Dear Reader,

What you are now reading is a first ever: an English micro-issue of the all-Yiddish magazine Afn Shvel (On the Threshold) prepared for the occasion of its 70th anniversary. This special PDF edition contains the full English translations of three articles chosen to best acquaint a broader audience with who we are and where we have come from. (The color print version has only the first parts of the articles.) These three articles also appear in Yiddish in our 84-page anniversary retrospective issue, which features some of the most compelling and representative articles published by us over the last 70 years. The English translation of the Table of Contents of that issue, reprinted here on page 2, will give readers a sense of the scope and focus of the magazine over time.

Afn Shvel was initially the organ of the Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization, an organization founded in 1935 which sought a territory and safe haven for Yiddish-speaking Jews in areas as far-flung as Western Australia, Suriname and Alaska. In 1979 under the leadership of noted Yiddish linguist Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter, the Freeland League was restructured into the League for Yiddish, a non-political Yiddish cultural advocacy organization whose goals include: encouraging people to speak Yiddish in their everyday life; enhancing the prestige of Yiddish as a living language, both within and outside the Yiddish-speaking community; and promoting the modernization of Yiddish.

When you look up the continuation of the English articles online, take your time on our website, browse around and get to know the projects that best advance our goals. Pass this issue on to others who might be interested and tell all your Yiddish-speaking friends about Afn Shvel. If you read Yiddish yourself, please consider subscribing. Let us know if you would like to be on our mailing list. If you are able, please support our mission financially by making a tax-deductible contribution either online or by using the envelope provided. In any case, we look forward to your ongoing spiritual and moral support. Read and enjoy!

Sheva Zucker
Editor-in-Chief

From the Editor

Afn Shvel: The Changing Mission of a Yiddish Magazine

Leafing through old issues of Afn Shvel, I found — in the 20th anniversary issue — this sentence penned by Michael (Mikhoel) C. Astour, the author of the monumental two-volume History of the Freeland League, “The contributors of Afn Shvel inherited from the president of the first territorialist organization, Israel Zangwill, the courage to be ‘fighters for unpopular ideas’” (June-July 1962, p. 3). A few issues later we find this greeting from the Yiddish writer Meylekh Ravitch, “It is good to know that Jewish thought has this platform, this non-conformist Freeland” (June-July 1962, p. 6).

To find out what these unpopular ideas were and what this “non-conformism” that Ravitch lauds consisted of, let us go back 70 years to the year 1941 to see what Afn Shvel was writing about in those years and to examine to what extent it has remained with or departed from its original mission.

Afn Shvel (the words mean “on the threshold”) was, from its inception in 1941 until the late 1970s, the organ of a political territorialist movement called “Di frayland-lige far der yidisher territoryalistisher kolonizatsye” (The Freeland League for Jewish Territorialist Colonization). Freeland, heir to the earlier Jewish Territorialist Organization which had disbanded in 1925 and the Socialist Territorialists, arose as a result of the economic crisis of the 1930s and Hitler’s coming to power.

That Freeland and its organ Afn Shvel were a response to the world crisis at the time is clearly seen in the opening article by Ben-Adir (pseudonym of Abraham Rosin), the first editor of Afn Shvel. A territorialist on ideological grounds, Ben-Adir believed that modern Jews and Jewishness could not sustain themselves against the double threat of anti-semitism on the one hand and assimilation on the other. Only by living in their own territory, he believed, could Jews lead a healthy, vibrant Jewish life. The events of the late 1930s and early 1940s added new urgently practical motives to his ideology.

His editorial in the first issue entitled, “What Do We Want” begins with these words, “A world catastrophe has erupted and even before that and together with that — the greatest and most terrible catastrophe ever to befall the Jewish people. ...”
The Jewish people,” Ben-Adir continues, “must create their own land and build their own home — a home that will be a refuge from specifically Jewish suffering, a home for a normal, natural, healthy and full-blooded national life” (p. 3).

Only near the end does he use the phrase “afn shvel” (on the threshold), saying, “The longer the consciousness that we are standing on the threshold of a new world penetrates into the broad strata of the population the deeper it goes. How should this new world be fashioned and how should the new life of the Jewish people be fashioned within it? — These are the problems of the day” (p. 4).

Ben-Adir’s insistence that the magazine not be narrowly partisan or dogmatic would lead one to believe, erroneously, that it would be a platform for all kinds of political ideas. His concept of “non-partisan” extends, however, as he himself says, only to “various directions and shades” as long as they are “directions and shades” of territorialism.

