

חדשות האגודה – ינואר 2021 The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

המועדון הקריאה יעסוק בספרו של אלן לייטמן, "החלומות של איינשטיין" (ספריית מעריב, 1993; כתר, 2007).
ביום חמישי, 02.18, בשעה 20:00. הקישור יתפרסם בדף האירוע בפייסבוק. מנחה: דפנה קירש.

כל האירועים של האגודה מופיעים בלוח האירועים (שפע אירועים מעניינים, הרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשים ועוד)

לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או בדף האגודה בפייסבוק.

Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

This month's roundup:

– Some Sheer Science – on Anti-matter

– Yiddish SF&F 101* – Part 2

Our usual, interesting tidbits from various websites.

– Your editor, Leybl Botwinik

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT #1:

NEW ZION's Fiction Website!

Showcasing the upcoming volume 2's cover.

www.ZionFiction.com

(NOTE: no "s" after "zion")

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT #2:

The FAAn awards are the international fanzine community's acknowledgement of excellence in fanzines for the previous year (2020 in this case, obviously) and typically voted upon in the early part of the year for presentation at Corflu, the annual fanzine fans' convention.

This year's Corflu has been delayed until November because of the COVID, but a virtual award ceremony will occur on the original date of March 28th.

Voting is open to *anyone* with an interest in fanzines, and the ballot form, instructions, and rough listings of qualifying zines, writers, artists etc. is at:

<https://efanzines.com/TIR/Incompleat2020.pdf>

The closing date for votes to be received, is March 12.

**NOTE: CyberCozen is amongst those you can vote for
– and there is no requirement to be a member, etc.**

Readers Write:

Dear Leybl

Much has been written over the years about what is (and is not) SF. Distinctions have been made between "hard" and "soft" and attempts to 'explain' SF = Science/Speculative Fiction/Fantasy.

I'd like to think, at this point in my life, that I am pretty flexible. Nora Roberts, whom no one would accuse of writing science fiction, writes what is described as "futuristic" cop stories under her JD Robb pseudonym.

There are computer advancements and flying cars and androids and 'off-planet' locations and blasters. Clearly though, the SF elements are there just to support the action. It's basically a police mystery/suspense, romance series.

(Don't get me wrong. I am completely addicted to the series and the running story of the regular characters. Robb/Roberts has managed to sustain this interest through more than 50 books now and they're REALLY well written.
The question is: Are they SF?)

Honestly, I like the stories that have the SF sort of just 'there' as a framework to the tales. Asimov wrote a lot of these. I'm also the type to forgive Heinlein his "1,000 degrees below zero" lines because they were there to help make the point of his stories. Man, rising above his place and advancing onwards.

I don't argue with someone who wants to call his or her stories SF. I just read them. If I like them, I read more.

Sometimes I like the ones with a moral or point. Occasionally, I enjoy a "set your brain on hold and allow the wonder to wash over you". (The first Star Wars movie springs to mind. IMHO, it was a classic western set "a long, long...away".)

Most of my life nowadays, including the writing of this email was SF when I was growing up in my single-digit years. Let's worry less about what "fits" and more about what's a good story.

Just my 2 Rigellian Morrekoms,
-Reuven F

PS--Thanks again, as always, for your ongoing dedicated editing!—rf

Thanks for your feedback, Reuven.

It's always good to hear other people's opinions. I like your perspective ("I don't argue with someone who wants to call his or her stories SF. I just read them. If I like them, I read more").

All in all, though, there is something to be said for quantifying and qualifying stories and books according to a set range of characteristics. It makes things more manageable. But the bottom line – like you said – is to enjoy what you are reading. That's probably why I love SF so much. I can read a Western, adventure, comedy, philosophical/theological/historical/social fiction, or what-not, and if styled right it can still be SF. Be well.

This just in:

Sheer* Science: If It's "Anti-matter" – does it Matter?

(* In memory of Aharon Sheer (7"t) – Founding Editor)

Could there be a cluster of antimatter stars orbiting our galaxy?

Antimatter shed by anti-stars could even be detectable here on Earth.

By Paul Sutter February, 2021

We don't know why [the universe](#) is dominated by matter over antimatter, but there could be entire stars, and maybe even galaxies, in the universe made of antimatter.

