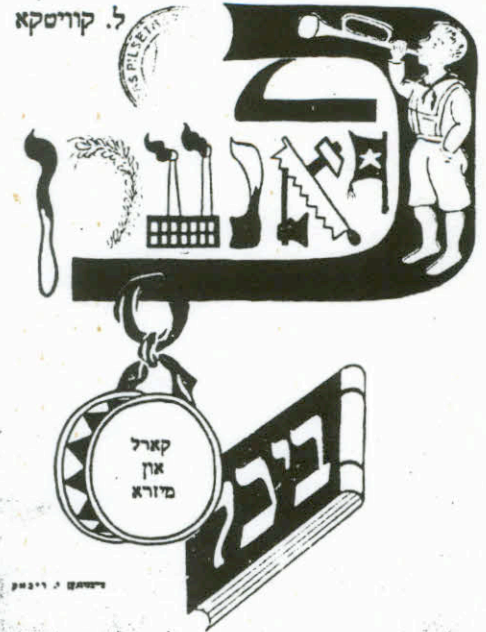
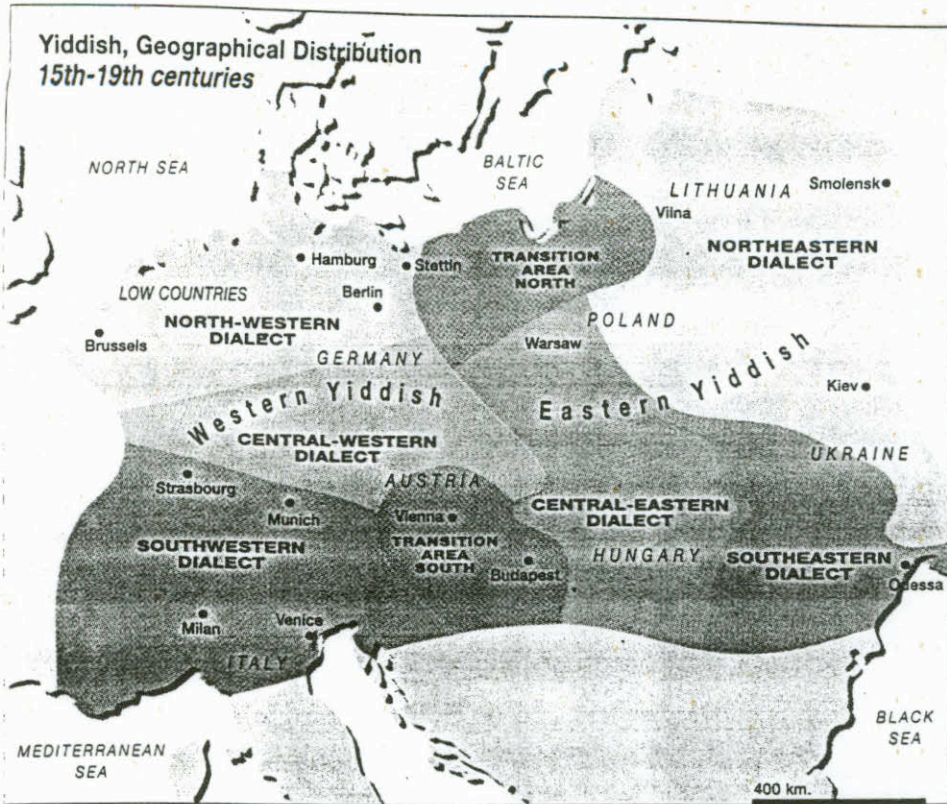


# 10th–20th Centuries



3. Leib Kvitko, "Karl and Mizra," From the Pioneer Book series. Kharkov, c. 1927.

Period	Yiddish-speaking Communities	Historical Background	Linguistic Characteristics	Important Dates
Early Yiddish (before 1250)	Valleys of the Moselle, Rhine, Main and the Upper Danube Rivers.	In the Carolingian period, Jews settle in the valleys of the Moselle and Rhine rivers; the Crusades.	Western Yiddish composed of: Hebrew-Aramaic, Romance, German.	No written documents.
Old Yiddish (c. 1250–c. 1500)	Spreads to Bohemia and Moravia, Poland and Lithuania, northern Italy, Palestine and Egypt.	European expansion eastward; Slavic lands are opened to Jewish colonization, driven by the Black Death and expulsions from the large towns of Germany and Austria.	Appearance of a fourth component: Slavic; written language based on Western Yiddish.	<b>1272:</b> the earliest known Yiddish text: a two-line rhyming blessing from the Worms <i>Mahzor</i> (prayer book). <b>1382:</b> the oldest literary documents in Yiddish: a fable, and four short epics on biblical themes, found in the Cairo Genizah.
Middle Yiddish (c. 1500–c. 1750)	Spreads to western Alsace, Holland, northern Germany, and eastern Courland.	The Union of Lublin: southern and western Lithuania are annexed to Poland; the Thirty Years War; Chmielnicki's massacres and the Swedish War; dispersion of the Jewish population westward ( <i>Landjuden</i> ) and eastward ( <i>shtetls</i> , villages).	Formation of Eastern Yiddish dialects which are distinct from Western Yiddish; yet the written language is still in the Western idiom.	<b>1469–1569:</b> Elijah Levita, called Bahur, born in Germany but lived in Italy, Yiddish writer, author of the first Hebrew-Yiddish dictionary. <b>1534–1535:</b> first printed books in Yiddish. <b>1622:</b> the fourth edition – and the earliest extant – of the <i>Zena u-Rena</i> : written in the late 16th century for women, this collection of commentaries and stories is the most popular Yiddish book of the period (over 200 editions).
New Yiddish (c. 1750–)	Declines in western Europe, spreads in eastern Europe, Palestine and the Americas.	Spread of the <i>Haskalah</i> and of Hasidism; urbanization, secularization, waves of migration to the West and to Palestine; progressive political emancipation; World War II and genocide; liquidation of Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union.	Considerable enrichment of the language due to its use in new social situations (political movements, modern literature, newspapers, theater, schools, science); a written language based on Eastern Yiddish; emergence of a Yiddish literary culture.	<b>1790–1860:</b> abundant <i>Haskalah</i> literature: M. Lefin, J. Peri, A.B. Gotlober, I. Aksenfeld. <b>1815:</b> First edition of the <i>Stories of Nahman of Bratslav</i> and of the <i>Praise of the Baal Shem-Tov</i> , the principal Hasidic works in Yiddish. <b>1862:</b> first Yiddish journal (with a Hebrew title: <i>Kol Mevasser</i> , "Announcing Voice"). <b>1870–1917:</b> the period of the "Classics." <b>1908:</b> A Yiddish conference in Chernowitz. Between the World Wars, an efflorescence of modern Yiddish literature in Poland, the Soviet Union and the United States.