

# BAGGEL SHOP

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Fall has come again, bringing not only its indescribable colors, but also a new issue of the Bagel Shop. In this issue we have an interview with principal of the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium in Vilnius Miša Jakobas, we remember Sulamita Lermanaitė-Gelpernienė and we share impressions from the LJC Olameinu children's summer camp. Besides the usual columns, we also paid considerable attention to the European Day of Jewish Culture, so read on to learn about gefilte fish, wooden synagogues, the interwar Jewish press and the poet Abraham Sutzkever.

Stay warm, and stop by the Bagel Shop Café at Pylimo street no. 4 in Vilnius for a cup of tea, and check out the new menu when you're there!

We always welcome your thoughts, suggestions and criticisms! Write me at [radvile@lzb.lt](mailto:radvile@lzb.lt)

*Radvilė*

# NEWS AT A GLANCE

**May 27** Lithuanian deputy foreign minister Mantvydas Bekešius met with a large delegation of journalists from Israel. The journalists were interested in Lithuania's progress successfully expanding relations between Lithuania and Israel, prospects for the expansion of trade, Jewish community current events, commemoration of Holocaust victims and Jewish heritage. On January 8, 2017, Lithuania and Israel will mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

**May 30** International conference "The Kupiškis Jewish Community: The Connection between Past and Present" held at the Povilas Matulionis pre-gymnasium in Kupiškis, Lithuania. Organized jointly by the pre-gymnasium and the Kupiškis Ethnographic Museum.

**June 1** A delegation from the World Jewish Congress including chairman Shai Hermesh, WJC Israel director general Sam Grundwerg, director of the the Israel Council on Foreign Relations Dr. Laurence Weinbaum and others, visited the Lithuanian Jewish Community (LJC). WJC Israel sends delegations annually to visit national capitals to meet with parliamentarians and religious leaders, create dialogue and establish Israeli support groups.

**June 6** Baltic News Service reported a discussion was held at the Lithuanian parliament on Holocaust perpetrators. Historian Alfredas Rukšėnas said those who transported and guarded Jews were just as much guilty of genocide as those who pulled the trigger. More than 95% of Lithuanian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

**June 7** An exhibit of cut-paper artwork by Klaidas Navickas opened in the gallery of the library of Vilnius Gediminas

Technical University. The exhibit included traditional Jewish religious mizrah designs and cut-paper works depicting Jewish holidays. Considered a master in his field, Navickas has exhibited in Japan, Poland, the USA and other countries.

**June 7** The National Art Gallery presented an exhibit of contemporary video from Israel by Tel Aviv Contemporary Art Center curator Chen Tamir providing the public a survey of contemporary Israeli experimental video work in the historical, social and political context of this unique country.

**June 11** The LJC celebrated the holiday of Shavuot dedicated to the revelation on Mount Sinai. The holiday commemorates the day God gave the Torah and Ten Commandments to Moses. Shavuot is celebrated seven days after Passover. Meetings with the Rabbis Samson Izakson and Kalev Krelin were held on the first evening of the holiday and traditional treats were handed out.

**June 15** The Romanian embassy to Lithuania and the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum held a screening of Radu Gabrea's film "Gruber's Journey" (2008) at the museum's Tolerance Center. The film centers around the pogrom of June 27 to 29, 1941, in the Romanian city of Iași. Romania currently holds the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

**June 15** The Ethnic Minorities Department under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania announced prizes to be awarded for the best graduate work on the topic of Lithuanian ethnic minorities by university students. The stated goal was to encourage students to take an interest in Lithuania's ethnic minorities and to choose topics associated with the minorities living in Lithuania in different disciplines.

**June 16** A presentation and discussion of the National Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Art Museum's exhibit of a set of posters and medals on the 145th birthday of famous US sculptor Victor David Brenner (1871-1924), born in Šiauliai, Lithuania, was held at the Povilas Višinskis Public Library in the Šiauliai district.

**June 16** An exhibition of works by first-year students in Raimundas Savickas's introduction to art class opened at the LJC by Junona Berznicky who initiated the series of outdoor art workshops and exhibitions which have now become an on-going art class by the Raimundas Savickas Art School at the LJC.

**June 17** The National Art Gallery hosted an exhibit of photographs called "Positive Images for Field and Forest" by Israeli artist Sharon Ya'ari providing an overview of the cities and wilderness of Israel. One of the author's largest exhibits in Europe and the first in Lithuania.

**June 18** LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliaksky and Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Amir Maimon marched in gay and lesbian parade in Vilnius along with about 2,000 other people.

**June 19** Lithuanian Jewish athletics club Makabi held mini-Maccabi Games in Kaunas dedicated to the memory of Lithuanian cyclists Isak Anolik and Tarkhum Murnik. Seventy-two athletes from Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Ukmergė participated in field soccer, basketball, volleyball, table tennis and chess.

**June 22** A joint team of archaeologists from the USA and Israel presented findings from Ponar at the Tolerance Center of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. The archaeologists reported finding the escape tunnel dug by the "burners' brigade." The group led by professor Richard Freund and Dr. Jon Seligman also dug at the site of the Great Synagogue in Vilnius. Owen Palmquist led a film crew shooting a documentary for the NOVA series on PBS about Jewish Vilnius and they filmed the digging and conducted interviews.

**June 22** BNS reported work had begun to remove fragments of Jewish gravestones used in the construction of an electric substation in Vilnius. They were later moved to the Jewish cemetery on Olandų street for use in a memorial composition.

**June 23** A commission studying issues of Litvak history and culture met for their second meeting at the Lithuanian Government. They discussed protection and preservation of Lithuanian Jewish heritage sites, Jewish cemeteries and Jewish mass murder sites, an overhaul of the Ponar Memorial Complex, property restitution and including the LJC in celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuanian independence. The commission called upon Lithuanian municipalities and regional administrations to follow

the law and register all Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust sites on the national property registry by January 1, 2017. Officially there are 203 old Jewish cemeteries and 207 Holocaust sites in Lithuania. The commission was presented a plan for the comprehensive overhaul of the Ponar Memorial Complex which is scheduled for renovation by 2018.

**June 23** Day to celebrate friends of the Mykolas Romeris University. The party to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the university included a publication about the school and those who have contributed to it. Trees were planted in their honor in a Garden of Friends at the university. Those honored included LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky's father Samuelis Kukliansky. He was a Lithuanian attorney, criminologist, a professor at the university and a doctor of social sciences.

**June 23** Lithuanian parliament adopted amendments to law on citizenship to insure the rights of Jews from interwar Lithuania and their offspring to restore Lithuanian citizenship. Ninety-six MPs voted in favor and none against. The amendment specifies all people who left Lithuania before March 11, 1990, have the right to restoration of citizenship, except for people who moved to other parts of the Soviet Union after June 15, 1940.

**June 24 and 26** The 75th anniversary of the Lietūkis garage massacre is marked in Kaunas. The men's vocal group Quorum performs at the Kaunas State Philharmonic as part of the event. Many non-Jews are active participants at the events, including representatives of the Catholic church, the Kaunas municipality, NGOs and non-Jewish residents of Kaunas.

**June 27** Celebration to welcome return of Torah scroll to the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius. British photo-journalist Judah Passow's family preserved the scroll from Vilnius for 56 years and on his initiative it was rededicated to the Vilnius Jewish Community.

**July 1** A delegation under the Jewish Heritage Trip to Lithuania program led by Peggy Mosinger Freedman visited the LJC. The organization supports the LJC Social Center's program to deliver food to the homes of the elderly.

**July 1** Exhibit of works by world-renowned sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891-1973) called "Life in Sculpture" opened at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. Lipchitz grew up in Druskininkai, Lithuania, and later earned fame in Western Europe. In America he created many sculptured which adorn public spaces, including Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, the Tweed Museum of Art at the University of Minnesota in Duluth and elsewhere. The exhibit included lithographs (sketches of famous sculptures), drawings, personal correspondence and documents as well as sculptural works.

**July 5** “The White Rose: German Student Resistance to the Hitler Regime, 1942-1943” exhibit opened at the Kaunas Center of Ethnic Cultures. Exhibit organized by Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Weiße Rose Stiftung, Kaunas Jewish Community and Kaunas Center of Ethnic Cultures. Students in Munich in 1942 and 1943 distributed leaflets calling for resistance to the Nazis. They protested against the war, oppression and Nazi crimes.

**July 13** Screening of film *Open Door: Jewish Rescue in the Philippines* at LJC. Film presented by Jack Simke Kol, assistant to director Noel M. Izon. The film tells the story of Philippines president Quezon who opened the nation’s doors to 1,300 Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust in Europe.

**July 17-August 12** Vilnius Yiddish Institute’s summer Yiddish program of language and literature took place at Vilnius University. Institute director Dr. Šarūnas Liekis said the course continued to feature four levels for students with varying facility in the language.

