the common attitude. The implied author supports the rabbi's attitude, leading his protagonist-narrator in a path of self-recognition and resignation. At the end of the story Gimpel gains the virtues of both 'Zaddik' and 'story-teller', achieving the

real perception of 'truth' and 'falsehood', 'reality' and 'fiction' 'Mayse Tishevits' is a unique story which leads to a lament for the Jewish shtetl and Jewish existence after the Shoah. The author employs a shrewd and witty narrator – a Jewish fiend. Paradoxically, the diabolic view stresses the disastrous effect of the events, and underlines the lament at the end of the story. Both stories are rooted in Jewish culture and represent the traditional world in a lively-modern way – the unique art of I. Bashevis-Singer.

*Yosef Bar-El*

### The Tempestuous Character and Fate of Moyshe Nadir

This essay describes the colorful personality of the virtuoso writer, Moyshe Nadir, an immensely talented poet whose fiery words often upset the more staid members of the Jewish community. Even the communists, who were delighted with his weekly column "With Pen and Gun", were dumfounded when he left them. The author wishes to exclaim: "O, Nadir!" – even though the debate over the poet's oxymoronic paradoxes will apparently never end. He gives selections from *Nadirizmen* (edited by Herz Grosbard, Tel Aviv, 1973), which he also translates into Hebrew.

*Tamar Wolf-Monson*

### Uri Zvi Grinberg's Prologue to *Eyma Gedola Veyareakh* (‘Great Fear and the Moon’): Manifest and Concealed *ars poetica* as a Response to Hostile Criticism

Uri Zvi Grinberg's prologue to his first Eretz-Yisrael book, *Eyma Gedola Veyareakh* (Hedim, 1925) is an unparalleled literary phenomenon in the poetry of the generation, both in form and content. The prologue addresses the readers, speaking in the first person, and is signed by the poet, Uri Zvi. The *ars poetica* nature of the text leads the poet to polemicize openly with

the literary community of his generation, particularly with the critics who disparaged his poems. At the same time the discourse functions as an exhibit that transmits the poetic keys of the book, and is full of allusions to the topoi that characterized the period of Grinberg's literary activity in Europe, and also influenced the literary design and content of *Eyma Gedola Veyareach*.

The discovery of the manuscript of this prologue in Grinberg's posthumous works (Uri Zvi Grinberg archives, National Library, Jerusalem) reveals a different version, in which Grinberg calls *Eyma Gedola Veyareakh* "a Hebrew brother to Mephistopheles". On the background of this explicit analogy, the links between *Eyma Gedola Veyareakh* and its Yiddish predecessor, *Mefisto*, which was first published in Lwow [Lviv] in 1921 and in a second expanded edition in Warsaw in 1922 are examined in this paper, and a number of hypotheses are suggested concerning Uri Zvi Grinberg's decision to draw a veil over the link between the two poems and finally to print a different version of the prologue to *Eyma Gedola Veyareakh*.

*Ziva Shamir*

### "Heaven, however, like a white goat, has climbed up to graze our thatched roofs": On the Creative Use of Yiddish Idioms in Alterman's Poetry

Alterman's works have often been described, both by his contemporaries and by their followers, as a typical product of a new-style "native" writing. However, a close reading of these modern poetic and dramatic works may reveal a wide range of Yiddish idioms and Hasidic motifs which are creatively integrated within seemingly alienated contexts. Alterman's early works usually assume foreign, West European, urban appearances, but are in fact latently imbued with warm, familiar East European colours. Indeed, this outstanding blend of "East" and "West" has its detectable biographical roots, but the present paper attempts to trace its poetic-stylistic *raison d'être*. It argues that Alterman used Yiddish folklore mainly for the creation of binary oppositions that reveal his fondness of paradoxical figures of speech (such

as the oxymoron and the zeugma). This inclination towards paradoxical expressions sprang from the genuine need to present the uncompromising blend of alienation and familiarity, east and west, tradition and modernity, provinciality and urbanism, humanism and dehumanization that invaded Jewish existence in the years between the two world wars.

For instance, the vagabond, the prototype of the poet in Alterman's works, is a blend of the West European troubadour and the East European pauper.

This impoverished wanderer provides the aristocratic addressee (the "thou" of the poem) with "almonds and raisins" and this is unnatural and contradictory: in Yiddish folksongs this widespread motif of "rozhinkes mit mandlen" stands for desirable and expensive products. It also serves as a symbol of the dried and shrunk Jewish existence on foreign lands (as opposed to the healthy and full-fledged national life of the Land of Israel). Hence, this seemingly uncompromising blend of western culture and Yiddish can also be traced in Alterman's extra-literary, political views: as opposed to Ben-Gurion who staunchly believed in the merits of the "melting pot" and who fostered revolutionary pro-Canaanite ideas, Alterman reveals a more pluralistic outlook. In all his writings from the 1940s onwards he advocates an evolutionary long-term process of integration, and as he puts it in his anti-Canaanite poem "Summer Row": "The new Shulamith is dressing up in her chamber / And it is strictly forbidden to peep through the keyhole."