This orientation very much defined the content of the magazine for quite some time. Almost everything published in Afn Shvel during the first sixteen years of it existence, that is, until the death of its second editor, Dr. Isaac Nachman Steinberg [Yitskhok Nakhmen Shteynberg], was in some way connected to territorialism and to questions of peoplehood, the underlying philosophic issue informing territorialism. In short, the magazine existed to advance the goals of the Freeland League which had as its platform: a concentrated agricultural and industrial colonization in an unpopulated or almost unpopulated territory, in a democratic country, that would serve as a secure foundation for the social-economic and national-cultural development of the Jewish people (Preface, The History of the Freeland League, [Buenos Aires-New York: Frayland-Lige Publishing, 1967], p. 2).

Political autonomy was not a requirement. Since the movement arose as a response to the problems of European Jews, and most specifically, Eastern European Jews, the official language of the territory was to be Yiddish. The attitude towards the language varied from editor to editor and from writer to writer. Some saw it as an end in itself while for others it was just the natural linguistic expression of the residents of the would-be territory.

It was fortunate for the Freeland League (and for Afn Shvel) that in those crucial years of territorialist dreams they had as secretary-general someone as exceptional as Dr. Steinberg. Although largely forgotten today, he is arguably one of the most interesting and remarkable Jews of the twentieth century. At once a religious Jew and a revolutionary, he served as justice minister in Lenin’s first cabinet until he himself, seeing which way the wind was blowing, resigned early in 1918. In 1923 he fled Russia for political reasons, settling in Berlin, and ten years later, in 1933, he fled Germany to London where he became involved with the Freeland League, taking over as secretary-general in 1937. In his writings, many of which appeared in Afn Shvel, he emphasized spiritual Jewishness (gayst-yidishkeyt) as opposed to state Jewishness (melukhe-yidishkeyt). He, and through him, Freeland, sought a home for the Jewish body but also a place in which the Jewish soul could flourish in its infinite variety.

During its existence the Freeland League attempted a number of projects, with varying degrees of success, most of these under Steinberg’s leadership. At the Evian Conference in the summer of 1938 the League caught the attention of the world. Roosevelt energetically supported a plan in Guyana (then British Guiana). Other possible territories that were discussed at Evian and elsewhere were the French colonies — the Hebrides and New Caledonia — as well as Ecuador, Alaska and the Peace River area in British Columbia. Discussion of these various projects naturally found its way onto the pages of Afn Shvel.

There was one country, however, that Freeland never considered as a homeland and that was Palestine. On the contrary, it was often mentioned as a place where a homeland should not be established although that is not to say that the organization’s attitude towards Erets-Yisroel was completely negative.

In a very thoughtful and prescient article entitled “Freeland and Palestine” published in November 1941 Steinberg discusses both Freeland’s position on Palestine as a homeland and the Arab question.

Speaking from the territorialist perspective that the spiritual concept of the Jewish people is naturally higher than the physical concept of the Land of Israel, Steinberg cautions against discounting the importance of the reality of contemporary Palestine for that reason. If the claim to the land is not justified either on biblical grounds or due to the Holocaust there is one argument that may be brought to bear and that is the reality of the newly created modern Palestine.
These 500,000 Jewish people ... have created a new historical basis for the right to the Land of Israel. No peace conference can make light of this... True, even on the strength of this creativity one cannot conquer the will of the Arab nationalists to be masters “in their own home.”... Who says that it must be conquered using those ways in which official Zionism has gone until now? (p. 4).

Ultimately, Freeland, and by extension, Afn Shvel, rejected Zionism as the answer, because they found the question of the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine to be complex, troubling, and without a solution. In addition, they felt that not all Jews who needed or wanted to settle there could do so, particularly if immigration were to be handled intelligently and systematically.

Steinberg warned that although a territory for Jews was perhaps possible in Palestine it ought not be the only haven:

Certainly the battle lines of Palestine should be defended and strengthened. Certainly the positions that the people have built there should not be weakened for even a single minute. But who — in modern day strategy — relies on a single line of defense (p. 4).

The search for other “lines of defense” particularly during and immediately after the Holocaust took the form of various colonization projects, those of Australia and Suriname being the most developed.

