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Yizkor Books in the Twenty-First Century: A History and Guide to the Genre

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Yizkor Books in the Twenty-First Century:

A History and Guide to the Genre

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an introduction to the genre of community memorial volumes, also known as *yizkor* books (*yisker-bikher* in Yiddish, *sifre ziḳaron* in Hebrew). The authors provide an overview of the books' contents, along with an update on recent developments relating to their publication and dissemination.

INTRODUCTION

At the libraries of *Yad Vashem* and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as at a number of other institutions around the world, there are collections of books locked in glass-enclosed bookcases. Most often these publications do not circulate. They are treated like rare books, but more so because thieves have been known to steal them. They are the collections of *yizkor* books dedicated to the life and death of Eastern European Jewish communities. What wealth is stored in these books to make them so valuable that they are worth stealing? The purpose of this article is to explore that question by looking at the history of these books and by describing what information is included in them. This article serves as an introduction to the genre for new readers and provides an update on recent developments for those already familiar with it.

WHAT ARE *YIZKOR* BOOKS?

Yizkor books are texts written primarily by Holocaust survivors in their countries of resettlement, in conjunction with individuals who left their hometowns before the war. The books are referred to as *yisker bikher* or *pinkeysim* in Yiddish, *Gedenkbücher* in German, and *sifre ziḳaron* in Hebrew. *Sefer* (*seyfer* in Yiddish), which means book in Hebrew and holy book in Yiddish, has also been used in the titles of some books. As soon as the survivors realized the great loss-

es they suffered personally and as a people, they looked for a way to memorialize their relatives and neighbors and to describe the world in which they had lived prior to the Holocaust. Using the written word, survivors found a means of documenting for posterity the history of the towns prior to World War II, the events that swept over the towns during the war, and the fate of individuals who had been the inhabitants of the towns.

Each *yizkor* book is considered a *matseyve* [gravestone] to the people in the town who were killed during the Holocaust. There was a very strong sense among the survivors that if they could not have the physical connection to the dead that cemeteries usually constitute, at least they would have the books as memorials, according to an age-old Jewish tradition of commemorating destroyed communities in print. The work of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (1982) and David Roskies (1984) suggest that this tradition begins with the Books of Moses and extends to the writings about the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem, the European crusades, the expulsion from Spain in the fifteenth century, the Chmielnicki pogroms in the seventeenth century, and the pogroms within the Pale of Settlement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Examples of written responses to catastrophe include Lamentations, written in 587 B.C.E; the *Memorbücher* of Nuremberg, written in the thirteenth century; *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel* (*Consolaçam às Tribulaçoens de Israel*), by Samuel Usque (written in 1553); and *Abyss of Despair* (*Yeṿen metsulaḥ*), written by Nathan Nata Hannover in the seventeenth century. The Holocaust-era memorial books may be understood as part of this tradition.

There is no conclusive figure for the number of Holocaust-era memorial books published due to the differences in definitions and when the count was taken. In 1973, Abraham Wein noted that about 400 books had been published in the previous thirty years, whereas David Bass counted 342 books. David Kranzler identified about 600 in 1979, and Paul Hamburg mentioned 800 in 1998. The number of *yizkor* books is probably somewhere between Kranzler's and Hamburg's estimates. But no matter which count one accepts, there exist a staggering number of pages, now much higher than the 150,000 mentioned by Wein (1973), who wrote that the books "contain a greater amount of information and data on the life of Eastern European Jewish communities than all other publications in this field that have so far been published" (p. 266).

Many people were involved in the book projects, probably over 1,000 editors and 10,000 writers. The materials included in each book were written by many authors and generally edited by one person or, at times, several people. Often the editors were members and functionaries of *landsmanshaftn,* mutual aid organizations comprised of immigrants from the same region or town. Although well-known editors, including David Stockfish and Berl Kagan, were sometimes hired to work on a book and essays by well-known historians, including Joseph Kermish and Philip Friedman, were included in some books, most contributors were ordinary people from the particular town.

For the purposes of this article, we limit our discussion to *yizkor* books published by *landsmanshaftn.* Generally, each *landsmanshaft* limited its publication to several hundred copies for financial reasons, but also due to the

assumption that only the families of the survivors from the town would be interested in purchasing its *yizkor* book. The books often include tribute pages from surviving relatives dedicated to the memory of lost family members. The towns represented in the books are spread over Eastern Europe. *Yizkor* books generally deal with one town or city, but there are books for particular countries, for example, Greece and Lithuania, and for specific regions, for example, Galicia, Transylvania, and Ruthenia. Still other books cover a city and its surrounding towns. As one would expect, most were published about towns in Poland, next is the Ukraine, followed by Belarus. About ten percent deal with two or more towns, and about five percent deal with countries or regions. This explains why the number of towns with *yizkor* books in any given collection is larger than the number of *yizkor* books in the collection.

