Gershon David Hundert

New History, Refined Memory

The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe

Since the end of the Cold War, interest in the history and culture of East European Jews has grown enormously. Access to archives has opened up new research opportunities. The YIVO Institute of Jewish Research has used them. Together with over 400 scholars, YIVO has produced the first encyclopaedia of East European Jewry. The results are significant. The encyclopaedia lays bare all the layers and diversity of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Work on the encyclopaedia has also shown where the gaps in our knowledge of East European Jewry remain. Furthermore, this project is by implication a compendium of Jewish Studies in the world.

Most Jews are descended from East European ancestors. From the 18th century until the Holocaust, the majority of the world's Jews lived in Eastern Europe. Those communities served as the demographic reservoir of the Jewish people, when emigration from Eastern Europe began to form the nucleus of Jewish communities from the United States to Australia, from Canada to South Africa, from Argentina to Israel. At the start of the 21st century, many Jews are seeking to learn more about their origins and their ancestors' experience, but until most recently, there was no comprehensive, reliable resource that could act as a port of entry to the history and culture of East European Jewry.

But history has intervened. The events of 1989 led to the opening of many archives. The new states of Eastern Europe made it possible to conduct research on a large number of previously forbidden topics. With the re-definition of national histories, there emerged a growing interest to allow a place for the "others" – including the Jews. This trend gave scholars a unique opportunity to contribute in a fundamental way to the shaping of both history and memory.

For the field of Jewish Studies, the aforementioned developments opened up the possibility of creating the first comprehensive, authoritative reference work on East European Jewry: *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, which, after seven years of planning and preparation, appeared in two volumes in May 2008.[1] Some 2,500 pages in length, the encyclopaedia contains 1,800 entries, over 1,100 illustrations (including 57 colour plates), and 55 maps, which were specially prepared for this project by the Cartographic Laboratory of the University of Toronto.

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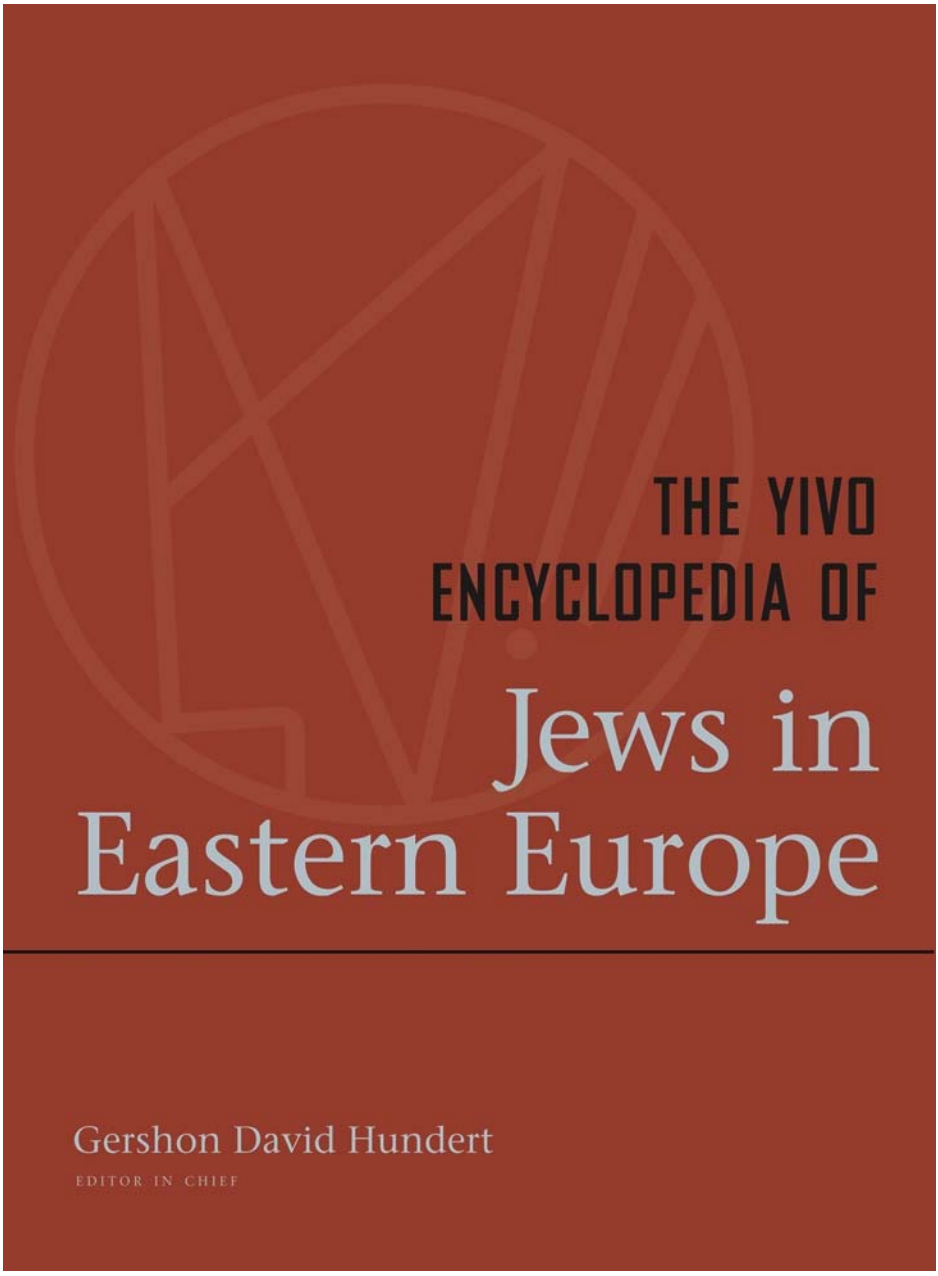
[1] Gershon David Hundert, ed., *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven and London 2008).