The immediate Holocaust-informed platform of Freeland can be seen in a resolution accepted at a mass meeting of the League held on January 17, 1945, printed in Afn Shvel, (January-February 1945):

“The difficult prospects of a ravaged Europe force us to find a new home for Jews in the democratic countries that want to increase their population. Australia distinguishes itself,” Dr. Steinberg continues, “as the country that holds out the greatest hopes for the Jews” (p. 25).

In Australia Freeland placed its hope in the Kimberley Project, a plan to settle Jews in The Kimberley, in the north of the province of Western Australia, which had at the time a population of 460,000, almost half of which lived in Perth. The region was 10,600 square miles, or roughly the size of Belgium.

Dr. Steinberg was sent to Australia in May of 1939 and, due to the war, remained there until 1943. Naturally, Afn Shvel at that time carried many articles about Australia, with an emphasis on the political and philosophical aspects of colonization. In the column Freeland Chronicle, June 1941 we find this note entitled, “Australian Government Considers the Plan of Jewish Colonization”:

...Dr. Steinberg who is presently in Australia, has already managed to interest the Australian government in his project, demonstrating that the district of East Kimberley, a tremendous area that is just lying there empty could provide a home for Jews and at the same time be a blessing for Australia as well as for the British Empire in general [...] (June 1941, p. 15).

The plan naturally had its opponents as well. Needless to say, there was fierce opposition from the Zionists. Not infrequently, Afn Shvel reported on how the Zionists, both in America and in the land of colonization, opposed the various colonization projects. In April-May 1945 in the article “Australian Zionists Combat Freeland” Dr. Steinberg records the reaction of Mr. Boaz, the vice-president of the Council of Australian Jews, who deliberately left Kimberley out of a memorandum on Jewish immigration to Australia.

After the failure of the Kimberley Project Afn Shvel went on to chronicle Freeland’s attempt to create a Jewish territory in the Dutch colony Suriname which began in 1947 and lingered on until the beginning of the 1950s. The title “Holland Makes an Offer to the Jews” proudly graced the first page of the January-February 1947 issue:

Cartoon depicting the issue of Jewish homelessness. Londoner’s Diary, August 2, 1946
The 17th of February the governor of Suriname telegraphed the Freeland League regarding the decision to invite an expert commission to explore local conditions and to discuss with the government all of the issues in relation to the matter.

The article stands in the right column on page 1 next to one in the left column entitled “Against Illusions — With the Truth” decrying the terrorism of the Irgun in Israel. The juxtaposition of these two articles speaks volumes.

The pages of Afn Shvel themselves, reveal, however, how marginal these territorialist projects were in Jewish life. Even Dr. Steinberg’s admirers did not necessarily agree with him. One greeting offered by Leyzer Ran, the compiler of the volume Vilna, The Jerusalem of Lithuania, (in Yiddish) on the occasion of Steinberg’s 60th birthday is particularly interesting (December 1948, p. 6):

Dear Yitskhok-Nakhmen Shteynberg,

By celebrating six wandering and redemption-thirsty decades for world, man and nation on all the foreign thresholds of the world, a quiet dream full of longing from a homeless dreamer from the Vilna Ghetto:

... It will certainly not be harder to deal with the government of Israel than with democratic Holland, and instead of a cold and alien favor-exile in Suriname, the long awaited hour has come to build a Freeland Center for the Mother Tongue in our own Jewish Negev.

The time has come, Yitskhok-Nakhmen!

May you be blessed with long life and may we celebrate your 70th birthday in New Vilna by the Kinneret.

Leyzer Ran
Cuba

In those days almost everything in the magazine was directly or indirectly related to territorialism. This might be reflected in book reviews, articles on agriculture or even poetry. Book reviews, for example, always focused on colonization, agriculture, or exploring new territories, in short, on those topics relevant to establishing a homeland based on agriculture. Articles about colonization, both Jewish and non-Jewish, abound. In 1941 Afn Shvel published a series on colonization, which included the articles, “How the Chinese Colonize” (July-August 1941), “The Colonization of Greece” (September-October 1941) and “Colonization in Libya” (November 1941). In 1949 Meyer Bursuk published a series about Jewish colonization in Argentina. The intent was clear: readers were to learn by example how to create the future Freeland colony.

Even poetry was generally connected in some ways to these themes. A number of poems by such authors as Leyb Wasserman, M.M. Shaffir, Eliezer Greenberg, to name but a few, express longing for the Old Country, which is, after all, a kind of yearning for a Yiddishland, and further evidence of the need for a new home.