The publication of *yizkor* books began immediately after the war, peaking in the 1960s. Although publications dropped in the 1970s, books continue to be published even now. These later *yizkor* books tend to have a chronological and thematic structure similar to earlier ones. For example, the *Memorial Book of the Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk and Kolki,* published in 2004, covers the towns and its inhabitants before, during, and after the war, as well as a necrology. However, significant differences may be found in translations of earlier books. A translation of an original volume may be a complete version, a partial translation, an update, an expanded edition, or a supplement. The English-language book *Luboml: The Memorial Book of a Vanished Shtetl* issued in 1997, for instance, contains numerous articles not included in the original 1974 *Sefer yizḳor li-ḳehilat Luboml.* Books published after the peak years may also contain tributes to fallen Israeli soldiers. New media are also changing the works. In some cases, an online version of a *yizker* book may be linked to other electronic resources about the hometown.

Generally, books about Hungarian, German, and Czechoslovak towns are not included in this study because those books were often written by non-Jewish inhabitants of the towns who wanted to document the history of the town's Jewish population and their fate during the Holocaust. Those books were published much later, with work continuing on many into the present. They are often the product of high school or university students or individuals who felt compelled by various reasons to publish the history of Jewish life in their towns.

WHAT INFLUENCED *YIZKOR* BOOKS?

When the members of *landsmanshaftn* decided to write a book about the life and death of their ancestral hometown, they drew on a number of practices. One was the tradition of martyrology. Alan Mintz (1996) writes that after the First Crusade the practice of memorializing ordinary people, not only the renowned took hold, and that by the fifteenth century, the *kadish* prayer and the *yortsayt* remembrance, as well as the *yizkor* service were incorporated into Jewish practices. It was then that *kidush hashem* [dying for the sanctification of God] and becoming a *kodesh* [martyr] were applied to Jews who were killed in

their defense of Judaism or who killed themselves to avoid converting from Judaism. Since then, and as expressed in the memorial books too, this idea of martyrdom includes those killed for being Jewish.

From *Khurbn Glubok:*

> We ask all the people from our town to mark the anniversary of those who perished by having the eldest in the family read to his relatives a few chapters from this book. In this way, we will identify with our beloved and dearest who died as martyrs in the sanctification of God's name (Rayak and Rayak 1956, p. iii; our translation).

From the *Zabludove yisker-bukh:* "Every word in this book shall be like a light burning for the souls of our martyrs" (Tesler, 1961, p. 13; our translation).

Another influence on the writing of *yizkor* books is the belief that the book is a sacred text and that writing a memorial book is a sacred act. This may be based on Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:17–19. Terms such as *heylik, khoyv,* and *eydes* [holy, duty, and witness] are used by writers to convey this notion of sanctity.

From *Pinkes Zamoshtsh:* "Let these holy souls of our martyrs always swim before our eyes, always live in our memory, always remind us of the sacred obligation: Remember what Amalek Did Unto You!" (Bernshteyn, 2004, p. 662; original source: Bernshteyn, 1957, p. 1081).

From *Pinkes Kovel:* "We, the people from Kovel in Argentina are doing this sacred work so that the memory of the holy congregation of Kovel, Volynia, will live on generation after generation" (Baler, 1951, p. 5; our translation).

Still another influence on the writing of *yizkor* books is the tradition of chronicling community events. In that sense, a memorial book functions like a *pinkes,* the register of records or a minutes-book that was kept by Eastern European Jewish governing bodies or communal organizations. Since the *pinkes* was an ongoing record of the life of a town and that the Holocaust destroyed the Jewish life in the town, a memorial book may be considered the last entry in the town's chronicles. Some writers call their book a *pinkes,* for instance *Pinkes Byten,* thus explicitly continuing the tradition of recording events and situating the work within the recording tradition. Others refer to their book as a *pinkes.*

An example from the Gombin *yizkor* book: "With deep respect and piety we present to our Landsleit and the Yiddish reader this Pinkas" (Zicklin, 1969, p. 5).

The practice of testimony may also have affected the writing of the books. As James E. Young (1988) notes: "Inasmuch as the idea of witness is so inextricably tied to the legal process of establishing evidence in order to achieve justice, it seems possible that these biblical and legal obligations to bear witness play some traditional role in the Holocaust victims' conception of themselves and their roles as witnesses" (pp. 18–19). This idea of "writer as witness" is found in *Pinkes Varshe,* where the editors call the front matter of their book "*a denkmol un an eydes*" [a monument and a witness] (Katz, 1955, p. 9). Similarly, in *Pinkes Zhirardov,* Mordechai Bauman calls his chapter "*eydes fun umkum*" [a witness to the destruction] (Bernshteyn, 1961, p. 474).