**July 18** The Curonian Spit Museum of History opened an exhibit called “Cornelia Gurlitt: Journey of the Heart. Vilnius through the Eyes of a German Expressionist, 1915-1917.” Exhibit items came from the collection of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and private collections. The lithographs and drawings show the life drama of the World War I-era German nurse at the German Army’s hospital in Vilnius. The exhibit included statements and testimonies by people who were eyewitnesses to the images of Vilnius life at that time as recorded by photographers attached to field marshal Hermann von Eichhorn’s army.

**July 23** Jewish cultural event held in old town of Anykščiai, Lithuania. The four-hour concert program included the Rakija Klezmer Orkestar, a performance by Rafailas Karpis and a performance piece called *Story of God’s Man* played by Arkadijus Gotesmanas, culminating in a performance by soloist Judita Leitaitė. Archival documents, photos from the Anykščiai and Vabalninkas Jewish communities and drawings were displayed on the walls of the synagogue and the buildings on the streets surrounding Simonas Daukantas Square. Event organized by the Antanas Baranauskas and Antanas Vienuolis-Žukauskas Memorial Museum and the Jewish Culture and Information Center.

**July 28-29** Free Israeli dance lessons provided by the Israeli embassy at the Old Town Hall Square in Vilnius.

**July 28** The civic organization Vieningas Kaunas [United Kaunas] invited the public to a volunteer clean-up of the old Jewish cemetery in the Žaliakalnis neighborhood of Kaunas. Many residents of the city and region of Kaunas, Kaunas Jewish Community members, representatives from the Cultural Heritage Department and the founders of the Maceva foundation showed up and cleaned headstones. The city of Kaunas allocated 8,000 euros for the first stage in renovating the cem-

etry: identifying and inventorying the grave monuments. A request was made to the Lithuanian Government for fixing the fence surrounding the cemetery. Plans were also made to set up surveillance cameras around the cemetery. The cemetery was established in 1861 and closed in 1952.

**July 31-August 7** Events held to honor Righteous Gentile Chiune Sugihara and Lithuanian festival held in his hometown, Yaotsu, Japan. Yaotsu mayor Mr. Masanori Kaneko and Kaunas city representative Inga Pukelytė signed memorandum of cooperation at opening of Sugihara memorial week.

**July** US delegation of rabbis and philanthropists visited Lithuania, led by Rabbi Yeruham Olshin and Rabbi Reuven Desler. They held meetings with LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky, visited the graves of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Chaim Ozer and other famous rabbis, attended the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius, said kaddish at the Seventh Fort in Kaunas and visited Kelmė and Telšiai, Lithuania.

**August 1-10** The Lithuanian town of Dieveniškės put on an event called *Among the Hills of Dieveniškės 2016* where LJC representatives sold traditional Litvak foods at the Bagel Shop Café booth there. The lectures “Jewish Burial and Grave Customs” and “Synagogues: How They’re Built, What They Do and Why” were delivered at the Dieveniškės School of Business and Technology.

**August 2** International Remembrance Day of the Roma Holocaust was observed at the Ponar Memorial Complex and the film *Papusza* about a Roma poetess was screened at the Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius.

**August 4** Maya Pennington performs concert at LJC. Program includes Gershwin, Joni Mitchell, Nina Simone and tributes to a number of American and Israeli artists.

**August 7** Baltic News Service reported the old Jewish cemetery on Olandų street in Vilnius has been declared a state-protected cultural heritage site at the initiative of the Cultural Heritage Department. State protection means greater protection, financing and maintenance. The 7.7-hectare territory was registered as the Užupis Jewish cemetery in 2014. The cemetery operated from 1828 to 1940 and about 70,000 Jews are buried there. The cemetery was destroyed between 1961 and 1963.

**August 8-14** LJC held an educational workshop of outdoor painting and ceramics classes led by professional teachers at the Įlanka farm in Šaukšteliškiai village in the Molėtai region of Lithuania.

**August 12** Rakija Klezmer Orkestar gave a concert on the steps of the central post office in Kaunas. Organized by the Kaunas Jewish Community.

**August 13** The Šarnelė Community Center in Plungė region held a conference called “They lived in Šarnelė” and a metal

sculpture installation called the Apple Tree of Rescuers is unveiled at the Litvak Memorial Garden in Medsėdžiai vilage there.

**August 23** The Center for the Study of the Genocide and Resistance of the Residents of Lithuania organizes a commemoration of Enzys Jagomastas, a publisher from the ethnic Lithuanian area of East Prussia, and his family at the grave site in Ponar.

**August 24** A library was opened at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius. The Šeduva Jewish Memorial Foundation provided the resources for a full-fledged Jewish library for Torah and Talmud study at Vilnius's only working synagogue.

**August 26** Commemorative monument unveiled at synagogue in Dusetos in Zarasai region to mark the 75th anniversary of the mass murder of 2,569 Jews from Zarasai and surrounding areas in the Krakynė Forest.

**August 28** "Memory stones" laid in Kaunas to commemorate Lithuania's first Olympian cyclist Isak Anolik, the artists Černė Percikovičiūtė and Jakovas Lipšicas, doctor and father of clinical psychology in Lithuania Dr. Vladimiras Lazersonas and pediatricist Regina Safočinskaitė-Lazersonienė.

**August 28** Holocaust commemoration in Biržai. A procession followed the route down which Jews were marched to the mass murder site 75 years ago. Jews comprised half the population of Biržai.

**August 29** Israeli film Me'kivun ha'yaar ("Out of the Forest," 2004) screened at "Uncomfortable Cinema" film festival in Kaunas. The film is about the mass murder of Jews at Ponar outside Vilnius and is based on the Sakowicz diary.

**August 29** Holocaust commemoration and procession in Molėtai, Lithuania. Attended by several thousand Lithuanians including MPs, government ministers, high-ranking politicians and the mayor of Molėtai. LJC chairwoman Faina Kukuliansky delivered an address in Lithuanian and English, reminding the audience almost every town in Lithuania shares a similar history.

**August 30** Holocaust commemoration in Šeduva, Lithuania.

**September 2-5** Events to mark the European Day of Jewish Culture held throughout Lithuania. This year's theme was Jewish languages.

**September 2** Retrospective of works by Mad magazine comic illustrator Al Jaffee at the Zarasai Regional History Museum. Jaffee's parents were both from Zarasai and he spent several years there before World War II.

**September 2** Asia Gutermanaitė delivers a public lecture on Jewish languages in Jonava and Jewish folktales were read at schools in the Kėdainiai region, where there was also a class on how to read Jewish headstones.



Kadish prayer during Holocaust commemoration in Šeduva.  
Photo: Michail Vilkomirskij.

**August 3** Jewish heritage site tours in Vilnius and Šiauliai. Discussion "Do We Have a 'Dictionary' of Lithuanian Jewish Culture and History? The Social and Culturological Consequences of Philological Decisions" held at Vilnius Jewish Public Library. Dr. Lara Lempertienė gave a public lecture about Chaim Nachman Shapiro, linguist, Semitic studies expert, historian of Jewish literature and teacher of Hebrew, Syriac and Arabian. A mobile telephone application called Discover Jewish Lithuania was presented. Folk artist and jeweler Ela Pavinskienė gave Hebrew calligraphy classes for young and old at the A. Volungevičius Regional History Museum in Leipalingis in the Druskininkai region. Dr. Jolanta Mickutė delivered a lecture in Šiauliai with the title "Why Did Jews Speak 'Jewish' and Not Something Else in 20th Century Eastern Europe?" and opera soloist Rafailas Karpis with Darius Mažintas on piano performed Jewish song arrangements in Yiddish in a concert program called "Letters from the Past."

**September 3-4** Jewish heritage site tours in Zarasai, Dusetos, Salakas and Kuiteniai village.

**September 4** Full day of events to mark European Day of Jewish Culture at the LJC kicked off at the Bagel Shop Café. LJC heritage protection expert Martynas Užpelkis spoke about aging and abandoned synagogues in Lithuania and how to insure their continued existence. The Bagel Shop provided breakfast and brunch and showcased the new fall menu. Abraham Sutzkever's poetry reading was an evening event upstairs. Hebrew language lessons were held for children and adults at the Ilan Club. The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum held a discussion complementing their Jacques Lipchitz exhibit called "Hymn of Vowels: Letters of the Sacred Tongue in the Sculpture of Jacques Lipchitz."

**September 4** Jewish heritage site tour in Eišiškės in Šalčininkai region presented Jewish sites on Rodūnės, Raubiškių and Vilniaus streets, the power station on Malūno street, the school, synagogue and the Jewish cemetery.

**September 4** Presentation in Joniškis of life and work of Chackelis Lemchenas, the famous philosopher, lexicographer, standardizer of the Lithuanian language, translator and Žagarė resident. Rod Freedman's film "Dėdė Chackelis" was screened and a mobile telephone application for learning about the Jewish heritage of the Joniškis region was presented.

**September 4** Cemetery clean-up outside the synagogue in Kurkliai village in the Anykščiai region. Regional historian Angelė Dūdienė moderated a discussion entitled "Jews Lived Together with Us." A map by local students showing where Jews lived there was put on display with an art composition in the Kurkliai synagogue.