Since Afn Shvel arose as a response to the plight of the Jews following Hitler’s rise to power, the war was, of course, reflected in its pages, but not as directly as one might imagine. One did not and would not read Afn Shvel for accounts of what happened, how the Jews “lived” in the ghettos and camps, and how they were annihilated. This would be the province of a newspaper and what’s more, the editors probably felt that their readers were well aware of the tragic facts. Indirectly, however, the magazine was very much concerned with the Holocaust and one could even say that, given its mission of finding a homeland for Europe’s long-suffering refugees, it was its main preoccupation. This concern might therefore be reflected in poetry as well as in essays or the very occasional factual reporting. Take for example this poem by Ezra Korman, a sacred parody of the traditional women’s prayer “God of Abraham,” published in the August 1944 issue:

Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob —
Thus did my mother with pious thoughts
In words soft, simple and quiet
Whisper with motherly worry her prayer.

I’m full of unrest, my heart is embittered,
My spirit is in a quandary, encumbered and in shock,
And I cannot find any pious words
With which to come to you, as my mother would have done.

I don’t possess the simplicity, the wise humility,
The belief in eternal greatness and importance,
And I cannot, like her, only praise you and thank you
In this time of slaughter, of Jews being extinguished.
I am not one to announce or lament, like Job,  
But there are no more Jews left in Kiev,  
And I know that they call you God of mercy and compassion,  
But I have not heard mention of that.

I feel no despair, not even a spark,  
Nor do I seek defense in my inferiority,  
But I have a complaint to you, compassionate God,  
For there is not a single Jew left in Ukraine.

I don’t have the simplicity, the humility of heart,  
The belief in eternal greatness and importance,  
My thoughts cannot comprehend you,  
Oh God, without Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Literal translation by Sheva Zucker

After the Holocaust the newly established State of Israel becomes a central issue causing a crisis of identity and direction for the Freeland League and Afn Shvel. “A number of members gave up hope in territorialism and consequently in its organ, Afn Shvel, some quietly so and others slamming the door so that everyone might know” (July-September 1986, p. 1).

What would and could now be the direction of a magazine whose raison d’être had been the establishment of a territory for Jews once another such territory was already established? Whether they wanted to or not, the people connected with Afn Shvel had to reckon with Israel.

Israel and its relationship to the diaspora is a frequent topic in the magazine. Afn Shvel was a rare vehicle through which the more radical sector in Israel tried to reach an audience abroad. Left-wing writers like Natan Hofshi, Natan Alterman and others were often published here.

Natan Hofshi, the founder of an Israeli pacifist group, argued for a bi-national state. In an article entitled “Literary War against the Truth,” November-December 1952, a response to an attack by Yiddish writer A. Almi on his book The Other Voice in the Land of Israel, he writes,

There are two things that Almi does not believe: the first — that we could have come to terms with the Arabs peacefully on the basis of a bi-national-state, and that the Arabs were in most cases driven forcefully from their cities and villages by our military... If Almi were to bother to come and live here in Israel ... we would show him that the Arabs of Ramla, Lod, Yafo, Migdal-Gad, Dir-Yasin and many other settlements were driven from their homes with fire and sword. And the greater part of them fled in fear! Does the Jew not know the taste of fleeing in fear! (p. 13).

At their second conference shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel the Freeland League drafted a set of resolutions stating its position on the newly formed country which were published in the October-November 1948 issue. They are at once congratulatory but also very explicit that Israel could not be the only Jewish homeland nor could Hebrew be the only language of the Jewish people. Resolution no. 3 is relevant here:

... By introducing Hebrew as the only official language of the yishuv and because of its negative attitude to Yiddish and Yiddish culture the State of Israel has set up a wall between the Jews of Israel and the Jews outside of Israel who speak Yiddish and live out their lives spiritually in Yiddish (p. 18).

What would and could now be the direction of a magazine whose raison d’être had been the establishment of a territory for Jews once another such territory was already established?

That was written in 1948 but how does one explain the fact that Afn Shvel remained the organ of the Freeland League, a political movement with an unpopular past and an even less promising future, until 1979? Given that the establishment of a Yiddish-speaking territory now seemed highly unlikely, Freeland activists turned their thoughts and efforts towards what was called kleyn-kolonizatsye (small-scale colonization). If even this could not materialize
then efforts must be put into choosing to build a rich, spiritual Jewish life — without land and without borders. Ultimately, *Afn Shvel* became less territorialist and more Yiddishist in orientation.