The anti-stars would continuously shed their [antimatter](#) components out into the cosmos, and could even be detectable as a small percentage of the high-energy particles hitting Earth.

Unbalanced birth

Antimatter is just like normal matter, except not. Every single particle has an anti-particle twin, with the exact same mass, exact same spin and exact same everything. The only thing different is the charge. For example, the anti-particle of the electron, called the positron, is exactly like the electron except that it has positive electric charge.

Read more here:

<https://www.space.com/cluster-antimatter-stars-orbiting-milky-way>

Yiddish SF&F 101* – Part 2

A brief look at some Yiddish Speculative, Science, and Fantasy Fiction of the last century or so.
– Leybl Botwinik

1) Yiddish SF / SF in Yiddish

In our first part, we covered the type of background which would normally influence writers in the Fantasy field, and which would naturally lead to an evolving Science Fiction genre. Well, fortunately, in the modern Yiddish Literature (I'm covering, roughly, the past 120 years) the field of Fantasy is very well represented. The Science Fiction field, however, is very under-represented, and we'll soon see why.

Let's stop a moment, and see what we do have.

As mentioned – as far as 'Fantasy' is concerned – there are a multitude of Yiddish stories. We have a wealth of demons and mystical beings, stories of giants and magic rings, secret pathways to the land of Milk & Honey (Israel), and much more – going back centuries! Some are original Jewish stories, and others are based on, or parallel to, folktales from the surrounding cultures – usually written from a Jewish perspective, but more often than not with some magical content, but still containing some universal theme.

We also have two themes that continuously appear in the Yiddish literature: The Heaven/Utopia/Messianic-times stories; and the mysterious Good-Stranger/Angel/Eliyahu-Hanovi/Sore-Bas-Toyvim, who help people in need.

If we duplicate our introductory schema to measure styles and content of stories of a more Science Fictionish nature, then we could include the following examples — from amongst the many in the Yiddish Literature:

1. **Space travel:** For example, Y.L. Peretz: "oyb nisht nokh hekher", is a short story about a rabbi purported to travel to Heaven (and back, each day during the Yomim Noroyim [=days of reckoning/atonement just before the High Holidays]. In this story, it doesn't actually occur. What is important is that the Rabbi's Hasidim (or followers) actually believed that it did.
2. **Man-made creations or fooling with nature/the natural order & its consequences:** As

mentioned, H. Leivick's "der goylem", a drama based on the Golem legend, and Anski's "dybbuk"

3. **Utopia:** H. Leivick: "di geuleh-komedi" (Golem part II + the Utopian coming of the Messiah).
4. **Time travel:** H. Leivick: "maharam fun rutnberg!" (1945). A drama with a WWII Concentration camp inmate transported back in time to the city of Rutenberg, Germany in the 1200's, by a mystical person known only as "Ahasfer". Leon Elbe's "Yingele Ringe!" (1929) – one of the most well-known and loved Yiddish children's stories about a boy with a magical ring – also time-travels (see footnote link)
5. **Other-worldly adventure:** Very few – See also notes taken from "Mendeley, Vol. 10.004" from June 2000 in the separate box at the end.

Some notes on the above:

#1) There are almost no 'Outer space' travel stories in the 'traditional' sense, of rocket/space ship travel to the Moon, stars, etc. There are, however Earth-based space-time themes, where a specific person (Often – but not only – a great Rabbi or Sage) can travel great distances almost instantly. Or, just disappear (we don't usually know where that person ends up – only that he/she is NO LONGER in the vicinity). That having been said, I just discovered a children's story by Ida Glazzer in her book "a rayze tsu der levone"³ A trip to the Moon (1940),

¹ You can download this Yiddish poetic drama here:

<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yiddish-books/spb-nybc208249/leivick-h-mehar-m-fun-rutenberg-dramatishe-poeme-in-zibn-bilder>

² The book contains many stories. In this chapter of Leon Elbe's fantasy masterpiece, the little boy with a magic ring travels back through time to escort the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt. Story explained and read [with English translation here](#):

<https://www.creativeshuli.com/april-14-2020---yingele-ringe-at-the-sea-of-reeds.html>