**September 4** Jewish heritage site tours provided in the Kaunas neighborhood of Šančiai and in Vilkija with a lecture about interwar Jewish cultural life and Jewish theatrical activity in Hebrew and Yiddish in Kaunas. Audio-visual art installation displayed in synagogue in Šančiai. The Kėdainiai Regional History Museum's Multicultural Center presented a mobile telephone application for learning about Jewish heritage sites in Kėdainiai.

**September 4** Conference "The Jewish Community in the Memory of Residents of Seda" held at Seda Cultural Center, information stand unveiled and educational event "Jewish Language, Customs and Traditions: Learning about Jewish Cuisine, from Name to Taste" led by Laurina Todesaitė.

**September 4** The Vladas Statkevičius Museum in Šilalė presented an exhibit of 3-D models called "Lost and Vanishing Heritage: The Architecture of Wooden Synagogues." In Švėkšna a lecture called "The Influence of the Lithuanian Language on the Lithuanian Jewish Dialect" and an event called "My Name in Yiddish" as well as a photo exhibit called "Glances from the Past" were held, and visitors toured the synagogue there.

**September 5** The Stanislovas Rapolionis Gymnasium of Eišiškės in the Šalčininkai region presented the project "My Town and Its Jewish Residents: History and Fates," which included an exhibit of drawings, the impressions of project participants, excerpts from the works of Romain Gary and Grigoriy Kanovitch, Jewish music and the virtual tour Shtetl Eyshishok.

**September 5** The Molėtai Regional History Museum opened an exhibit called "Our Jews of Molėtai" and there was a public meeting with pianist and music teacher Leon Kaplan, a Jew from Molėtai. He performed a short concert.

**September 5** The Pandėlys Gymnasium Museum in the Rok-iškis region presented "Synagogues of Pandėlys" with a presentation of art works called "Synagogues: Jewish Houses of Prayer" and a map called "Jewish Buildings in Pandėlys." A ceremony was held in the old Pandėlys Jewish cemetery to honor the memory of the dead.

**September 13** Four "memory stones" were unveiled in Panevėžys to commemorate Roma victims of the Holocaust.

This was the first monument in Lithuania to commemorate the Roma Holocaust.

**September 16** Commemorative plaque by sculptor Gediminas Pašvenskas unveiled at Mapu street no. 18 in Kaunas to commemorate the Union of Jewish Soldiers Who Fought for Lithuanian Independence which operated there between the two world wars.

**September 18** Rositsan and Maccabi Elite Chess and Checkers Club celebrated their 10th anniversary with a chess match at the LJC in Vilnius.

**September 18** The Israeli embassy in Vilnius held a bicycle ride in the run-up to Rosh Hashanah. The first 200 arrivals to the start line received special event t-shirts and apples dipped in honey--a traditional New Year dish--were served at the finish line. The Sveikas miestas [Healthy City] public enterprise was the partner organizer for the event.

**September 20** Vilnius mayor Remigijus Šimašius and LJC chairwoman Faina Kukliansky unveiled a street sign in Yiddish and Hebrew on Jewish street in the historical Jewish quarter.

**September 21** Discussion "The Tragedy of the Jewish Citizens of Lithuania 75 Years Ago: Events, Facts, Interpretations" held at the library of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences in Kaunas, organized by the Social and Liberal Arts Cathedral of the University, the Lithuanian Journalists Association and the university's Bio-Ethics Center. Kaunas Jewish Community chairman Žakas Gercas took part in the discussion.

**September 20-28** Events to mark the Day of Remembrance of the Lithuanian Jewish Victims of Genocide and to honor rescuers of Lithuanian Jews: **September 20** volunteer clean-up of Sudervė Jewish cemetery in Vilnius; **September 21** walking tour of Jewish Vilnius, screening of film "Gyvybės ir mirties duobė" ["Pit of Life and Death"]; **September 22** Israeli vocal ensemble Adam Le Adam concert at Old Town Hall in Vilnius; **September 23** Monument unveiled to the murdered children of the Vilnius ghetto in the Garden of Brothers at the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium in Vilnius, Holocaust victim commemorative ceremony held at the Ponar Memorial Complex; **September 25** Lithuanian parliament hosted conference "They Rescued Lithuanian Jews, They Rescued Lithuania's Honor," presentation of Jewish calendar for 5777 and exhibition; **September 28** awards ceremony for rescuers of Jews held at the Lithuanian President's Office.

**September 23** Holocaust commemoration in Panevėžys at the memorial statue "Sad Jewish Mother" on Memory Square and at the mass murder sites in Kurganava, Žalioji Forest and Staniūnai Forest; screenings of the films "Du broliai" ["Two Brothers"] and "Tai todėl, kad mes žydai..." ["Just Because We Were Jews..."].

**October 4** Rosh Hashanah, happy 5777!

# Памятник спасителям евреев Литвы



Today we mark 75 years since the Holocaust began. Someone born on June 1, 1941, would be 75-years-old today, and his children all grown up, and his grandchildren as well. Today when we watch films about the Holocaust, we cry because we still remember what we went through, indescribably brutal atrocities against Jews, and our children cry because of it, too. After a few more decades pass there will be no more tears because the events will no longer move anyone. I might compare it to Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. It is an interesting historical fact that Napoleon and field marshal Kutuzov were in Vilnius, but it no longer moves anyone. Today, 75 years later, many people are moved and grieve over the Holocaust, the mass murder of the Jews, and their rescue. We lived through the Soviet era, we have lived in a free Lithuania for 26 years now, but those who dared rescue Jews have not received the honor due them. Till the present day there is no monument, no sign where Jews could pray, meditate or give thanks to those who saved their lives. Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, the Jewish community received a nice gift from the city of Vilnius: a sign in Yiddish and Hebrew on Jewish Street. It was truly a beautiful event: the mayor smiled as did I, the Israeli ambassador and other important people took part and there were Jewish songs. That same day just several hours after that ceremony, it was decided at the Vilnius municipality that the site selected for a monument to the rescuers

was inappropriate, but they didn't specify an appropriate site. The decision was postponed yet again, always with the promise to take care of the matter. Mayors change, and still there is no monument. I would call this spitting in the face of the entire Jewish community and especially in my face, because I am from a family of Jews who were saved. I am ashamed in front of all my relatives spread around the world. My 94-year-old uncle is one of those who were rescued, and I cannot explain to him why this has happened. It needs to be understood that the LJC with the Center of Genocide and Resistance have for many years exerted enormous efforts so that any site at all in Vilnius might bear witness. Our feeling is that the best location would be somewhere around Ona Šimaitė Street, at the intersection of Misionierių and Maironio streets. It was the courtyard of the monastery at Misionierių street where the final selection of thousands of Vilnius Jews took place when the Vilnius ghetto was liquidated. Ghetto resistance members were murdered there. It is a site where the condemned awaited the decision on their continued existence. The selection was carried out. Some had a terrible fate in store: they were to be sent to Ponar. Others faced the "good" prospect of being sent to concentration camps in Latvia, Estonia and to Stutthof in German-occupied Poland, where Jews were locked in cellars and condemned to death. LJC member and Holocaust survivor Fania Brancovskaja's mother and

sister were sent to Kaiserwald concentration camp outside Riga. Women over 35 were drowned at sea as unfit for labor. Her mother was then 42. Her father was sent to the Klooga concentration camp in Estonia where there were electro-mechanical workshops. He died just a few days before the camp was liberated in 1944. The final selection was carried out on Rosa Square at the monastery of the Church of the Missionaries where the Lithuanian Jewish Community sought permission from the municipality to erect a commemorative statue to the rescuers.

One of the most famous rescuers, the Lithuanian woman Ona Šimaitė, recognized by Yad Vashem for her work saving Jews, has had a street named after her, but Vilnius maps show the street as Ona Širvaitė Street instead, because no one here knows who Ona Šimaitė was. They don't discuss the rescuers at school. Now we have a street named after Ona Šimaitė, and we would like the monument to stand close by.

In 2004 famous Jewish author and rescued Jew Icchokas Meras wrote a testament to the president of Lithuania, the parliamentary speaker and other high-ranking state officials: "Intentionally or unintentionally, they opposed the destructive power of the Nazis and their tools, those who committed the murders. We must remember and honor their heroism based on conscience, morality, love of their neighbors and simple human mercy. Their names are commemorated on the Mountain of Memory in Jerusalem. Their names should be inscribed in golden letters in independent Lithuania as well. A monument should be raised to the Righteous Gentiles of the Lithuanian nation, to those who in the time of greatest darkness bore in their unarmed and burning palms the ember of conscience, morality and love of neighbor. Sadly, it all remains merely words. Until now there is no monument, no street named, no alley of rescuers, and the rescuers receive no support from the state. Why the state doesn't appreciate its most noble people is unknown. Speculations about Holocaust

education, different programs and seminars will not bear any fruit if there isn't official, loud and understandable esteem given to the rescuers in the state, and if those who needed to be rescued are punished instead. Otherwise the heroic deeds of the rescuers are simply derided."