THE YIVO
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
Jews in
Eastern Europe
Gershon David Hundert
EDITOR IN CHIEF

The encyclopaedia's sponsor, YIVO – the acronym for *Yidisher visenshaftlikher institut* – was founded in Vilnius (Vil'na) in 1925 with the aim of becoming the central institution for Yiddish-language research on the history and culture of East European Jews and their emigrant communities. Located in New York City since 1940, the YIVO Institute of Jewish Studies is today the world's pre-eminent resource centre for East European Jewish Studies; Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; and the American Jewish immigrant experience. The YIVO Library and Archives house the world's most important collections of materials related to East European Jews. These treasures and the institution's primary concern with Eastern Europe made YIVO the perfect home for the encyclopaedia.

Goals

The basic goal of the encyclopaedia is to impart and reflect East European Jewish civilisation as a whole. To this end, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* seeks to represent Jewish life in *all* its variety and complexity: religious and secular; male and female; urban and rural; Hasidic and Misnagdic; Yiddishist and Hebraist; Zionist and assimilationist; Russian and Polish; Romanian and Ukrainian; *Litvak* and *Galitsianer*; even Karaite and Rabbinite. The fundamental test for inclusion was historical and cultural significance. The *YIVO Encyclopedia* is intended to be an ecumenical work: nondenominational, nonideological, and nonconfessional. Nothing Jewish is considered foreign.

This is a single reference work where one can find, for example, biographical entries on Ludwik Fleck, a pioneer in the sociology of science who anticipated and substantially influenced the work of Thomas Kuhn; Marcel Iancu, an avant-garde artist and illustrator of the first volume of Dada; Rózsika Schwimmer, the first female ambassador ever; Moshe Isserles, a 16th-century rabbi and codifier of Jewish law; Lev Shestov, the existentialist religious philosopher; and Sholem Aleichem, probably the most famous Yiddish writer.

One can consider this encyclopaedia a monumental work of translation. This is meant literally – the language of East European Jewish culture was chiefly Yiddish, along with Hebrew and other local languages – but also metaphorically – most of our readers live in quite different circumstances than their ancestors. Moreover, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* highlights not only high cultural achievements in their various forms but also the everyday life of ordinary Jews as manifested in their clothing, books, festivals and holidays, and certain customs.

In the preface to the encyclopaedia, I use the phrase "dispassionate filiopietism", which – even if it has too many syllables – best expresses the motivation behind this project. The *YIVO Encyclopaedia* is filiopietistic and dispassionate precisely because it seeks to present East European Jewish life in detail – as soberly, comprehensively, and accurately as possible. The goal is not to celebrate or eulogize, but to recover and represent on the basis of the most up-to-date and objective scholarly research available. The piety, our obligation to our ancestors, is therefore expressed in our determination to present East European Jewish civilisation without prejudice and nostalgia but with as much thoroughness and objectivity as possible.

