



Introduction

1. World map that was showing the branches and support groups of YIVO. It adorned the lobby of YIVO headquarters (recreated from a photograph) ¹

I. On the Way to YIVO

- 2. Doctorate diploma awarded to Max Weinreich (1894–1969), director of the YIVO Institute, by the University of Marburg in 1923. Lithuanian Central State Archives
- **3.** Max Weinreich's autobiography, March 9, 1924. Lithuanian Central State Archives
- 4. List of teachers at the Jewish Real Gymnasium, including Yiddish language and literature teacher Max Weinreich, 1926-1927 academic year.

 Lithuanian Central State Archives
- **5.** Wallpaper of the Jewish scout movement "Bee" (*Bin*) founded by Max Weinreich
- **6.** Max Weinreich's linguistic notes on the back of medical forms belonging to his father-in-law, the physician Tsemach Shabad (1864–1935)
- 7. Autobiography of Tsemach Shabad. Paris: YIVO,
- 8. Uriel Weinreich's (1926–1967) letter to his father, Max Weinreich, who had left for the internship to the USA, 1933
- **9.** A drawing by Uriel Weinreich, November 15, 1937
- 10. Geography notebook of Gabriel Weinreich (1928–2023), son of Max Weinreich and student at the Sofia Gurevich Gymnasium in Vilnius, 1938–1939 academic year
- 11. An aquarelle by Max Weinreich's wife Regina Shabad-Weinreich (1898–1974), undated

- 12. Photographs of Regina Shabad-Weinreich and Gabriel Weinreich taken for foreign passports before leaving Vilnius for the USA in 1940.

 Lithuanian Central State Archives
- 13. Excerpt from a 2013 interview with Dr. Gabriel Weinreich, who recounts his family life in Vilnius. Yiddish Book Center, Wexler Oral History Project

Translation of the fragment:

You come from a very prominent family – in fact, from two prominent families. Perhaps we could begin the story with your grandparents, Cemach Shabad and your other grandparents?

Yes, I knew the Shabad grandparents very well, because my mother was from Vilnius, and their family was a rooted Vilnius family. Both families, on my grandfather's and grandmother's sides, were old Vilnius dynasties. My grandfather was Dr. Shabad. I never heard anyone call him anything other than "Doctor. Shabad". My father, by the way, was also a doctor – Dr. Weinreich. For a long time, I didn't understand what the word "doctor" meant – to me, he was just my dad, but to others, he was Dr. Weinreich.

But returning to the Shabad family, Dr. Shabad was not only a physician, but also an important figure in the city's Jewish community, well known to the people of Vilnius.

When my mother took me with her on errands during my childhood, I often heard people whispering, "Dr. Shabad's daughter". At the time, I didn't understand what that meant, but today I understand [his authority].

So, he was a doctor. Though his family was not wealthy, it belonged to a prominent lineage. His grandfather had been Rosh Yeshiva of the renowned Ramayles Yeshiva in Vilnius. It was a highly respected family, and Dr. Shabad further enhanced its distinction through his modern social initiatives. My grandmother, his wife, my mother's mother – Stefania Shifra Shabad, née Grodzenski. The Grodzenskis were a very well-known and wealthy family in Vilnius. I remember my grandparents very well – they played an important role in my childhood and were part of my everyday life.

My grandfather died in 1935, I think, at the age of 71 (I don't remember exactly, but it was in the 1930s)². My grandmother perished in the Vilnius ghetto. I did not suffer the same fate because our immediate family – my parents, my brother and I – left Vilnius before the war: my father left with Uriel before it started, and my mother and I left during the war. In any case, we avoided the ghetto.

What about your grandparents from Latvia?

My father's native language was not Yiddish. This surprises many people because he was an important figure in Yiddish culture – one of the founders of YIVO. In addition, he was a very stubborn man and insisted that we speak only Yiddish. Therefore, people were surprised that his native language was German.

He grew up in Courland, in present-day Latvia. In that region, common folk spoke Latvian, while the intelligentsia spoke German.

You were born in Vilnius. What did it mean to grow up in the "Jerusalem of Lithuania"?

In our family—and not only in ours—there was practically no one with whom we communicated in any language other than Yiddish. We not only lived in Vilnius, but we also lived in Yiddish: we thought, dreamed, and fantasized in Yiddish.

The school we attended was a Yiddish school – all lessons were conducted in Yiddish. Except for two compulsory lessons, which were taught in Polish – these were Polish language and Polish history. Although the teachers were Jewish, these lessons still had to be taught in Polish. We all knew Polish, and had to know it because we needed it to communicate at the bank, the post office, or with the police. Our Polish was probably not very good. I mean, it was correct, but not literary. It would have been difficult for us children to read Polish literature. So, even though we knew Polish, we actually lived in Yiddish.