Not erecting a monument to the rescuers is not a decision by one or another mayor or a commission. No one has invited me as chairwoman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community to hearings at the municipality. Instead dilettantes with no knowledge of the history of the Jews or the heroism

of the rescuers deliberate the issue. More than 200,000 Jews were murdered during the Holocaust in Lithuania and more than 800 people have been recognized as rescuers. In this sense the Yad Vashem motto, "When you save one life, you save an entire world," takes on a special significance. The Jewish Community is ready to erect this monument at our own expense. The Lithuanian state should bow down and give thanks to those people, if not for whom Lithuania's honor and reputation would be entirely associated with those who committed mass murder. The heroic

actions of the Righteous Gentiles were a ray of humanity during the darkest times for Lithuania filled with hatred for Jews.

Did perhaps the rescuers act incorrectly? Should their awards be rescinded? The argument over a monument is not anything like the issue of whether to erect a monument to Jonas Basanavičius in Vilnius. It is an argument over principle, not over location. And this is Lithuanian policy. The rescuers are treated like dirt. Worse.

*Faina Kukliansky, chairwoman,  
Lithuanian Jewish Community*

## Rabbis' Corner



Kalev Krelin. Photo: Eugenijus Barzdžius

### **Rosh Hashana, the Beginning of the Year Also Known as the Day of Judgment, has Passed**

Ideally we should review our own behavior constantly, but it's human nature to put things off until tomorrow. Finally the day comes when you can no longer postpone things, and we must reckon the final result.

At this time I would like to calculate the results of my first half-year here in Lithuania. There are some things about which I want to shout: "Wonderful!"

First of all, for the first time in contemporary Lithuania shekhita, the kosher slaughter of chickens, has taken place under the direction of the Lithuanian rabbinate.

Second, the Šeduva Jewish Memorial Foundation has helped the Vilnius synagogue acquire a complete library for Talmud study. The necessity of this library will only grow.

Third, more and more people, young and very young, are coming to synagogue in the evening for Torah and Talmud lessons. Initially there were from 5 to 10 young people, but now more than 40 people are attending these lessons, and there aren't enough chairs for them all in the newly renovated room on the second floor of the synagogue.

For the first time in many years, Torah study was carried on continuously all night during the Shavuot holiday, as it is in many synagogues around the world.

Fourth, many people are latching onto the "delicious and healthy kosher food" idea. The kosher Bagel Shop Café under the supervision of the Lithuanian rabbinate is becoming ever more popular. We have accomplished the difficult part of the job and now we're finding more and more kosher milk products working with Lithuanian milk producers. Many Lithuanian producers, encouraged by the Lithuanian rabbinate, have been able to find new partners in Israel and Europe. Kosher curd treats, ice cream, mozzarella and many other great food products are made in Lithuania. Interest is growing, the products are in demand, and more and more people are enjoying the ability to eat kosher food.

Fifth, for the first time since the fall of the "wall," a huppah, or Jewish wedding,

was held--from now on this is an official and recognized marriage under Lithuanian law. Now all who want to undergo the huppah ritual may forego the trip to a government office and may hold the ceremony among their own.

There were sad moments in getting to know Lithuania as well. At the end of August there were events everyday, each of which sapped spiritual strength, day after day. Days of remembering the destruction of the communities... Large and small communities... And of course there was the procession in Molėtai.

A group of students and journalists approached me asking to keep them company and drive together to the procession. Over the hour and a half while we were driving, they posed so many questions and touched upon so many difficult topics... This made a bigger impression upon me than the procession itself. I realized it is important for me to work here, in this country, to work with my people and with the people of this country.

I greet the Rosh Hashana holiday with this kheshbon nefesh (self-examination of the soul).

I wish for everyone to conduct their own "review" of their personal spiritual life and to take seriously the call which will issue forth together with the blowing of the shofar horn in the synagogues.

Shana tova!

*Rabbi Kalev Krelin*



# MIŠA JAKOBAS: Being Strict Is Easy, But How To Be Loving?



Miša Jakobas

We spoke with principal of the Vilnius Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium Miša Jakobas at the Bagel Shop Café about plans for the coming school year, ethnic identity, the calling of teachers and... history's unlearned lessons.

**The school year began in September and Rosh Hashana falls in early October, the new year, 5777. What are your thoughts and feelings as we move into the new year?**

When that minute comes I always think about my people who truly gave and continue to give the world great wonders used by people around the world. And then the question arises for me: why do so many people in the world hate us? I identify myself first of all as Jew, of the Jewish people, a member of the Jewish community. This is something I am proud of, but also my loss, my despair, my melancholy... Jewish traditions are an important part of my life. It pains me we still believe in stereotypes in Lithuania, they affect our lives and decisions, and their number is increasing. These are my thoughts as I mark the most beautiful holiday, Rosh Hashana.

**How do you as a teacher view the new school year?**

With the hope that the children this year will be even better, better behaved, brighter and more dedicated. With the desire I will have more joy and happiness than last year, and finally that which has been sowed, that investment, will bear fruit. Let the things I had troubles with yesterday change; we might smile upon one another, perhaps embrace each other. We will continue doing our best and if even one person from the larger group somehow improves, that's already a good thing.

**The Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium has come in first according to various ratings and is recognized for its atmosphere of tolerance. How are you able to maintain students' motivation and not lose authority? What are the things that need to remain constants at school?**

Constant? Let me answer that right away. The constants are learning, reading books, critical thinking, the ability to set priorities for oneself. I always say I realize ratings aren't the most important thing, school is. It's fine the ratings are wonderful, but even when ratings are not especially high, it's important to be able to say to yourself: I am working, I am striving, I was here with the staff of the school and this is what we have achieved. The most important thing is the emotional climate at school, how my children feel here, and as the principal this is my responsibility. It depends upon me whether they are comfortable here, whether they arrive frowning and waiting for the final bell so they can leave slamming the doors with their feet rather than their hands.

Yes, the school is noted for tolerance. One must begin with oneself, to show the children that you really love your work, that you are tolerant, that one must show love, to be strict but at the same time loving. To be strict is easy, but how to be loving, how do you balance that? You have to have charm. That's one of the most important characteristics of a principal. And those who have it have no problems with communicating nor with tolerance. There are highly talented people who are very private, who have given the world incredible things--these are our artists and scientists. We must accept and love them as they are. But they aren't principals.

**Language has been an important aspect in attempting to preserve one's culture and identity. You often speak in the Samogitian dialect. Why?**

I respect the place where I was born, the small town where I grew up, the school I attended, my neighbors and friends. I preserve Samogitian culture not because anyone is forcing me to, but because it is the language of the land of my birth, my childhood and everyday life. It never even enters my mind. Why would I, being in Samogitia, knowing the Samogitian language, speak anything else? My friends living in my native Telšiai wouldn't understand me and would say: "So why are you putting on airs here, have you forgotten the Samogitian language? How could you?! You've betrayed the culture of the place of your birth."

**This year the theme of the European Day of Jewish Culture is Jewish languages. What is your opinion about the Yiddish situation?**

There is a handful of people who know the Yiddish language. I am very sorry, but there is no situation, it is finished. The last generation who speak Yiddish are leaving us. Some of them live in Israel, a small portion in Lithuania. Yiddish will never again be heard on the streets of Vilnius. That is my sad conclusion. It happened in a somewhat poor manner. Israel didn't pay attention when the state was being formed. I understand that they were reviving the historical Hebrew language, but it seems they should have taught Yiddish alongside it. I agree they need to know the Arabic language of their neighbors, that's a strategically important language, but we didn't have the moral right to forget Yiddish.

**How many languages are taught at your school? Could Yiddish be revived by teaching it in the primary grades?**

We teach four languages: Lithuanian, Hebrew, English and Russian. I am pessimistic about the prospects for teaching Yiddish basics at the school. That requires specialists, and we don't have them. Yiddish can only be revived by people who are real enthusiasts.

**A certain breakthrough has taken place in Lithuanian society now, we are going over those pages of history which appear dark and so difficult to accept. What do you think, in terms of youth and children, what should be done so that we might begin to view Lithuania as a multiethnic state?**

Your question is a very good one. First we must learn. A breakthrough has taken place. It's not especially prominent, so far it's just small cracks. For the breakthrough to really occur, we must break through. As long as Lithuania is "us" and "them," "we" and "they," as long as the people in Lithuania are addressed as "dear [ethnic] Lithuanians" instead of "dear and honored and irreplaceable citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, responsible for the future of our country," that's how long we'll have to wait for positive changes. And until that moment, so long as we don't look history in the face, so long as we try to tear out those dark passages from the history books, we will fail to see the simple truth: what was. Was. There were mass murders, and the blood of innocent people was spilled, not just of Jews, but also of the Roma and Poles and Lithuanians. But here's the problem: a new wave of Naziism and fascism is rising. Today there are attempts to suppress, to cover up the facts, intentional errors and sins against the truth are being made. How many years we would have won, what completely different consequences we would have in Lithuania, if twenty-five years ago we hadn't rushed to rehabilitate the murderers.

