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ווי איז די הויפטשטאָט פֿון „יִיִדישלאַנד“? WHERE IS THE CAPITAL OF YIDDISHLAND?

KALMAN WEISER | *Delivered in Yiddish.*

יִיִדישיסטן האָבן פֿאַרשטאַנען יִיִדיש ווי אַ וועלטשפּראַך און די יִיִדיש־וועלטלעכע קולטור ווי אַ וועלטקולטור וואָס איר צענטער ליגט אין מזרח־אײראָפּע. נאָר וווּ איז די הויפטשטאָט פֿון „יִיִדישלאַנד“? נאָך דער ערשטער וועלט־מלחמה זענען אַרויסגעטראָטן ווי די פֿירנדיקע קאַנדידאַטן אין פֿאַרמעסט די ליטווישע ווילנע – דער זיצאַרט פֿונעם יוואָ – און די פּוילישע וואַרשע – די מעטראָפּאָליע פֿון דער מאָדערנער יִיִדישער פרעסע, ליטעראַטור און טעאַטער. יעדע שטאָט האָט געהאַט אירע „חסידים“ און „מתנגדים“ וואָס האָבן געלויבט מעלות און געפּסלט חסרונות אין צענדליקער אַרטיקלען אין דער יִיִדישער פרעסע. זייערע אָפּשאַצונגען שפּיגלען אָפּ לאַקאַלן פּאַטריאַטיזם, פּערזענלעכע רײַבונגען און אידעאָלאָגישע קאַנפּליקטן. נאָר וואָס לאַזט אונדז הערן די קאַנקורענץ איבער דער מערכה פֿון יִיִדיש בכלל און וועגן יִיִדישיסטישע האַפֿענונגען און שרעקן פֿאַר דער צוקונפֿט פֿון יִיִדיש?

Yiddishists understood Yiddish as a global language and its secular culture as a global culture whose centre lay in eastern Europe. But where was the capital the “Yiddishland”? Following the First World War, litvish Vilna—home of YIVO—and poylish Warsaw—the metropolis of the modern Yiddish press, literature, and theatre—emerged as the leading candidates in the competition. Each city had its admirers and detractors who praised its virtues or condemned its vices in dozens of articles in the international Yiddish press. Their evaluations reflect local patriotism, personal frictions and ideological conflicts. But what does the competition teach us about the state of Yiddish in general and about Yiddishist hopes and fears for the future of the language?

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