As interesting as was all the political talk, perhaps even more so, were the articles about peoplehood, language and Jewish life that discuss the ideological foundations of territorialism. Even though the dream of establishing a territory was no longer viable many of the reasons for wanting to do still obtained. The question remained both during Dr. Steinberg’s tenure and long after: how could modern Jews create a rich spiritual life and maintain their own culture and language, now not so much in the face of anti-Semitism but in the face of assimilation?

In an article entitled “Territorialist Thoughts” — one of the many by Avrom Golomb, famed educator, essayist, national thinker and frequent contributor to *Afn Shvel* — he accuses Jews of being guilty of their own cultural deficiency as well as of the low quality of Jewish life, in general:

> Why do we make gentiles of ourselves? Why do we sweep every sort of Jewishness out of our homes? Why are we embarrassed about our names? [...] It appears that the *goles* (diaspora) is inside of us. We create it, we build it, we convince ourselves that we are living in an alien world because we don’t want to build our own world for ourselves.

A territory of our own, he goes on to suggest, might not even help. “We don’t need to look for a territory, even were we able to find one, but we need to have Jews with a territorialist psyche” (p. 10) (See A. Golomb’s article on p. 29 of issue #352-353). This “territorialist psyche” expressed itself in a striving to preserve one’s own culture in one’s own language, Yiddish, which was very clearly visible in the second phase of *Afn Shvel*, a phase that the journal itself called “militant Yiddishism,” bearing the mark of its main coworker Mordkhe Schaechter.

Since Dr. Steinberg’s demise in 1957 until issue #236 (April-June 1979) when Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter officially became editor-in-chief, *Afn Shvel* was edited by an editorial board consisting throughout the years of Mordkhe Schaechter, Aaron Glanz-Leyeles, Saul Goodman, Beyle Gottesman, Michael Astour, Leybl Cahan, Leybl Bayon (of Mexico), Avrom Kin, Zeydl Khabatski and Yankev Levine.

Even though it is generally acknowledged that Mordkhe Schaechter (in partnership with Leybl Bayon) was the de facto editor, it took Schaechter more than twenty years actually to claim that title, perhaps because the reverence for Dr. Steinberg was so great — so charismatic and so beloved was he — that it was felt that no one could take his place. For ten years after Steinberg’s death his name continued to appear on stationery and from time to time in the magazine as editor-in-chief and as secretary-general of the Freeland League.

A piece of archival evidence found at YIVO suggests that Steinberg was not exactly the household word we think he should have been. At the bottom of a letter addressed to “Mr. So-and-So” asking people, probably members, to make a contribution to the organization in honor of the 10th yortsayt of Dr. Steinberg and his daughter Ada Siegel who died very young, we find handwritten at the bottom:

> 1) Who the hell are Steinberg and Siegel?
> 2) If I had been the one to die 10 years ago, would they have written a greeting for me?
> 3) If Dr. Steinberg died 10 years ago, I notice that he is still Secretary-General of the Freeland League — don’t you think it would be appropriate for him to resign and give over the post to someone a bit more alive?
> Sincerely,
> Mr. So-and-So

In the immediate post-Steinberg period one could still find articles on territorialism and politics. Israel appears frequently, both as the subject of articles as well as in the press review. Some of the topics covered include: the absence of a Yiddish translation at the Eichmann Trial; why Yiddish is practically neither seen nor heard at Yad Vashem;
or why an anthology of Israeli literature includes Arabic but not Yiddish writers.

A fateful moment came in the October-December issue in 1979 when the Freeland League finally dissolved and reconstituted itself as the League for Yiddish. This was hardly a sudden break, — ideological wavering had been evident in Af*n Shel* since Dr. Steinberg’s death and persisted for the next twenty-two years. In this turning-point issue in which the magazine now defined itself as “A social-literary quarterly” as opposed to the “publication of the Freeland League,” the mailing panel on the back still carried the words, “published by Freeland Territorialist League of America for Jewish Colonization, Inc.”

In an article entitled, “A New Name, A Fresh Start,” Mordkhe Schaechter, now fully claiming the title of editor, outlines the direction of the newly constituted organization. Formerly the organ of a very specific political movement Af*n Shel* now sought, like its new publisher, to transcend all political and religious boundaries within the Jewish community and to unite all who spoke Yiddish and viewed it seriously. One could call this an evolution rather than a revolution because the magazine had been in the process of moving from territorialism to Yiddishism for quite some time.

