

CONFERENCE
**The Intellectual Heritage
of the Jews of Vilnius**

10–11 October 2023, Vilnius

KONFERENCIJA
**Vilniaus žydų
intelektualinis paveldas**
2023 m. spalio 10–11 d., Vilnius



PROGRAMME
SHORT BIOGRAPHIES
OF THE SPEAKERS
ABSTRACTS
OF PRESENTATIONS

VILNE | ווילנע
1323-2023 | 5083-5783



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ACADEMY OF
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On 10–11 October 2023, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities are holding the international scholarly conference ‘The Intellectual Heritage of the Jews of Vilnius’.

In Lithuania, the year 2020 was the Year of Lithuanian Jewish History and of the Vilnius Gaon, Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of his birth. A conference of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Vilnius was part of the commemorative programme.

Unfortunately, this goal did not materialise because of the pandemic. As soon as it was over, both academies decided to revive the idea of the conference.

As part of the celebrations of the 700th anniversary of Vilnius and in view of the influence of the Jewish people and culture on the history of Vilnius, a decision was made to broaden the scope of the conference by exploring the rich intellectual heritage of the Jews of Vilnius from the eighteenth century onwards and the impact it has had on Vilnius and the wider world.

To achieve this goal, the conference will focus on the intellectual heritage of Vilnius Jews in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries (the first day of the conference), the process of the intellectual modernisation of the Jews of Vilnius, and the spread of the Jews of Vilnius in the world (the second day of the conference).

Thanks to the support of the Research Council of Lithuania, we were able to invite such world-renowned experts in Jewish history and culture as Prof. Israel Bartal, Prof. David E. Fishman, Prof. David G. Roskies, Prof. Benjamin Brown, Prof. Alex Lubotzky, Prof. Marcin Wodziński, Dr Jon Seligman, Prof. Avner Holtzman, Prof. Tsvia Walden, Prof. Mordechai (Motti) Zalkin, and others.

The conference will also feature presentations by prominent Lithuanian scholars: Prof. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Prof. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Dr Lara Lempertienė, Prof. Jurgita Verbickienė, and the doctoral student Saulė Valiūnaitė.

Promotion of scholarly cooperation between the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities is one of the central goals of the conference.

The conference ‘The Intellectual heritage of the Jews of Vilnius’ is the first joint scholarly event organised by the two academies.

PROGRAMME

English is the official language of the conference

10 October



THE INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE OF THE JEWS OF VILNIUS IN THE EIGHTEENTH-NINETEENTH CENTURY

GRAND HALL,
LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
Gedimino Ave. 3, Vilnius

8.30–9.00 *Participant registration, welcome coffee*

Plenary meeting
Chair Prof. Jūras Banys

9.00–9.30 **OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE.
WELCOME ADDRESSES.**

Prof. Jūras Banys, President
of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

Prof. David Harel, President
of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein, HE Ambassador
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Israel
to the Republic of Lithuania

9.30–10.10 **OPENING LECTURE. Prof. Benjamin Brown,**
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
The Vilna Gaon's Theopolitical Legacy

10.10–10.25 **Discussion**

10.25–10.40 *Coffee break*

**10.40–14.50 The Intellectual Heritage of the Jews
of Vilnius in the Eighteenth-Nineteenth
Century**

Chair Prof. Yadin Dudai

10.40–10.50 INTRODUCTION. Prof. Yadin Dudai, The Israel
Academy of Sciences and Humanities

10.50–11.30 KEYNOTE LECTURE. Prof. Israel Bartal,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
**Each Generation and its Scholars:
The Changing Faces of the ‘Historian’s Gaon’**

**11.30–12.10 Prof. Alex Lubotzky, Weizmann Institute,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
The Mathematics of the Vilna Gaon**

12.10–12.30 Discussion

12.30–13.30 *Lunch break*

Chair Prof. Vladas Algirdas Bumelis

**13.30–13.50 Prof. Jurgita Verbickienė, Vilnius University.
The Space of Intellectual Life:
Jewish Socio-Topography of Vilnius
in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century**

**13.50–14.30 Prof. Marcin Wodziński, University of Wrocław. Two
Enlightenments: The Case of Josef Rosensohn of Vilna**

14.30–14.50 Discussion

AFTERNOON PROGRAMME



**THE VILNA GAON MUSEUM OF JEWISH HISTORY,
Naugarduko St. 10, Vilnius**

**15.30–16.00 Dr Jon Seligman, Israel Antiquities Authority.
Excavating the Other Cathedral of Vilnius:
The Great Synagogue of Vilna**