II. YIVO at its Home: Headquarters, People, and Activities

- 14. YIVO staff and guests, ca. 1933. Seated: (first from left) YIVO Director Zalmen Reizen (1887–1941) and (first from right) actor Abraham Morevski (1886–1964); standing: (first from left) YIVO staff member Hirsh Abramowicz (1881–1960), (fifth from left) Dr. Max Weinreich, (sixth from left) [YIVO aspirant Ber Shlosberg] and (fourth from the right) YIVO artist and Theater Museum Director Uma Olkenitski (1899–1943/1944)
- 15. Plan of the garden in front of the YIVO building (ca. 1933)
- 16. YIVO garden. Reproduction of a painting by Vilnius artist Ben-Zion Zuckerman (1890–1944) in the YIVO magazine "Notebooks for Jewish Art" (Heftn far yidishe kunst), 1938, no. 1 (colored)
- 17. Laying ceremony of the YIVO building cornerstone, which took place in October 1929, during the first YIVO conference
- 18. Fragment of the list of YIVO supporters, which hung in the lobby of the YIVO headquarters in Vilnius. Graphic artist Uma Olkenitski
- 19. List of YIVO Honorary Board of Trustees
- **20.** YIVO statute, [1925]
- 21. Brochure "The Organization of Yiddish Scholarship" (*Di organizatsie fun yidishn visnshaft*) (Vilnius: TsBK–VILBIG, 1925), introducing the founding principles of the future Institute activities
- 22. YIVO correspondence registration ledgers for 1926 and 1935
- 23. YIVO stationery postcard and envelope

All exhibits, except those indicated separately, come from the Judaica Collection of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

² 1935 is a correct date of dr. Tsemach Shabad's death

III. Promoting the Yiddish Language and Culture

- 24. Linguistic map for the study of Yiddish dialectology
- 25. Poster for a lecture "The Foundations of Yiddish as a Cultural Language" by Dr. Zelig Kalmanovich, Director of YIVO, delivered on November 26, 1939 in the hall of the Šiauliai Jewish Gymnasium
- 26. Manuscript of the article "The Yiddish Language" (*Yidishe shprakh*) for the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia by Dr. Max Weinreich, a famous Yiddish linguist. The article written in December 1938–January 1939
- 27. Linguistic questionnaires (*Lingvistishe anketes*). Vilnius: YIVO, 1938
- 28. Report of the Yiddish Orthography Congress in Buenos Aires (*Barikht fun ortografishn kongres*), Buenos Aires: YIVO Branch in Argentine, 1931
- 29. Announcement of a series of public lectures on the Yiddish language, literature, and folklore, 1940. Speakers: YIVO Director Dr. Zelig Kalmanovich (1885–1944), Pinchas Kohn (1895–1941) and YIVO collaborators refugees from Nazi-occupied Warsaw, Noah Prilutski (1882–1941), Solomon Kazhdan and Solomon Mendelson (1897–1948)
- 30. Noah Prilutski's book "Yiddish as a Mother Tongue" (*Mame-loshn*), vol. 1, Warsaw: Kultur-lige, 1924, published before the establishment of YIVO. Prilutski's high reputation as a Yiddish linguist enabled him to get involved in the activities of the Institute's Philology Section
- 31. YIVO journal "Yiddish for All" (*Yidish far ale*), ed. Noah Prilutski, 1938, no. 5
- 32. Noah Prilutski's book "Yiddish Phonetics" (*Yidishe fonetik*), Vilnius: Jewish Teachers' Courses, September 1940. Since the book was published during the first Soviet occupation, it was printed not in classical Yiddish but in the reformed Soviet Yiddish orthography. From Vilnius Jewish Museum that operated 1944–1948

- 33. Yiddish language notebook of a six-year-old first-grader Chipe Bezim from Hrubieszów (Poland), undated. YIVO Pedagogical Museum
- **34.** Malka Bloch's of Dieveniškės diary in Hebrew and Polish (1938–1939), submitted to a competition for autobiographies and diaries organized by YIVO for Jewish youth
- **35.** Cards of participants in autobiography and diary competitions (1932, 1934, and 1939)
- **36.** Poster for a rally organized by the YIVO support group in Krakow on December 9, 1931, calling for the recognition of Yiddish as an official language of the state