Some writers explicitly state that eyewitness accounts are the best defense against future catastrophes and revisionist history because each writer's account adds to the total body of evidence about the destruction, making it harder for Holocaust deniers to make their claims. From the Piotrokow Tribunalski book:

> It is therefore important that those of us who are still here bear witness, put everything on record and make it available to our children and the generations to come—an undistorted record, in all its tragedy and all its glory, so that the world will not forget one of the oldest and most thriving Jewish communities in Poland (Giladi, 1991, pp. 11–12).

Hagiography may have also exerted an influence on the books, since many works profile spiritual leaders from the town. Although descriptions of the town's religious life are common, religious people from the town did not usually contribute the entries because the books are primarily the products of secular organizations. The writing of history also had an influence on the *yizkor* books. About that, Annette Wieviorka (1994) finds:

> The Jewish reaction to the destruction of a number of its communities prefigures the response to the genocide: Jews wrote works that were anchored in the Jewish tradition while simultaneously borrowing from the non-Jews the genre of historical narration (pp. 31–32).

In general, the books are divided into four parts: the town and its people before the war, the town and its people during the war, the fate of the town and its survivors after the war, and the necrology. Writers wanted to provide descriptions of a broad scope of town life as a means of portraying what was lost. To that end, accounts of business leaders, doctors, writers, activists, athletes, and others are included, along with accounts of less prominent citizens. Besides the value placed on history, writers placed value on memory. Thus, books include numerous autobiographical entries from the townspeople. Readers valued this combination of historical and personal content. Writers believed that the works would be useful for researching the ancestral hometown. This is clearly expressed the editor of the *Bzhezhin yizkor* book:

> And although the family chronicles and other works in this yizkor book are written by non-professional writers, we are sure that they will enter our rich literature and folk memoirs that are being so strongly and warmly evaluated and which are such a great treasure for our historians for their scholarly work (Alperin and Summer, 2008).

Likewise, Asher Tarmon, the English-language editor of *Memorial Book of the Jewish Communities of Manyevitz, Horodok, Lishnivka, Troyanuvka, Povursk and Kolki,* notes: "This work will also provide scholars and historians, who work in English, with authentic source material of the period of the Holocaust" (Merin, 2004, p. 12).

WHAT INFORMATION IS CONTAINED IN *YIZKOR* BOOKS?

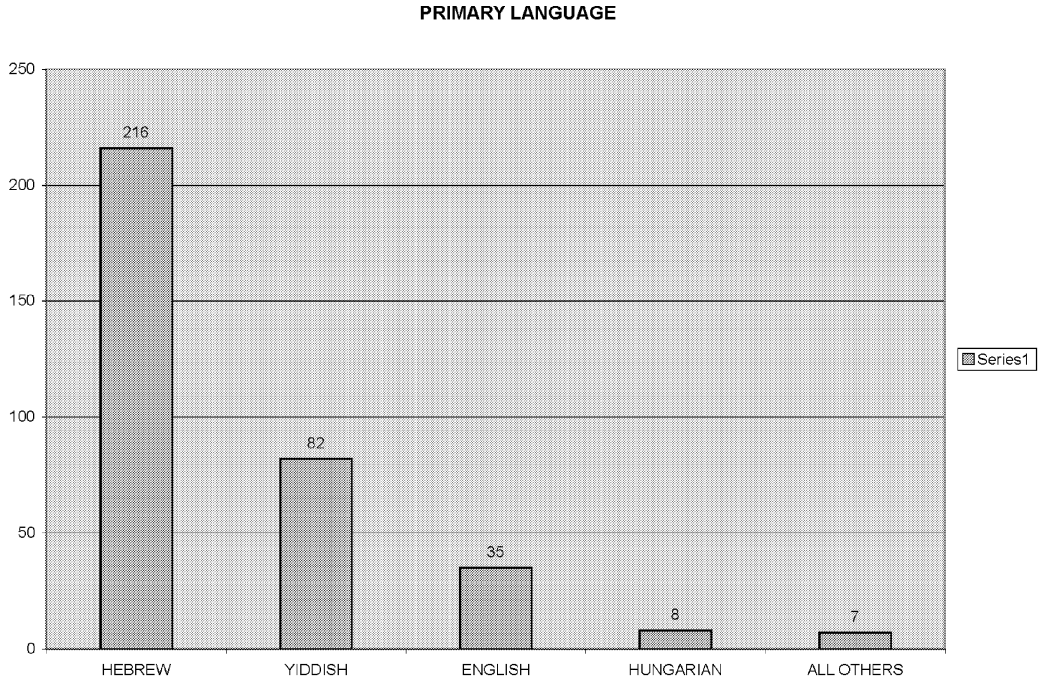
Before World War II, over three million Jews lived in Poland, at the time the country with the largest Jewish population in the world. Half a million lived in its largest cities, Warsaw and Lodz, and all but ten percent of them perished during the Holocaust. Close to one-half of the *yizkor* books are about towns in present-day Poland, and if the pre-1939 borders are considered, close to three-quarters of the books are dedicated to towns in Poland (Wein, 1973). Some towns and regions have more than one *yizkor* book or have multi-volume publications. These are most often the case for larger towns and cities, such as the four volumes about Slonim, the three volumes about Pinsk, and the three volumes about Vilna. The region of Bessarabia has three *yizkor* books, and Lithuania has at least four. Sizes of the towns described in the *yizkor* books vary from the largest, Warsaw, with over 300,000, to small ones with as few as ten Jewish inhabitants. The median size is population of about 2,500.