We cannot tolerate murderers, and the Jewish community must also speak about this. We have to look back at the past, we also must speak about this, yes, it happened. Yes, they participated. Yes, they collaborated. But it was both Russians and Lithuanians who collaborated with them, and why now are only Jews condemned for having worked with the KGB? We're intelligent people, after all, so let's read the archival sources, it's all written down. Why do we have to include all that garbage on our internet pages? Why should we be happy that some uneducated fellow who has finished perhaps the fourth grade is trying to teach us? Why are monuments erected to the murderers? Really, were all the Jews who lived in Lithuania her enemies? In this case ethnicity doesn't matter, not every person with black hair and brown eyes was a Jew. Not all Lithuanians killed Jews. Today I am grateful to a Lithuanian priest for being able to live in this land, he rescued my mother! My friends and their mothers were also rescued by Lithuanian families.

**How should we tell school pupils about the Holocaust? It appears as if we don't know how to talk about the Holocaust and that we don't understand that it was even a tragedy.**

Everything depends on the heart and head of the individual. If teachers are unable to put themselves in the shoes of a simple Jew, the teachers will only speak the language of textbooks, without emotion, without spirit; until they understand what happened in Lithuania and what Lithuania lost, the lessons of the Holocaust will not be learned. Until you begin to feel the pain, until you invite a relative of the victims to talk to the class, you have done nothing and have accepted no moral responsibility that things might be different. It's an art to be a teacher. And you don't have the right, morally or professionally, to be just any kind of teacher. We know the profession of teacher best of all, for 12 years we sit on the bench and we see what a teacher is, what awaits everyone who comes to school. And if you come and learn, then go and work!

*Interviewed by Kornelija Zaicaite*



# LJC Olameinu International Children's Camp 2016

Lithuanian Jewish Community youth programs coordinator and camp programs director Pavel Gulyakov reported the only negative at the camp this year was some not-so-great weather, it rained, preventing the children from visiting beautiful Lake Asveja at times. The camp went international this year with children from Jewish communities in all three Baltic states.

The LJC camp located in Dubingiai, Lithuania, is a summer favorite for all. "Living conditions are of the highest caliber, and I remember my own childhood when I went to summer camps; I never had it so good," Pavel recalled. The summer camp is financed mainly by the Joint Distribution Committee who pay most of the costs.

Parents usually worry about living conditions and whether the activities program is interesting before allowing their children to attend summer camp. Pavel comments: "I looked at other children's camps in Lithuania but found nothing like our Jewish Community children's program, with no idle time left for the children to goof off. The children are engaged the entire time, either going somewhere, learning something, dancing, singing or drawing. All the parents asked about the program before letting their kids attend. What will they do? Will they be bored? We tell parents there is almost no free time, their children will be occupied with different interesting activities under the programs prepared. So-called free time won't be missed because children can do what they want during activities conducted by camp counselors. If they want to play soccer or basketball, there's more than an hour per day set aside for that. Every day features sports, dance, art, crafts and song with a teacher from Israel."

This year two rabbi-teachers attended the camp, able to explain Judaism to the children in a language they understand. One rabbi was from Latvia and the other from Norway. Jewish identity and family values are important parts of camp activities.

There were eleven groups of twenty individuals each. Over the ten days of camping, each day had a daily theme and the events for the day were connected with that theme. Themes included "Ten Cities of Israel," beginning with ancient Tsefat and ending with modern Tel Aviv. Discussions were held on various topics, including Litvaks, famous personalities, technology and other achievements. One day the children were presented sumo wrestling costumes for fun and mock matches were held with older children. Representatives from Lithuanian and other national scouting organizations visited camp, held discussions on their activities and showed photographs. Musician Misha Frishman visited, taught the children how to make music videos, the children danced and sang and in the evening watched their music videos together.

The camp had its own doctor on hand just in case. Some of the adolescents built up a healthy appetite from all the activities and asked for second helpings, which of course they received. Pavel Gulyakov said 99% of parents were completely happy with their children's stay at camp and with the quality of the food.

The Bubble Show turned out to be a big hit with all. A troupe arrived with a bubble-blowing machine and campers danced and waded through huge piles of bubbles. The scene was extraordinary and it made a big impression on the kids.

Professional Israeli singer Uri Zer was on hand for the last day of camp, the discotheque in the evening and the farewell party. He taught Jewish songs to the children and got everyone to join in to sing a song together.

Children who are participants in the LJC social programs were able to attend camp at a discount and the LJC provided the volunteer camp counselors who made the experience such a success with the children this year. Take a look at some of the photos.



# Israeli Center for Young Leaders Seeks Partnership with Lithuania

A delegation of 40 “young ambassadors” aged 16 and 17 visited Vilnius for the first time this summer. We met with Israeli ambassador to Lithuania Amir Maimon, paid a visit to the Vilnius municipal body and met with Lithuanian deputy foreign minister Mantvydas Bekešius. We discussed the importance of historical memory for diplomacy, the development of Lithuanian-Israeli relations and cooperation between the two countries at the United Nations. We spent much time at the Lithuanian Jewish Community, and want to say thank you to Faina Kukliansky, Amit Belaitė and all the other members of the community for the time they gave us. We also spoke with students at the Sholem Aleichem ORT Gymnasium, visited former ghettos, cleaned up an abandoned Jewish cemetery and paid respects to those murdered at Ponar.

The Israeli Center for Young Leaders in implementing its Young Ambassadors program works with more than 100 schools in Israel and wants to forge ties with schools in Lithuania. The National School for Young Ambassadors has been operating since 2011. Since its inception, 22 delegations have made intensive one-week visits to different cities in Europe. The program encourages school-age young people to get into international politics and provides young people the opportunity to acquire their own personal skill-set in diplomacy, community work, leadership and business.

*Yitzhak Eldan, Head of the delegation,  
Head of Israel's young ambassadors school*



Photos: Snir Dolev.

## NAUJANERIAI: Sometimes Bad Things Happen Because of Ignorance



"The Holocaust is cemented in our history, but will we pay attention and do something about it? Living in post-Holocaust society Jewish heritage protection (not just mass murder sites)--what we research and investigate, what we protect and how we make use of it--is mainly a consequence of the Holocaust... If it's not the graves of our own relatives, we tend to forget about the sites quickly. They may remain unremembered and unnoticed for a long time. The first time I experienced this was regarding the abandoned Naujaneriai Jewish mass murder and mass grave site (in the Joneikiškės rural district, Riešė aldermanship, Vilnius region). But these sorts of cases repeated themselves constantly, these sites continue to 'bear witness' in the strangest ways," Lithuanian Jewish Community heritage protection expert Martynas Užpelkis said in his talk for the European Day of Jewish Culture, speaking about this specific site. In 1999 the Vilnius regional administration signed an agreement to turn the Naujaneriai Holocaust site over to the Vilnius city municipality, and the city was in no hurry to undertake renovation work outside city limits. "A report on the lack of maintenance of the Jewish mass murder site was only received in 2013, but this site was untended for 14 years! We took the issue to the Vilnius city municipality and the Cultural Heritage Department under the Ministry of Culture. The problem was solved quickly. The Naujaneriai case helped me understand that frequently bad things happen not because of ill-will, but out of ignorance," Užpelkis said in conclusion.

## In Memoriam: Sulamita Lermanaitė-Gelpernienė (1926–2003) Would Have Been 90 This Year



Sulamita Lermanaitė-Gelpernienė.  
Photo: Antanas Sutkus.

Near the close of 1941 a united underground resistance organization formed in the Kaunas ghetto, one of whose primary tasks was to acquire firearms. Sixteen-year-old Sulamita Lermanaitė, who worked in a labor brigade in the city, was given the task of smuggling the weapon into the ghetto. So began the brave young woman's path to par-

tisan warfare. In the underground she was a message carrier and translator and carried out different tasks. In the anti-fascist underground organization she met her future husband Dmitri Gelpern (1914–1998), who was one of the leaders of the organization at that time and was later sent to Dachau. In April of 1944 Sulamita Lermanaitė fled the Kaunas ghetto and joined up with the Forward partisan unit. Her parents and brother died in the Holocaust...

Sulamita's love of music was born before the war in childhood when she attended the famous pre-war private piano study of Elsa Herbek-Hansen. She lived in Vilnius after the war and was graduated in the piano class of the State Conservatory (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater). She studied under professor Yakov Ginzburg. She played accompaniments for stringed instruments. For many years she worked in the classroom of famous violinist Aleksandras Livontas and played with cellist Augustas Gučas, often touring with violinist Algis Gričius. She became a teacher, associate professor

at the piano cathedral. Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theater professor and cathedral head Leonidas Melnikas spoke to [the magazine] *Muzikos Barai* about Sulamita Lermanaitė-Gelpernienė, saying she was a person to whom you could always go to ask for professional advice. He said she took an interest in contemporary music, even though she taught classical music and developed good skills among her students. Her students always came to repetitions well prepared, Melnikas recalled. She tried to remain impartial and to grade her students objectively, discussing their musical performance failures openly and frankly. In this she differed from her colleagues. "We admired her very much in the cathedral. Gelpernienė was one of the people who established our cathedral, she began beautiful traditions which survive today," Melnikas said.