IV. YIVO Branches and its Global Renown

- 37. Poster for an art festival organized by the Argentine branch of YIVO in Buenos Aires on September 25, 1932, during a visit by Zalmen Reizen, Director of YIVO in Vilnius. The funds raised were to be donated to YIVO
- 38. Poster for a lecture "Tragic Lyricist" (about the classic of Yiddish literature Isaac Leib Peretz) by Solomon Mendelson, organized by the support group of the Jewish Scientific Institute in Kaunas on May 14, 1940
- **39.** Report on the International YIVO Convention held in Vilnius on May 14–19, 1935 (*Der alveltlekher tsuzamenfor fun yidishn visnshaflekhn institut*). Vilnius: YIVO, 1936
- **40.** Brochure of the YIVO branch in Argentina on the establishment of the Central Jewish Library in Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires: YIVO, 1939
- **41.** Photo of members of the YIVO support group in Brazil. Rio de Janeiro, undated
- **42.** Excerpts from the YIVO scrapbook dedicated to the [1929] lecture tour of Dr. Max Weinreich in the USA
- **43.** Yearbook of *Amopteyl* the YIVO branch in America (*Yorbukh fun Amopteyl*), New York: YIVO, 1938

- **44.** Brochure of the YIVO branch in Berlin, "Jewish Scientific Institute (1925–1928)". Berlin: Society for the Support of the Jewish Scientific Institute, 1929
- **45.** Poster for the lecture by Zalmen Reizen, Director of YIVO in Vilnius, organized by the Argentine branch of YIVO in Santa Fe on July 2, 1932
- **46.** Poster for a lecture "The Current State of Jewish Culture" by Dr. Max Weinreich, Director of YIVO in Vilnius, organized by the YIVO support group in Kutno (Poland) on March 15, 1937
- 47. Poster for a scholarly conference (contemporary term: "Academia") organized by the YIVO support group in Warsaw. Speakers: Zalmen Reizen from Vilnius, group members: Isaak Schiper (1884–1943), Noah Prilutski, Solomon Kazhdan and A. Buksbaum
- **48.** Article "Jewish Scientific Institute in Vilnius," published in the daily *Vilniaus balsas* (The Voice of Vilnius) on March 17, 1940, no. 164
- **49.** One-off publication "The Road to Jewish Science," introducing YIVO to the Jewish community of independent Lithuania, Kaunas, January 15, 1926
- 50. Sofija Štromaitė-Veisienė and her daughter Irena Veisaitė's from Kaunas subscription card for YIVO publications

V. Vilnius YIVO Archives and Museum Treasures

- **51.** Manuscript chronicle (*pinkas*) of the Kaunas Torah study group, 1853-1899. Collection of YIVO History Section
- **52.** Henryk Berlewi poster for the premiere of the play "The Dybbuk" (*Der dibek*) by the Vilnius Jewish drama group *Vilner trupe* in Warsaw in 1920. YIVO Theater Museum
- **53.** Advertisement poster by Ben-Zion Zuckerman for the Berlin Jewish publishing house *Klal-farlag*, 1921. YIVO archives

- 54. Poster for the Baltic Maccabiah and Maccabi Sports Association Convention held on August 27–29, 1937 in Kaunas. YIVO Jewish Sports Research Archive
- 55. Playbill for the show "The Lithuanian Yankee" (*Der litvisher yenki*) at the New Yiddish Lawndale Theater in Chicago, undated. YIVO Theater Museum

VI. The Eve of WWII and the Years of Nazi Occupation

- **56-57.** Proclamations to boycott Nazi German films, Krakow, ca. 1933–1939. YIVO archives
- 58. Decree on the dismissal of Jewish lecturers from Vilnius University, July 1, 1941. Noah Prilutski, Head of the Yiddish department and the last Director of YIVO in Vilnius, was among the dismissed. Lithuanian Central State Archives
- **59.** Cancellation of Noah Prilucki's ID as associate professor at Vilnius University, June 1941. Lithuanian Central State Archives
- **60.** Uma Olkenitski's report to the Vilnius Ghetto administration on the sorting of YIVO documents and books, September 5–12, 1942
- **61.** YIVO Theater Museum catalog cards filled out by Uma Olkenitski in the pre-war period

VII. YIVO Continuity and Legacy

62-63. A two-volume monograph by Jacob Shatzky, "The History of the Jews of Warsaw" (*Geshikhte fun yidn in Varshe*), published by YIVO in New York in 1946 and donated to the Vilnius Jewish Museum, which operated in 1944–1949

- 64. Dr. Max Weinreich (first from the right) and his colleagues open boxes containing Jewish books from Vilnius that were stolen by the Nazis and handed over to YIVO in New York after the Allied victory, 1947. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
- 65. Dr. Max Weinreich teaches Yiddish at the City College of New York, 1947. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
- 66. Dr. Uriel Weinreich, the renowned Yiddish linguist, professor at Columbia University in the City of New York and the son of Dr. Max Weinreich, [1967]. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
- 67. Facade of the headquarters of the Argentine branch of YIVO (IWO) in Buenos Aires, 1945. Fundación IWO
- 68. Reading room at the headquarters of the Argentine branch of YIVO, 1945. Fundación IWO
- **69.** Maurice Minkowski Museum at the YIVO branch in Buenos Aires, 1945. Fundación IWO
- 70. YIVO academic publications printed in Vilnius and New York, 1925–1997
- 71. Excerpt from a 1965 interview with Dr. Max
 Weinreich about the beginnings of the Institute.
 YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

Transcript of the excerpt:

Dr. Weinreich, tell us how it all began, and also about the pioneer Nokhem Shtif.