*Yechiel Szeintuch*

## The Czernowitz Conference and Yiddish Culture

The Czernowitz Conference of 1908 set the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of questions and conflicts of contemporary Jewish culture. The sponsors' original aim was to organize a unifying cultural and historical event for the enrichment of Jewish spiritual life and the reinforcement of Jewish identity. The actual outcome of the conference was the very opposite – it created deep division and harmed Jewish identity. The Czernowitz Language Conference did not plan only to address problems concerning the

Yiddish language, but also intended to deal with the general cultural issues confronted by Yiddish-speaking communities in Europe and America. The conference agenda included the following: 1) the Yiddish language (orthography, grammar, foreign words, neologisms, a dictionary); 2) Yiddish literature and Yiddish authors; 3) a Yiddish translation of the Bible; 4) Yiddish theater and Yiddish actors; 5) Yiddish press; 6) “the young generation”; 7) the recognition of Yiddish. But the conference did not cover the agenda fully and its resolutions focussed on the recognition of Yiddish as a national language.

This article deals with the sources of the conference deliberations; the twenty-year period that preceded the conference; the significance of the year 1908; and the cultural and historical context of the resolution declaring Yiddish a national language.

*Dov Sadan*

### Chaim Grade

The author, deeply knowledgeable in both Hebrew and Yiddish literature, sketches the literary-biographical profile of Chaim Grade, poet and prose artist, emphasizing his individuality among the poets of the Young Vilna school and his rooted connection to the classical poetry of Chaim Nachman Bialik. This essay was published twice, once in *Di goldene keyt* 108 (pp. 5-11), where it appeared as a eulogy for the poet who had just died, and two years later in a collection of Dov Sadan's essays entitled *In un arum yidishvarg* ('In and Around Yiddish Wares') [Tel Aviv, 1984, pp. 76-85].

*Shalom Luria*

### Pearls of Yiddish Poetry (David Hofstein and Abraham Sutzkever)

Two Yiddish poems by David Hofstein and Abraham Sutzkever, together with their Hebrew translations and a brief commentary by Shalom Luria are

given in this section The two poems are Hofstein's 'Shneyen' ('Snows') and Sutzkever's 'Ikh leyg aleyn zikh verter' ('I put words for myself').

## FOLKLORE

### *Chaya bar-Itshak*

#### Judah Loeb Cahan and his 'The Yiddish Folksong'

Judah Loeb Cahan was one of the pioneers who aspired to collect and study the treasures of Eastern European Yiddish folksong. The society of collectors that he helped to found was principally interested in the folksong, but also gave attention to folktales, proverbs and other folk genres. Of particular interest are Cahan's approach to collecting itself, to the sorting and describing of folk materials, and his principles of folksong research methodology, his definition of 'folksong' in comparison with other lyrical compositions. Cahan argued that the folksong was more universal than national, as seen especially in love songs. His essay 'The Yiddish Folksong', which is here translated into Hebrew, clearly presents his basic folkloristic concepts.

*Y.-L. Cahan*

#### The Yiddish Folksong

This essay attempts to define the Yiddish folksong and to describe its genres and characteristic themes, a difficult task because of the many transformations undergone by the songs in the course of their transmission. They were sung to different tunes and with variant lyrics. The author provides a spirited overview of a rich body of songs, many of which were collected by volunteer helpers, but most of which he himself heard and recorded in Warsaw in the years 1896-1901. He discusses love songs,

wedding songs, songs of joy, songs of longing, songs of sorrow, children's songs and adult songs, but he begins with love songs, "the most beautiful and most important of our folk songs" (p. 41).

This translation of Cahan's essay from *Shtudyas vegn yidisher folkshafung* (biblyotek fun yivo, New York, 1952, pp. 9-42) first appeared as the introduction to his two-volume work *Yudishe folklieder* [=Yidische folkslider] (New York, 1910, pp. V-LV).

*Yitskhak Ganoz*

### "Ten Daughters": A Yiddish Folksong Sung Among Kolobyeler Hasidim

In the ruins of a Ramat-Gan house struck by an Iraqi missile, the author found a manuscript of a well known folksong about a rich man who had ten daughters to provide for, a song of which there exist many variants. The author gives the Yiddish text, a Hebrew translation and an explanation of the background to the spread and popularization of the song. He also adds a commentary on the song which a Kolobyeler hasid, a batkhn ('wedding jester') wrote, and which was sung in Kielce, Poland.