³ I'd never have heard about this story, but at the ceremony where I was presented the prize for my short Yiddish SF story, the winners were presented with a Yiddish-Hebrew Calendar for 2020-2021. Each month had an excerpt from some book in Yiddish with its Hebrew translation – The month of November had an excerpt in Yiddish (with Hebrew translation) from that very book – see the image.



of a boy that creates a ladder from light-strands and walks up to the Moon where he is fascinated by the strange technology and flora/fauna. For example, a vehicle that travels by magnetic attraction towards one of many distant magnetic stations (just spin your dial to the destination and that station will pull your vehicle there...).

#2) Our very own most famous Golem legend, and Dybbuk story have actually inspired other Jewish and many non-Jewish offshoots. The two stories mentioned are the most popular. There aren't many others like them (in Yiddish). – It's almost as if once they were written, no one dared write anything similar. The only one I know of is H. Leivik's where he extrapolated on the Golem story and transformed it into a Utopia story. Which brings us to #3...

#3) Stories of Utopian futures are perhaps the most popular subject area in Yiddish SF&F⁴. More so, because of the various political and territorial movements that were trying to establish some sort of national homeland or autonomous region for Jews, or the various political parties that were promoting global utopias (for all of mankind) and whose children's authors took up pen to write Yiddish books on such subjects for children. One such Utopia story is Kalman Zingman's: "Edenia, a City of the Future"⁵ (1918) that

imagines a new world of tolerance and culture in eastern Ukraine.

#4) Leivik's and Elbe's are the only time travel ones I know of (other than my own stories, which we will cover in Part 3).

#5A) Itsik Manger writes an amusing novelette in 1939, *Dos bukh fun Ganeydn* (The Book of Paradise)⁶ about a little boy and his (mis-) adventures in Heaven among the angels.



#5B) Yehiel Feiner was a Yiddish writer who survived the Auschwitz Death Camps and also testified at the Nuremberg Trials. After the war (WWII) he came to Israel, changed his name to Yehiel De-Nur, and adopted the nom-de-plum "Katsetnik" (a person from a Concentration Camp) and began writing in Hebrew.

He said, that he saw his stay in Auschwitz, as if he were on a different planet, and that he was reborn a different person: <https://blog.nli.org.il/en/katsetnik/>. The Wikipedia write-up has some interesting background info on him, and a tie-in with Israeli SF writer Lavi Tidhar who has him briefly as a character, in one of his own SF novels.

Other Yiddish writers also adopted the motif that Auschwitz was another planet – no way could it have happened here. One such writer was Joseph Rogel of Montreal.

⁴ This is probably due to the fact that – before the creation of the State of Israel – Jews have been discriminated against, exploited, tortured, and (mass-)murdered for the last almost 2 millenia, as a people without a country. Even after our greatest, most recent tragedy – the Holocaust – things haven't gotten much better from a global perspective. Whereas, previously, the instigators and perpetrators were mainly from the Christian nations, since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 – and from the early 1900s on as well – much of the Islamic world has taken up the chant 'Death to Jews'... Hopefully that will change now that more and more Islamic countries are joining the Abraham Accords.

⁵ <https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/8498/edenia-lost-yiddish-utopia-ukraine-afterlife-modern-day-kharkiv>

⁶ Manger - <https://archive.org/details/nybc201537> *Di vunderleke lebnshraybung fun Shmuel'el Aba Abervo* (The Amazing Life Story of Shmuel-Aba Abervo) is better known by its subtitle, *Dos bukh fun Ganeydn* (The Book of Paradise). It's an irreverent romp (with topical allusions) through the precincts of heaven by two bad-boy angels, Shmuel-Aba and his sidekick Pisherl. They annoy the great personages of the Bible, make a dangerous foray into the Christian heaven next door, and—in Shmuel-Aba's case—live to tell the tale, by outwitting the drunken angel whose job is to make little angels forget everything before they are born on Earth. Charminglly illustrated by Mendl Reyf, the book was originally published in Warsaw in 1939.

“True” Yiddish SF?

So now you are probably asking yourself: “Is there really such a thing as Yiddish-”SF”, or is he just trying to bluff his way through this write-up?

