

The B'nai B'rith World Center

Jerusalem

B'NAI B'RITH
AND ISRAEL:
THE
UNBROKEN
COVENANT

INTRODUCTION

The booklet before you tells the remarkable and little-known story of B'nai B'rith in Eretz Yisrael from its beginnings in the last decade of the 19th century until the period following the founding of the state. It is a story of dogged determination to form a community of activists who would drive a movement toward Jewish revival in the Land of Israel, supported by B'nai B'rith members in other countries. The fundamental tasks they undertook included fostering egalitarianism among Jews, initiating Jewish-Hebrew education, promoting settlement of the land and attempting to ensure the primacy of the Hebrew language. The overarching motivation for all these activities was a will to promote the idea of Jewish peoplehood through concrete action—all this beginning a decade before Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress. Through the activities of the pioneer "Jerusalem Lodge," Jewish children and adults were exposed for the first time to Hebrew education; the first libraries were established; missionary activity was fought; hospitals were founded; settlements were established; barriers between the divergent Jewish sects were overcome; lodges were formed; and *aliyah* was encouraged from neighboring countries.

Although it is difficult to determine the cumulative effect these activities had in establishing the building blocks upon which the state was eventually founded, their significance should not be underestimated. The Jewish community in the country at the twilight of the Ottoman Empire, which numbered only some 50,000 souls, was controlled by the feuding leaders of yeshiva communities whose sole means of support was philanthropy from overseas. The B'nai B'rith leaders sought to create a new community, one in which members would help themselves while helping others and one that would strive toward rapprochement between the existing factions within the community. The towering figures who undertook this task—among them David Yellin, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Yehiel Michael

Pines, and Joseph Mejhohas—became legends in their own time for their work within the B'nai B'rith framework and for other civic projects that they initiated.

One of the most striking aspects of this movement was the founders' wish to popularize the notion of Jewish nationalism. On the occasion of the Jerusalem Lodge's 40th anniversary, David Yellin, a founding member of the lodge and later its president and president of the Palestine District of B'nai B'rith, reminisced in 1928:

"What was the essence of the founding of the lodge? ... [To create a] union of forces which seeks to move society towards joint efforts. The fact that this body was different than all others in that it did not operate by fiat of an omnipotent and exclusive board of directors, whose members are called just once a year for a general meeting to hear its report, but where every one of the brothers must always come to meetings and participate...

"And to this was added a second purpose from the day the lodge was founded: to endeavour with this great association [B'nai B'rith] which counts its members in the tens of thousands from among the best active forces in the whole world, to know the concept of [Jewish] nationalism and to recognize it, and this is more than ten years before Zionism was born...

"From the outset, the common opinion within the lodge was that in order to create a strong force in Eretz Yisrael, assistance must be secured from all the energetic forces in other cities in Eretz Yisrael and, on the other hand, one of its main goals must be to penetrate the large communities in the ancient world...and to imbue them with a new spirit, the spirit of our national rebirth... This was the true 'winning over of the communities' that Herzl dreamt about...

"And how much more work there is to persuade the entire Order! Lately the attitude of the Order has completely changed

in regard to the idea of building the land and to Zionism. Eretz Yisrael is slowly winning over the hearts of thousands of members, and whereas before it was forbidden to speak at the lodges about Zionism at all, now we find in the official B'nai B'rith Manual a special article about Zionism.....”

The leadership of the Jerusalem Lodge was wise in the ways of old-world diplomacy and responded quickly to new developments. Before the First World War, while Eretz Yisrael was under Ottoman rule, it established lodges in Izmir and Constantinople which later successfully lobbied the sultan to lift restrictions on *aliyah* and on purchase of land by Jews. Just after the war, when Palestine came under British rule, the Eretz Yisrael District was established, led by the Jerusalem Lodge.

Jesaias Press, an early member and president, summed up his sentiments as follows: “The Jerusalem Lodge laid the healthy foundations for the development of Hebrew culture and the national spirit among the Yishuv not only in Jerusalem but in all of Eretz Yisrael, and from it came the message and the light throughout the East. The lodge created on its own, or provided the impetus for the creation of, cultural and financial values which, in their time, made an imprint on the Yishuv and whose great importance is recognizable until today”

Joseph Mejoahas, another founder, used metaphors to describe the significant foundation laid by the lodge: “The lodge truly served as a greenhouse in which all those healthy seeds of work for our rebirth in the land were sowed and struck roots, and which are today as splendid plants and essential laws for us, and toward which we are all committed in heart and in spirit.”

In this scheme of national rebirth, Jerusalem held a special place in the hearts and minds of the founders. The early founders spared no effort to strengthen Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish

people. As we celebrate Israel’s 50th anniversary in a united Jerusalem under Jewish sovereignty, it is right to hear how both Yellin and Mejoahas reminisced about their attitudes toward this city. Speaking about the establishment of the rural settlement of Motza outside Jerusalem by the Jerusalem Lodge, Yellin wrote with pride: “How great was the celebration of the founding of Motza by three young farmers, the *halutzim* [pioneers] of those days, when all the brothers of the lodge and their families traveled to the celebrations of the founding of *the first settlement near Jerusalem* [emphasis by Yellin]. And there was a principle in this step: at that time, when Jerusalem was completely neglected by the Baron’s [Hirsch] clerks in regard to agricultural settlement, the Lodge sought to begin in earnest agricultural settlement near the capital of Eretz Yisrael in order to be an example for others; and Kiryat Anavim (Dolev), and Atarot (Kalandia) and Neveh Ya’acov indeed followed....”

