

# Don't Knock Yiddish For Dogs Until You've Tried It!

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9/28/2017

While I was excited to see [The Forward](#) follow The New York Times in covering our Yiddish for Dogs program, it was disappointing that the author missed the point of the event—and, more importantly, seemed confused about the new Workmen's Circle and what we're about today. With that in mind, I suggest that we *zitz* (sit), *shtai* (stay), and update the narrative.

Just as The Forward has undergone an incredible evolution over the past century, so have we. The new Workmen's Circle powers progressive Jewish identity through Jewish cultural engagement, Yiddish language learning, multigenerational education, and social-justice activism. In our second century of life, we're excited to find a new generation embracing our mission — the intersection of our heritage, traditions, language, and activism.

Every day, we are seeing an inspiring renewal of people who want to reconnect with their *Yiddishkayt* heritage through Jewish culture and our Yiddish language. We are proud today to be offering the largest Yiddish language program in the United States, with over twenty classes taught online and in-person and upwards of 250 students enrolled each semester.

In response to this Yiddish revival, we also are developing new programs for people to discover and embrace their Yiddish roots. One such program is our Yiddish for Dogs event, which was piloted in August and drew a lively group of dogs and their human companions to Central Park on a Sunday morning.

The Forward didn't attend our event. But its writer took a disparaging tone, and misrepresented much of the program's intent and outcome. Even stranger to us, she erroneously characterized our longtime affiliation with The Forward (which we never "operated," although with whom we are proud to have shared a building!).

Had The Forward writer attended our cultural event, she would have encountered a vibrant cultural outing, which drew about 20 people (not the seven she noted!) who were animatedly noshing and chatting in Yiddish in a joyous, meaningful way.

The event illustrated that New Yorkers—and I suspect, many Jewish (and Jewishly connected) Americans – are interested in reading, speaking, writing, and even acting in the language that was spoken by Eastern European Jewry for more than a thousand years. And further, many busy New Yorkers are looking for new and novel ways to combine their passions—Jewish culture and dog ownership among them.

That's why we're returning to Central Park in October, for another Yiddish for Dogs event. We wanted to accommodate the waiting list we had of people who couldn't attend the first time around and who begged for another opportunity.

To us, all of this speaks volumes that many people today are searching for accessible, engaging, and meaningful opportunities to connect with their Jewish identity. And the Workmen's Circle, true to its mission, is committed to finding and creating engaging and novel ways to meet this need and connect new audiences to our heritage, traditions, and values.

To the Forward, we say: Kum (come!). We hope you'll join us.

*Ann Toback is a lifelong progressive activist and the Executive Director of the Workmen's Circle.*