– Well, the answer is: Yes, there definitely is Yiddish ”SF” material out there!

Is there a lot? Unfortunately not.

Let’s first consider “hardcore SF”. Why didn’t it develop in the modern Yiddish Literature? -- And when I say “hardcore SF”, I refer to a heavy dosage of technology and/or futuristic speculation.

I’m sure, that it would be an interesting study to do cross-language / cross-cultural comparisons on this topic (similar to, but not exactly like “comparative literature”), to see how the SF timeline compares for the literatures of various cultures. For example, I picked up some interesting statistics from the Internet, by asking for English SF references for the years 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950, & 1960. In this sampling of one year per decade – in the US – we find⁷:

Year	Novels	Short Stories	Poems
1900	3	1	0
1910	8	8	0
1920	8	16	0
1930	12	86	0
1940	10	152	7
1950	17	230	1
1960	43	248	1

From: ISFDB (Internet Speculative Fiction Database)

So, not until the 1940’s, do things start to become interesting vis-à-vis SF, in English, for a potential readership counting in the 10’s of Millions (not including India).

Considering, that the Yiddish readership and number of writers was proportionately very high, then one wonders why we do not find very much in this type of genre. Well, Yiddish translations of Jules Verne were actually very popular in the early 1900’s (I have some old copies, myself), and a Yiddish scientific and technological vocabulary had begun to take roots as progress reached the far-flung Jewish communities in smaller and larger towns and cities. Therefore, from the point of view of the readership, SF might actually have taken off. The problem then, was mostly with the writers.

Let’s first consider the 3 major areas of Yiddish writing in the 20th century: The New World (North and South America, and to some extent England, South Africa, and Australia); The Old World (Poland, Lithuania, Romania); The New-Old World (the countries of the Soviet Block).

From the Period of 1900-1945 (Pre-Holocaust)

In the New World, we have several issues to consider:

1. The new immigrants were interested in practical answers to pressing problems (both readers and writers).
2. With the integration into a new life and lifestyle, there was also a great assimilation. Anyone who wanted to keep up with the times, mostly abandoned Yiddish for English or other "modern languages of Science and Technology".
3. Yiddish, then often became a medium of nostalgia for the "old home".
4. Where we do have Yiddish in a modern or 'progressive' form is in the Socialist and Anarchist movements. The closest thing to SF in their writings is the Utopian literature. We do find instances of this, often in allegory form, or in children’s literature, as we mentioned earlier.
5. H. Leivik, one of the most important Yiddish writers, poets, and dramatists settles in the US, and writes "der Goylem" (1920), and part II - "Di Geuleh-Komedie — der Goylem Kholemt" (1932) about the coming of the Messiah (who it appears, is the Golem himself). In my opinion, Leivik is the foremost Yiddish writer of fantastic poems, stories, and dramas – in the New World. Notably, his works concern Jewish theological and Jewish national issues.

⁷ Note that the table was discovered (or possibly put together by me) in 1996 – taken from the ISFDB (Internet Speculative Fiction Database) website. I can’t claim to its accuracy, and Novel-wise, it may be just the ones published by major book companies, and not cheap pulp fiction. Unfortunately, I couldn’t find the source (other than ISFDB), and now their statistics seem to be in graphic form, rather than tabular form.

Refer to: <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/stats-and-tops.cgi> & <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/stats.cgi?5>

In the Old-World (Europe), there was less of a problem of assimilation, but more of a problem of anti-Semitism. Jews tended to be more isolated from the surrounding cultures, and often absorbed their contacts through Yiddish translations of the World Literature.