And Mejoahas: “[The lodge] did not forsake any means to elevate the value of our capital city in the eyes of our brothers abroad, who had always thought of it as a city of laziness and idlers who receive *halukah* [charity distribution].”

Today, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel, we of the World Center are proud to present this essay on the Jewish return to Eretz Yisrael. All B’nai B’rith members should take pride in the story that unfolds in the following pages.

SHALOM P. DORON
Chairman

ALAN SCHNEIDER
Director

B'NAI B'RITH WORLD CENTER - JERUSALEM
1Elul 5758, August 23, 1998

B'NAI B'RITH AND ISRAEL: THE UNBROKEN COVENANT

SHELLY KLEIMAN



Wilhelm Ze'ev Hertzberg



Eliezer Ben-Yehuda

The story of B'nai B'rith in Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) and the rise of Jewish nationalism are one and the same. B'nai B'rith was first established in Jerusalem in 1888. It was a period ripe for change. Stagnation, vulnerability, poverty—it was these dismal conditions that led a small, idealistic group of young men to establish the first B'nai B'rith lodge in Eretz Yisrael. A pioneering movement, B'nai B'rith promoted the revival of Hebrew as the living vernacular of the growing Jewish community, bridged gaps between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, aided immigrants and impoverished Jews, encouraged settlement of the land, and fought the powerful influence of the many Christian missionary movements in Palestine. Laying foundations for the cultural, economic, and social rebirth of the Jewish nation, B'nai B'rith, in a very real sense, set the stage upon which the Jewish state was to evolve.

THE EARLY YEARS

The rebirth of a Jewish nation began toward the end of the 19th century almost simultaneously in Palestine and in Eastern Europe. Ruled by the incompetent, corrupt, and faltering Ottoman regime in Constantinople, the Jews living in Eretz Yisrael at the time, who were known as the “Old Yishuv,” were mostly devoutly religious and heavily dependent upon Halukah funds, charitable support sent by co-religionists abroad. Initially intended to support Talmud scholars—guardians of all that is sacred in the Holy Land—and the needy, there was mounting criticism that *halukah* distribution was dishonest, often distributed to those who were neither engaged in study nor poor. Despite attempts during the 19th century by Sir Moses Montefiore and Baron Edmond de

Rothschild to teach trades and encourage settlement of the land, the Old Yishuv remained, for the most part, a paralyzed, dependent community, incapable of sustaining itself.

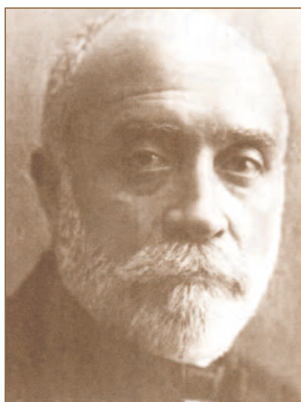
Toward the end of the 19th century, small groups of rebels, mostly traditionalists living in Jerusalem, decided to break out of the stifling confines of the *halukah* system and build a society based on its own labor. At the same time, waves of antisemitism were breaking throughout Europe, and tens of thousands of Jews took flight, immigrating to the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere; others took part in the revolutionary movements in their native countries. A much smaller group of European Jews, preferring to reaffirm their Jewish identity in a secular and nationalist form, found themselves attracted to the emerging Zionist study circles and clubs. Members of these groups, known as Hovevei Zion, “Lovers of Zion,” “believed” that there is no salvation for the people of Israel unless they establish a government of their own in the Land of Israel.”

The Jewish population in Eretz Yisrael, numbering a scant 17,000 by the mid-19th century and 24,000 by 1882, had more than doubled by the turn of the century. Fully 25,000 Jews entered Palestine during the 1880s and 1890s. The “First aliyah,” as this wave of immigration later became known, changed the cultural and religious landscape of the country, thus ending a period of impending atrophy and paving the way for a Jewish national renaissance. These settlers, mostly arriving from Russia and Poland, were young, educated, and idealistic. Doctors and philosophers, teachers and tradesmen, they arrived in the Promised Land to begin their lives anew.

To further the cultural and national interests of the Yishuv, there was a desire among many of these enlightened Jewish men to organize under one organization. That organization was B'nai B'rith. In the spring of 1888, nearly 10 years before Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress

in Basle, “a quorum of ten men who envisioned the redemption from the depths and from the neglect”—as described by Jesaias Press, an early member—established B’nai B’rith’s first lodge in Palestine, Lodge no. 379, named simply “Yerushalayim.” The founders—among them Wilhelm Ze’ev Hertzberg, a German-born philosopher, author, and principal of the first orphanage that offered secular education; Eliezer Ben Yehuda, “the father of modern Hebrew”; David Yellin, Hebraist, founder of the Hebrew Teachers Seminary, and community representative; Ephraim Cohen, local representative of the “Ezra” educational fund; Avraham Moshe Luncz, founder and first director of the School for the Blind and leading geographer of Eretz Yisrael; Yosef Mejohas, President of the Council of Jerusalem Jews and a scion of the Sephardi community—and those who joined B’nai B’rith shortly afterwards—including Shimon Rokach, head of the Ashkenazi community in Jaffa and a member of the Yishuv’s political council; Yehiel Michael Pines, secretary general of the Hovevei Zion executive; and Meir Dizengoff, one of the founders of Tel Aviv and its first mayor—were among the political and cultural leaders of the developing Yishuv. Zigmund Semmel, a leader of B’nai B’rith in Germany, planted the idea of establishing a B’nai Brith lodge with Hertzberg during a visit to Jerusalem in 1887 after attending the inauguration of the Ben Maimon Lodge in Cairo. Oskar Strauss, a long-serving American consul in Constantinople, who was on a visit to Jerusalem in 1888, provided the immediate catalyst.

