

# Glossary<sup>1</sup>

This glossary is primarily YIVO Yiddish. Hebrew, Lithuania or Russian origins are indicated with (H), (L), or (R).

According to Mariampoler descendant and Chicago Jewish scholar David Passman, contrary to the YIVO transliteration below, the spoken language among Litvaks had the following pattern of pronunciation: “ey” is a long “a” and “ay” is a long “i”. Thus “[eynore] evil eye”, which is rendered here according to the YIVO pronunciation rules, would actually be four syllables: eye-in-hor-ah, a Yiddish phrase from the Hebrew “ayin” (eye) “hora” (evil).<sup>2</sup>

- A** [**adoshem**] word for G-d (H)  
[**alef**] letter A  
[**alefbeyz**] letters “a” and “b”  
[**almer**] cabinet that stores food  
[**ayngemakhtsn**] preserves (plural)
- B** [**bankes**] cupping glasses  
[**bashert**] destined (match)  
[**bashlyek / bashlik**] warm head cover  
[**besmedresh**] house of prayer and study (H)  
[**beys haseyfer**] school building  
[**beyz**] letter B  
[**beyze khaloymes**] bad dreams  
[**bime**] platform for reading Torah  
[**bizies apey**] By his sweat he earns a living. (H)  
[**blitslomp**] bright lamp  
[**bobes refues**] grandmother’s remedies  
[**bronfn**] (pouring) whiskey  
[**bulbe kugl**] potato pudding  
[**bulbes**] potatoes  
[**burzhuazi**] bourgeois
- D** [**dayen**] judge of religious law  
[**drabines**] wagons  
[**drite likhtl**] third light (of Chanukah)
- E** [**elel**] last month on the Hebrew calendar

[**es zol azoy nit trefn**] It shouldn't happen like that  
[**eynore**] evil eye (H)

- F** [**far a fule vokh**] for a blessed (literally, "full") week  
[**farzesn**] passed over  
[**fatsheyle**] huge shawl  
[**feldsher**] folk doctor  
[**for gezunt**] travel in health  
[**forshpayz**] appetizer  
[**fraytik bay nakht**] Friday night

- G** [**gekokhte arbes**] boiled chick peas  
[**gimnazyes**] secondary schools [**gimnazye**] (singular)  
[**goldene medine**] land of opportunity (literally, "golden country")  
[**groypn mit gornit**] barley/grain without anything else  
[**grusn**] greetings  
[**G-t fun Avromovinu, fun Yitskhek, fun Yankef, der heyliker shabes koydesh geyt avek, s'zol kumen a vokh fun brokhe, gezunt, un parnose.**] G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the holy Sabbath goes away, let there come a week of blessings, good health, and livelihood.  
[**gut shabes**] good Sabbath  
[**gutn bisn**] good morsel to eat (accusative case)  
[**gutn yid**] good Jew (accusative case)

- H** [**havdole**] ceremony closing the Sabbath (H)  
[**heldzlekh**] chicken necks  
[**henglaykhter**] chandelier

- I** [**In mayn familye iz keyn bal milokhe nit faran.**] In my family there were no workingmen.  
[**inteligentsye**] students of men's and women's advanced schools (literally, "intelligentsia")

- K** [**kadesh der mamen**] prayer for mourning one's mother  
[**kadesh**] prayer for mourning (H)  
[**kakhloyvn**] tile oven  
[**kamashn**] gaiters  
[**kamen**] fireplace  
[**kantl**] ruler (literally, "little edge")  
[**kapishonen**] woolen hoods

[**karetke**] horse-drawn carriage  
[**kartes**] maps, steamship tickets  
[**katerinshtshik**] one who grinds music from music box  
[**katukh**] chicken coop  
[**kayle**] barrel  
[**kesl**] kettle  
[**khale**] braided egg bread  
[**kheyder**] religious elementary school for Jewish boys  
[**kheyune**] earning a livelihood  
[**kholem toyve hazise.**] May your dreams be good. (H)  
[**kholem tovo haziso**] A good dream you have seen. (H)  
[**kidesh koyses**] ceremonial wine cups (H)  
[**kidesh**] blessing over wine (H)  
[**knepl shtivl**] boots with buttons  
[**knipl**] little knot  
[**komets-alef 'oh' komets-beyz, 'boh' komets-daled 'doh'**] rhyme to memorize alphabet  
[**kompot**] fruit dessert  
[**kopeke**] Russian copper coin [**kopekes**] (plural)  
[**korobelniks**] country peddlers (Russian, Polish, or Ukrainian)  
[**koymen kerer**] chimney cleaner  
[**koymen**] chimney  
[**koymen**] fireplace  
[**kretshme**] inn, tavern or roadhouse [**kretshmes**] (plural)  
[**kretshmer**] innkeeper  
[**kushetke**] sofa (R)

- L [**landslayt**] fellow townspeople, Mariampoler descendants  
[**landsmen**] countryman  
[**landsmanshaft**] (singular) association of immigrants originating from same hometown;  
    [**landsmanshaftn**] (plural)  
[**latkes**] potato pancakes  
[**lekoved shabes**] to honor the Sabbath (H)  
[**likhternes**] lanterns  
[**linyeh hatsedek**] lines of charity (H)  
[**Litvaks**] Lithuanian Jews [**Livakn**] (plural)  
[**loyg**] lye, mixture of rainwater and wood ashes