She taught Raimondas Katilus, Virgilijus Noreika, Silvija Sondeckienė and other well-known musicians. She made working trips to Moscow, Leningrad, the Yerevan Conservatory and the Samuel

Rubin Israel Academy of Music in Tel Aviv. She dedicated much of her time to academic work and collected and edited the eighth, eleventh, fourteenth and fifteenth “Young Pianist” collections, and also wrote methodological reports about M. K. Čiurlionis and K. Brunzaitė. She transcribed a J. Juzeliūnas and M.K. Čiurlionis quartet for piano for four hands. Sulamita Gelpernienė taught children to play piano over the many years she worked at the Ažuoliukas Music Academy.

There was a volunteer Jewish theater in Vilnius during Soviet times where Vilnius residents performed, and Sulamita was an active theater-goer there. Young Jews from Moscow, Leningrad and other cities came to see the concerts and plays. Having heard something about the life-story of the slender woman named Lermanaitė-Gelpernienė about the ghetto and her experience as a partisan many wanted to meet her in person. She never refused. Once during a meeting a young woman from

Leningrad asked her whether there had been anti-Semitism among the partisans during the war. “Yes,” Sulamita said tersely. During the Soviet era it took courage to make such direct and specific statements, and courage is esteemed in all eras.

*Prepared by Radvilė Rimgailė-Voicik according to Chaim Bergman's article "Pirmas Ginklas" ["First Weapon"] published in Obzor and Asta Linkevičiūtė's interview with Leonidas Melnikas in Muzikos Barai.*



## Wooden Synagogues: A Unique Lithuanian Ethnic Architectural Legacy

*The relicts of the Jewish cultural landscape created over more than 600 years in cities, towns and villages throughout Lithuania can be placed in four categories: mass murder sites; cemeteries; synagogues and other heritage buildings; monuments and other commemorative markers. Martynas Užpelkis, Lithuanian Jewish Community heritage protection expert delivering a lecture at an event dedicated to the European Day of Jewish Culture, said: “The Lithuanian Jewish Community, almost exterminated during the Holocaust, is not able to maintain and protect heritage sites throughout Lithuania alone today. The role of the Lithuanian state and municipal institutions, NGOs and citizens is crucial. Many challenges are arising, but great results have been achieved in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage Department and the municipalities.”*

### **To what use should the synagogue buildings be put?**

About 80 synagogues survive in Lithuania today, and 43 of them are listed on the register of cultural treasures. There are only two working synagogues and all other buildings are being put to other uses or are not being used at all. The LJC owns 13 synagogues and synagogue complexes. Most of the buildings are not in use and are in serious disrepair.

“To what use should the synagogue buildings in the towns be put when there is not a single Jewish community member there? How do we convince the local communities to take over those buildings, fix them up and use them for their own purposes?” Užpelkis proposed as discussion topics, and noted that three synagogues--in Alytus,

Žiežmariai and Kalvarija--are undergoing renovation currently under a 2016 heritage protection program, and another three--the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius and the synagogues in Žemaičių Naumiestis and Švėkšna--are being inspected and plans for renovation next year are currently being drafted.

### **Lithuania's Wooden Synagogues: Exceptional and under Threat**

Lithuania counts more than 20 wooden synagogues, more than all such in other countries combined. The Pakruojis synagogue, built in 1801, an example of early classicism, is still standing today. It is the oldest surviving wooden synagogue in Lithuania preserving its authentic elements and form. The summer synagogue (it's unheated) has a very decorative aron khodesh and the

bima is arranged as an open, eight-sided octagonal pavilion. The walls and vaults of the ceiling are decorated with exotic and local floral and faunal motifs.

From the latter 18th century to World War II synagogues were an essential and abundant part of the architecture of Lithuanian cities and towns testifying to the rich Litvak culture and ethnic diversity of Lithuanian architecture. Marija Rupeikienė\* writes the wooden synagogues built at the intersection of the baroque and classical epochs are exceptional buildings which can only be found in the Diaspora. Wood is employed very creatively in their architecture, with an original harmonization of ethnic and architecture style features, modified forms of different kinds of wooden homes and other sacred buildings or portions of them applied. Artistic placement of boards on walls usually enlivened the façade. The synagogues of Valkininkai, Jurbarkas and Vilkaviškis are quite impressive, with towers on the outside corners, open arcades and balconies.

The period of construction of Lithuania's wooden synagogues lasts from the latter 17th century to World War II. Rupeikienė distinguishes two main periods: 1) from the second half of the 17th century until 1830, when churches and tradi-

tional Lithuanian farmhouses exerted great influence upon synagogue forms; and 2) from 1830 to 1940, when wooden synagogues were constructed in a way architecturally similar to brick and mortar synagogues. Jewish houses of prayer in Lithuania were categorized by season and named after different religious associations, guilds and workshops; often the buildings were named after the street or neighborhood where they were located, or after the builder or owner.

According to halacha, or Jewish religious law, there is only one main requirement for synagogue design: it must have 12 windows symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel. Often exterior elements include decorative Ten Commandment tablets or the Star of David. An integrated system of different biblical signs and symbols is used for the interior. The aron khodesh, used to make plain where the Torah is kept, has characteristic floral and faunal designs, representations of the tablets of the Law, a

crown and a figurative hand of priest (the kohen) extended in blessing. In the 18th century the aron khodesh was especially decorated, with columns and carvings in bright colors, and the octagonal bima featured all sorts of coverings bringing to mind the image of a crown. Sometimes paintings decorated the walls and ceilings. Besides traditional local plants and animals, sometimes the symbols of the zodiac were employed, as were animals and mythical entities from the Torah (the lion, Leviathan), images of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, ritual regalia, passages from the Torah, musical instruments (most frequently King David's lyre, the biblical kinnor) and different geometrical designs.

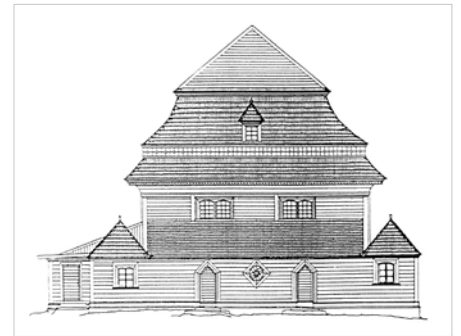
*Prepared by Radvilė Rimgailė-Voicik  
\* Monograph by Dr. Marija Rupeikienė  
"Nykstantis kultūros paveldas: Lietuvos sinagogų architektūra" [Disappearing Cultural Heritage: The Architecture of Lithuanian Synagogues], (Vilnius, 2003).*



Aron khodesh of Šaukėnai synagogue (Aušra Museum of Šiauliai, No. 9907)



Synagogue in Pakruojis. Photo by S. Vaitkus, 1937 (Aušra Museum of Šiauliai, No. 1924)



Main façade of Valkininkai synagogue. Survey blueprint, 1928 (Politechnika Warszawska)



Synagogue in Žiežmariai, YVA photo collection no. 211AO3



Synagogue in Kaltinėnai, Šilalė Distr.



Synagogue in Tirkšliai, Mažeikiai Distr.



Synagogue in Alanta, Molėtai Distr.

# Gefilte Fish: Stuffed Fish, or a Fish Ball? Secrets of the Litvak Kitchen Revealed



In the kosher food shop of the Stockholm Jewish community three different gefilte



Gefilte fish cushions designed by Noam Levinson

The issue of survival is an urgent one in the history of cuisine just as much as it is in the history of humanity. Do the fittest and most delicious survive? So what are we to make of the apparent success of this boiled ball, a brownish gray mass with a slice of carrot atop, either sweet or salty, framed by a pink jelly, or just as often with a sauce of indeterminate color? Gefilte fish is an established dish in world cuisine; in the kosher food section you can find several different types and it is an essential food during the holidays at European Jewish homes. Gefilte fish is an Ashkenazi Jewish dish of epic proportions which has survived the challenges of the centuries remaining almost unchanged to the present time. Litvaks make this stuffed fish in the following way: the carp or pike is gutted, the bones are removed from, the fish fillet is combined with spices and the mixture is placed back within the skin of the fish or strips of it and boiled in a pot with carrots. The stuffed fish cools in the fish broth which gels into a jelly, is decorated with lateral slices of carrot and served with horseradish. Jewish housewives in Vilnius used to put bits of beet in the pot so the jelly would take on a pink color and a more interesting taste.

The fish of choice for stuffing in the Jewish kitchen is the carp or pike, but cod may also be used. Different fish may be mixed. Carp are easier to prepare because of its bulk, while pike meat is drier and contains more bones. Still, pike scores higher with connoisseurs in the categories of appearance and clever design. Litvak gefilte fish is made with salt and pepper. If you travel fifty kilometers to the west of Warsaw, you may find sweet gefilte fish. Marvin Herzog even wrote his dissertation on the existence of the “Gefilte fish line.” This is a geographical boundary defining the ranges of the sweet and salty versions of the dish, running roughly north to south about 50 kilometers and about 80 kilometers east of Warsaw. On the western side you find sweet gefilte fish, to the east, with salt and pepper. Jews call sweet gefilte fish “Polish fish” and Poles call it “Jewish fish.” The sweetness isn’t simply sugar, cooked sweet

onion is placed in the ground fish mixture. Unsweet ground fish mixtures are made with green onions and black pepper.