The creation of the Jerusalem Lodge was not B’nai B’rith’s first connection with the Holy Land. In 1865 a severe outbreak of cholera had struck all of Palestine. The disease seems to have spread from Egypt to Beirut and Izmir, then to Jaffa and other parts of Palestine, including Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nablus. The Board of Deputies of British Jews appealed to B’nai B’rith for assistance, and the organization’s first short-term overseas philanthropic project resulted in raising \$4,522 in response to



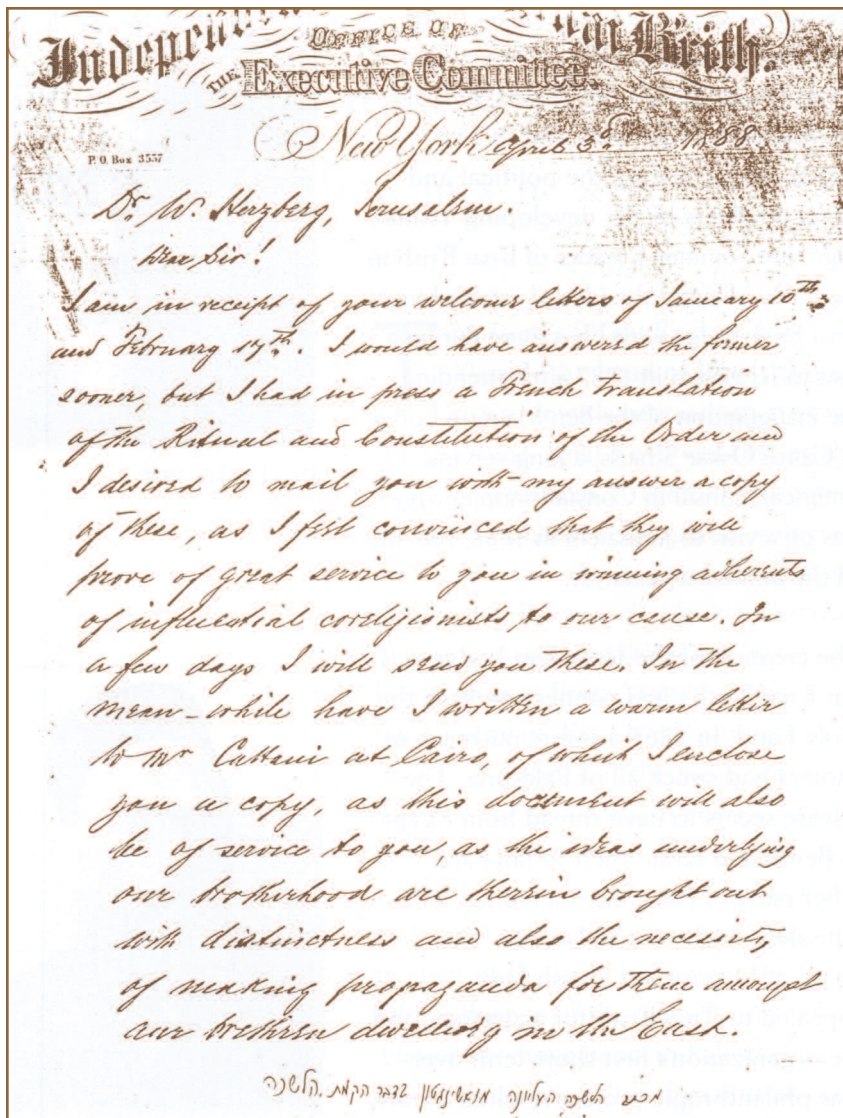
David Yellin-1920



Yehiel Michael Pines



Presidents of Jerusalem Lodge, David Yellin (center) - 1930s.



Letter from Executive Committee of B'nai B'rith in New York to Ze'ev Hertzberg-1888.



Zichron Ya'acov-1910

this request.

When B'nai B'rith was founded in 1843 by 12 German-Jewish immigrants at Sinsheimer's Cafe in New York City, its founders sought to forge an organization that would attract the entire spectrum of American Jewry and prevent this minority population from splintering into disconnected fragments. The situation in Eretz Yisrael was entirely different. There was no fear of assimilation, no need for ethnic solidarity. What was needed was a way to reconcile the sometimes fragile, often poor relations between Ashkenazi and Sephardi, old-timers and new settlers, religious and secular. At the lodge's first meeting, Hertzberg, who was elected the body's first president, spoke of uniting the Jews in Israel under the B'nai B'rith mantle. Uniting the people to improve the state of the Yishuv, while acting as a bridge between Eretz Yisrael and B'nai B'rith lodges throughout the world, became the young lodge's *raison d'être*.

In 1889 the Jerusalem Lodge received formal recognition from the B'nai B'rith Order in New York, which called upon it "to establish other lodges in the Holy Land." Under the aegis of the Jerusalem Lodge, the Sha'ar Zion Lodge was established in Jaffa in 1890, to be followed by the Galilee Lodge in Safed in 1891 and the Adolf Kraus Lodge in Zichron Ya'acov in 1911.