1. A prolific writer of fantasy poetry was Leib Naidus (1880-1918), unfortunately, he passed away very young. His poetry may have been influenced by such writers as Edgar Allan Poe, PB Shelly, Pushkin and others – since he also translated some of their poems into Yiddish. His poetry includes a translation of Pushkin's Snow White story (matching the original poetic presentation), of Poe's the Raven (in a beautiful poetic rendition⁸), and he wrote his own fantastic poems about gnomes & fairies, mythology, or about legendary sunken Atlantis⁹ (Poe also has a poem purportedly about Atlantis).
2. In 1917 Moyshe (Morris) Bassin publishes a 2 volume book of Yiddish poetry through the ages, and includes his scarily-funny "*Gonte Cossak*"¹⁰ poem about the ultimate, 3-headed, bogey-man that is supposed to scare kids to be quiet and go to sleep (not sure how that is supposed to work ...).
3. A large body of the potential readership was religious, and speculation in Science and Technology did not exactly speak to them. They were more at home with mysticism, magic, and the supernatural. Thus, a story like Sh. Anski's drama "Der Dybuk" (1920), later made into a Yiddish movie), and the Yiddish Faustian movie "Got Mentsh un Tayvl" (1930's) would become very popular. We have, as well, a large and popular literature of Hassidic mysticism and wonders, including the stories of Y.L. Peretz.
4. I have been told, by the way, that there exists a story, possible by Y.L. Peretz himself (who passed away in 1916, and is considered by many, to be somewhat of a prophet). The story is titled something like "The World in the Year 2000". As it was recounted to me, Life is now a Utopia, where no one works, everything is provided, and longevity prevails. Only one problem exists, which

no one seems to have a solution for: the ever-present "genets" (a yawn).

One brave fellow, in order to dispense with some of the boredom, picks up a rusty old shovel and digs, and digs, until he unearths a body, which is then revived by specialists and interrogated:

- Who are you?
- A general in Napoleon's armies.
- What did you do?
- We would shoot people.
- Did people "genets" (yawn) back then too?
- No...

So everyone goes out to search for a weapon, old gun, or what not, and the yawning problem is solved...

**I haven't yet tracked down this story, but Peretz may be considered a good choice as possible author.

5. A second large body of potential readership was into activism in various groups of the political spectrum. The language of conflict, and struggle, utopian ideals, etc. was the closest to SF that they got. Science and Technology did play a major role for them, and scientific and technological institutes with Yiddish as the working language (with the inherent necessary vocabulary, study material, dictionaries, etc.) began to emerge. We have, thus, a Yiddish speaking scientifically, technologically aware youth – for example in the ORT Technikum school in Vilna and elsewhere.
6. In 1934, Yekhezkel Kornhendler, a Polish Jew, writes "*Der toyt fun Yeshu ... in Poyln*"¹¹, about Jesus' appearing in a Polish forest, in 1919, and crucified by anti-Semitic Poles...
7. It is very likely, that a new generation of writers (and readers) may have emerged for whom Science and Technology in Yiddish was not foreign, and for whom SF might have become a literary medium. However, the Holocaust of the years 1939-45, virtually put an end to that.

In the New-Old World of the Soviet Russia, the third major centre of Yiddish:

⁸ You can hear some excerpts of the Raven in both Poe's English and Naydus' Yiddish – followed by a simultaneous English/Yiddish reading by myself and my brother Alexander in Montreal's Jewish Public Library, in 1982:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFHmhwM1tVc>
<https://youtu.be/UFHmhwM1tVc?t=150>

⁹ Poe – *The City in the Sea* - <https://poets.org/poem/city-sea>. Although Naydus' "*Atlantide*" is very similar, there are also many differences, starting with the line count and the rhyming sequence. Poe's is less orderly, at 11+18+12+12 lines, with rhymes mostly at every two-line pair. Naydus is consistently 4 verses of 8 lines, with an exact rhyming schema. Content-wise,

one could claim that Naydus was inspired by Poe, although there are too many differences to call Naydus a (direct) translation.

¹⁰ Bassin "antologye 500 yor YIDISHE poezye", Vol 2 p318

¹¹ Kornhendler – Later, in the 1960's (living in Paris) he writes other fantastic stories, including "*der 10ter tsum minyen (the 10th worshipper)*", about a Jewish tourist who is transported by the classical horse drawn super carriage to the afternoon prayer of a group of 9 spirits (ghosts) in a Jewish community that has been dead for 200 years. He wrote me in 1981, after reading my novel, and sent me a copy of his own book, "*fun der un yener velt*" (1974) – where he reprinted those stories.