16.00–16.15 Discussion

16.15–16.45 EXHIBITION TOUR

16.45–18.00 Screening of the film *Daughter of Vilna: The Life in Song of Masha Roskies*

11 October



THE INTELLECTUAL MODERNISATION OF THE JEWS OF VILNIUS

GRAND HALL,
LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
Gedimino Ave. 3, Vilnius

Chair Faina Kukliansky

9.00–9.40 KEYNOTE LECTURE. Prof. David E. Fishman,
Jewish Theological Seminary. **Nationalism, Socialism
and the Modernisation of the Jews of Vilna**

9.40–9.55 Discussion

9.55–11.30 **Jewish Culture and Modernity
in Interwar Vilnius**

Chair Prof. David G. Roskies

9.55–10.15 Prof. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Vilnius University.
**The Yiddish Avant-garde Group *Yung Vilne* and
Vilnius University: Separate or Interconnected
Worlds?**

10.15–10.35 Saulė Valiūnaitė, Vilnius University.
**Unknown Soldiers? Women in the Politics
of Doikayt in Interwar Vilnius**

- 10.35–10.55** Dr Lara Lempertienė, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. **On Vilna with Love. Zalman Shneur and Hermann Struk**
- 10.55–11.15** Prof. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. **Art of Jewish Women Artists in Interwar Vilnius**
- 11.15–11.30** Discussion
- 11.30–12.15** *Lunch break*
- 12.15–15.15** **The Spread of Jewish Ideas from Vilnius to the World**
Chair Prof. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas
- 12.15–12.55** KEYNOTE LECTURE. Prof. David G. Roskies, Jewish Theological Seminary. **A Tale of Two Cities: Growing Up in *Vilne de-Kánade***
- 12.55–13.35** Prof. Avner Holtzman, Tel Aviv University. **Vilnius, a Centre of Hebrew Enlightenment**
- 13.35–14.15** Prof. Tsvia Walden, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. **From Kalman Schulman in Vilnius to Hebrew Speaking Children in Israel: Laying the Foundations of Modern Hebrew Culture**
- 14.15–14.55** CLOSING LECTURE. Prof. Mordechai (Motti) Zalkin, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. **The Intellectual Heritage of Lithuanian Jewry: Reflections and Thoughts**
- 14.55–15.15** Discussion
- 15.15–18.20** A Tour of the Jewish Vilnius.
Tour guide Julijus Gurvičius

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES
OF THE SPEAKERS

ABSTRACTS
OF PRESENTATIONS

Prof. Jūras Banys,
President of the Lithuanian
Academy of Sciences



Photo: Virginija Valuckienė

Jūras Banys is the president of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and a professor at the Institute of Applied Electrodynamics and Telecommunications, Faculty of Physics, Vilnius University.

Prof. Banys is a member of the Advisory Board of the European Conference on Applications of Polar Dielectrics, the European Committee on Ferroelectricity, the AMPERE Group, and a Senior Member of the IEEE. He is a foreign member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, a corresponding member of the Saxon Academy of Sciences (Germany), and has an honorary degree from Uzhhorod National University (Ukraine).

His main areas of research encompass lattice dynamics, ferroelectrics, structural phase transformations, dipole glasses, relaxors, dielectric spectroscopy, multiferroics, composites, and electron paramagnetic resonance. He has published 600 research articles and presented over 1300 papers at international conferences.

Jūras Banys has been awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas, St Christopher's statuette, and the Medal of the Baltic Academies of Sciences. He is also a recipient of the Lithuanian Science Prize, the Povilas Brazdžiūnas Prize of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and other awards.

Prof. David Harel,
President of the Israeli
Academy of Sciences
and Humanities



David Harel is the President of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics at The Weizmann Institute of Science.

Harel is a fellow of the ACM, the IEEE, the AAAS, and the EATCS, and a member of several international academies, including the US National Academy of Engineering, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the US National Academy of Sciences, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

His areas of interest include software and systems engineering, visual languages, modeling and analysis of biological systems and of art and music creation, odour reproduction and analysis, analysis of prosody. (In the past, also computability and complexity theory, logics of programs, theory of database queries, automata theory, layout of diagrams, computer science education).

He has received many awards, including the ACM Karlstrom Outstanding Educator Award, the Israel Prize, the ACM Software System Award, the EMET Prize, the IEEE Harlan Mills Award, and six honorary degrees, in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Israel.