The Ashkenazi Jewish culinary heritage has survived and become legendary, and remains popular today. Traditions guide the food-making process. Gefilte fish, for example, is deboned and ready to eat, and so is appropriate for the Sabbath meal (even picking bones out of food is considered work and a violation of the Sabbath). Housewives would prepare the dish for Sabbath Friday evening, and the next day the dish would have cooled, the gel would have set and the food could be consumed for several days. Some families stretched the food by adding matzoh flour or carrots to the ground fish mixture. At some point the fish skin was largely discarded, so gefilte fish now means boiled fish balls made out of the ground fish mixture as well as formally stuffed fish.

Gefilte fish is also popular because it is compatible with kosher cooking. Fish are “pareve,” meaning in kosher food rules it is neither meat nor dairy, and may be combined with other foods. With Jews living all around the world, I was interested to see how the “Gefilte fish line” operates outside Europe, for example, among Argentine Jews. My classmate Ruben was born in Argentina and his father-in-law was a Litvak. Of course, it is usually the women who preserve culinary tradition. When I asked Ruben whether he ate sweet or salty gefilte fish during Passover, he asked back: “Are you asking me about salty and sweet gefilte fish?” Latin America has a diversity of fish unknown to Eastern Europe. Ruben’s family boils fish balls in a spicy, salty tomato sauce and serves them hot. Gefilte fish la Raquelita is how Mexican families call their fish balls in a spicy tomato sauce.

My teacher Hedva’s mother comes from Egypt where no one even dreams of gray fish balls. Hedva only learned of them from her father, a Romanian Jew. His mother used to make him sweet and salty gefilte fish balls.

In the United States gefilte fish is usually made of equal parts ground carp, trout and whitefish flesh. Sometimes a fourth part of *Ictiobus*, a “buffel fish” is added (buffel is Yiddish for





Gefilte fish line

buffalo). This fish is similar to carp and is reportedly only found at Chinese fish markets now. Incidentally, many Jewish kids in America grew up thinking carp live in bathtubs, since a live carp

was often placed there for a while if there wasn't room in the icebox... Author Ellen Cassedy recalls her mother used to keep carp brought home from market in the bathtub, and that pepper was added to the ground fish meat. And the gefilte fish line, she says, isn't purely culinary. Linguists have also defined northern and southern ranges of Yiddish according to how "gefilte fish" is pronounced.

Gefilte fish isn't giving up the fight any time soon. Ever new names for the dish appear in the run-up to Passover in Israel every year. In the kosher food shop

of the Stockholm Jewish community I counted three different names for the dish. Gefilte fish isn't just a cult food offering, but almost a cult in and of itself. In December of 2014 there was a Gefilterama, an almost week-long festival held in Tel Aviv during Polish Cuisine Week. In London the annual kosher food fair is called Gefiltefest.

The Lithuanian Jewish Community assembled for European Day of Jewish Culture 2016 and printed Litvak recipes submitted by members, including Mira Traub's recipe for gefilte fish.

by Dovidlė Rūkaitė

## Jewish Book Corner

# The Poetic World of Abraham Sutzkever



Abraham Sutzkever (1913-2010) was one of the most famous representatives of 20th century literature who wrote in Yiddish. He was born near Vilnius and spent early childhood in Siberia. He lived in Vilnius again in the period between the two world wars, survived the Holocaust and witnessed the destruction of his people and city. He was actively involved in the cultural life of the Vilnius ghetto, rescued Jewish cultural treasures from the Nazis, fought as a Jewish partisan and gave testimony at Nuremberg on Nazi crimes.

Sutzkever's book "Lider" (Songs) is conserved at the Martynas Mažvydas Lithuanian National Library. It contains 37 poems combining the young poet's feelings and experience. They are written in the modern language of poetry combining images of nature, the city and the shtetl. The book is dedicated by the author's own hand to Bentsion Mikhtom, a friend in the Yung-Vilne movement, a group of Jewish writers and artists founded in 1927.



"Lider" book cover



Poem "Here I Am", 1935



Portrait of Abraham Sutzkever (by Yankl Adler)

"Lider" is first published collection of poetry by Sutzkever and was issued in 1937. It was hailed by critiques as one of the most innovative collections of poetry for its visual and linguistic forms. The title "Lider" could just as well be translated as "Poetry" instead of "Songs." Sutzkever's poetic language is like a symphonic orchestra with many metaphors, neologisms and a modern sense of rhythm. Fine musical phrases underpin the poetry sometimes indistinctly heard by the reader, a window on the worldview of the poet and the people around him in his younger years.

**Title** Songs (Poetry) / Lider / רעדיל

**Author** Avrom Sutzkever (1913-2010) / רעוועקצוס / א.

**Place of publication** Jewish PEN Club Library, Warsaw / Bibliotek fun jidišn pen klub Varše / ופ קעטאילביב עשראוו בולק ונפ

**Year** 1937

**Ex libris** A. Suckewer, Wilno, ul. Wilkomierska 14

**Author's dedication** Sincerely to my friend Bentsiy [Bentsion] Mikhtom from A. Sutzkever, Vilna / Main chaver Bencije Michtomin mit har-cihkait A. Suckewer Vilne / רבח ויימ א. טייקיצראה טימ וימאטכימ עיצנעב ענליוו רעוועקצוס

By Kristina Dūdaitė  
Lithuanian National  
Martynas Mažvydas Library

# News from the Interwar Period in Jewish Lithuanian Newspapers: A Reflection of Society



Di Yiddishe Stimme (The Jewish Voice), 1921

Jews were the largest ethnic and religious minority in Lithuania in the period between the two world wars. The Jewish culture of Lithuania, just like that of Eastern Europe as a whole, was multifaceted and diverse, and the Yiddish language was an important vehicle of communication. When Isaac Bashevis Singer received the Nobel Prize for Literature in December of 1978, he wasn't just speaking in vain when he said: "There are some who call Yiddish a dead language, but so was Hebrew called for two thousand years. It has been revived in our time in a most remarkable, almost miraculous way. ... It is a fact that the classics of Yiddish literature are also the classics of the modern Hebrew literature. Yiddish has not yet said its last word. It contains treasures that have not been revealed to the eyes of the world. It was the tongue of martyrs and saints, of dreamers and Cabbalists—rich in humor and in memories that mankind may never forget. In a figurative way, Yiddish is the wise and humble language of us all, the idiom of frightened and hopeful Humanity." Sixteen daily and 30 weekly newspapers were published in Lithuania in the pe-

riod between 1919 and 1936, as well as about 20 collections of literature. We invite you to turn back the pages of time with us and turn the pages of editions of the newspapers *Mūsų garsas* [Our Voice, initially the weekend Lithuanian-language supplement to and later a sort of Lithuanian-language version of the Zionist newspaper *Di Yiddishe Stimme* (The Jewish Voice) published in Yiddish; the Hebrew edition was called *Lithuanian Echo* and the Yiddish edition of the weekend supplement was called *Di Velt* (The World)] from 1924 and *Apžvalga* [Review, published in Lithuanian by the patriotic *Žydu karių sąjunga* (Union of Jewish Soldiers)] from 1935.

In editions of *Mūsų garsas* from August 27 and September 4, 1924, Dr. Jonas Basanavičius argued against discrimination against the language of the Jews after government institutions banned the use of that language on signs: "After finding out from Mr. Katzenelenbogen (Urijas Kacelenelbogan) that a number of district administrators are forbidding the use of the Jewish language on signs, at the same time offending the sense of truth and justice of Lithuanian citizens

who speak the Jewish language, I would like—even if it is a *vox clamantis in deserto*—to support the their linguistic rights in terms of equality and to advise government organs to stop the petty persecution of the language of loyal citizens, and to stop annoying them and setting them against the Lithuanian state."

Reading reviews of world events, it's clear much attention was paid to solving the issues of the Jewish minority in many countries, and public figures as well as national leaders spoke out openly and favorably towards Jews:

- Czechoslovakian prime minister Edvard Beneš stated: "To us the Jews are a people and they will receive all the rights of an ethnic minority. We see the Jews as an ethnic group, but we are not opposed if Jews voluntarily proclaim they are not Jews. Regulation of this problem is a matter of our honor and civilization. Among us there have been no excesses against Jews and neither is that possible in the future."

- Well-known German pacifist, professor of international law at the University of Munich and member of the Bavarian parliament Dr. Ludwig Quidde fought fiercely against militarism and ethnic chauvinism, and spoke out in favor of the rights of Jews living among other peoples and for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. "I have to note that, going by the principles of international law and the concepts of nation and state, there are two concepts of equal import for the Jewish people: an independent Jewish state, and the rights of ethnic minorities in Diaspora. When the Jews have their national political center in Palestine, their ethnic rights in other countries will be respected and protected in a completely different manner"

- The Russian philosopher sent to the gulag for anti-Soviet activities Nikolai Berdyaev opposed anti-Semitism and said: "The knowledge of each thing requires an appreciation of that thing. Anti-Semites who hate Jews are completely unable to understand because hatred

blinds them. The only one with the moral right to be an anti-Semite is a true Christian who is truly filled with Christian love.”