Identifying towns may be quite a challenge at times since the names changed so often. As a result, some towns have as many as fifteen different name versions. What is now called Navahrudak was previously called Nowogródek or Navaredok, names that sound similar. There are towns that had totally different names in different periods and in different languages. There are town names that are very common and appear repeatedly in different areas of Eastern Europe, and there are different towns with similar sounding names. It is sometimes difficult to determine the correct town when individuals who are searching for their family's hometown do not know its exact location.

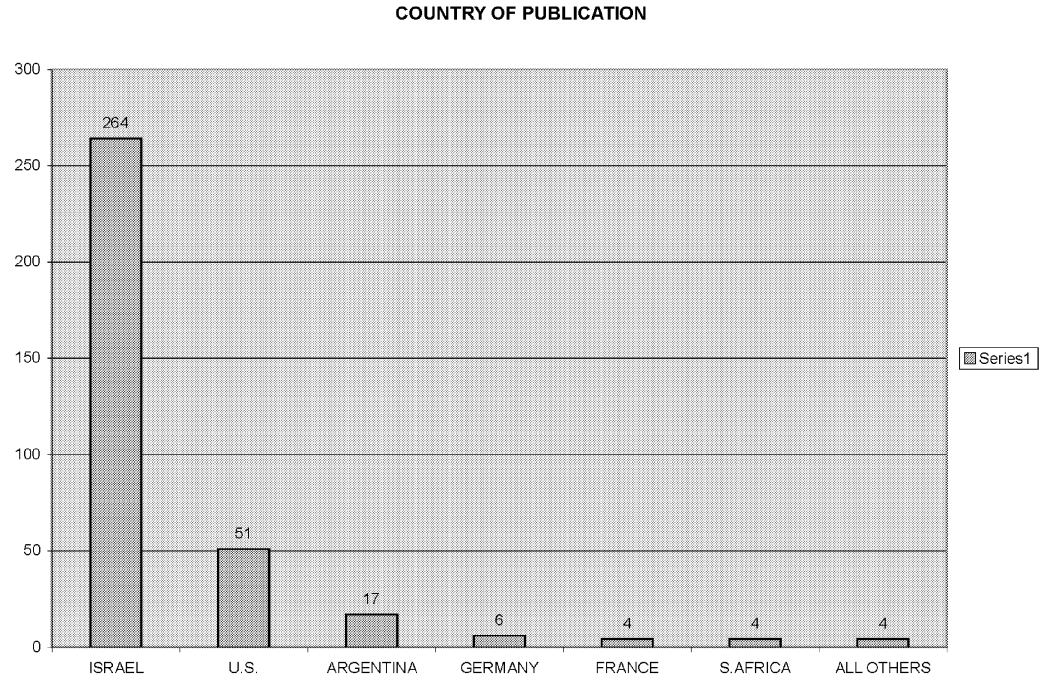
Authorized headings for most town names have been established by the Library of Congress Authority File. These do not appear consistently in all catalog records. Cataloging records of *yizkor* books are far from perfect with many errors in transliteration of the Hebrew and Yiddish titles with limited subject headings. The New York Public Library only recently added a special category description for all its digitized *yizkor* books, so that they may be pulled up with one search term.

Regarding languages, *yizkor* books were written predominantly in Hebrew and Yiddish. Many had the same text in each language to make it possible for those who did not know Yiddish to read about the towns of origin of their families. Some books have summaries or introductions in English and a few in Spanish. Since 1994, JewishGen, an Internet site for Jewish genealogy, has been coordinating efforts to translate *yizkor* books into English, so that increasingly parts of the books, such as the necrologies, or entire books, are available for those who are not able to read Hebrew or Yiddish. The Yiddish in the books is of great importance as a source of local dialects. Slang and expressions used especially during the Holocaust in various regions of Eastern Europe may be found in the books.

The following two graphs describe the primary languages in which *yizkor* books were published, and separately, the countries in which they were published. These are based on a sample of about half of the books in the New York Public Library collection and validate a similar study done based on 500 books at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's library examined by Michlean Amir (2001).