## DOCUMENTS

*Shlomo Berger*

### The Beginnings of Yiddish Journalism

The essay sketches the twice-weekly newspaper, *Dinsttagishe Kurant un Fraytagishe Kurant*, which appeared in Amsterdam from 13 August 1686 to 5 December 1687, discussing its commercial and informational content, the editor, publisher, correspondents and the geographical range of the latter. Newspapers circulated in a number in European countries in the 17th century.

The Ashkenazim of Amsterdam apparently wanted a paper in their own language.

*F. Klein*

## A Theory of Yiddish

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Yiddish linguistic studies were still in their infancy and it was even necessary to convince some people that Yiddish was a language and not some crippled half-German “jargon.” The present essay discusses the problems of Yiddish as a cultural language and the historical sources of its individual qualities. The philologist and literary scholar Zelik Kalmanovitsh published this study in *Literarische monatshriftn* [Vilna] 3 (April 1908), 60-77.

*Nathan Susskind*

## On the History of Yiddish\*

Linguistic and literary scholars ask such questions as When and how did Yiddish first arise and how did it spread and develop? Nathan Susskind discusses the historical and social conditions under which the language grew. He postulates that Jews spoke the co-territorial vernacular. The specific Jewish fate of Exile meant constant migration, which caused a break with this adopted vernacular; subsequently Jewish speech absorbed elements from a variety of languages – German, Hebrew, Slavic, Italian, Old French. The greater the migrations the more Yiddish the language became. Susskind maintains that Yiddish was born in Exile and that the Exilic experience is of its essence. In the Old Yiddish period 1350-1500 Yiddish became independent of German even on German soil. Susskind dates Middle Yiddish 1500-1750 and the beginnings of Modern Yiddish from 1750.

\* Translated from the Yiddish original in *Yidishe Shprakh* 13:4 (Oct.-Dec., 1953), 97-108.



*Der Ashmedai* (Berlin/Warsaw 1912-1913)

This essay describes the comic-satirical monthly *Der Ashmedai* and attempts to identify its six editors, Eastern-European Jewish students who met in Berlin, a Jewish cultural center by virtue of a number of important writers and artists gathered there (M.J. Berdichevsky, S.Y. Agnon, H.D. Nomberg, Nathan Birnbaum, David Einhorn and others). The author names the editors individually; two of them, Meir Grossman (Meyerl) and Abraham Margolin (Avreml), went on to become important writers and editors in Kiev, London, America, and Palestine.

He explains the journal's Warsaw-Berlin axis; and shows the high-level use of text and caricature to comment acutely on Jewish events, in Poland mainly, but also in Western Europe. He sees the journal as a significant document of Jewish cultural history.

**REVIEWS**

*Shalom Luria*

Ma sheraiti: Zikhronot shel *Yekhezkel Kotik* ('What I Have Seen... The Memoirs of Yekhezkel Kotik') (David Assaf)

The first volume of Yekhezkel Kotik's memoirs have been given to us in a lively Hebrew translation accompanied by learned notes and a comprehensive introduction. Kotik's memoirs vividly describe small-town Jewish life in late nineteenth-century Poland. Kotik proves himself a sensitive writer, as Sholem Aleichem himself understood so well – a letter from the great humorist to Kotik graces the preliminary pages of this impressive work, skillfully edited by the historian David Assaf.

*Vera Solomon*

*Moyshe Broderzon, un écrivain yiddish d'avant-garde*  
(Gilles Rozier)

The major modern Yiddish writers have been translated into French in the past few decades and the French-reading public will therefore not be surprised to learn of the work of the avant-garde writer Moshe Broderzon (1890-1956). It is as an avant-garde writer that the Parisian Yiddish scholar, Gilles Rozier, has chosen to present his subject in his French-language academic study of the talented and popular Polish-Yiddish writer. Rozier places Broderzon in the modernist stream of writers who created a vibrant Yiddish literature in Poland in the period between the two world wars. Rozier's copious notes and bibliography on the life of the poet and his analysis of the historical and cultural contexts of his work serve as background for detailed discussions of individual creations. A little anthology of Broderzon's verse is included in the book, Yiddish original opposite French translation, as well as splendid illustrations. This is an excellent introduction to the life and work of a yiddish avant-garde poet.

*Vera Solomon*

*Birshut-harabim uvirshut hayakhid: Aharon Tseytlin*  
*vesifrut yidish* ('In the Public and in the Private Domain:  
Aaron Zeitlin and Yiddish literature' (Yechiel Szeintuch)

This collection of Aaron Zeitlin's letters by the Jerusalem scholar, Yekhiel Szeintuch, is the product of intensive, years-long research on the distinguished writer. 127 letters, mainly in Yiddish, a few in Hebrew, written between the years 1914 and 1938 and addressed to fellow writers and editors, are given together with detailed annotation in Hebrew. A Zeitlin hitherto unknown emerges from this magisterial edition. A monographic introduction in Hebrew guides the reader in his use of this rich work, as do the compendious indexes.

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