**Hadas Wittenberg
Silverstein,**
HE Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
of the State of Israel
to the Republic of Lithuania



Before becoming the Israeli Ambassador to Lithuania in 2022, **Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein** headed the Cadet Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. She served as Deputy Ambassador to Austria (2015–2019) and Deputy Consul General of Israel in Toronto, Canada (2010–2013). Before that, she served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Belgrade, Serbia (2004–2007) and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Israeli Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica (2008–2010).

Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein joined the Israeli foreign service in 2002. At the headquarters of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, she held positions in the Division of Asia and the Pacific, the Department for Public Affairs, the Department for Central Europe, and the Division of International Organisations.

Before embarking on a diplomatic career, she worked as a social worker at a family visit centre in Jerusalem. Previously, she worked as a research assistant at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Hadas Wittenberg Silverstein graduated with honours from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and holds a master's degree in social work from the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

For three years (1993–1996), she served in the Israeli Defence Forces as a military medic and later as an officer in the Golan Heights.

Prof. Benjamin Brown, Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Benjamin Brown is a professor of the Department of Jewish Thought of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His focus is Orthodox Judaism, which he studies in a variety of aspects: Jewish Law (*Halakhah*), Hasidism, Musar Movement and Haredi ideology (*Hashkafah*). Among his books are ‘The Hazon Ish: Halakhist, Believer, and Leader of the Haredi Revolution’ (Magnes, 2011; Hebrew); ‘Lithuanian Musar Movement: Personalities and Ideas’ (Modan, 2014; Hebrew); “‘Like a Ship on a Stormy Sea’: The Story of Karlin Hasidism’ (Shazar Center, 2018; Hebrew). He is one of the co-authors of *Hasidism: A New History* (Princeton University Press, 2018). Some of his recent books analyse Israel’s Haredi Community and its current developments: ‘The Haredim: A Guide to Their Beliefs and Sectors’ (Am Oved and Israel Democracy Institute, 2017; Hebrew); and ‘A Society in Motion: Structures and Processes in Ultra-Orthodox Judaism’ (Israel Democracy Institute, 2021; Hebrew).

The Vilna Gaon’s Theopolitical Legac

Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, the Vilna Gaon (1720–1797), was not a systematic thinker, certainly not in political philosophy. He never developed a political theology and was probably unfamiliar with modern political thought. However, in several places throughout his writings, he addresses some of this discipline’s fundamental questions in ways that may echo modern concepts. The Vilna Gaon advocates a government based on public consent, as in the social contract theory. Like Montesquieu, who distinguished between regimes founded on ‘love of the laws and of our country’, on moderation, on honour, or on fear, the Vilna Gaon delineates regimes founded on honour, on fear, or on peace; however, he adds that no regime can be founded on peace until the days of the Messiah. Further, he also notes the need for distinct branches of government, enumerating four: legislative, executive, judicial, and enforcement. He maintains that these branches should be administered by Torah scholars. Nonetheless, he occasionally hints at a utopian, semi-anarchistic ideal in which God rules over all mankind and no man governs another. Among nineteenth-century Lithuanian Jewry, where the Vilna Gaon was a towering figure, a number of thinkers adopted similar political ideas and developed them in different directions.

Prof. Yadin Dudai,
Israel Academy of Sciences
and Humanities



Yadin Dudai is the Chair of the Sciences Division of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He is Professor of Neurobiology (emeritus) at the Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, and the Willner Family Global Distinguished Professor of Neural Science at New York University. He received his B.Sc. (with honours) in the Life Sciences, with supplements in History, from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and his Ph.D. in Biophysics from the Weizmann Institute of Science. As a research fellow at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, he was among the pioneers of the field of neurogenetics of memory. Over the years, he has contributed to the understanding of brain and behavioural mechanisms of learning and memory, with a focus on encoding, consolidation and modification of long-term and remote memory of naturalistic events in both animal models and in humans. In recent years, he has extended his research to the investigation of the mechanisms of memory in human groups and cultures. Prof. Dudai has served as dean of the Faculty of Biology and Chair of the Department of Neurobiology and director of the Brain Research Center at the Weizmann Institute, and scientific director of the Israeli Center of Research Excellence in the Cognitive Sciences. He also served as a member of the National Committee for Planning and Budgeting of the Israeli Universities (VATAT) and in other key national and international academic positions.

Prof. Dudai has received numerous academic honours, including the IPSEN Prize (2013) for achievements in memory research.