As editor in chief, it was especially important to me to avoid the kitsch sometimes associated with East European Jewish culture. Tacky, overly sentimental images and

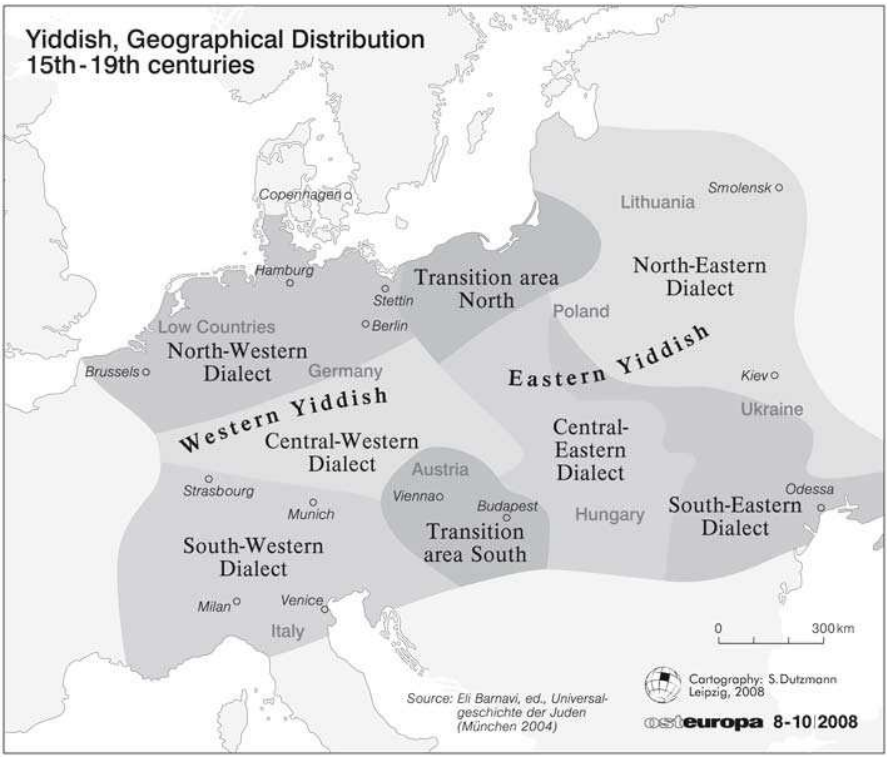
melodies have distorted and cheapened the historical memory of an extraordinarily rich and diverse culture. Consequently, I attached great significance to the encyclopaedia's physical appearance and design. Guided by leading U.S. designer Joan Greenfield, Yale University Press has succeeded in making a physically beautiful book that presents the contents with clarity and dignity and contributes to our effort to re-frame and re-imagine the history and memory of East European Jewry. The encyclopaedia is to counter the widely shared notion that this Jewry was culturally homogenous, poor, pious, and unmannered.

Contributions were provided by 451 authors from 19 countries, all of whom rank among the foremost experts in the various branches of East European Jewish Studies. The encyclopaedia will allow scholars – especially those who do not normally publish in English – to reach a much broader audience than the readership of specialized academic publications. This project – perhaps because it is unprecedented – generated a great deal of excitement in the field, which may explain why it was possible to enlist virtually every major scholar to write about his or her areas of expertise. To choose just a few examples: Jan Gross wrote on the Jedwabne massacre; Zvi Gitelman, on Communism; Jay Harris, on Talmud study; Michael Silber, on Orthodoxy; Michael Meyer, on religious Reform; Ruth Wisse, on Y.L. Peretz; Chava Weissler, on *tkhines* (Yiddish prayers associated with women); Todd Endelman, on assimilation; Chava Turniansky, on Yiddish literature before 1800; James Young, on monuments and memorials; James Hoberman, on cinema; Dan Miron, on Sholem Aleichem; and Jonathan Frankel, on parties and ideologies. The high standing of these and the hundreds of other scholars who contributed to the *YIVO Encyclopedia* lends the project prestige and authority.

Each article was reviewed by the editor of the relevant topical section, with some articles being submitted to others for additional review. Every article is signed and includes suggestions for further reading, with preference being given to books and articles in English. About half of the submissions had to be translated into English from one of ten different languages.

Issues

The assumption implicit in our project is the distinctiveness of the East European Jewish experience. The key elements of this distinctiveness are numbers and language as well as the differences in the political and economic development of Eastern Europe compared with that of Central and Western Europe. By the 18th century, there were ten times more Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth than in the lands of the future German Empire. East European Jews spoke a dialect of Yiddish that was infused with thousands of Slavicisms and very difficult for speakers of Western Yiddish to understand. It is striking, for example, that the Hasidic movement never crossed this geographical-linguistic boundary. The historical and cultural path of East European Jews also followed a very different course than that of their neighbours to the west. The Jews of Eastern Europe tended to remain more attached to Jewish culture than the Jews of Western Europe, the best examples of this tendency being the Hassidic movement and the persistence of the Jewish languages in the Russian Empire despite the Jews' efforts to modernise.