THE REVIVAL OF HEBREW

Ben-Yehuda, who became the Jerusalem Lodge's first secretary, called it "a center of visions." And, indeed, it fast became the unofficial cultural center of the new Yishuv. Believing that a Jewish national renaissance was conceivable only if it was consciously rooted in the Hebrew language and culture, the Jerusalem Lodge became the first public body in Palestine in which Hebrew was the official language. Its minutes were written in Hebrew and it was declared the preferred spoken tongue, although "everyone had the right to speak in the language of his choice."

B'nai B'rith's impact on the revival of Hebrew went well beyond lodge meetings. In 1889 a number of young lodge members



Jerusalem Lodge-1930s.

established Safah Berurah, the first organization aimed at “spreading the Hebrew language and speech among people in all walks of life.” The Jerusalem Lodge pledged “to strive its utmost to revive the language and support the organization at all times according to our ability.” A year later the group founded and elected the Va’ad Ha-Lashon Ha-Ivrit (the Hebrew Language Committee), the precursor of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, which to this day is the supreme authority on the Hebrew language. The committee, made up of Ben-Yehuda, Yellin, R. Hayyim Hirschenson, and Luncz, devoted itself to determining the Hebrew vocabulary needed for daily use and creating, out of the Babel-like variations, a uniform pronunciation for Hebrew speech.

Beyond the ideal of making Hebrew common to all Jews, the Jerusalem Lodge had a practical reason to support the widespread use of Hebrew. True to the egalitarian and pluralistic principles of B’nai B’rith, the Jerusalem Lodge was the only institution at the time which opened its doors to all ethnic groups and from its inception set out to meld the fragmented Jewish sects into a sin-



Hebrew Language Committee, sitting from left: Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Prof. Joseph Klausner, David Yellin.

gle Israelite community. If not yet the *lingua franca* of the burgeoning Yishuv, Hebrew was the common denominator between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, and the importance of maintaining its use at lodge meetings was constantly stressed.

Aside from Hebrew classes, B’nai B’rith

offered evening courses—continuing education, in today’s parlance—in several European languages. Taught on a voluntary basis by lodge members, it was part of an all-out effort to combat the missionary schools that were luring adults and children into their classrooms. So serious was the threat that B’nai B’rith denied membership to anyone who sent their children to one of the many missionary schools.

HEBREW FOR TOTS

Another B’nai B’rith initiative aimed at bridging the cultural and ethnic differences in the Yishuv and encouraging the use of



First Hebrew Kindergarten.



Second Hebrew Kindergarten-1907.

Hebrew, was the creation of the first Hebrew-speaking kindergarten in Jerusalem. (There already was one opened in 1898 in Rishon Le Zion and another in Jaffa opened in 1902.) Opened in 1903 in a rented house on B’nai B’rith Street, the kindergarten was immediately filled to capacity with 70 children. In a light-filled room, children of Ashkenazi and Sephardi backgrounds spent the day playing and eating together and learning to speak the same tongue.

The reaction from the ultra-Orthodox world was swift. Rabbinical authorities had already forbidden the study of science and foreign languages and they viewed the kindergarten with the same contempt. The rabbis posted warnings throughout the city—the kindergarten would lead Jewish children astray, down a path of corruption and ruin. David Yellin, one of the kindergarten founders, responded to the attacks in writing, expounding on the goals and activities of the new facility. Providing childcare for mothers who had to work, the kindergarten prevented youngsters from roaming the streets and offered them “an environment beyond the squalor of their homes.” Yellin stressed that children were taught the daily prayers (“so they will understand what is taught them at home”) and the elements of reading, while only hearing the strains of their “sacred tongue.”

The kindergarten was an educational experiment that set the tone for further Hebrew education in the country.

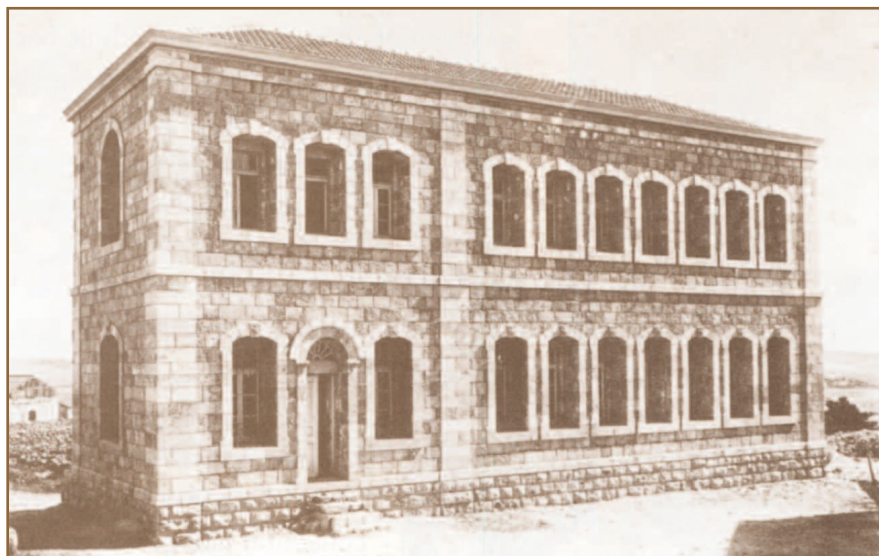
Subsequently B’nai B’rith opened a seminary for kindergarten teachers in Jerusalem, and the lodges in Jaffa, Safed, Tiberias, Rehovot, Haifa, and Beirut followed the Jerusalem example and opened Hebrew-speaking kindergartens. As the language wars were being fought on the university level—Hebrew vs. German as the language of instruction at the Technion in Haifa—the battle for Hebrew was being won with the new generation as scores of youngsters learned to speak what was destined to become the national tongue.