Prof. Israel Bartal, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

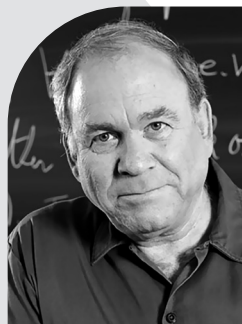


Israel Bartal is Professor Emeritus of Jewish history and the former dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2006–2010). He served as the chair of the Historical Society of Israel (2007–2015). Since 2016 he is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences. Professor Bartal taught at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, McGill, University of Pennsylvania, and Rutgers, as well as at Moscow State University and the CEU in Budapest. Prof. Bartal is a veteran student of Eastern European *Pinkassim*. In 1990, he published a second revised edition of Israel Halpern's *Pinkas Va'ad Arba Aratsot*. In 2010, in collaboration with Prof. Gershon Hundert and Prof. Adam Teller, he initiated the Pinkassim Project. He is the author of *The Jews of Eastern Europe. 1772–1881* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 2006, also published in Hebrew, Russian, and German); *Tangled Roots. The Emergence of Israeli Culture* (Brown Judaic Studies, 2020).

Each Generation and its Scholars: The Changing Faces of the 'Historian's Gaon'

The scholarly creation and intellectual leadership of eighteenth-century Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720–1797, known as the 'Prodigy of Vilnius') has played a major role in shaping the historical writing on Eastern European Jewish society. Several generations of writers, from early *maskilim* and conservative Talmudic scholars up to radical socialists and modern religious Zionists have presented the man and his teaching in a variety of historical narratives, from quasi-hagiographic depictions of the exemplar pre-modern rabbinic authority on the one hand, to a forerunner of Jewish Enlightenment on the other. This paper offers a 2023 updated review of two centuries of changing historical narratives in their different contexts and calls for a closer look at the Gaon in his real time and place, that is, in eighteenth-century Vilnius.

Prof. Alex Lubotzky,
Weizmann Institute,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem



Alex Lubotzky is a professor of mathematics at the Weizmann Institute and Maurice and Clara Weil Professor of Mathematics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

He is a mathematician doing research mainly in group theory and its connections with number theory, geometry, combinatorics, and computer science. He has published over 160 papers, one textbook, three research books (two of which received the Ferran Sunyer i Balaguer Prize – an international prize for research books). He is a member of three academies of sciences (Israel, USA, and Hungary). Prof. Lubotzky has received a number of awards: the Erdos Prize (1990), the Rothschild Prize (2002), the Israel Prize (2018); he holds an honorary degree from the University of Chicago (2006). He has received ERC advanced grants three times (2009–2014, 2015–2020, 2021–2026). The professor has served on various Israeli and international committees, was a member of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) (1996–1999), and the president of the Israeli Mathematical Union (2019–2020).

The Mathematics of the Vilna Gaon

A mathematical book, named *איל משולש* (*Ayil Meshulash*; The Triangle) was published based on the Vilna Gaon's notes, posthumously. We will describe the book and will try to learn about his knowledge and attitude toward mathematics and astronomy.

Prof. Jurgita Verbickienė, Vilnius University



Photo: Justinas Auškelis

Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė is a professor at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University and the head of the Centre for Studies of the History and Culture of East European Jews at the same university. Her scientific interests cover the history of Jews in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, comparative history of non-Christian communities, socio-economic history, historical demography, and representation of Jewish culture and heritage in contemporary Lithuania. Her recent publication in co-editing with Darius Staliūnas and Vidas Sirutavičius is *The History of Jews in Lithuania. From the Middle Ages to the 1990s* (Brill 2020).

The Space of Intellectual Life: Jewish Socio-Topography of Vilnius in the Second Half the Eighteenth-Century

The Vilna Gaon was an outstanding figure in the Jewish milieu of Vilnius. In assessing his merits, it is often emphasised that he lived and thought in an environment that created conditions for it and appreciated his genius, but questions are rarely asked as to how exactly he lived and what that environment was like. The presentation is dedicated to the socio-cultural and socio-topographical analysis of the residents of the Jewish quarter of Vilnius and Vilna Gaon's neighbours during his Vilnius period. The key source of the research presented is the 1765 and 1784 Jewish censuses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Prof. Marcin Wodziński,
University of Wrocław



Photo: Miłosz Poloch

Marcin Wodziński, member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Academia Europaea, works at the University of Wrocław, Poland, where he runs the Tadeusz Taube Department of Jewish Studies and is a professor of Jewish history and literature. His research focuses on the Hebrew epigraphy, Jewish material culture, and the social and religious history of East European Jews in modern times, especially the Haskalah and Hasidism. Of his publications, he is most proud of *Historical Atlas of Hasidism* (Princeton, 2018) and *Hasidism: Key Questions* (Oxford, 2018).

