

# THE GAON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

A PERIODIC PUBLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

WINTER 2005

## PROFILES IN PHILANTHROPY

*Eta Taub (1908 – 2003):*

*Lifelong Supporter of Yiddish, Israel and Family*

**E**ta Taub was a woman rich in friends, family and *yidishkayt*. Born in the Ukraine, she moved to Bucharest at age 13 to work as a domestic and nanny. She waited for three years before receiving permission to move to North America. Although she traveled alone, her radiant personality and determination compelled people to assist her.

Mrs. Taub made it possible for her younger brother to move to Canada. As far as she knew he was the only member of her family to survive the Nazis.

In her 20s she moved to New York, where she married Shitza Taub. Eta was devoted to her husband's family. Although the Taubs had no children of their own, she was a favorite of her nieces and nephews. Friends describe the Taub home as a "treasure trove of art and good taste." Lester Taub, her nephew, remembers that there were always guests, lively Yiddish discussions, music and culture.

She never gave up hope that other relatives had survived, and after the war she found cousins in Russia. This discovery was like a rebirth; she began making visits to Russia, bringing or sending parcels. Happily, a number of her family members later emigrated to the United States.

Mrs. Taub celebrated the richness of Yiddish language and culture through her support for orga-

nizations in New York and Israel. Her cousin Eda Rybalov remembers that she encouraged her family to share their Yiddish language with younger generations. She herself wrote and published her memoirs in Yiddish, detailing her early life in Russia. She also wrote lovely Yiddish poetry.

YIVO was honored to be remembered in Eta Taub's will along with other organizations that are involved in promoting and encouraging the Yiddish language and *yidishkayt*. Mrs. Taub and her family have donated treasures from her own collection, including personal photographs and manuscripts, to YIVO. In addition, her generous bequest to YIVO will assist us in the maintenance of our archives and library, helping to keep the treasures of YIVO accessible to scholars and lay people alike.

We are truly grateful to Eta Taub for this exceptional legacy, which will help YIVO in its work to preserve Yiddish history, language and culture.

If you would like information on how you can help preserve Yiddish and *yidishkayt*, please call Ellen Siegel at YIVO at (917) 606-8293.



*Eta Taub*

*Happy Birthday to YIVO and YOU!*

*Come Celebrate!*

**W**hen YIVO was founded 80 years ago in Vilna, it was the first institution to document, collect and teach the language and culture of our East European Jewish ancestors. We are also the only pre-war European institution whose collections have survived, largely intact — from our roots in Vilna to our vibrant center in New York City.

We are thrilled to be celebrating this great milestone, and we look forward to an exciting year of special exhibitions and events — highlighted by our April 14, 2005 gala evening at Carnegie Hall, with Michael Tilson Thomas, in honor of his grandparents, Yiddish theater legends Bessie and Boris Tomashefsky.

### *The Gaon Society*

**N**amed for the 18th-century Rabbi Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman — the Vilna Gaon — The Gaon Society was established to recognize and thank YIVO supporters who have created a legacy for YIVO in their wills or estate plans or through a charitable gift annuity or charitable trust.

Like The Vilna Gaon, who was known for his intellect and for the importance he placed on *zedakah*, these friends understand and appreciate the role YIVO plays in preserving and perpetuating our heritage for future generations. The resources of YIVO, and your support of these resources, play an essential role in advancing Jewish scholarship, as well as securing the culture, language and history of Eastern European Jewry.

To learn more about becoming a member of The Gaon Society and helping to safeguard our heritage for the future, please use the enclosed reply envelope or call Ellen Siegel at (917) 606-8293. We will be happy to discuss bequest and gift-planning ideas that may help you preserve your assets and our shared history.



*Ice skaters on a frozen pond (Marghita, Romania, 1929).*

Many of you have also reached this milestone year. A YIVO charitable gift annuity is a terrific way to celebrate your birthday and ours!

A charitable gift annuity is a simple contract that enables you to create a legacy for YIVO and steady, guaranteed payments for yourself or a loved one. In exchange for your gift of \$10,000 in cash or securities, YIVO promises to pay you regular quarterly payments for life!

For example, if you are 80 (like YIVO!) you may enjoy the following benefits:

- An 8% charitable annuity;
- Guaranteed quarterly payments totaling \$800 per year for life;
- A charitable tax deduction of \$4,855 in the year you create the gift;
- The knowledge that you have created a lasting tribute to Eastern European Jewish Culture;

AND

- As an added bonus we are proud to offer anyone who creates an annuity between now and April 1, 2005, a complimentary ticket to the April 14 Carnegie Hall celebration with Michael Tilson-Thomas.

Please help us celebrate the legacy of YIVO by creating your own legacy. For more information please call or write Ellen Siegel, Planned Giving Officer, at (917) 606-8293 or [esiegel@yivo.cjh.org](mailto:esiegel@yivo.cjh.org), or YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011.