THE ABARBANEL LIBRARY

One of the Jerusalem Lodge's most important contributions was the establishment of the Midrash Abarbanel Library. Established in 1892 as the city's first free public library, it became the nucleus of what was to become the Jewish National and University Library.

The creation of a public library had strong ideological underpinnings. While religious academies and Christian missions had their own libraries, the few prior attempts to open public, nondenominational libraries had ended in dismal failure. More than ten years earlier, the Montefiore Library had closed due to pressure from ultra-Orthodox circles, as had a library opened by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Despite threats of excommunication, members of the Jerusalem Lodge were intent upon widening the cultural and intellectual horizons of all the city's inhabitants, secular and religious.

Created 400 years after the expulsion of Jews from Spain, the library was named—in an appreciative nod to the Sephardi community—after Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508), among the first Jewish scholars to be familiar with the concepts of humanism and the world of the Renaissance. There were those who suggested naming the library after Christopher Columbus, a tribute to their B'nai B'rith brethren in the United States who were celebrating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America. In the end, the more literary, scholarly, and identifiably Jewish name was chosen. B'nai B'rith members went from door-to-door to solicit books to fill the library's shelves. Ben-Yehuda donated his shutdown library's collection of 2,000 volumes, 30 percent of which were secular—forbidden fruits to the ultra-Orthodox. In 1895, the library's collection made a quantum leap when a Zionist physician, Dr. Joseph Chasanowich, transferred his collection of 10,000 volumes from Bialystok to Jerusalem. A collector of rare and ancient manuscripts, Chasanowich urged other Jews to donate their books, as

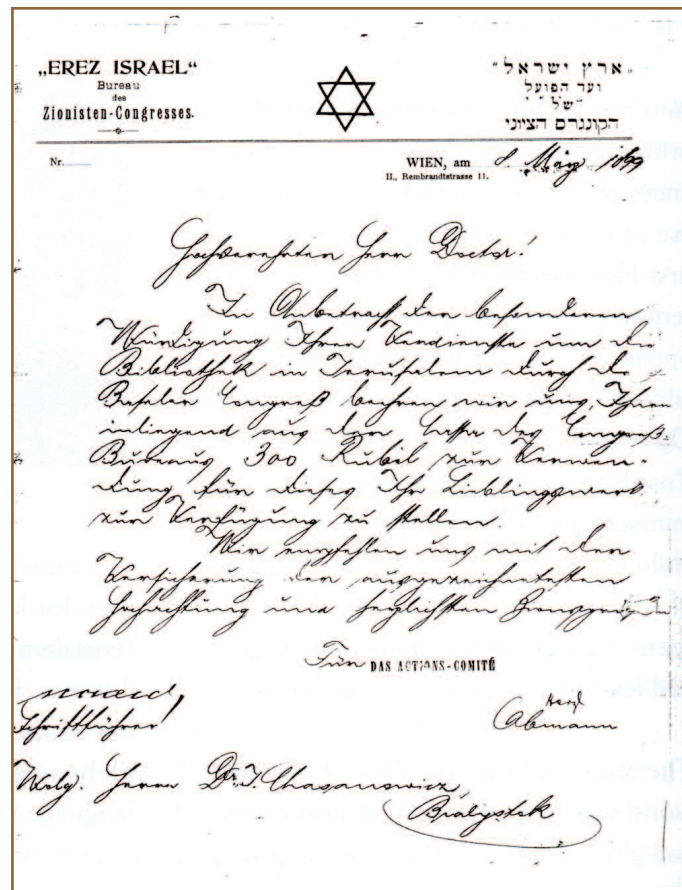
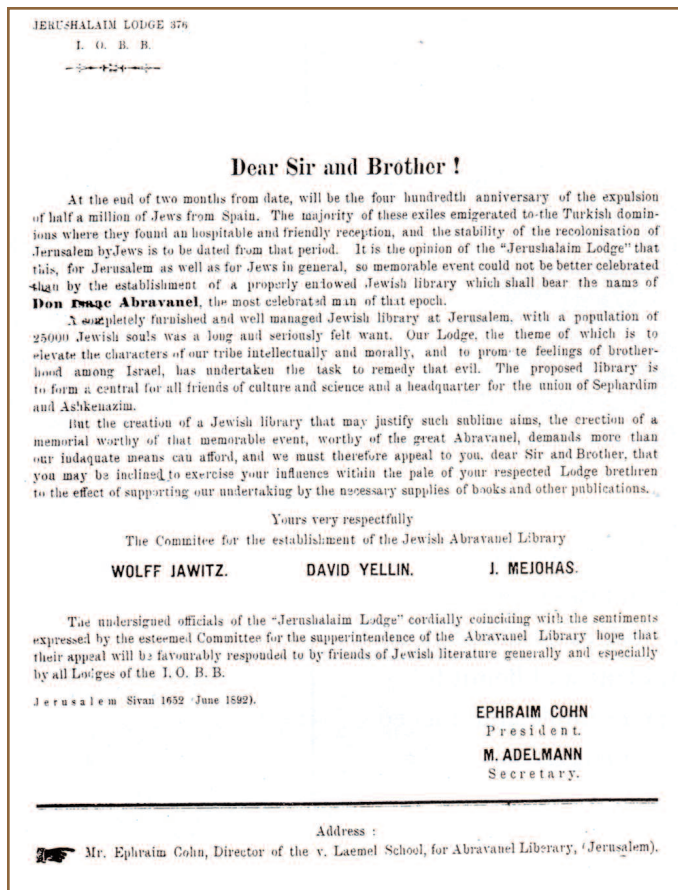


B'nai B'rith Library, Midrash Abarbanel-Beit Ne'eman.
Shortly after opening-1902



Zionist Archives-1925.

well: "In our Holy City, Jerusalem, all the books written in Hebrew, and all the books in all languages which deal with the Jews and their Torah ... will be treasured." In 1899, Theodor Herzl, in the name of the Zionist Congress, sent Chasanowich a 300-ruble donation for the library. In his letter, Herzl wrote that the money should "be used for the good of the endeavour that is



From letter in Hebrew, German, and English requesting donations of books to the library. Signed by the board of directors, it announces the foundation of the library in 1892.