Geographical limits

In designing the *YIVO Encyclopedia*, the editors first had to answer the question: Where is Eastern Europe? The answer, we concluded, was the region east of the German-speaking realm, north of the Balkans, and west of the Ural Mountains, that is to say, the borders of the region corresponding roughly to the present-day Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states and Finland, as well as that part of Russia west of the Ural Mountains. It is true that, in North American academic parlance at least, the very notion of "Eastern Europe" has fallen into disuse by scholars, who now tend to prefer terms such as East Central Europe or Central Europe and seldom use either to mean Russia. Nonetheless, the vague, general term Eastern Europe suits the purposes of the encyclopaedia, which for the most part addresses the eastern Ashkenazic experience. The original intent to treat the area where the eastern dialect of Yiddish was spoken had to be dropped. The western boundary of that region corresponds to no national borders. Moreover, the borders of the states concerned have shifted repeatedly in the course of history. Although the area defined by speakers of Eastern Yiddish would have been correct – almost pedantically so – we feared confusing readers by including only parts of several countries.

Using other, more general cultural criteria, we might have included some regions for specific historical periods alone. For example, for the period prior to the 19th century, Prague's Jewish community should be included as a part of the same cultural region of the Jews living farther east. However, one does not usually think of a figure such as

Franz Kafka as East European. He is nevertheless included here as somewhat of an anomalous consequence of the simplifying decision to include the Czech lands within our geographical boundaries. Treating some regions for some historical periods and not for others would have created more problems than it solved.

Chronological limits

The chronology of the encyclopaedia extends from the earliest signs of a Jewish presence in Eastern Europe to the end of the 20th century. The starting point varies from place to place, in some cases going back to Roman times. Generally, more attention is given to recent centuries than to Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

This was not an easy decision and resulted mainly from the project being limited to 2 million words. In discussions concerning the chronological limits, some maintained that the *terminus ad quem* ought to be 1939, because, it was argued, East European Jewish life in all its variety and complexity was wiped out during the Holocaust. It is indisputable that the Second World War represents a momentous historical divide. Nevertheless, because Jews continued to live in these regions during the second half of the 20th century, because their story has not been told in full, and because the downfall of Communism created a fundamentally new situation, the encyclopaedia runs to the year 2000.

Treatment of the Holocaust

The period of the Holocaust – or *khurbn* (Hebrew: annihilation, devastation) – presented a major challenge. While the Holocaust is appropriately represented in this work, it should be noted that there exists an enormous literature on this subject in English, including several reference works.[2] The Holocaust is treated mainly within the entries on countries and other geographical entities in order to integrate this period into the longer-term narrative. The *YIVO Encyclopedia* pays particular attention to the experience of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe and their responses to events at the time. There are several entries for certain ghettos and biographies for the most prominent chairmen of the Jewish councils and other important figures. Specific concentration camps are dealt with in the entries "Aktion Reinhard" and "Killing Centers". There is also an entry "Labor Camps." Other Holocaust-related entries include "Babi Yar", "The Black Book", "Honor Courts" (informal courts that tried Jews accused of collaboration with the Nazis after the war), and "yizker-bikher" (postwar memorial volumes published by survivors, usually one for each community). The main focus of the encyclopaedia, however, is on the life of the East European Jews and not their murder or their murderers. Consequently, there are no entries for individual killings centres, not even Auschwitz. This represents one of our guiding editorial principles. The Holocaust must not be allowed to define the East European Jewish experience. We must try to avoid seeing the centuries that preceded the Second World War through the prism of the *khurbn* and avoid depicting the history of those hundreds of years and millions of lives as leading inevitably to destruction.

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[2] The reference works include Walter Laqueur, Judith Tydor Baumel, eds., *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven 2001) and Israel Gutman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York 1990).

Criteria for inclusion

In discussions on the encyclopaedia's emphasis and criteria for inclusion, the editors agreed to dedicate articles exclusively to Jews. Persons such as Iosif Stalin, Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi, Adam Mickiewicz, and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk are mentioned in the appropriate contexts, and their names do appear in the index.

