

הקשר היהודי שלך

Your Jewish Connection

Brought to you by the Lifelong Learning Committee – Written By Linda S Trapasso

Shlemiel, Shlimazel...

Do you remember those words from the opening of the Laverne and Shirley television show? Did you know it was Yiddish? So many people use Yiddish words and have no idea that they're doing so. It's an expressive language originally spoken by Eastern European Jews. Jews in the entertainment industry and areas with large populations of Jews on the east coast of America provided the Yiddish that's become part of our American culture.



Almost everywhere you go, from east to west, south to north, and everywhere in between, you can encounter Yiddish in every day conversations. Check out the [top 10 Yiddish words](#) you probably know. Then go on to see how many additional Yiddish words you know by reviewing this [list of 40 words](#). Similar lists can be found on Wikipedia (see [English words of Yiddish origin](#) and [Yiddish words used in English](#)).

Unfortunately, the use of Yiddish as a spoken language is on the decline. According to the US Census Bureau, Yiddish was number 11 of non-English languages spoken in the US in 1980. As of 2010, Yiddish dropped to number 17 (source: [The Washington Post](#)).

A local resource we have available is the [Yiddish Book Center](#) in Amherst, MA. You can visit and tour their exhibits, learn through their various programs, watch oral history videos, and listen to podcasts. You can even visit their gift shop and get a tote bag sporting the word "shlep"!



Another local resource is [The Yiddish Voice](#), a Yiddish language radio program based in Brookline, MA. You can listen to it live on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 pm on WUNR 1600 AM. You'll want to explore the audio and program rundowns, as well as audio of Sholom Aleichem. Plus there is an extensive list of Yiddish-related links.

Perhaps you're a geek and want to know about Yiddish technology. Have a look at this site – [Understanding Yiddish Information Processing](#). There is a users' guide and links to Unicode information and text editing. Need to check out the spelling of some Yiddish text? Visit the [Yiddish Typewriter](#).

You can learn Yiddish through the Yiddish Book Center, but even closer is the Boston Workmen's Circle Center for Jewish Culture and Social Justice. Check their [list of programs](#) for future offerings. For online learning, go to the [Yiddish Academy](#). They list their top 7 reasons why people want to learn Yiddish. NOTE that this is a paid program.

To learn more about Yiddish and Jewish life in Eastern Europe, visit [AHEYM](#), the Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories, sponsored by Indiana University. There are several online exhibits of videos on daily life, historical events, religion and ritual, and songs, poems, prayer. Also look at the [Mayrent Institute](#) for Yiddish Culture sponsored by the University of Wisconsin. They offer Yiddish learning through language, dance, folktales, songs, and crafts. Mayrent also has a Yiddish Radio Project that won a Peabody Award for Excellence in Electronic Journalism. The project covered the history of Yiddish broadcasting. If you're looking for more scholarly information, then these web sites will be of use:



The Jewish Language Research Website, the [Yiddish page](#), provides a detailed history and description.

[MyJewishLearning](#) covers Yiddish from many perspectives. Enter Yiddish in the Search box in the upper right and select the topic you're most interested in.

[Chabad](#) also has several Yiddish articles. Enter Yiddish in the Search box in the upper right and select the topic you want. Nu, don't kvetch or go mishegas. Get the mishpocheh and learn the joys of Yiddish!