Primary Language of Publication



Country of Publication

TABLE 1 PERCENTAGE OF LANGUAGES

Language	*Number of Books*	*Percentage*
Hebrew	216	62
Yiddish	82	24
English	35	10
Hungarian	8	2
All others	7	2

TABLE 2 PERCENTAGES OF COUNTRIES

Country	*Number of Books*	*Percentage*
Israel	264	75
United States	51	15
Argentina	17	5
Germany	6	2
France	4	1
South Africa	4	1
All others	4	1

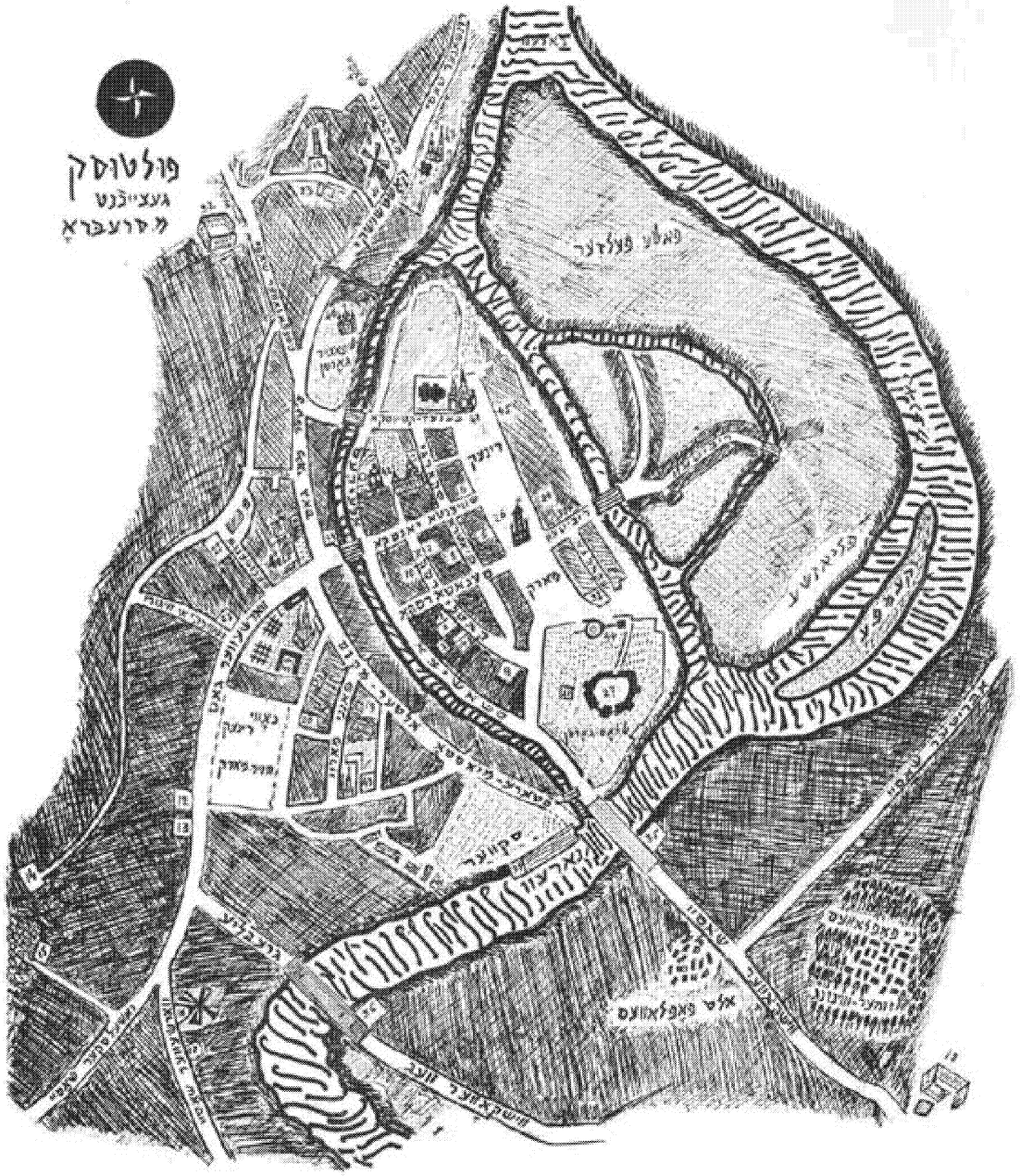
In spite of the fact that no basic guideline or "boiler plate" was used for the writing of *yizkor* books, the information included in them is similar and may be categorized. Although not every book includes all the information, the following list reveals the wealth of knowledge that may be gleaned from these books. Many have sections on all or some of the following subjects:

- The history of Jewish life in the town from the first settlement, including everyday life, market days, transportation, religious life, the role of women, relations with and Christian neighbors.
- Documentary material relevant to that history, such as articles from newspapers, copies of certificates, birth certificates, and registers of dead.
- Illustrations such as detailed maps of the town, sometimes with streets in the Jewish quarter and names of families that lived there, photographs of meetings, rabbis, school children, youth group meetings, synagogues, parks, and more.
- Information on the economic life of the Jewish population, including lists of professions at different periods in the town's history, Jewish-owned factories and businesses.