**Two Enlightenments:
The Case of Josef Rosensohn of Vilna**

Josef Rosensohn (c. 1774–1849) was a Vilna-based rabbi, medical doctor, and a maskil (follower of the Jewish Enlightenment). He was also the author of the oldest maskilic treatise on Hasidism written late in 1804 or in 1805, so far unknown to the scholars. As I will demonstrate, the treatise is a critically important source for the history of Haskalah and Hasidism, and especially for the history of Lithuanian Jewish orthodoxy, Jewish-Christian relations, and more. Not only it provides a number of unknown or corrective information, but, most importantly, it sheds entirely new light on the emergence of the misnagdic circle in Vilna, relations between the Vilna Gaon and the Jewish community, and the early anti-Hasidic conflicts in Lithuania.

Dr Jon Seligman, Israel Antiquities Authority



Jon Seligman is a senior research archaeologist at the Israel Antiquities Authority. His previous positions include director of the Excavations, Surveys, and Research Department and the Jerusalem regional archaeologist. Dr Seligman studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University College London, receiving his doctorate from Haifa University on the subject of 'Rural Hinterland of Jerusalem during the Byzantine Period'. Jon Seligman has directed some thirty excavations in Jerusalem, Bet Shean, the Carmel Mountains, and Yavne and has published widely, including three books, and numerous chapters and articles in refereed books, journals, and other publications. Since 2016, he has directed the excavation of the Great Synagogue of Vilna. His research interests include ancient agriculture, Byzantine studies, Jerusalem and Jewish built heritage.

Photo: Adam Jones / [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)

Excavating the Other Cathedral of Vilnius: The Great Synagogue of Vilna

Over the past years, excavations have been conducted at the site of the Great Synagogue of Vilna. Though only a small fraction of the historic synagogues and other Jewish communal buildings of Lithuania survived the Holocaust, they are an essential and integral part of the cultural heritage of Lithuania. None was more consequential than the magnificent Great Synagogue of Vilna, the oldest and most significant monument of Litvak Jewry. As the Jews of Vilnius constituted such a significant proportion of the city's population, this monument should be viewed culturally as one of the cathedrals of Vilnius. The baroque synagogue, built on remains of an earlier wooden synagogue, was constructed in the seventeenth century and became the heart of one of Europe's most important Jewish communities. Standing at the centre of a communal courtyard (*Shulhoyf*), together with eleven smaller synagogues, a bathhouse, kosher butcheries, a library and community offices, the Great Synagogue would go through a series of changes until its tragic ransacking and demolition under the Nazi and Soviet regimes. The lecture will concentrate on the finds of the excavation, with emphasis on the bathhouse, the *miqva'ot* (ritual baths), the synagogue and the dedicatory inscription of the Bimah.

Prof. David E. Fishman, Jewish Theological Seminary



David E. Fishman is professor of history at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. His research deals with East European Jewry in modern times. Among his books, mention should be made of *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* and *The Book Smugglers* (which also appeared in Lithuanian as *Knygų gelbėtojai Vilniaus gėte*, 2019). D. E. Fishman is director of the Jewish Archival Survey in Ukraine, and co-editor of its recent guide *Jewish Documentary Sources in Lviv Archives* (Wrocław University Press, 2023). He is a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Nationalism, Socialism and the Modernization of the Jews of Vilnius

In the late nineteenth century, the Jewish community of Vilnius developed a peculiar cultural and political profile. In the cultural sphere, the enduring strength of Yiddish language was evident, not only among the working class, but also among the petit bourgeois, middle-class, and intelligentsia. In the political sphere, the synthesis of Jewish nationalism and socialism became the predominant trend, in the forms of Bundism, socialist Zionism, and smaller off-shoot movements. Compared to the neighbouring communities of Kaunas and Minsk, linguistic Russification and Jewish participation in the general Russian socialist movement were modest, as was the allure of general 'Herzlian' Zionism, without the admixture of liberal and socialist ideas.

Prof. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Vilnius University



Photo: Orinta Gerikaitė

Mindaugas Kvietkauskas is a literary scholar and translator, dean of the Faculty of Philology at Vilnius University. In 2019–2020, Kvietkauskas served as Lithuania's Minister of Culture. His main areas of research are multinethnic literary modernism and urban culture in Lithuania and East-Central Europe. He is the author of a monograph on multilingual literary modernism in Vilnius (2007, Polish translation 2013); co-author of a study on the Lithuanian contexts of Czesław Miłosz (2011, Polish translation 2014), and the editor of a collection of research articles *Transitions of Lithuanian Postmodernism. Lithuanian Literature in the Post-Soviet Period* (Amsterdam, New York, 2011). Prof. Kvietkauskas has translated several books from Yiddish and Polish, including works by famous poets Czesław Miłosz, Abraham Sutzkever, and Moyshe Kulbak. He has researched and translated Holocaust diaries written by Lithuanian Jewish children – *Vilniaus geto dienoraštis* (Vilnius Ghetto Diary) by Yitskhok Rudashevski and *The Unlocked Diary* by Matilda Olkin. He also researched the work of the Vilnius Jewish avant-garde photographer Moyshe Vorobeichic-Mo'Ver.

