

## On the Road, Back in the Old Country: Memories and Maps of a Yiddish Dialectologist

### Inaugural Naomi Kadar Memorial Lecture

by **Dovid Katz**, Litvak Studies Institute & [www.DefendingHistory.com](http://www.DefendingHistory.com)

Thirty five years ago, Dovid Katz, then a student in New York, began to look for elderly Yiddish informants from the Lithuanian (Litvak) lands, a territory corresponding with today's Lithuania, Belarus, and Latvia, plus chunks of eastern Ukraine, northeastern Poland and westernmost Russia. More than once, the late Yiddish writer Wolf Younin helped by putting notices in his column on language, asking for natives of this or that town or region to come forward.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and it became possible to carry out expeditions 'in the old country', Dovid, by then the head of Yiddish studies at Oxford, began to launch one or two expeditions a year, developing a questionnaire. Then, in 1999, he relocated to Lithuania to take up a professorship in Yiddish Studies in Vilnius, and was able to continue the project on a much more intensive basis.

Dovid is working on an atlas of Lithuanian (Northeastern Yiddish), and has put drafts of the first maps on his website, [www.dovidkatz.net](http://www.dovidkatz.net).

At his talk at YIVO, Dovid, now chief analyst at the Litvak Studies Institute and editor of [www.DefendingHistory.com](http://www.DefendingHistory.com), will talk about some of his adventures on the road, particularly in Belarus and Lithuania, over the last two decades, and he will show some maps and video clips. He will also talk about the everyday life, beliefs and opinions, and hardships of the people he has met on the way.