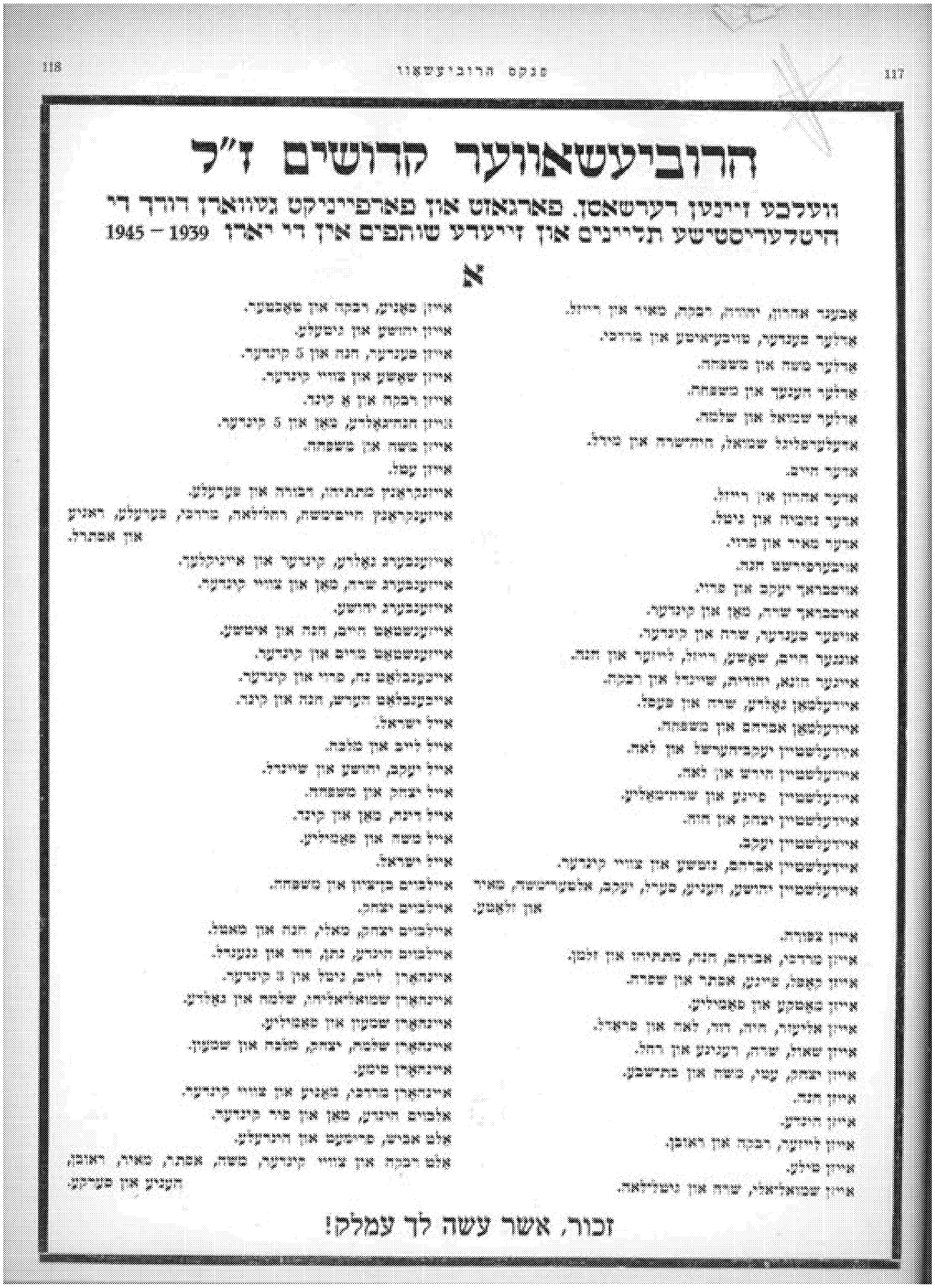
- Literary works by local writers such as poems, songs, and stories are sometimes included.
- Descriptions of what happened to the population during the Holocaust, where they were deported to, how many escaped and to where, participation of town inhabitants in the partisan movements, and correspondence between organizations in the town with world Jewish organizations.
- Descriptions of concentration camps and forced labor camps in the town's vicinity.
- Diaries written during the Holocaust.
- Names of collaborators.
- Names of German officers who were responsible for major actions against the Jewish population of the town.
- Descriptions of Righteous Gentiles in the town.
- Details on waves of immigration from the town to various places around the world and to Palestine.
- Lists of local people who fought and died during the Israeli War of Independence.
- Indexes of names and places.
- Lists of names of town inhabitants who perished during the Holocaust.