## *Members of The Gaon Society*

Ms. Rosina Abramson  
Ms. Leone Adelson  
Ms. Sylvia Antonier-Scher  
Mr. Harold Baron  
Dr. Sylvia Brody Axelrad  
Ms. Eliane Bukantz  
Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Cohen  
Dr. Ethel Cutler  
Mr. and Mrs. Sol Eldman  
Mr. Stanley Engelstein  
Mr. and Mrs. Gene Forrell  
Mrs. Shulamis Friedman  
Ms. Vicki Gold  
Mr. Nathan Goldstein  
Dr. Laura Hapke  
Mr. George Hecht  
Ms. Felice Itzkoff  
Mrs. Louisa Johnston  
Mr. Louis Osofsky  
Ms. Bathsheba S. Phillips  
Ms. Ethel Roberts  
Mr. Abraham Sherman  
Mr. Samuel Silverstein  
Mr. Bruce Slovin  
Dr. and Mrs. Robert and Lottie Tartell  
Professor Franklin Toker  
Mr. Jacob Waisbord  
Mr. Milton Weiner  
Ms. Edith Weiss  
Joan Wertheim, Ph.D.  
Anonymous (8)

### *Matured Estates*

Mr. Abe Feldman  
Ms. Rebekah Gisnet  
Ms. Pauline Hechtman  
Mr. Charles Stopper  
Mrs. Eta Taub  
Mr. and Mrs. Max and Sylvia Wohl

**If you have remembered YIVO in your will, trust, life insurance or pension plan, or if you would like information on how to leave a legacy to YIVO, create a charitable gift annuity, or create a memorial to honor a loved one, please contact Ellen Siegel at: (917) 606-8293. Thank you.**



*Ruth Kremen, Dr. and Mrs. Mark Barbasch, Dr. and Mrs. I. Bernard Weinstein at The Gaon Society event.*

## *Gaon Society News*

**M**embers of The Gaon Society were invited to brunch and a special viewing of treasures from the YIVO Archives. On October 17, 2004, Fruma Mohrer, Head YIVO Archivist, gave Society members a “highlights” tour of YIVO’s extensive collections.

Mohrer explained that YIVO collects materials in four general areas: Jewry in the Diaspora of Europe, the American experience of European Jews, Holocaust materials and material related to the State of Israel and its creation. YIVO’s archival collections represent the breadth and depth of the Jewish experience from Europe, around the world and in America, touching every aspect of world Jewry.

Guests viewed materials from our Holocaust collections, including documents and registry cards from displaced persons camps, as well as YIVO’s pioneering collection of the first eyewitness testimonies. They were shown the beautifully restored Register of the Rabbinic Court of Metz, France, dating from the mid-1700s, which concerns the daily lives of the relatively autonomous Jews of the period. Mohrer also shared a 1932 Yiddish letter from Golda Meir to David Pinsky in New York, demonstrating the importance of Yiddish as the lingua franca of world Jewry.

## *YIVO: Giving Life to the Past — One History at a Time*

**B**y helping people understand their pasts, we bring to life the rich history and culture of the Jewish people. Our staff, our archives, our library and *you, our supporters*, safeguard the lives of our parents and grandparents by saving their stories and their histories.

YIVO has always understood the importance of our work in saving and preserving our past. We were the first organization to collect eyewitness testimonies from the Holocaust, gathering information even before the war's end. After the war, YIVO continued to collect information from Jews the world over, from DP camps, Latin America and Europe.

For 80 years, YIVO has collected and preserved the primary records of daily life in Jewish Eastern Europe: the large and small things that comprise a culture and society, such as theater and political posters, family photographs, telephone directories, books in many languages (especially Yiddish), music, record books of Jewish organizations, family trees, folklore and much more. YIVO is consistently in the forefront of recognizing the need to remember and save our past.

Our work reunites people with their history. How wonderful it is to discover a loved one's personal history hidden in a scribble written on the back of a photo. Our staff works with individuals from around



*New immigrant adjusts to Israeli life  
at Kibbutz Glil Yam (1968).*

the world who are searching for information about their families — bringing life to our families' pasts. YIVO creates a lasting legacy for future generations — we save the lives of our parents by saving their history, preserving their culture, recording our history. For this reason, we hope that you will create a legacy for YIVO.

Just as documents and photos speak to current and future generations, your bequest — the most significant expression of the life you have lived — should speak to future generations and reflect your connection to YIVO's mission. For more information please call or email Ellen Siegel, Planned Giving Officer, at (917) 606-8293 or [esiegel@yivo.cjh.org](mailto:esiegel@yivo.cjh.org).

**YIVO recommends the following bequest language:**  
**"I give and bequeath ( \_\_ dollars or \_\_% of my estate) to  
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research,  
15 West 16th Street, New York, NY,  
for its general purposes."**