- M** [*m'zol dos nit darfn.*] You should not get into it. (literally, One shouldn't need it.)  
 [*manifestatsye*] demonstration  
 [*markes*] postage stamps  
 [*maykhl meylekh*] food fit for a king (H)  
 [*melamed*] children's teacher (H)  
 [*metrikes*] birth certificates  
 [*mishpokhe*] family  
 [*mitsve*] good deed  
 [*mosn*] measurements  
 [*minyem*] quorum of ten men gathered for prayer  
 [*Moyshe kibal Toyre mesinay*] Moses brought the Torah from Mount Sinai
- N** [*nadn*] dowry for a groom
- O** [*opfastn*] to break fast  
 [*opshatsn*] appraised his age  
 [*opshrayen a teytn*] screaming and yelling (literally, "to raise a corpse by screaming at it")  
 [*orn koydesh*] holy ark, cabinet in synagogue for Torah scrolls (H)  
 [*Osev taazev ehs okhiko.*] Thou should help thy brother in need. (H)
- P** [*papirene kinder*] paper children  
 [*peysekhn*] Passover  
 [*Pirke-oves*] "Ethics of our Fathers") section of the Mishna dealing with ethical principles (H)  
 [*plite*] brick stove  
 [*politse*] shelf  
 [*poyer*] peasant farmer  
 [*priziv*] army conscription  
 [*prinik*] wooden-grooved trowel (R)
- R** [*Ram oys dem khomets, me geyt zukhn dem afikomen.*] Hide the contraband there's going to be a search from the government. (literally, "clean out the 'chametz,' unleavened bread, they are going to look for the afikomen.")  
 [*rebe*] spiritual teacher  
 [*rozheve*] dark bread
- S** [*sermige*] overcoat (L)  
 [*shabes*] Sabbath

**[shar lemud]** tuition fees (H)  
**[shatkhn]** matchmaker  
**[shatkhones]** marriage brokerage fees  
**[shetske]** chopped straw  
**[sheygen]** woven runner  
**[sheyne eydems]** educated sons-in-law (literally, “beautiful sons-in-law”)  
**[shidekh]** marriageable match  
**[Shir Hashirim]** “Song of Songs,” a poem in the Torah (H)  
**[shlof bank]** folding bed  
**[shmalts]** chicken or goose fat  
**[shmaysn]** whipping, lashing  
**[shnaps]** whiskey or other alcohol  
**[sholem aleykhem]** peace unto you (H)  
**[sholem biyisroel]** peace among Jews (H)  
**[shoykhet]** ritual slaughterer  
**[shpayzkellers]** food storage cellars  
**[shpritsarmye]** firehouse  
**[shtiv]** boot  
     **[knepl shtiv]** boots with buttons  
**[shtshav]** sorrel, green leafy plant (A light soup is made with it) (R)  
**[shuster]** shoemaker  
**[souhas, kriacius ne zmogusz.]** A shoemaker and a tailor are not people. (L)  
**[statskinikes]** Jewish idealists  
**[stroznik]** Russian police guard, Tsar’s officer (R)  
**[sukes]** the Sukkoth festival

**T** **[taip, taip, bet ka maci?]** Yes, true, but what’s the use? (L)  
**[tales]** prayer shawl  
**[Talmud toyre]** Jewish Day School  
**[tate-mames kinder]** parents’ children  
**[taytsh khumesh]** the Yiddish translation of the Torah  
**[toyre lishmo]** (Hebrew) Torah study  
**[treyf]** non-kosher food  
**[tsholnt]** Sabbath stew left to cook on low heat during the previous night  
**[Tsi nemt er?]** Does he take?  
**[tsign]** goats

[*tsimes*] vegetable or dessert stew

V [*vant zeyger*] wall clock

[*veksl*] promissory note

[*vyorst*] old Russian distance, about 1 kilometer (R)

Y [*yakhsonim*] privileged rich

[*yeshive bokherim*] male Talmud students

[*yeshive*] a secondary school for boys where the Bible, Hebrew, Jewish rituals, law, and Talmud were taught

[*yingl*] little boy

[*yisker*] prayer commemorating the dead (H)

[*yonkiper*] the day of atonement

[*yontef*] holiday

[*yontoyvim*] holidays

Z [*zhandarm*] policeman (R from French “gendarme”)

[*zmires*] religious songs to greet the Sabbath (H)

[*zoyer*] souring (as in preparing pickles)

[*zuntik bulbes, montik bulbes, dinstik bulbes, mitvokh bulbes, donershtik, un fraytik bulbes, un shabes, bulbe kugl.*] (folk rhyme) Sunday Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday potatoes, and Saturday potato pudding.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan North Washington, M.A. served as Yiddish and Linguistics consultant in the editing of this glossary. I hereby acknowledge his assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Amongst Litvaks themselves there were regional variations. Some readers may remember a local dialect, or their own pronunciation may reflect a variation which was due to immigrant patterns of spoken Yiddish amongst Mariampolers in Chicago.