These topics represent information that is of great value for the study of Eastern European Jewry. Related discussions of the contents of the books may be found in Wein (1973) and Baker (1980). Research has been conducted based on some the information, but much more remains to be done. The full spectrum of subjects on Jewish life in the cities and towns may be researched extensively based on this treasure of information. Where they exist, archival records of towns as well as oral histories should be used for comparison and verification purposes. Kugelmass and Boyarin (1989) have discussed issues of methodology related to research using memorial books.

Y*izkor* books reflect the post-Holocaust sensibility of descendants and survivors from the town. The books also reflect the internal politics of the survivor organizations. The sentimental views in the works are meant to show the beauty of the life that was destroyed. Written by descendants and survivors, the books are by their very nature memoiristic, and the books serve multiple purposes for the *landslayt,* as well as for current researchers. Dedicated to the life and death of the Eastern European Jewish hometowns, these books are considered monuments in print, destined to fulfill the purpose of commemoration. As repositories of memory, the books express what people choose to remember. The maps, the graphics, the pages of dedication, the prefaces, and other features of the books yield insights into the culture of the survivors.



Hand drawn map of *Pultusk* *Source: Y. Ivri, ed.* Pultusk; sefer ziḳaron, *Tel Aviv: Pultusk Society, 1971.*


118 פנקס הרוביעשאוו 117

הרוביעשאווער קדושים ז"ל

וועלכע זיינען דערשאסן, פארגאזט און פארפייניקט געווארן דורך די
היטלעריסטישע תליינים און זייערע שותפים אין די יארן 1939 – 1945

א

זכור, אשר עשה לך עמלק!

The first page of the necrology

Source: B. Kaplinsky, ed. Pinḳas Hrubieszow, *Tel Aviv: Hrubieshov Associations in Israel and the USA, 1962.*

A group of school children
Source: B. Kagan, ed., Sefer yizḳor le-ḳehilat Luboml, *Tel Aviv: Luboml Memorial Book Committee, 1974.*

Although the works have been of interest to scholars from early on, scholarly attention to the books has not been constant and reflects the changing assessment of the books as source documents. Reviewers in the 1950 and 1960s tended to point out the deficiencies in the books. From that perspective, criticism focused on historical inaccuracies or bias in the material. As a result, the richness of the material in the books was underappreciated. During the 1970 and 1980s, researchers started to realize that the books contain valuable details useful for studying a wide variety of topics from a multiplicity of disciplines. Two groundbreaking works issued during that period, Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin's *From a Ruined Garden* (1983), along with Annette Wieviorka and Itzhok Niborski's *Les livres du souvenir* (1983), introduced the genre to an audience of new readers. Interest in *yizkor* books as source documents continues to rise. Natalia Aleksiun's work on gender (2002) and Jeffrey Veidlinger's on culture (2005) are examples of recent publications using *yizkor* books.

For many years now, genealogists have found books useful. Zachary Baker (1980) outlines some of the limitations of the books for family research. Understanding those limits should guide genealogists as they mine the books for information. Here are some possible finds that a family researcher may gain from the books:

- Pictures may show a relative in a class or a youth group meeting.
- Maps may show the name of the street where the family lived and the proximity of the home to the school, synagogue, or market.
- Descriptions of common local professions that may apply to family members, and necrologies as well as indices often include family names. Even in cases where a large part of the family emigrated to the United States or to Palestine early in the twentieth century, very often some members remained and they perished with their progeny during the Holocaust.

WHERE ARE THE COLLECTIONS OF *YIZKOR* BOOKS?

Collections of *yizkor* books exist worldwide. Zachary Baker's bibliography (1998) contains the most comprehensive listing to date. Details about specific collections are scattered across numerous sources. Librarians and researchers will also find Estelle Guzik's work (2003), *Genealogical Resources in New York,* extremely helpful. Ilana Tahan (2004) details the holdings at the British Library; Michlean Amir (2001) describes the holdings of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum; and Faith Jones and Gretta Siegel (2006) summarize the major collections in libraries and archives around the world. (A detailed and up-to-date bibliographical listing of all *yizkor* books that have been identified has not yet been compiled. That would be an excellent tool for scholars and genealogists. A union list of *yizkor* books held in major collections, along the lines of listings found in Guzik's book, would also be very useful.)

Jones and Siegel also discuss collection development, collection management, and new media issues, including the creation of a digital library of *yizkor* books undertaken by the National Yiddish Book Center and the New York Public Library.* That digitization project is perhaps the most significant change to the genre and represents an important new development for scholars and librarians interested in the books. The recognition that the books need special treatment because of their scarcity and gradual deterioration prompted the National Yiddish Book Center and the New York Public Library to digitize the approximately 700 titles in the New York Public Library's collection. Faye Zipkowitz (2002) described the technical and commercial aspects of this joint effort, detailing how the online copies and the reprint-on-demand copies preserve the books and make them accessible to a wider audience in their original languages via the Worldwide Web. Basically, patrons may read the volumes online at the New York Public Library's Website and may buy a print-on-demand copy from

* Faith Jones won the 2007 RUSA ABC–CLIO Online History award for her work digitizing the collection, an award that recognizes the importance of Internet-based historical resources.

the National Yiddish Book Center. While the original books continue to be valued and carefully guarded historical documents, the project has made the books more accessible than ever before.