Even more important, the Jewish experience stands front and centre in this work. The "Jewish contribution" to political, artistic, literary, or ideological movements in the countries where Jews lived plays a much smaller role. The very notion of such contributions is fraught with difficulty and is often either patronizing or apologetic. In the past, they were frequently used to reinforce calls for Jewish civil rights and to respond to anti-Jewish allegations.[3] Nonetheless, the encyclopaedia does include two or three entries that might be considered an exception to this rule. Among them is the substantial article "Communism". Many of the questions surrounding the role of Jews in the Communist movement seemed so important that they outweighed the flipside of the coin – the role of Communism in Jewish life. Zvi Gitelman addresses not only the putative attractions of Communism to Jews, but also tries to express in numbers, wherever available, the proportion of Jews who could be counted as Communists and the proportion of Communists of Jewish origin. This matter continues to be a sensitive one in our own time.

We did not omit important figures whose behaviour could be called into question on ethical grounds. The test was prominence and importance, not righteousness. Therefore, there are biographical entries on Genrikh Iagoda, Stalin's commissar for internal affairs from 1934–1936, and similar figures in addition to a long entry entitled "Crime and Criminals".

Entire libraries could be filled with books and articles that attempt to define who is a "Jew". In this encyclopaedia, we used a broad definition that includes Jews who converted to other religions or who never identified themselves as Jews even though they were born Jews. In the case of converts, an attempt has been made to include the date and circumstances of conversion. People with remote Jewish ancestry, however, are not included. This category, it turns out, even includes Lenin. It also did not seem appropriate to included the famous Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, whose only connection to Jewry was his father, who was Jewish by birth. On the other hand, we did include orientalist Daniil Khvol'son, who, in explaining his conversion to Christianity, famously said: "I was convinced it was better to be a professor in Saint Petersburg than a *melamed* in Eyshishok."[4]

Generally speaking, our criterion was ontological: Those who were considered Jews by others and those who saw themselves as Jews were included.

The more vexing issue was what to do about individuals who were Jewish by birth but did not identify themselves as Jewish. The decision was made to include them for the following reasons: First, they may have excelled or accomplished their achievements

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[3] Jeremy Cohen, Richard I. Cohen, eds., *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea* (Oxford 2008).

[4] A *melamed* is a teacher in a Jewish religious school for children. Eyshishok is now Eišiškės, Lithuania. The quote is taken from Barry Rubin, *Assimilation and Its Discontents* (New York 1995), p. 159.

despite being Jewish in a society that was full of prejudices against Jews and placed obstacles in their way; second, their being Jewish by birth tied them to the Eastern European Jewish experience; third, their fame may have affected the Jewish community negatively or positively; fourth, they are famous, and readers expect to find them in this book. Including such individuals also provides an opportunity to explain to readers the attitudes of the people in question towards their Jewish heritage. If people were of particular importance in their fields of endeavour and were born Jews, they are included here. Obvious examples are some very prominent Soviet scientists, such as Lev Zil'ber or Iakov Zel'dovich, and important Hungarian bankers, such as Leo Goldberger or Ferenc Chorin.

It was easier to decide not to have entries on living persons. The editors were of the opinion that a life could not be represented properly in a reference work unless that life was over. Because this work attempts to cover history up to 2000, this principle led to some borderline cases. Therefore, there are some exceptions, for example, the entries on the Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever (born 1913) and the athlete Agnes Keleti (born 1921). When necessary, within the context of a certain entry, living persons are given the place they deserve.

Since the focus of this encyclopaedia is on people and events in Eastern Europe, the inclusion of people who had roots in Eastern Europe but made their mark outside the area would have been overwhelming. One of the guiding principles for inclusion was that a person had to have done something of significance in Eastern Europe. For this reason, there are no entries on many Jews who stood out in labour movement or the film industry in the United States or in the Zionist movement and the history of State of Israel. The editors were not inflexible on this. Decisions were made to include Perets Smolenskin, who edited the important Hebrew monthly *Hashakhar* in Vienna, and Joseph Roth, who wrote many of his stories about Galicia in Paris. These two figures, and a few others, are so closely linked to Eastern Europe that their inclusion seemed necessary. The articles on individuals who began to produce important work or make notable achievements in Eastern Europe before moving elsewhere generally focus on what they did before they left the region.

