

Yiddish Studies Pathfinder

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Pathfinder Series

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Where does one begin to search for a response to a reference question in a field with which you are unfamiliar? Your access to guides, handbooks or bibliographies may be limited by your own collection, your location, or not knowing whom to contact or where to begin.

In response to the needs of librarians, Judaica Librarianship initiates a **Pathfinder Series**, a guide to reference tools and sources. Each Pathfinder explores a different subject area. It offers a guide to and through the literature in the field—from introductory and survey articles, major texts, handbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies (published separately or as articles), indexes, and journals—to societies associated with the field, reports, non-print materials, and the names of major research collections. In short, it enables one to identify all the indispensable sources from basic to technical works in a given field.

After publication in Judaica Librarianship, each Pathfinder will be available as part of a series of AJL publications. All readers are invited to prepare Pathfinders in subject areas in which they have expertise. Contact the Vice-President of the R & S or SSC Division of AJL for a set of guidelines.

As the first in this series, Judaica Librarianship Contributing Editor for the *Responsa* column, Zachary Baker, presents a Pathfinder on Yiddish Studies.

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Scope

Yiddish Studies encompasses the Yiddish language and its literature, along with such related areas as folklore, theater, and press. Yiddish is a fusion language composed of elements deriving from Middle High German, Hebrew, Aramaic, and several Slavic languages. Spoken by 10,000,000 Ashkenazic Jews at the outbreak of World War II, its history can be traced back to the era of the Crusades. At present, between two and three million people speak or understand Yiddish.

Yiddish literature, which had its origins during the Italian Renaissance, flourished during the half century leading up to the calamitous Holocaust period, producing such noted writers as Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sholem-Yankev Abramovitsh), I. L. Peretz, Sholom Aleichem (S. Rabinovitsh), and the Nobel Prize-winning storyteller Isaac Bashevis Singer. In recent years, Yiddish courses have been offered on many university campuses, and the stature of Yiddish Studies has grown apace with this rise in academic interest. Included in this Pathfinder are essential resources in both Yiddish and English, with the stress laid, however, on materials available in English.

Materials dealing with the various aspects of Yiddish Studies are listed in library catalogs under the following headings (arranged in logical order):

- Yiddish language
- Yiddish philology
- Yiddish literature
- Yiddish drama
- Yiddish fiction
- Yiddish letters
- Yiddish orations
- Yiddish poetry
- Yiddish wit and humor
- Authors, Yiddish
- Yiddish imprints
- Almanacs, Yiddish
- Yiddish newspapers
- Theater, Yiddish
- Yiddish songs

Introductions to the various aspects of Yiddish Studies appear in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 1972). See the following articles:

- "Yiddish language," by Uriel Weinreich;
- "Yiddish literature," by Chone Shmeruk;
- "Theater," subsection "Yiddish theater," by Alfred Abraham Greenbaum;
- "Press," by various authors.

The *EJ* also includes biographies of many Yiddish writers and personalities. Always consult the index (vol. 1) before searching the other volumes for a topic. Articles include bibliographic references.

Major Works in Yiddish Studies include the following:

A. Yiddish language.

Weinreich, Max. *History of the Yiddish language: concepts, facts, methods*. Translated by Shlomo Noble, with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

An exhaustive study of the history of Yiddish, including the text, but excluding the footnotes and bibliography contained in the Yiddish original: (*Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh*. New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1973. 4 vols.) The 99-page index includes all Yiddish words mentioned in the text and constitutes a guide to romanized Yiddish and a key to Yiddish etymological data.

Birnbaum, Solomon A. *Yiddish: a survey and a grammar*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.

A concise and sophisticated overview of Yiddish.

The field of Yiddish: studies in Yiddish language, folklore, and literature. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1954-1980. 4 vols.

Scholarly articles on Yiddish, in English. Vol. 1 includes bibliographies of works by Sholem Aleichem and I. L. Peretz in English translation. Vols. 2 and 3 were published at The Hague: Mouton; vol. 4 was published in Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues (ISHI).