Reprints fill gaps in collections and reduce the use of original copies that have deteriorated with time and use. The option to buy reprints is extremely useful for collection development. Libraries that list *yizkor* books as a priority acquisition may meet their goal with the reprints. As an example, Yale University library has been buying reprints. In addition, the books are more available to researchers who are far from collections, such as Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (of the Marie Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, Poland), who is conducting a study of *yizkor* books for a Polish readership. But at the same time, the reprints affect the ways that the books are conceptualized. First, reprints do not have artifactual value. And second, reprints serve to distance the works from the *landsmanshaftn* insofar as the original publication data is subsumed under the new publisher's data, in which credit for the works is given to the National Yiddish Book Center's David and Sylvia Steiner *Yizkor* Book Collection and Steven Spielberg Digital Library Projects. Reading a digitized copy is difficult because the page-turner technology is cumbersome to use. Also, because many *yizkor* books lack an index and only have an incomplete one, using the digitized books may be frustrating and time consuming.

For librarians and others interested in the books, another development to the genre is the JewishGen project that links English translations of *yizkor* books to the organization's website. JewishGen volunteers have been translating yizkor books and publishing them on the web since 1994. Most of the online books are partial translations of the originals; however, a few are complete translations. Care must be taken when using these translations because the quantity of translated pages and quality of the translations varies widely. Researchers should always check the original or the digitized volumes. In addition, JewishGen volunteers have created a database of necrologies from the online translations. This is a great service to researchers because the database indexes family names by how they sound and may be searched using the Russell (NARA) and the Daitch-Mokotoff soundex coding systems. Since most names were transliterated from Hebrew and Yiddish, the spelling of names varies from the Latin-alphabet. The use of hypertext also augments the information in the original books. For instance, the Horodenka and Rohatyn entries on the JewishGen site include portions from the original book, along with links to other sources of information about the places.

In addition to these organizational projects, individual descendants from particular Eastern European towns maintain personal sites dedicated to their ancestral hometowns. Many of these personal sites contain portions of *yizkor* books or links to books. For example, Ada Holtzman's personal home page (http://www.zchor.org/) contains links to JewishGen, as well as to sites maintained by others. On José Gutstein's Szczuczyn home page (2008a), there is a link to an English translation of the original 1954 Szczuczyn *yizkor* book published in Tel Aviv by former residents of Szczuczyn in Israel. Chapters from an English translation of the book are included on the site with photographs from

the original book. Gutstein's homepage for the town of Radziłów (2008b) uses hyperlinks creatively. Since Radziłów does not have its own *yizkor* book and is near the towns of Goniądz, Jedwabne, Kolna, Szczuczyn, and Stawiski, Gutstein provides links to those JewishGen online books. Other examples are the web-based only books for Czortków and Sudilkov, created by descendants from those towns. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that these will be maintained on the web for posterity as is the case with the Sudilkov book, which is not accessible anymore on the World Wide Web.

While new technologies are making it much easier than ever before to use the books, the books may be transformed over time. Tracing the changes to the original Yiddish-language *Zabludove Yizker Bukh* (Tesler 1961) illustrates the differences between print and electronic versions. Then, the Hebrew volume *Zabludov: dapim mi-tokh yisker bukh* (Shavli-Shimush, 1987) was issued. A portion of that was translated into English. Never published in print, that English version is currently on the Zabludów home page, maintained by Tilford Bartman, a descendant from the town. The original Yiddish and Hebrew texts are available from the New York Public Library and National Yiddish Book Center's digitized collection. However, there are two JewishGen entries: One is a translation of the original table of contents, a single article, and the necrology from *Zabludove yisker bukh*; whereas the other is a translation of the Holocaust chapters from *Zabludov: dapim mi-tokh yisker bukh*. What is clear is that attention must be given to the various versions of a *yizkor* book.

CONCLUSION

Yizkor books were written to commemorate the life and the death of Eastern European Jewish life. These books constitute a rich source of information about life during the interwar, war, and postwar period. Written by descendants from the towns, the books add immeasurably to our knowledge about the times and places. Studies of the books and studies using the books reveal the range of materials available in the volumes. Librarians who work with *yizkor* books face several challenges. These include dealing with the various definitions of what is considered a *yizkor* book, the scarcity of original books, the problem of collection development and management, the lack of indexes, the uneven quality and quantity of content, and much more. Yet despite all of that, the usefulness of the books as artifacts and as sources is invaluable. Addressing these matters offers many opportunities for future investigations into specific aspects of the history of Jewish communities in towns in Eastern Europe.

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