It all started when Shtif realized that the Yiddish language had reached such a level that it was necessary to establish a Jewish scientific institute, which would be a natural next step in the development of the Yiddish language and culture. In order to implement this idea, Shtif wrote a memorandum on the establishment of the institute and, as much as

he could afford, sent it to key figures in the field of Yiddish culture and various organizations. At the time, he was living in Berlin, did not have a steady job, and made a living by participating in conferences and other similar activities. One copy of the memorandum reached people in Vilnius who were in contact with the CBK (Central Jewish Education Committee) and the Vilnius Jewish Education Society (VILBIG). On the initiative of these two organizations, a meeting was convened in Vilnius on March 24, 1925, to discuss the memorandum plan.

Are there any printed materials from this period?

Yes. An official response to the memorandum was published in a brochure "The Vilnius Theses on a Jewish Scientific Institute," which later became the "Bill of Rights" for our future Jewish Scientific Institute. During the meeting, a commission was also formed to coordinate further work.

Who belonged to the commission?

The commission consisted of M[ax] Weinreich, J[oseph] Chernichov, G[ershon] Pludermacher, H[erz] Kowarski and Zalmen Reizen. In addition, A[braham] Golomb, Sofia Gurevich, and L[eib] Turbovich also participated in the commission's work, forming a special subcommittee responsible for the Shtif project and the analyses of the opinions expressed at the aforementioned meeting.

Was it difficult to find funds to publish the brochure before YIVO began its activities?

We received funds for the brochure from Berlin. The YIVO initiative group operating there—Cherikover, Leshchinski and Shtif—took care of the financing. At that time, neither of the two organizations mentioned earlier had such funds.

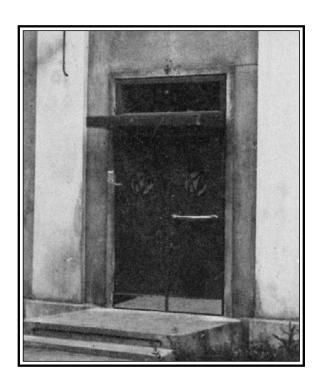
Of all the initiators known to us, only a few remained involved in the practical activities of YIVO. Can you tell us about them?

By the fall of 1925, four people remained active: Cherikover and Leshchinski in Berlin (Shtif had already withdrawn from active involvement with YIVO at that time), and Zalmen Reizen and Weinreich in Vilnius. I must say that without Reizen, YIVO's work would have looked completely different-everything would have been much more difficult. Reizen was, above all, a very community-minded person, and this was extremely useful for our Institute, which establishment was not without obstacles. The Institute constantly had to recover from various blows, and only someone with Reizen's boundless faith in the cause could bear it. Secondly, although his formal education was limited to an eighth-grade high school diploma, he was a very talented academic. His feeling for the Yiddish language was so deep that it was evident in all his work. Although new discoveries have been made in Yiddish linguistics over the past 40 years, Reizen's insights have not aged, because they were monumental. Third, he had an advantage that none of us had: He grew up surrounded by the Yiddish language, and all his roots came from Yiddish life. After experiencing a setback, he would get up the very next day as if nothing had happened and continue his work. Such was his nature.

What happened to the Berlin group? I mean Shtif, Cherikover and Leshchinski?

Shtif decided to return to the Soviet Union. My very pragmatic explanation would be this: He no longer wished to live in poverty. Cherikover and Leshchinski, who remained in Berlin, thanks God, established themselves and remained active in the Yiddish field. However, none of us could compare to Reizen, who so firmly believed in the status and in the strength of Yiddish.

I would also like to mention Kalmanovich and his role at the Institute. He was not with us during the first few years—at that time he was living in Lithuania and working as a teacher at the Jewish Gymnasium in Panevėžys. Since Lithuania was completely cut off from Poland, there was no possibility of direct correspondence between the two countries until the mid-1930s. Therefore, he was unable to contribute to organizational and academic work, but he occasionally sent us articles as a contributor. He joined our conference, which took place in July, August, or September 1929...



09 04 – 12 31 Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, exhibition Hall, 3rd floor

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