1. Yiddish remained the official language of various autonomous and semi-autonomous regions. Schools and institutes of higher learning were very progressive, and even in the 1920's we find technological dictionaries and books. However, the first intellectual crackdowns begin in the late 1920's, and all Jewish schools are closed down, by the early 1930's.
2. One of the most prolific writers of fantasy in Yiddish in Soviet Russia block is "Der Nister" (pen name of Pinchus Kahanovich) I haven't read very much of his works, but an interesting piece is about a city of glass, where all the inhabitants are made of glass¹².
3. Yiddish becomes an instrument of the politicians. Almost all writing is politically focused.
4. Anything imaginative would be very carefully censored or self-censored. Many Yiddish writers struggled with this, and some attempts were made to write stories of the old traditional ways, and in this manner, to keep somewhat of a contact with mainstream Judaism from whom they were physically cut off.
5. An easing off on the crackdown on Yiddish intellectuals occurred from the late 30's until the end of WWII, as the Jews were mobilized to fight the Fascists.

From the period of 1945-1970's (Post-Holocaust)

The Old World is no more. The core of Eastern Europe's Jewish population (Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia) is virtually annihilated together with their Yiddish language and culture. The survivors are in a shocked state, and are dispersed to every corner of the Western world, and many also disappearing behind the Iron curtain (Soviet Union and other countries of the totalitarian Communist block).

In the Soviet Republics, the Stalinist repressions recommence, culminating in the 1950s almost final destruction of the Yiddish intellectuals. Yiddish then resumes its previous token role for political purposes, and is manipulated into an anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist, and anti-Western instrument of the various ruling governments.

In the New World, now including Western Europe, England, and Israel, the children have mostly assimilated the languages of the countries they are living in, and the parents, many survivors of the Holocaust, must rebuild their lives and aspirations. Most of the writing done is instinctively of nostalgic

nature, as if there is a need to preserve the last remains of a great culture for future generations. At the same time, ironically, there is very little done to pass on this culture and the Yiddish language to the next generations.

1. H.Leivik, writes "*Maharam fun Rutenberg*" (1945), about a mysterious messenger who takes a young concentration camp victim back in time to the city of Rutenberg, in the early 1200's. Ahasfer, just whisks him off, in space and time. The 'how' need not be explained in terms of Einstein's Theory of Relativity, or Space-time warps, etc. No sophisticated gadgetry is needed and yet, this is readily accepted by the Yiddish readership.
2. Bashevis Singer writes fantastic stories of magical and mystic nature, mostly based in the villages and townships ('shtetlekh') of Eastern Europe.

We must take into account one other aspect of Jewish life, which would naturally reject much of Science Fiction. Themes like (Alien) Invasions trying to wipe out Mankind, Abductions (by ETs), etc., were in fact part of daily Jewish life for centuries. Jews who lived for centuries in some lands were treated as if they were Aliens with Pogroms and discrimination rampant. In the 20th century, biochemical experiments on humans for cloning, or what not, were some of the very real experiences of WWII, perpetrated by German scientists. Thus, the idea of Utopias and of a better future became ingrained into folk legend, and the hope that days of the coming of the Messiah were close. Jews did not need to dream up "SF", when they often lived or died by the reality of it.

From the period of the 1970's to the present

In the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Union, we have a new generation of younger writers who are more scientifically sophisticated. Some of them make their way to Israel.

1. From the 1960's on, there is one major government sponsored Yiddish journal in the USSR called "*Sovetish Heymland*". It is also anti-Jewish (religion), anti-Israel, and toes the Communist party line. They do, however, bring in a new generation of Yiddish writers, and starting in the 1980's begin to publish a yearly special issue on the Cosmos and the Space-Race and include SF stories, - although mostly translated from the Soviet Literature.
2. Two major writers publish SF works: Chayim Bayder of the older generation writes a poem about Mars (He moved to the US, where he passed

¹² Nister – "*fun-mayne-giter*", Kharkov (1928) page 45: "*a mays emit a lets, mit a moyz, rui mit dem nister aleyh*" (A Story About a Clown, a Mouse and Der Nister Himself)

- away), and Boris Sandler of the younger generation (eventually immigrates to Israel, and later moves to the US to become editor-in-chief of the Yiddish Forward) writes "*Tsum Letsn Breg (To the Final Shore)*" – a story of Noah and his ark, and a space bound counterpart, searching for a place to land his spaceship. The story is later reprinted in "*Naye Vegn (New Paths)*" the Yiddish literary journal of the New Generation Yiddish writers in Israel, and again republished with other fantasy stories in his book "*Toyern (Gates)*".
3. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, some of these and others young writers have continued to write SF in Yiddish (more about them in Part 3).