Language problems

Aspiring Jewish Studies scholars, who must study Hebrew, are nowadays taught modern Israeli Hebrew. Consequently, Modern Hebrew has become the language of scholarship in the field. Most East European Jews spoke Yiddish, however, and when they spoke Hebrew, they spoke it with an Ashkenazic pronunciation, which differs from that of contemporary Hebrew. It was important to the editors to avoid, or better to highlight, the drift to anachronism in transliteration that has resulted from this situation. Thus, in some instances, the actual Ashkenazic Hebrew-Yiddish version of a term has been preserved for pedagogic reasons. Two examples are the political movement *Agudas Yisroel* (not *Agudat Israel*) and the revolt in Ukraine in 1648–1649, which is identified here as *gzeyres takh vetat* (not *gezerot takh ve-tat*). This was done to remind the reader of the actual language and terminology of the time and place. Similarly, Yiddish-speaking Jews who wrote primarily in Yiddish are identified in that language. Rabbis who generally wrote in Hebrew are identified not in the Ashkenazic Hebrew version of their name

– as would be proper if we want to avoid anachronism – but in the Modern Hebrew version. By no means does this exhaust the list of problems encountered as a result of the multi-lingual character of this endeavour.

There is an article on the cultural meaning of the term "Litvak", which describes a Jew who sees things unemotionally and sceptically and speaks a specific Yiddish dialect. Polish readers may find this surprising, for in Polish historiography and memory the term "Litwak" is associated with Russian Jewish immigrants to Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century. Another problem arose from the fact that many cities have had a variety of designations over time and Jews sometimes referred to them in yet another way. Perhaps the best known example is L'viv, previously known as Lwów, Lemberg, and L'vov. The entries for towns reflect their contemporary designations – Vilnius, instead of Vilna – but variations from other relevant languages are also provided. Nevertheless, in other articles, historical designations appropriate to the discussion at hand are usually employed. Thus, we refer to the Gaon of Vilna, not the Gaon of Vilnius. A comprehensive index with 40,000 entries is available to help readers find what they are looking for.

Geographical affirmative action

Another problem confronting the editors was the geographical unevenness of research on numerous topics. There has been, for example, a great deal of research on a variety of topics as they relate to Jews in Poland but not on the same topics as they relate to Romania or Hungary. Where possible, the *YIVO Encyclopedia* tries to redress this imbalance by devoting an appropriate amount of attention to regions outside of the Polish-Lithuanian heartland. An encyclopaedia cannot commission new research. Nevertheless, the state of scholarly study for these regions is represented as extensively as possible, for their importance is substantially greater than the quantity of attention they receive in the scholarly literature.

In the case of Romania, there is a genuine dearth of research, even though it was home to one of Europe's largest Jewish communities before the war. Thoughtful studies on the differences between the Jewish communities within Romania's various regions, the role of Jewish intellectuals in the development of Romanian national consciousness, the possible distinctiveness of Romanian Jewish artists, to name a few examples, still await their scholars. In the case of Hungary, a good deal of research is underway, but this work is largely unknown due to the language barrier. Few academics outside that country know Hungarian.

Given the limited amount of space, we could not achieve anything approaching total coverage of every individual and every community included in the *YIVO Encyclopedia*. Each editor had to make difficult decisions. There are, for example, entries on circa 190 cities and towns. Had we aspired to comprehensiveness, there could easily have been more than 20 times that number. Here, too, our program of "affirmative action" can be seen. The criteria for inclusion were applied more strictly to Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian communities than to Hungarian and especially Romanian towns.

Gender

From the outset of this project, the editors were highly aware of the need to redress the imbalance in the amount of attention given the depiction of women, who are often ignored in studies of Eastern Europe. As a matter of principle, the decision was made not to "ghettoize" women. All of the contributors were therefore instructed to address gender and use it as a category of analysis whenever possible and appropriate. In many cases, particularly the section devoted to everyday life, this yielded interesting and novel material, for example, on child-rearing, sexuality, and holidays. There is also a general essay devoted to gender by Paula Hyman. Among the 220 biographical entries on rabbis and other religious leaders, there are only two women. The imbalance among the authors is not quite so dramatic. This unhappy state of affairs reflects the current state of research and the patriarchal nature of Jewish society. The editors therefore saw themselves confronted with the dilemma of doing justice to women, on the one hand, and upholding the criteria of including in the encyclopaedia only culturally significant persons, on the other.

"Canonisation"

The encyclopaedia is unavoidably a kind of canon. This is not in fashion in the academic world. Our rather old-fashioned approach is owed to the fact that the field of East European Jewish Studies developed rather recently. The selections made by the editors are largely their own. The encyclopaedia undoubtedly provides the basis for future debates and discussions that will further enrich the field.

