

New York Values Run Amuck: Ex-Socialists Teach Dogs Commands In Yiddish

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There are certain objects and behaviors that are unquestionable hallmarks of New York: bagels with smoked fish, ill-disguised fury at tourists who walk too slowly, humans dressed as Elmo accosting the unwitting in Times Square. But for those like Ted Cruz, who in a long-past era — could it be possible I'm remembering it with fondness? — criticized, ahem, "[New York Values](#)," the city has produced a newly daunting prospect: dogs who respond to commands delivered in Yiddish.

As The New York Times' Alix Strauss [reported](#), the Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, a storied Jewish not-for-profit that formerly helped operate the Forward — and shares its socialist past — recently held its first-ever Yiddish education class for canines. Held in Central Park, and attracting seven very enthusiastic human attendees, the course schooled the pooches present in the basics of *Yiddishkeit* dog etiquette.

Among those standards were commands to sit (*zits*), stay (*shtai*), come (*kum*) and lie down (*arop*), as well as signals to the pups that they had been good (*gut*) or were getting a treat (*maykhl*), and the dreaded imperative "no" (*neyn*).

The humans in attendance ate chocolate rugelach, the dogs munched on apple-stuffed kichel, traditional bowtie-shaped cookies, and a rich cultural tradition in the midst of a revival gained some new four-legged adherents.

"This is an affirmation of culture and life," a visiting California resident named Amanda Devons told Strauss. "It's another positive way of being Jewish and bringing back a dying language. I had no one to speak it to. Now I can speak it to my dog."

"New Yorkers love their dogs," said the Workmen's Circle's director, Ann Toback. "This was a great way to integrate the two."

[Jesse Lempel](#) November 28, 2015