In the free world, we do find, that, some modern SF has been written in Yiddish:

1. We have, of course, the world famous Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer. He has at least 2 short stories which are considered SF. Bashevis, a writer of fantasy-filled stories and winner of the Nobel prize for literature, was considered a great Yiddish writer. His stories, however, like the stories of the other writers of his generation, deal mostly with the Eastern European "world that is no more".
2. My stories begin appearing from 1972 on, first as satirical and humorous, speculative fiction, and then as more serious works of SF (we'll get to me in Part 3).



<https://vimeo.com/333318157>

3. We do find SF-ish type spoofs and satires from time to time, as well as a continual array of the traditional fantasy and mystical, magical stories.
4. My brother Jack (Yankl) Botwinik writes an SF-ish horror story "*Shrek*" (Fear), that I publish in "*Der Nayer Dor*" issue 3, 1980 (a once-a year magazine type journal that my father and I put out from 1978-1982 – more on that in Part 3).
5. In 2014, 12-year old Israeli born Etele Niborski-Trinh (daughter of Yiddish professors Eliezer Niborski and Miriam Trinh), self-publishes a booklet "*di ummeglekhe vakatsye*" (The Impossible Vacation) about her family's trip to the Moon. Written by her, in honour of her own Bat Mitsva.



6. In 2017 – A young animator, Yoni Salomon in Israel decides to make a Yiddish SF animation short called "*Niggun*"¹³ (melody), with Yiddish speaking astronauts in search of the legendary "Earth", home of their ancestors (pics below).

And I suppose, an 'honourable' mention should go to Michael Chabon for his "*Yiddish Policeman's Union*" (2007) – which really needs a full review (and is on my list of 'things to do' for CyberCozen) ...

That's all for now, from me

– but here's some more stuff of interest from the Yiddish MendeLe mailing list of June 2000:

MendeLe: Yiddish literature and language

Contents of Vol.10.004 – Jun 2 2000

1) Science fiction in Yiddish (Marc Caplan)

2) Science fiction in Yiddish (Iosif Vaisman)

1) Date: 23 Apr 2000

From: "A. Marc Caplan"

Subject: science fiction in Yiddish

¹³ Niggun – Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-OiokgaUdE> ; 12 min film: <https://vimeo.com/333318157>

and write-up about it: <https://www.fantasy-animation.org/current-posts/2019/5/9/niggun-by-yoni-salmon>

David Hewitt asks about science fiction in Yiddish. Although I've made the argument in a book review once that Yosef Perl's *Megale tmirin* is a kind of science fiction (if you're willing to accept practical kabole as a kind of science...) -- science fiction proper owes its start, like so much of our literature, to Mendele Moykher-Sforim, who translated a Jules Verne novel into Yiddish in the late 1860s, then parodied parts of his translation in the balloon sequences of *Di kliatshe*.... I know that works by Verne, Jack London, and H.G. Wells were translated into Yiddish during the glory days of Yiddish publishing (from about the 1890s until the 1930s).

Keep in mind that articles on science, and science as a general topic of discussion was of enormous interest in secular Yiddish circles of that era; an article about Darwinism is, for example, the only really memorable entry in the first number of *Di tsukunft* (1892).

As far as original science fiction novels in Yiddish, I know of only one genuine example: *Af yener zayt Sambatyon*, by one L. Borodulin (1929).



Borodulin was a Yiddish journalist who wrote mostly science articles for *Der Tog*. His novel, by the way, earns a footnote in Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers* (p. 546). My

wife and I have read the first 50 or so pages together;

It's mostly pretty entertaining--about a journalist in search of a mad scientist who has found his way to the land of the Red Jews after having invented a death ray. The Sambatyon¹⁴ river, it turns out, is made of a series of geysers--hence the regular eruptions that have prevented travelers (all accept this scientist and journalist, apparently) from crossing it all these years.... An intriguing mix of (Jewish) mythology and contemporary problems--like all the best science fiction in other languages.