Funding

The cost of this project ultimately amounted to over U.S. $ 3 million. Fortunately, many of the institutions to which we turned for financing were as enthusiastic about the project as the scholars themselves. Instead of providing articles, foundations and other donors supported the encyclopaedia by providing dollars. One important source was the United States National Endowment for the Humanities, which responded positively to our first application and a request for a supplementary grant as well. We also received financial support from The Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, The Charles H. Revson Foundation, The Righteous Persons Foundation, the members of the YIVO Board of Directors (under the chairmanship of Bruce Slovin), and a number of other private donors. Such backing not only made the encyclopaedia possible, it served as an emboldening and encouraging endorsement of the project.

The state of East European Jewish scholarship

The geographical distribution of the contributors to the encyclopaedia reflects the state of the academic field of East European Jewish Studies at the start of the 21st century. Unsurprisingly, most of the researchers are from Israel (167, or 37 per cent of the authors) and the United States (162, or 36 per cent). The rough parity between these two groups represents the tremendous development of Jewish Studies in general, and East European Jewish Studies in particular, in the United States in recent decades. Jewish

Studies scholars in both Israel and the United States, especially since the 1970s, have liberated themselves from the longstanding tendency to focus on the west, which began with Heinrich Graetz, the architect of Jewish historiography, back in the 19th century.[5]
A remarkable number of the contributors – 75, or 16.6 per cent – come from East European countries. The largest contingent is from Poland (28), followed by Hungary (20) and the Czech Republic (10). There are eight Russians, three Romanians, two contributors each from Estonia, Finland, and Lithuania, as well as one author from Slovakia. That is to say, we are witnessing the return of Jewish Studies to Eastern European after a hiatus of about a half-century – even longer in the states of the former Soviet Union. The total number of European contributors – 113, or 25 per cent – includes 15 scholars from England, ten from Germany, and eight from France. Two contributors reside in Switzerland, with individual authors living in Austria, Holland, and Italy. In addition, eight Canadian scholars prepared articles for the encyclopaedia.

How to Make an Encyclopaedia

The encyclopaedia was assembled on the basis of a synoptic outline that was the subject of much debate and considerable revision in the early stages of the project. The final version is included at the end of Volume 2. Working in consultation with one another, the 33 editors constructed a framework that aimed to take into account all aspects of the culture and history of Jews in Eastern Europe. This framework serves as the conceptual skeleton of the project. We began with nine divisions:

- Geographical-Political Units
- Social History and Politics
- Religion
- Language and Literature
- Social Organization, Economics, and the Professions
- Communications Media
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Everyday Life
- History of Study

We initially apportioned space within the limit of 2 million words on the basis of these broad categories. Each of these divisions was then divided into principal articles, supporting articles, and biographies. Thus, each major topic includes an extensive principal entry and shorter entries on specific subjects and issues related to the major topic. In the case of Geographical-Political Units, this was relatively straightforward; this division starts with long essays on various countries and moves on to regions, cities, and towns.
In Social History and Politics, the second division, the major essay "Parties and Ideologies" introduces more detailed entries such as "Bund" and "Zionism and Zionist Parties" as well as entries on other particularly important figures, parties, and events.

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[5] The encyclopaedia includes an entry on historiography, which gives a general overview focused on Poland and Russia, and supplementary articles on the Bohemian lands and Hungary as well as Orthodox historiography. There is also an analogous entry on "Folklore, Ethnography and Anthropology".

In the same division, the composite entry "Relations between Jews and Non-Jews" leads to the entries "Antisemitic Parties and Movements", "Informers", "Judaizers", and "Conversion", among others. These are somewhat provocative examples. In the first case – so as to avoid anachronism – Zionism is presented implicitly as one of several parties and ideologies. In the second case – so as to avoid distortion – antisemitism is presented as one form of relations between Jews and others. Generally, the goal here is to provide context for the entries as they become more specific.

While it is tempting to describe dozens of entries, I will merely draw special attention to the extensive treatments of theatre, art, and literature, including Jewish literature in Yiddish and Hebrew as well as the various languages of the region. I am particularly proud of the division "Everyday Life", which includes entries such as Angels, Birth and Birthing, Childhood, Food and Drink, Love, Marriage, Dress, Pilgrimage, Badkhonim (jesters), Beggars, Cartoons, Chess, Christmas, Cookbooks, Crime and Criminals, Dogs, Galitsianer, Litvak, Humor, Landkentenish, Money, Pigs, Sport, and Yikhes (lineage), in addition to four entries under the rubric Talk.