This Yiddishism was reflected in two ways, both in an interest in the language as a language, the province of Mordkhe Schaechter, Yiddish linguist and professor, as well as in what was referred to above as “militant Yiddishism.” The hallmark of the magazine was Laytish Mame-loshn (Authentic Yiddish), a column introduced by Schaechter in 1957 and which came to occupy a more central role as Af*n Shel* moved away from politics. Mordkhe Schaechter was very much concerned that Yiddish be a language suited to life in the twentieth century offering its speakers the possibility of saying everything that modern Jews might want to say, whether it be on the subject of plants, telephones, computers or space travel. The column featured frequent discussions on how to convey various, not exclusively but often modern, terms in Yiddish such as power plant — kraftstantsye, elektrishe stantsye, or elektray (July-December 1983); weightlessness in space — ought one say voglozikeyt or onvogikeyt in roym or in kosmos (July-September, 1985).

A look at the term “shredder” in the January-March, 1988 issue helps illuminate Schaechter’s approach. First of all, Yiddish has to keep up with the times. Although in this issue, Af*n Shel* is defined as a “social-literary quarterly,” the organization’s name still appears in the address as “Freeland Territorialist League...”. Although the magazine was ever vigilant against foes of Yiddish and wrongs against the language this was by no means its full scope. Over time the balance shifted from militant Yiddishism, this is not the case. Although the magazine was ever vigilant against foes of Yiddish and wrongs against the language this was by no means its full scope.
Yiddishism to broader cultural, literary and linguistic topics. Af

Shvel was home to the best Yiddish writers: the poets Avrom

Sutzkever, Beyle Schaechter Gottesman, Rifke Basman Ben-Hayim,

M.M. Shaffir, Malke Heifetz Tussman, the sociolinguist Joshua

Fishman, the prose writers Blume Lempel, Lili Berger, Tsvi Ayznman,

Yehuda Elberg and Yechiel Shraibman, and young academicians like

David Roskies, Rakhmiel Peltz and Hannah Kliger. It was indeed, as

the words following the title suggest, a “gezelschaftlekh-literarisher”

(social-literary) magazine.

It is with this orientation that Af

Shvel has come into the

third phase, the post Mordkhe Schaechter phase, under the pres-

ent editorial staff. We are no longer “officially” militantly Yid-

dishist although we are still committed to Yiddish as a living spo-

ken language and a vehicle for Jewish cultural expression. We are

no longer territorialists (most of us, probably not even in some

secret corner of our hearts) and we are far enough removed from

it that we are no longer afraid of our territorialist past. The issue

of creating a place for Yiddish and Yiddish culture in Jewish life is

still crucially important to us.

We publish solely in Yiddish. Those who write for us are both

young and old and come from the world over; most are from the

United States but we also have contributors from Canada, Israel,

Moldova, Australia, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Belgium, France,

among others. Since the “rejuvenation” of the magazine in 2005

we’ve introduced several columns. In “About Books” librarians or

scholars discuss a particular collection of books or archival material.

In “On the Jewish Street,” Marc Brukhes writes about popular culture

from a specifically Jewish perspective. Taking into account that

many of our readers are not totally proficient in the language we

publish several articles accompanied by fairly extensive glossaries.

We understand that the members of the younger generation will

not read a Yiddish magazine simply to fulfill the mitzvah of reading

Yiddish; there is plenty of fine literature to read in the language

without it. People should not be reading our magazine out of a sense

of guilt or pity but rather because they want to do so. We believe that

Yiddish readers have the right to a magazine that is just as interest-

ing and enjoyable as the magazines they read in English (or whatev-

er the language of their country is). The contents and the appearance

must go hand in hand — one enriches the other. Thanks to our won-
derful art director Yankl Salant we have been able

This image which accompanies Marc

Brukhes column “On the Jewish

Street” is entitled “Roots,” from the

cycle “When I Return” by Alexander


Although a Yiddish magazine must be just as interesting and as vibrant as anything one might

read in English it must be something that one

would not be able to find in English. It must bring

readers into the deeply complicated and often

contradictory world of that which I.N. Steinberg

would have called “mentsh un yid” (human being

and Jew), which expresses itself in a Jewish lan-

guage and can only express itself in Yiddish.