- The rights of Jews in White Russia (the current Belarus), recently partitioned by Poland and the Soviet Union, are discussed in the paper: “A meeting of the Central Committee of Soviet White Russia resolved the language rights of the ethnic minorities of White Russia are guaranteed.” It is reported the Soviet government provided the Jews of White Russia with 200 schools where 20,000 children attended.

Mūsų garsas presented to their readers Jewish culture around the world and celebrated Jewish language:

- The Royal Spanish Academy of Art selected professor Max Liebermann as one of their members. This academy, the oldest art academy in Europe, also sought to honor the famous Jewish artist.

- Two Jewish students appealed to a Paris university which was requiring new students know at least three languages, and requested they be allowed to take the exam in Hebrew. The university’s board of directors decided Hebrew was a living language and allowed it.

- A student requested a London university allow him to write a dissertation in Hebrew. The request was granted.

The October 11, 1935, issue of Apžvalga carried the reaction to the Nuremberg laws adopted in Germany discriminatory to Jews:

- The diplomatic representatives of some states put their objections to the German Foreign Ministry.

- Harvard College director of athletics William F. Bingham announced Harvard wouldn’t be participating at the Berlin Olympics if the German government placed obstacles in the path for Jews.

- More than 6,000 people in Amsterdam turned out to protest Germany’s implementation of its “Jewish laws.”

- The press in England condemns the Nuremberg Laws, with the Daily Telegraph saying they strip German Jews of all their civil rights and create a new kind of second-class citizenship together with insulting restrictions unbecoming a civilized nation.

- US theater and cinema stars speak out against the persecution of colleagues in Germany.

Litvaks were also concerned over their fellow Jews in Germany. Adas Israelis sent League of Nations security council chairman Edvard Beneš a telegram in the name of the Kaunas Jewish Community and other Lithuanian Jewish communities: “Deeply concerned by the unprecedented betrayal of the human rights of our brothers in Germany, we, in the name of the Lithuanian Jewish Community, express our protest, and ask you, sir, Mr. Chairman, and through you the entire League of Nations which was founded to protect and defend all nations, to do everything in your power to protect the life and honor of our unfortunate German brothers.”

Jewish periodicals were printed in Kaunas and Vilnius, but also in Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Klaipėda, Telšiai and Kėdainiai, Lithuania, during the period between the wars. Yiddish was almost the universal language and literary vehicle of Lithuanian Jews at that time and even the Zionist newspapers used Yiddish. The Lithuanian-language weekly newspaper Apžvalga, published by the Žydu karių sąjunga (Union of Jewish Soldiers) and featured above, was an exception to the rule, as was Mūsų garsas, also featured above. Apžvalga testifies to the self-identification of the community which published it and their patriotic love of the ideals of Lithuanian statehood.

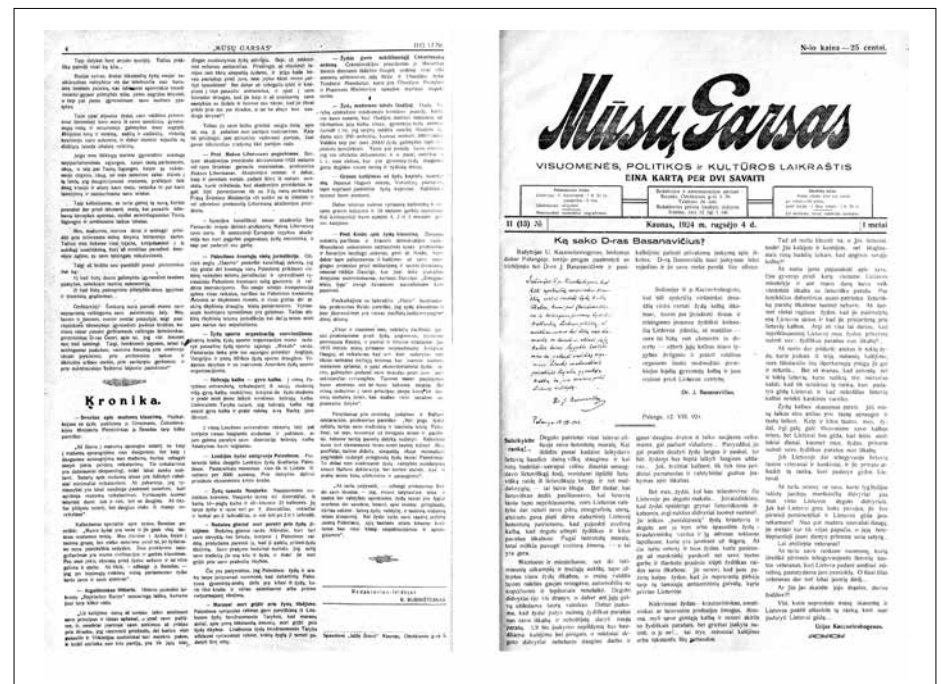
Di Yidische Stimme (The Jewish Voice) was published in Yiddish in Kaunas be-

tween 1919 and 1940. Briefly it published the weekly supplement in Lithuanian called Mūsų garsas (Our Voice), featured above. The anti-Zionist Yiddishist Folksblat (People’s Page, i.e., People’s Newspaper) was published in Kaunas beginning in 1930. In Vilnius the Yidische Tsaitung (Jewish Newspaper) was pro-Zionist and began publishing in 1919, later becoming Tsait (Time, i.e., The Times). Popular publications such as Ovnt Kuryer (Evening Courier, established 1924), Vilner Radio (Radio Vilnius, 1928) and Vilner Ekspress (Vilnius Express, 1934) also appeared.

Different cultural, artistic and literary movements and associations also had their own press, the literary and artistic association Jung-Vilne in Vilnius and the literary association Mir Alein (We Alone) in Kaunas, among others. In Vilnius Solomon Bastomski published a magazine in Yiddish for children called Grininke Beymelakh (Little Green Trees).

Sadly, the traces left behind of the Jewish cultural activities in interwar Lithuania haven’t attracted much scholarly attention yet, and the few academic studies based on primary sources focus mainly on Jewish political and social life. Lithuanian translations of Yiddish literature are few. There is still hope, though, that the treasures of Yiddish will soon help us better understand Lithuanian society in the period between the two world wars.

Prepared by Ruth Rechtes



Mūsų garsas (Our Voice), 1924

## LJC SOCIAL CENTER STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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Ugnė Gėgžnaitė	Curator, Patronage services department	(8 5) 261 7244
Sulamita Lev	Medical equipment, laundry and dry cleaning services	(8 5) 261 1736
Volunteer doctors	Medical consultations from 12 noon to 3:00 P.M.	(8 5) 261 4582
Geršonas Taicas	Lecture series	8 689 83 293

## LJC CLUB COORDINATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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Young Families Club	Julija Lipšic	8 659 52 604	julija.lipic@gmail.com
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Abi men zet zich Club	Žana Skudovičienė	8 678 81 514	zanas@sc.lzb.lt
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## WRITE US!

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## BAGEL SHOP



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### WORKING HOURS

I-IV 11:00 - 20:00

V 11:00 - 17:00

VI SHABBAT/CLOSED

VII 12:00 - 17:00



## YIDDISH ALPHABET

מ	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	ב	א	א	א
melupm vov	vow	hey	dalek	giml	veyz	beyz	komets alef	pasekh alef	(shtumer) alef
u	u (w) [u]	h	d	g	v	b	o	a	silent
פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ
kof	pasekh tsvey yudn	tsvey yudn	khirek yud	yud	tes	khes	zayin	vov-yud	tsvey vovn
k	ay [aj]	ey [ej]	i	y, i [i]	t	kh	z	oy [oj]	v
ק	צ	פ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ
uf	tsadek, lange tsadek	fey	pey	ayin	samekh	nun lange nun	mem shoits mem	lamed	khof lange khof
k (q) [k]	ts [ts]	f	p	e	s	n	m	l	kh [x]
ש	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז
tes shin	dalek zayin shin	zayin shin	dalek zayin	sof	tof	sin	shin	reysh	
tsh [tʃ]	dz [dʒ]	zh [ʒ]	dz [dʒ]	s [s]	t [t]	s [s]	sh [ʃ]	r	

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Schedule of services at the Choral Synagogue in Vilnius, Pylimo st. no. 39:

- ▶ workdays from 8:30 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.
- ▶ Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.
- ▶ Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 P.M.

Guided tours of the synagogue are available daily from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. except on Saturdays. Telephone: (8 5) 261 25 23

Vilnius Jewish Cemetery (Sudervės way No. 28, Vilnius) open: workdays and Sunday from 9:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.; closed on Saturday. Telephone: (8 5) 250 54 68

# SUPPORT

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AB SEB BANKAS LT097044060000907953

On the cover - moments from unveiling of Žydų Street sign in Yiddish and Hebrew. Photos: Michail Vilkomirskij.

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