The Yiddish Avant-garde Group *Yung Vilne* and Vilnius University: Separate or Interconnected Worlds?

In interwar Vilnius, the main Polish cultural and literary activities were concentrated at Vilnius University and its associated intellectual circles. In the 1930s, the elderly cultural generation of the early Polish Modernism (Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Marian Zdziechowski, Witold Hulewicz, and others) were challenged by the left-wing avant-garde and the bohemian youth of Vilnius University, which formed the famous literary group *Żagary* (1930–1940). The formation and activities of *Yung Vilne* (1929–1940), the most prominent Yiddish literary and artistic avant-garde group in interwar Vilnius, paralleled these processes, and there were many similarities in the work of the authors of both circles who belonged to the same generation (social criticism, avant-garde expression, the significance of the Vilnius identity, catastrophism). However, only fragmentary facts about contacts between the Yiddish and Polish avant-garde milieus are known (for example, joint literary readings 'The Poetry of Revolt' at Vilnius University in 1931 or participation of the poet Avrom Sutzkever in the lectures of the formalist literary theorist, Prof. Manfred Kridl, very influential for the Polish avant-garde). The memoirs and previous research highlight the isolation that existed between

the Polish and Jewish literary worlds in Vilnius. This distancing was particularly due to the rise of anti-Semitism at Vilnius University in the 1930s. The aim of this paper is to reconsider the thesis of the mutual isolation between *Yung Vilne* and the Polish literary and intellectual life centred around Vilnius University, to bring together and analyse facts and texts that allow to examine the other side of this situation – the attempts at cultural exchange and mediation in a multilingual Central European city.

Saulė Valiūnaitė, Vilnius University



Saulė Valiūnaitė is a PhD student at the Faculty of History at Vilnius University. She is currently working on her thesis '*Yidishistkes Preserving Yidishkayt. Women's Input into Forming and Preserving the Secular Jewish Identity in Interwar Vilnius*'. For the past decade, Valiūnaitė has been working in the field of Lithuanian Jewish history and culture. Among her works is the book *Viltis stipresnė už gyvybę. Vilniaus geto dienoraštis* (Hope Is Stronger Than Life: Vilna Ghetto Diary) by Zelig Kalmanovich, which she co-edited with Stanislovas Stasiulis. Her latest project, the translation of Vilna Ghetto memoirs and Nurnberg diary notes by Avrom Sutzkever (ed. Justin D. Cammy), will be published in the upcoming year.

Unknown Soldiers? Women in the Politics of Doikayt in Interwar Vilnius

Writing about her women comrades, Anna Rozental, one of the leaders of the Bund, stressed women's devotion to the activities of the illegal revolutionary workers' movement in the Russian Empire and concluded: 'Who remembers them? These are the unknown soldiers whose names history did not even register'.

In interwar Vilnius, women already had opportunities to participate in communal and, among others, legal activities of the Bund and the Folkist political parties, which supported the concept of *doikayt* (Yid. 'hereness'). However, in analysing the case of Vilnius, historiography is still dominated by the political activities of men, whereas women's input into the dissemination of the diasporist ideas remains comprehensively unresearched. The paper aims to reconstruct women's activities in the Bund and the Folkist party and to answer the questions of how women contributed to the dissemination of the ideas of this concept: were their activities still limited to the role of 'unknown soldiers', that is, did they still primarily focus on the educational work, or did they contribute to the formation of the policies of the party as well.

Dr Lara Lempertienė,
Martynas Mažvydas
National Library of Lithuania



Photo: Milla Sholochova

Lara Lempert (Lempertienė) is the head of the Judaica Research Centre at the Documentary Heritage Department in the National Library of Lithuania and the curator of its Judaica collection. Her fields of expertise are Jewish classical texts and the cultural history of the European and Lithuanian Jewry. She is the author of numerous articles and editor of several books, curator of exhibitions, participant, and organiser of Lithuanian and international cultural and academic events. Dr Lempertienė's activities have been recognised with such awards and state decorations as 'For the Memorialisation of the Jewish Cultural Heritage and Its Actualisation for the Future Generations' by the Jewish Community of Lithuania and the Prime Minister of Lithuania (2015), the honorary badge 'Star of Lithuanian Diplomacy' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021), and the medal of the Order 'For Merits to Lithuania' (2023).