Letter from Herzl to Chasanowich.

so close to your heart.” The library became known as the Midrash Abarbanel and Ginzei Yosef (“Joseph’s Archives” after the name of Chasanowich).

Chasanowich was the first non-resident who was granted membership to the Jerusalem Lodge. As a way of maintaining contact with Jewish communities in the Diaspora, it became the lodge’s policy to grant honorary membership to Jews—mostly from Russia and Poland—whose hometown did not have a B’nai B’rith lodge. Another “visiting” member was the Zionist leader Isaac Leib Goldberg of Vilna, later founder of the Ha’aretz daily newspaper and supporter of the Hebrew Language Committee.

The library was initially housed in a two room rented apartment on Jaffa Road and opened only two to three hours a day. In 1894, B’nai B’rith members began collecting funds, mostly from abroad, for a perma-

nent library structure. In 1900 the cornerstone was laid and two years later the books were transferred to a spacious two-story structure named Beit Ne’eman on what would eventually be called B’nai B’rith Street in the heart of Jerusalem.

By the end of the period of the First Aliyah in 1904, the Midrash Abarbanel Library had become the most important library in Eretz Yisrael. In numbers alone it boasted over 22,000 volumes, including many rare manuscripts. More importantly, it had become the cultural pulse of the Yishuv’s capital. Lectures on popular and scientific subjects were offered and its bulletin board kept citizens abreast of local and international events. (The first telegrams describing the Dreyfus Affair were posted in the library’s entrance hall.) An atmosphere of tolerance pervaded: Seminary students and teachers, tradesmen and farmers, and (in a revolutionary move for 1900) women of all economic and ethnic backgrounds

gathered at this pioneering B'nai B'rith institution on equal ground. It was in a very real sense the cultural melting pot of the developing Yishuv.

From its inception until the outbreak of World War I, the library was administered by a special committee, headed by Ephraim Cohen-Reiss. By the onset of the war, the library's collection had grown to 32,000 volumes, 10,000 of which were in Hebrew. But during the war, contributions were reduced to a mere trickle, and as Trukey entered the fighting, the Ottoman forces ordered the library to shut its doors. The library reopened in 1918 and perceiving an opportunity to fulfill its aspirations of creating a national library, B'nai B'rith signed an agreement transferring its collection to the World Zionist Organization (WZO). With the opening of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in 1925, the library—this brainchild of B'nai B'rith—took on new life as the nucleus of the Jewish National and University Library. The B'nai B'rith library remained open to the public well into the 1970s, and the building, refurbished by the Jerusalem Municipality through a gift from International President Philip Klutznick, remains a Jerusalem landmark.

THE SETTLEMENT OF MOTZA

In the hills and valleys just nine kilometres west of Jerusalem is a picturesque and lush garden suburb. Today, home to professors and jurists, artists and politicians, the site of a popular inn, a winery, and plant nursery, Motza was the first rural site in Eretz Yisrael acquired by Jews for farming. It was the Jerusalem Lodge of B'nai B'rith that pioneered and supported the embryo agricultural settlement that developed there.

The story of “modern” Motza (it was one of the first places conquered by the Prophet Joshua) goes back to 1859 when citizens David Yellin (grandfather of the B'nai B'rith leader of the same name) and Shaul Yehuda, both Turkish citizens, purchased a plot of land from nearby Arab villagers in the village of Kolonia. For a fee, the Sheik of Abu Ghosh permitted them to farm the land—they hired Arab laborers for the task—but not to build houses there. Yellin built a roadside inn on top of Byzantine ruins, to be used by travelers between Jaffa and Jerusalem. When Shaul Yehuda died in



B'nai B'rith Library-1925.



B'nai B'rith Library, new immigrants-1948.



Motza, 1895—First Jewish building, David Yellin standing third from left.



Theodor Herzl (center) with Zionist leaders on his visit to Holy Land—opposite Jerusalem's Old City Walls—1898.



Herzl's cypress tree, before it was felled.

1864, Yehoshua Yellin (the elder Yellin's son) abandoned the whole agricultural enterprise, though he did continue purchasing land. By 1891 he owned 188 dunams (47 acres).

In 1893, at the prompting of Pines and

Ze'ev Yabetz, the Jerusalem Lodge decided to create a settlement there. Using funds raised from Jews in Cologne and Vienna, the Jerusalem Lodge purchased the land from Yellin. According to Jesaias Press, president of the Jerusalem Lodge at the time, the purchase was a form of protest against the Baron Rothschild's settlement initiatives which were thought to have eroded into a corrupt system of bribes and patronage. B'nai B'rith also wanted to prove that an agricultural settlement could succeed in the hills and not only in the plains, as many had insisted. By supporting individual initiatives and using modern farming methods, it was B'nai B'rith's goal, writes Press, "to pave new ways in agricultural settlement."

