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2010 Jewish Lithuania Program Dates Coming Soon

## THE SLS JEWISH LITHUANIA PROGRAM

Directed by Professor Dovid Katz

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### About the Program

SLS is proud to introduce the option of a self-contained Jewish Lithuania Program within the 2009 Summer Literary Seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania. It is directed by Professor Dovid Katz of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, who will be the primary instructor and "cultural interpreter" in events featuring various unique and fascinating personalities from among the last generation of prewar Lithuanian Jews. Professor Katz will be joined by other SLS faculty members in addition to local writers, scholars and community leaders. For the provisional program of Jewish Lithuania's guest lecture series, visit the [Guest Presentations](#) page.

This is a first-time-ever, unique, in-depth program for English speaking folks who have a serious interest in the Jewish literature and heritage of the Lithuanian lands (a territory called *Lite* in Yiddish, *Lita* in modern Hebrew or English; it encompasses what is today Lithuania, Belarus, Latvia and more). The center of gravity of this literature was for hundreds of years the city called Vilna — *Vilne* in Yiddish, known as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" for its rich rabbinic, literary, and cultural heritage. In today's Vilnius, you will explore the scant traces of bygone generations and learn of an enormously complex and rich Jewish literature that was created over many centuries in three Jewish languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish. You will learn about these cultures "from inside" and come to see to what degree they constituted a separate civilization that thrived for centuries, developed continually by a peaceful minority.

The program is designed with English speakers in mind. Some of the most fascinating personalities you will meet do not speak English; simultaneous translation and cultural interpretation will be provided. They will include a Holocaust survivor who was part of the Hebrew culture movement (and Zionism) in prewar Wilno (as the city was known during the interwar period, when it was part of Poland); another who was an equally staunch devotee of the modern Yiddish movement (and socialism); and a third who was brought up in the strictly religious age-old traditions of a Jewish shtetl. These people are all Jewish Mohicans of a rapidly disappearing generation of prewar personalities. You will also meet several middle-generation writers for whom Jewish life is a source of inspiration and material.

The seminars will stress literature and culture, with discussions of works created in all three Jewish languages, and the various cultures of Lithuanian Jewry: classic rabbinic, Lithuanian Hasidic, Mussar; Hebrew-revivalist, Zionist; Yiddishist and socialist and "here-ist"; revolutionary movements; international heirs (real and claimed-to-be-real) to Lithuanian Jewish culture. There will be extensive discussion about the nature of the historical (and, the romanticized) shtetl in relation to the larger urban centers. There will also be frank discussions of today's painful Jewish issues, which include the Holocaust; efforts to deny, minimize and obfuscate the Holocaust (and most recently, to prosecute veterans of the anti-Nazi partisan movement); racism and antisemitism; preservation of cemeteries and historic sites; property restitution issues; and more (but the program will not include politicians or officials).

*As a matter of both principle and convenience, SLS's Jewish Lithuania program is held at the Jewish Community of Lithuania (JCL) building and its activities are coordinated with the community. The program's directors and lecturers are staunchly allied with the small and embattled remnant Jewish presence here, and there will be many opportunities during the program to meet with local Jewish people from a variety of walks of life and age groups. JL's seminar headquarters in the community building is in easy walking distance of both operating synagogues and all three branches of the Jewish Museum, and is a five minute walk from the center of town.*

#### NOTES FOR YIDDISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

SLS's Jewish Lithuania Program is conducted in English. Students interested in a credit-with-homework course in Yiddish language are invited to apply to the Vilnius Yiddish Institute's [summer program in Yiddish](#), which will be held from 26 July to 21 August. It is possible to enroll in both programs, with just a few sessions missed during the brief days of overlap. Let us know how we can help with arrangements.

HOWEVER, in the event of SLS Jewish Lithuania program participants with advanced knowledge of Yiddish, and/or those who wish to work on their written Yiddish, Professor Katz will be delighted to add sessions conducted in Yiddish, workshops on Yiddish stylistics, sessions for Yiddish writers, and a daily reading circle for a selected work from classic Lithuanian Yiddish literature. Such "Yiddish-in-Yiddish" activities, if they materialize, will not affect the base program which is entirely in English.

#### Costs

Program costs for the 2009 SLS Jewish Lithuania program are as follows:

The program fee for the two week program (19 July to 2 August) is USD \$1,111. The program fee covers full participation in the Jewish Lithuania program. PLEASE NOTE: Participants are encouraged to participate in as many of the activities as possible, and are free to pick and choose. There is, however, no possibility of "partial enrollment" and the full fee must be paid for registration in the program, no matter how much of it is attended. Seminar sessions are open exclusively to registered participants.

Please note that the program fee does not include airfare, airport fees, or accommodations. Participants will receive complimentary transportation from the airport upon arrival.

For more information on accommodation possibilities, visit the [Housing & Facilities](#) section of the site.

To view the application form, please press [here](#).

#### About the Director

##### Dovid Katz



[Dovid Katz](#), professor at Vilnius University, and research director at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, is a specialist on Yiddish linguistics, literature and stylistics, and [Lithuanian Jewish culture](#) and literature. He has been developing Yiddish cultural programs for three decades. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1956, he is the son of Lithuanian-born Yiddish and English poet [Menke Katz](#). He did his doctorate on the origins of the Yiddish language at the University of London, and founded the Yiddish program at Oxford, which he led for eighteen years. After a stint at Yale, he cofounded the Center for Stateless Cultures (1999) and the [Vilnius Yiddish Institute](#) (in 2001). He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Manger Award for Yiddish Literature and the John Marshall Prize in Comparative Philology.

His books include [Lithuanian Jewish Culture](#) (2004), [Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish](#) (2007), [Windows to a Lost Jewish Past: Vilna Book Stamps](#) (2008) and [Seven Kingdoms of the Litvaks](#) (2009). He has published dozens of papers in [Yiddish linguistics](#), and on [Yiddish stylistics](#).

He also writes short stories in Yiddish; [three collections](#) have appeared to date, and a fourth is ready for the press. An anthology of stories in English, selected, edited and translated by Dr. Barnett Zumoff of New York, is near completion. For several years in the 1990s, he edited the world's only [literary Yiddish monthly](#), and he continues to contribute [non-fiction and fiction](#) to the New York weekly *Algemeyner Zhurnal*.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, he has been leading expeditions to find, interview and support the last prewar Jews of Eastern Europe. One academic product is his [language and culture atlas](#), a work in progress. He has also completed a memoir, *Back to the Old Country* (vol. 1 of a projected series), which he is hoping to have published soon.

He is a passionate advocate for Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe. His 1999 op-ed on the poverty of the last survivors was quoted extensively in the Swiss banks settlement. He helped inspire the establishment of the LA based Survivor Mitzvah Project (SMP), and works closely with the Jewish Community of Lithuania (JCL) and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). He has sought to define and expose the new "Holocaust Obfuscation Movement," a topic he lectured on this academic year at the University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University, Rutgers, and University College London. He is about halfway through writing a book on the subject. In Yiddish studies, he is at work on the volume *Yiddish and Power* (Palgrave Macmillan). Dovid divides the year between Vilnius and his home in the mountains of North Wales.