**On Vilna with Love:
Zalman Shneur and Hermann Struk**

In 1923, the poem *Vilne* (Vilnius) by the famous poet Zalman Shneur was published in Berlin as a book with etchings by the no less celebrated artist Hermann Struck. The paper will present the history of that publishing project inspired by both authors' love for Vilnius and nostalgic sentiments towards it, as well as analyse the image of Vilnius created by them.

Prof. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė,
Vilnius Academy of Arts,
Lithuanian Culture
Research Institute



Photo: Dovilė Dagienė

Giedrė Jankevičiūtė is an art historian and exhibition curator, a leading researcher at the Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research, and a professor at Vilnius Academy of Arts. Her recent research focuses on Lithuanian art and artistic life during the Second World War (1939–1945). She plans to summarise the results of this research in a monograph, and in the meantime, she has been publishing the results of this research in articles in the academic and cultural press, presenting them in lectures in Lithuania and abroad, in exhibitions, curated both by her and other curators, and in catalogues, including ‘A Difficult Age. Vilnius 1939–1949’ (2020), ‘Women Artists in Interwar Vilnius: Between Expectations and Possibilities’ (2022), ‘Vilnius, Wilno, Vilne 1918–1948: One City – Many Stories’ (2023), among others.

Art of Jewish Women Artists in Interwar Vilna

The presentation regards the work of Jewish women artists in Vilnius between the wars. This topic has not been systematically studied so far, although the current state of research already allows us to talk about the work of Jewish women artists as a distinct phenomenon, which deserves separate attention, adds to our understanding of Jewish culture and social life in Vilnius and of the state of the city’s art field in general. Women’s names appear in the sources of Jewish artistic life of Vilnius already in the early 1920s, and they become more numerous in the 1930s. Jewish women artists cross the borders of the Jewish community in 1930s and become involved in the city’s general art life. In this paper, I discuss these changes and look for their causes, linking the proliferation of women artists to modernisation and the growing trend towards emancipation, which affected the lifestyle of the Jewish community of Vilnius and the position of women in society in general. At the end of the presentation, I touch upon an interesting question about the integration of the Jewish art in Vilnius, including women’s art, into the Lithuanian national cultural heritage after the autumn of 1939.

Prof. David G. Roskies,
Jewish Theological Seminary



David G. Roskies is Sol and Evelyn Henkind Chair emeritus in Yiddish Literature and Culture and professor emeritus of Jewish literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

His research interests focus on Yiddish, the Holocaust, and comparative Jewish literature. D. G. Roskies is the author of *Yiddishlands: A Memoir* (2008), *Against the Apocalypse* (1984), *A Bridge of Longing* (1995), *The Literature of Destruction* (1989), and *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (2013), among others.

A Tale of Two Cities: Growing Up in Vilne de-Kánade

The lecture reflects my personal perspective on how *klal-tuers* (communal leaders), pedagogues, and poets transplanted the languages, spirit, and substance of Jewish Vilna to Montreal, the economic and multicultural hub of French Canada, after the Holocaust.

Prof. Avner Holtzman, Tel Aviv University



Avner Holtzman is a professor of Hebrew literature in Tel-Aviv University. He is the incumbent of the Jacob and Shoshana Schreiber Chair for Contemporary Jewish Culture. Between 2000 and 2004, he was head of the Katz Research Institute in Tel-Aviv University. Between 1987–2019, he was director of M. Y. Berdichevsky Archive in Holon. He is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and a member of the Academy of the Hebrew Language.

Prof. Holtzman has authored 16 books on various aspects of modern Hebrew literature and edited some 60 other scholarly books and editions of Hebrew classics, among them comprehensive critical editions of the writings of H. N. Bialik and M. Y. Berdichevsky, Yitzhak Orpaz and Hanoch Bartov. He has also edited the Hebrew Literature section of *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*.