- Marc Caplan

2)Date: Mon, 24 Apr 2000

From: Iosif Vaisman

Subject: science fiction in Yiddish

In response to David Hewitt's question (09.078) - a small bibliography from my old Usenet post: Newsgroups: soc.culture.jewish,rec.arts.sf.written,rec.arts.sf.misc
Date: Wed, 22 Jul 1998
From: Iosif Vaisman

A. Tanenboym, *Tsvishen himel un vaser: a visenshaftlikher roman*. NY: Y. Sapirshtayn, 1896. 479 p.

A. Tanenboym, *Doktor und tsoyberer*. NY: Farlag fun Yehudah Katsenelenbogen, 1899

A. Tanenboym, *Di shvartse kunst a vissenshaftlikher roman*. Nyu York: Hibru pob. ko., 1899. 75 p.

Moses Seiffert, *Baym tir fun Ganeydn, oder A puster holem mit a groysen emes: a fantastisher roman* [At the Paradise Gates] / NY: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1917. 64 p.

¹⁴ Sambatyon - Legendary "Sabbath River" beyond which the [Ten Lost Tribes of Israel](#) were exiled in 721 BC by [Shalmaneser V](#), king of [Assyria](#). [Legends](#) describe it as a roaring torrent (often not of water but of stones), the turbulence of which ceases only on the

Sabbath, when Jews are not allowed to travel.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sambaton>

(continued):

Lazar Borodulin, Oyf yener zayt Sambatyon. Visenshaftlikher un fantastisher roman [On the Other Side of Sambathion. Science fiction novel] / Nyu York: A. Slutski, 1929. 190 p.

Solomon Bogin, Der ferter internatsyonal, fantastishe dertseylung [The Fourth International] / Nyu York: Maks Yankevitsh, 1929. 116 p.

Leon Kussman, Narnbund, fantastishe trilogye [Union of Fools] / NY: Farlag Atlantis, 1931. 224 p.

Y.L. Goldshtayn, Tsuzamenbruch oder iberboy: fantastisher roman in fir teyln. Varshe: Farlag "Bikher", 1934. 2 v.

Velvl Tshernovetski, Erev der ferter velt-milkhme, Hines-di kenign fun Mars, fantastisher roman [On the Eve of World War IV, The Martian Queen] / Buenos Aires: El Magazine Argentino, 1959. 319 p.



Leybl Botvinik, Di geheyme shlihes: fantastishe dertseylung [The Secret Mission] / Montreal: D. Botvinik, 1980. 101 p.

Besides, there are Yiddish translations of SF "classics": all major works of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, etc.

Iosif Vaisman

Fun from the Web:

- [China's Tianwen-1 spacecraft will reach Mars orbit on February 10](https://www.space.com/china-tianwen-1-mars-orbit-insertion-february-2021)
<https://www.space.com/china-tianwen-1-mars-orbit-insertion-february-2021>
- [New law is first to protect Apollo sites from future moon missions](https://www.space.com/one-small-step-space-heritage-act.html)
<https://www.space.com/one-small-step-space-heritage-act.html>
- [Humans could move to this floating asteroid belt colony in the next 15 years](https://www.space.com/megasatellite-colony-ceres-oneill-cylinder)
<https://www.space.com/megasatellite-colony-ceres-oneill-cylinder>
- [Retro-cool starfighters and spaceships revealed for 'Star Wars: The High Republic'](https://www.space.com/star-wars-high-republic-spaceship)
<https://www.space.com/star-wars-high-republic-spaceship>
- [If You Live in the Star Trek 'Mirror Universe,' You're Probably Going to Die](https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/star-trek-mirror-universe-deaths)
<https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/star-trek-mirror-universe-deaths>
- [X-Men vs. Fantastic Four Movie with Deadpool & Daredevil? Director Confirms](https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/fox-x-men-fantastic-four-movie-with-deadpool-daredevil)
<https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/fox-x-men-fantastic-four-movie-with-deadpool-daredevil>

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the above topics and with your OK, we may publish them!

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