B'nai B'rith leased the land to four pioneers: Samuel Broza, Simcha Katz, Yitzhak Cohen, and a fourth who later sold his plot to the Makleff family (most of whom were killed in Motza by Arabs during the 1929 riots—the sole survivor being nine-year old Mordechai Makleff, who would later become commander in chief of the Israel Defence Forces). B'nai B'rith helped the settlers acquire cattle and tools and provided a minimal monthly stipend to each farmer. The condition was that they work the land, plant vineyards and maintain peaceful relations with their neighbors. B'nai B'rith purchased the inn from the Yellin family and turned it into a public building, a combined cowshed, synagogue, and school.

Despite the difficult conditions under which they lived, Samuel Broza was able to transform his dunams into a success story. He left his sons a large inheritance of vineyards, cattle and poultry, fruit orchards, and a thriving winery (today's Efrat Winery). In 1898, Herzl visited Broza's vineyards—he had supposedly invited the Zionist leader to "come and see what can be grown in the Judean hills"—and, impressed by the small settlement outside Jerusalem, planted a cypress tree in the hills of Motza. Known as the "first Zionist tree," it soon became a symbol of the revival and settlement of the land. It was felled by Arabs in the 1920s and the stump that remained is preserved in its original place.

B'NAI B'RITH AND THE GATES OF ZION

While Jerusalem at the end of the 19th century was still the spiritual center of the Holy Land, Jaffa, once a small, provincial backwater, had become not only the main port town of Palestine and gateway to Jerusalem, but also the administrative, cultural, and social center of the Yishuv. The burgeoning Zionist movement brought increasing numbers of immigrants to Jaffa's shores, and these newcomers brought with them a spirit of change, enlightenment, and secularization—"the spirit of living life to the full," was how Jerusalemite Yellin described his coastal brethren. A pluralistic community developed, far less encumbered by the religious tensions pervasive in Jerusalem.

Appropriately named Sha'ar Zion, "Gates of Zion," B'nai B'rith opened its Jaffa Lodge (No. 402) in 1890 under the auspices of the Jerusalem Lodge. Reflective of the time and place and of the spirit of cooperation and tolerance in the port town, many of B'nai B'rith's activities were joint efforts with other organizations and public bodies including a committee charged with lobbying the Turkish authorities to ease restrictions on Jewish immigration. Shortly after its founding, the lodge was instrumental in arranging the first all-communal elections for a joint city council, made up of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and North African immigrants.

In an attempt to combat Christian missionaries in Jaffa, B'nai B'rith, together with the town committee, established the Sha'ar Zion Hospital in 1890. With up to 40 beds (the town's three other hospitals – all run by missionaries – had only half that number) the hospital provided medical services (including a free eye clinic) to Jews throughout the coastal plain. As immigrants poured into the Yishuv's port town, epidemics, especially cholera, were among the hospital's chief concerns.

Maintaining the hospital was no easy matter. It was forced to shut down for sev-



Sha'ar Zion Library, Beit Ariella building.

eral months a year due to financial problems, and patients were referred to "the Hospital of Inciters" where they had "the pleasure of listening all day to the preaching and prayer of the saints of Christianity." Thus, in a letter to the Jerusalem Lodge, Sha'ar Zion's secretary described how missionaries lured patients by opening an eye clinic next to the hospital on the days when Sha'ar Zion's eye clinic was closed. "We raised funds and now have a doctor on the premises daily." In the end, the missionary clinic was forced to close its doors.

Both in the United States and the Yishuv, creating public libraries and cultural centers was B'nai B'rith's primary concern, and in 1892 the organization established the Sha'ar Zion library in Jaffa, two years before the Abarbanel Library was to open in Jerusalem. B'nai B'rith shared both the financial and administrative maintenance of the library with a number of organizations, including B'nai Moshe, the philosopher Ahad Ha'Am's fervently secular group whose ideology (anathema in the less pluralistic Jerusalem) governed the library's direction.

Under the influence of Jaffa's more secular atmosphere, the Sha'ar Zion Lodge viewed the library as a catalyst for strengthening Zionism and Jewish nationalism, and its collection included many volumes of Jewish and national interest. The library served not only the needs of the growing Jewish town, but also the outlying settlements,

which relied upon messengers to transport the books.

Unlike most public libraries in Eretz Yisrael, the Sha'ar Zion Library stayed open year after successive year. In 1913, a branch was established in adjacent Tel Aviv (founded 1904), keeping its doors open 42 hours a week, including the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. In 1922, the Jaffa library was transferred to the Tel Aviv municipality, becoming the basis for today's Beit Ariella Library. If it never achieved the status as the country's national library—and the Jerusalem vs. Jaffa debate was a fierce one—it was the Yishuv's most important library during the critical years of the 1890s, and Beit Ariella, which opened in 1972, is today Israel's largest public library.

The library that B'nai B'rith opened in Safed in 1891 catered to a very different population. Almost totally cut off from the rest of the Yishuv, many of the residents of Safed were poorly educated and reliant upon *halukah* funds. With its large reading room, the library became the area's cultural center, with evening classes offered in Hebrew and other subjects. The Galilee Lodge established a Hebrew Academy in 1891 “so that Jews would be able to understand the language of their brothers” and, soon after, a Hebrew-speaking kindergarten. These efforts went a long way in alleviating the isolation felt by many of the Yishuv's northern residents.



Ezrat Nashim Hospital.