Photo: Sasson Tiram Photography

Vilnius, a Centre of Hebrew Enlightenment

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian Empire replaced Galicia as the centre of Hebrew Enlightenment activity. Within a short period of time, a system of new literary genres was born and established in Vilnius and its surroundings. Avraham Mapu wrote the first Hebrew novel, *The Love of Zion* (1853). Mordechai Aharon Guenzburg authored the first modern Hebrew autobiography, *Aviezer* (1864). Yehuda Leib Gordon composed short stories and satirical poems on contemporary and historical topics, and at the same time developed and perfected the genre of the journalistic feuilleton. Avraham Dov Lebensohn and his son Micah Yosef developed, each in his own way, Hebrew lyric poetry. Avraham Yaakov Paperna founded Hebrew literary criticism. The *Hakarmel* weekly (1860), edited by Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, was part of the Hebrew press revolution that branched out in Eastern Europe. Kalman Schulman devoted himself primarily to translating and popularising history, geography, and ethnography, both general and Jewish, as well as fictional prose. All of these laid a solid foundation for the growth of modern Hebrew literature.

Prof. Tsvia Walden,
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev



Photo: Lidia Bagnara

Tsvia Walden, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, retired. Main research interest is psycholinguistics, specifically language acquisition. I have been studying the parallel phenomenon between the acquisition of Hebrew and its renewal as a mother tongue.

For years I devoted most of my time to updating kindergarten teachers and teachers about advanced research in this domain. Hence most of my publications are in Hebrew; I took part in developing software and creating TV programmes about the words of the Hebrew language and translated books for children. My relevant publication as far as the coming meeting in Vilnius is concerned is 'From Kindergarten, Not from Birth. The Contribution of the Hebrew Kindergarten and Its Teachers to the Renewal of Hebrew as a Mother Tongue, 1898–1946', with Zipora Shehory-Rubin (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2018, Hebrew).

A recipient of the Allerhand Award of the Hebrew Language Academy, Jerusalem (1997); an honorary doctorate of the Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem (2010).

**From Kalman Schulman in Vilnius to Hebrew Speaking Children
in Israel: Laying the Foundations of Modern Hebrew Culture**

My research has been focusing on the extraordinary phenomenon – a second life of a language that renewed its being a mother tongue after 2000 years. Our last testimony of Hebrew being spoken at home is dated to the second century. Ever since, there has not been even one single native speaker, not one child who would be greeted good morning in Hebrew, no Hebrew lullaby sung to a beloved child. Linguists are divided as to whether we should talk about the revival, the renewal, or even the emergence of contemporary modern Hebrew. Some argue it was a dead language, others prove it has never stopped living, though its itinerary was unusual. But there is a general agreement that against all odds it has evolved into a second life as a mother tongue.

Kalman Schulman, a Jewish writer who pioneered modern Hebrew literature, was born in Vilnius in 1819 and passed away in 1899, just a year after the first Hebrew-speaking kindergarten was founded in Rishon LeZion in Palestine. In my talk, I will discuss the contribution of Kalman Schulman's translation of Eugène Sue's novel *Les mystères de Paris* (The Mysteries of Paris), very popular among young adult readers, to the renewal of modern Hebrew as a mother tongue.

**Prof. Mordechai (Motti)
Zalkin,**
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev



Mordechai Zalkin is professor emeritus at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His research interest is the history of Lithuanian Jewry, to which he has devoted over 30 years of research. In 2022, President of Lithuania awarded 'The Cross of the Knight' of the Order 'For Merits to Lithuania' for his contribution to Lithuanian Jewish historical and cultural heritage.

**The Intellectual Heritage of Lithuanian Jewry:
Reflections and Thoughts**

The prevailing perception of the intellectual heritage of Lithuanian Jewry, both in the popular discourse and in the academic debate, begins, and many times even ends, with the question of the scholarly/cultural heritage of the Vilna Gaon. However, most of the supporters of this approach focus exclusively on the 'bequeather', that is, the Vilna Gaon and his scholarly world, but completely ignore the question of whether this can indeed be seen as a legacy, i.e., whether, and to what extent, his intellectual and religious views were accepted in the Ashkenazi Jewish society in general, and in the Lithuanian Jewish society in particular. In this context, it is necessary to mention another assumption, which was not proven in the research and which considers the Lithuanian yeshivas as a central element in the Gaon's legacy.

The focus on this approach prevented, to a large extent, the possibility of examining other and important aspects of the intellectual heritage of Lithuanian Jewry, such that their influence is still evident today. For example, the educational system of the Jewish Enlightenment in Eastern Europe, of which Vilna was one of the first and most important centres (and which, unfortunately, is not discussed at all in this conference) – not only elementary and secondary schools but also the extensive and extraordinary participation of thousands of Jewish young men and women in the higher education system.

In my lecture, based on over thirty years of research into the history of Lithuanian Jewry, I will propose a new model for examining the question of the intellectual heritage of Lithuanian Jewry in general, and of Vilnius Jewry in particular.

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