Gaps in Knowledge

Describing the ideal encyclopaedia, H. G. Wells insisted that "it would not be a miscellany, but a concentration, a clarification and a synthesis".[6] Precisely because the *YIVO Encyclopedia* has no precedent, it not only concentrates, clarifies, and synthesises knowledge on numerous topics for the first time. The editors hope that the encyclopaedia will by its very existence inspire inquiry among future generations of scholars. A by-product of our work has been to expose gaps in the existing body of knowledge. One of these gaps, for example, is in economics and economic history. Adam Teller, the editor for this field, struggled to provide a comprehensive picture in the absence of basic research on a number of essential questions. For example, there is a lack of systematic research on the role of Jews in banking and finance, the links between East European Jewish merchants and court Jews, and the place of Jews in the industrialisation of the Russian Empire.

It was especially difficult to find scholars able to write about such matters as the visual arts, youth movements, sport, and communal organisation in Eastern Europe. This is owed to the tendency towards increasing specialisation in a region or country and the fact that few scholars know more than a few of the region's many languages. Because Jewish Studies is relatively new to East European universities, scholars in the region frequently lack rigorous training not only in Hebrew and Yiddish, but also in the canonical texts of Jewish culture.

Although the *YIVO Encyclopedia* includes a splendid and innovative essay by Jay Harris on the history of Talmud study, the general field of the intellectual history of East European rabbinic literature contains numerous gaps. If there had been a conceptual framework on the development of Jewish law in the region, to take a most crucial case, it would have been possible to place the biographies of various prominent rabbis within a larger context. This important topic is under-researched, and this lack of research is reflected in the encyclopaedia. An analysis of the impact of the printing press on this field, in particular with regard to the wider circulation of legal literature

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[6] David Smith, ed., *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells*, 4, (London 1998), p. 20.

of Sefardi provenance, would be very useful. Another related and equally important lacuna is the history of liturgy in Eastern Europe. A careful, analytical comparison of the most popular and influential prayer books in different periods and regions would be extremely rewarding.

Matters related to popular culture and daily life, particularly in regions outside the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, have not received adequate attention. And even for those "central" regions, we need much more sophisticated research. The very interesting entry "Money" is based largely on work published in 1959. To cite another desideratum, the role of the *shadkhn* (matchmaker), which seems to have declined in prestige from the early modern period to the 19th century, still awaits its historian. A detailed illustration of the differences in dress among the various Hasidic groups in Eastern Europe would be very helpful as well. Such a chart could be prepared for the Hasidim in present-day Jerusalem, New York, and elsewhere, but nobody has studied the matter with regard to 19th- and 20th-century Eastern Europe.

One gap in our knowledge that emerged in the course of preparing the encyclopaedia was rather surprising. There are many studies on the mass migration of East European Jews to the west, which began in the last decades of the 19th century and continued to about 1924. But none of them attempts to link places of origin and destinations. This phenomenon is known from more general studies of European migration patterns, which have shown that people from a certain place migrate to a limited set of destinations. The Jewish example, however, still has not been analyzed systematically.

Moreover, historians sometimes mistakenly link the start of this migration to the pogroms of 1881–1882, whereas it actually began in the 1870s and not in the regions later affected by the pogroms. Nonetheless, the years 1881–1882 continue to be seen by some as initiating a crisis and change in the mentality of the Jews in the Russian Empire. Our entry on pogroms will surprise many readers, because it estimates that the total number of deaths in roughly 250 violent incidents during this period to be about 50 and suggests that about half of those killed were attackers and not Jews.

Although we were able to provide an entry on "Military Service in Russia" and considerable information on the same subject regarding Hungary, the current state of research did not allow for comprehensive treatment of this subject for all of the countries of Eastern Europe. The problem deserves attention because service in the army was often seen as a path toward acculturation and acceptance and marked, generally speaking, a departure from the norms of the traditional Jewish community. We also thought of commissioning an essay on the entry of Jews into Eastern Europe's nobility, but quickly realized that this subject has also yet to find its historian. Similarly, we were unable to find anyone who could prepare a chronological and quantitative table of Jewish persons elected to national parliaments in their various forms. Although it would have contained numerous asterisks to account for the revolutionary regimes in Hungary, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere (e.g. Ukraine), such a distillation of information would have been revealing and useful. These gaps will not remain open forever, however. We have agreed with Yale University Press to place the contents of the encyclopaedia on YIVO's Web site starting in June 2010. This will not only make it possible for the *YIVO Encyclopedia* to reach the widest possible audience. Given adequate funding, the work can be expanded indefinitely. Thus future scholars will be able to continue providing concentration, clarification, and synthesis as they recover lost elements of East European Jewish heritage.