

NEWS OF THE YIVO



YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1048 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028

YIVO Extends Warmest Congratulations to This Year's Nobel Laureate in Literature, Master of Yiddish Story-telling, Isaac Bashevis Singer

YIVO Holds 52nd Annual Conference Conference Marks 10th Anniversary of the Max Weinreich Center

On Sunday, October 29, 1978, YIVO officially began its 52nd Annual Conference with a reception.

Participants, registrants, and guests were greeted by YIVO Chairman Morris Laub, who spoke about the Max Weinreich Center and its achievements during the past 10 years. Mr. Laub emphasized that the Center was not a unique phenomenon in YIVO's history, but rather that it was a continuation of the concept of *aspirantn* (research trainees) conceived by YIVO founders in Vilna in the 1920's. Mr. Laub concluded that though the context and framework for research at YIVO had changed, the commitment to encourage and train young scholars has always remained the same.

Monday, October 30. Session I Current Research In Jewish Folklore

The session was chaired by *Beatrice Silverman-Weinreich* (YIVO Institute). Before introducing the speakers, Ms. Weinreich gave a brief history of YIVO's role in training several generations of Yiddish folklore scholars and collectors of folklore materials, as well as a review of YIVO's scholarly publications in this field, dating from the very year of its inception in 1925 to the work now being done at the Center.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Max Weinreich Center—YIVO; University of Pennsylvania) next presented a paper entitled "The openness of text: Text/image relation on the Ashkenazic torah binder." Since about the 15th century, many western Ashkenazic Jews have made binders for Torah scrolls from swaddling cloths used at circumscions. Based on the examination of about 500 such bind-

ers, Ms. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett showed that because the painted or embroidered formulae (taken from the circumcision liturgy) on these binders remain relatively constant, the binders provide an ideal case for examining the many relations of relatively variable images to a relatively standard text.

The second speaker was *Yael Ze-*
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YIVO Conference, first session: B. Silverman-Weinreich, chairperson; B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett presenting her paper.

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רעפֿערענט: בריינדל קירשנבלאַט-גימבלעט.

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rubavel (University of Pennsylvania) who read a paper entitled "The making of a modern Jewish hero: The postmortem career of Joseph Trumpeldor." Ms. Zerubavel first outlined the significant facts of Trumpeldor's life and then proceeded to relate and analyze the numerous legends that sprung up around his life, career, and appearance.

Session II

Folkloristic and Anthropological Approaches to Hassidic Folklore And Culture

The session was chaired by *Shifra Epstein* (Max Weinreich Center—YIVO; University of Texas).

The first paper, entitled "Hassidic tales generated in the period of the Holocaust," was presented by *Dr. Yaffa Eliach* (Brooklyn College, CUNY). *Dr. Eliach* related four Hassidic tales told during the Holocaust by survivors. They reflect the fact that the story tellers believed their survival was directly related to intervention by a *tsadek* or to their strong faith. The four tales were selected from the more than 1,000 tales that *Dr. Eliach* has collected through interviews with Hassidic survivors.

David Rozen (University of Oklahoma) then read a paper entitled "Patron-client aspect of the Hassidic Rabbi," in which he examined the role of the *rebe* in obtaining health care in New York City for members of his congregation. *Mr. Rozen* used the sociological patron-client model of European peasant societies as a basis for his analysis.

Session III

Audio-Visual Documentation Workshop in Visual Anthropology Of Contemporary Hassidic Communities

Joshua Waletzky (YIVO Institute) acted as chairperson for this session

which consisted primarily of audio-visual presentations.

The first presentation was by *Shifra Epstein* (University of Texas; Max Weinreich Center) who introduced excerpts from her videotape of a *purim-shpil* (Purim play) performed by the Bobover Hassidim in Brooklyn in 1977. Details about this videotape were presented in the *News of the YIVO*, Nos. 141-142.

Jill Gellerman (Laban Institute of Movement Studies) presented videotapes of dancing at various Hassidic weddings. She discussed some of the differences between the dances of men and women, the young and old.

The last presentation consisted of colored and black and white slides by *Bill Aron* (free-lance photographer). The slides showed Purim costumes worn by children as well as adults in the Hassidic community in Brooklyn.

Session IV

Studies in Yiddish Literature

Chairperson for this session was *Rosaline Schwartz* (YIVO Institute).

Dr. Janet Hadda (graduate of Max Weinreich Center—YIVO; University of California, Los Angeles) presented the first paper entitled "The use of *daytshmerish*, Germanized Yiddish, and German in the poetry of Yankev Glatshiteyn." *Dr. Hadda* pointed out that Glatshiteyn's reputation as a master of the Yiddish language should take into account not only his manipulations within the standard language, but also his deviations from this standard. *Dr. Hadda* also showed that at some point, in direct relationship to the destruction of Eastern European Jewry, Glatshiteyn found it impossible to exploit deviation from the Germanic component of Yiddish for purposes of humor, although, in certain cases, it remained appropriate as an ironic device.

Dr. David H. Roskies (YIVO; Jewish Theological Seminary of America)

presented a lecture entitled "A Key to Peretz's *Memoirs*." *Mr. Roskies* stated that in his *Memoirs* (1913-14), Peretz rejected the accepted form of the genre and used such anti-mimetic approaches as symbolism—to reveal a higher truth—and psychology—to reveal a buried, inner truth. According to *Mr. Roskies*, each of the eight chapters of the work possesses its own descriptive technique and thematic structure. However, there is one theme that binds them all together, that of the attempt of a Jewish boy to bridge thought and feeling, logic and sensitivity.

The last presentation of the session was given by *Dr. Eli Katz* (Sonoma State College). Entitled "Entertainment, moralizing, and narrative style in the *Ku-bukh*," the analysis showed that the compiler of the *Ku-bukh* adapted his sources for a popular audience by using colloquial diction, placing the tales in familiar and concrete settings, emphasizing their amusing and entertaining aspects, and drawing conclusions in terms of practical morality rather than abstract ethico-religious precepts. The secularizing effect may have contributed to the contemporary criticism of the *Ku-bukh* as being frivolous.

Tuesday, October 31. Session I

Hassidism: A Historical Perspective

The session was chaired by *Rabbi Jules Harlow* (Rabbinical Assembly).

Henry R. Huttenbach (The City College, CUNY) gave a paper entitled "The non-Jewish origins of Hassidism: Beshtianism as a Ukrainian cult." *Dr. Huttenbach* emphasized the Ukrainian intellectual currents and political circumstances that he felt were possible stimuli and sources of the movement. In an admittedly speculative and controversial presentation, *Dr. Huttenbach* went on to attempt to establish a causal rela-