OTHER INITIATIVES

The Jerusalem Lodge was the catalyst behind other important initiatives. These included the establishment of the Ezrat Nashim hospital for the mentally disturbed, built on Jaffa Street in 1895. The lodge was also behind the founding of the City Council, with representatives chosen from among all Jewish sects by way of the first elections ever held in the city. Describing this monumental event, Ephraim Cohen wrote, “Through the influence of B'nai B'rith members, the City Council was established in 1898, and its members were elected by general, secret ballot—unheard of until then anywhere in the vicinity of Jerusalem. For these elections, stationary ballot boxes were not set up. [Rather] the sextants of the rabbinical courts walked about the city with ballot boxes went from house to house, so that all citizens of the city had the opportunity to participate in the elections.”

The lodge also adopted as part of its mandate to organize the Jewish communities in the “ancient lands” under the B'nai B'rith mantle in order to “instill in them a spirit of new life, a spirit of national revival” (Yellin). To accomplish this, difficult and sometimes dangerous missions were undertaken between 1891 and 1898 by members of the lodge—particularly Yellin, Edelman, Mejohas, and Rokach—to Alexandria, Cairo, Izmir, Constantinople, Beirut, Plovdaev, and Sofia. Mejohas: “Indeed, these Jewish communities were simply revived by our lodge. They were already submerged in a dangerous, lethargic coma and some had already begun to roll down the slope of assimilation, and our lodge came and gave them a push from behind and brought them back to a better path, to the life of the people, to the life of the language and nationhood.” These lodges and their progeny adopted many of the activities forged by the Jerusalem Lodge, establishing libraries, kindergartens, and schools. Through the efforts of the Jerusalem Lodge, a B'nai B'rith district encompassing all lodges in the ancient lands, was established in Constantinople in order to coordinate efforts and serve as a lobby before the sultan.



Visit of High Commissioner Herbert Samuel at the city council—1920. Sitting right to left: Jaref Mejohas, son of Weizmann, Chaim Weizmann, Herbert Samuel, Menachem Ussihkin, David Yellin

CHANGING FOCUS: B'NAI B'RITH AFTER WORLD WAR I

By the outbreak of World War I, the impact of B'nai B'rith—with only four lodges in all of Eretz Yisrael—on the developing Yishuv was unparalleled. The population of the Yishuv had reached 85,000, and Hebrew had become the daily language of an ever-increasing number of workers, teachers, and young people. But World War I wreaked havoc in the country. The Ottoman regime levied heavy taxes on the Jewish population, confiscated property, even expelled Turkish citizens, including Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and David Yellin. With contagious diseases rampant and starvation the rule rather than exception, thousands of Jews perished. The Turkish military administration, headed by Jamal Pasha instructed all Zionist and Jewish organizations in Palestine to cease operations. The Jerusalem Lodge members continued to meet clandestinely in a private home. Someone played the piano throughout the evening sessions so as not to arouse Turkish suspicions.

On December 11, 1917, the British army, commanded by General Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem, and Ottoman rule over the Holy Land came to an end after 401 years. Two months later B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge officially reconvened—Jesaias Press was elected president—and the Abarbanel Library, soon to be transferred to the WZO, was reopened. During the British Mandate, the administrative and political landscape of the Yishuv changed drastically. The Va'ad Leumi (National Committee), the main executive organ of the Jews in Palestine, now shared responsibility with the Jewish Agency for providing certain services to the Yishuv, in particular, education, health, social welfare, land development, immigration, and settlement. The Yishuv, by organizing and centralizing its energies, was setting the stage for the establishment of an independent Jewish state.

The effect on B'nai B'rith was inevitable. The organization, which had been such a key player in the cultural, social, and political development of the Yishuv, now, in the natural course of things, had to change its



Certificate of Indebtedness—B'nai B'rith Palestine Housebuilding Fund, Ltd.

focus, concentrating on social and welfare services. Lodges were established throughout the Yishuv, in Tiberias, Hadera, Rishon LeZion, and Ramat Gan, and, in 1922, the first women's lodge, Bat Zion, was founded in Jerusalem.

During the years immediately following World War I, over 35,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine. Most of the newcomers were young Zionists, but the impoverished and small Yishuv was incapable of absorbing them all. Some formed collective settlement groups, others worked on construction sites, but many remained unemployed and not a small number found themselves without a roof over their heads.

Although the Jewish Agency was responsible for immigration policies (within the limitations delineated by the British Mandatory Administration), it was the Jerusalem Lodge of B'nai B'rith that created the country's first absorption center. In 1920 the organization acquired a small seven-room 24-bed house called Beit Olim

(Immigrants House). Providing shelter for newly arrived Jews until they found employment, Beit Olim was forced to close its doors in 1926 for lack of funds. But the center's activities had impressed a well-connected Jerusalemite, Chana Strashlovsky, who raised what was needed to purchase a large house next to the Jerusalem Lodge building on B'nai B'rith Street.

While Beit Chana, as the absorption center came to be called, was undergoing renovations, the Jerusalem Lodge rented two small houses to help alleviate the plight of the thousands of Jews fleeing Germany. In 1936, Beit Chana opened its doors. A two-story complex, it had 24 rooms, four auditoriums and could house up to as many as 100 new immigrants. By 1940 Beit Chana had provided bed, board, and emotional sustenance to over 22,000 new immigrants.

The upper floor of the hostel was used as the temporary quarters of the B'nai B'rith's Children's Home, a facility for emotionally disturbed children that was established in 1943, at the suggestion of Henrietta Szold, the founder of the Hadassah Medical Organization. Initially intended for recent arrivals from Teheran, the home soon began absorbing and treating scores of Jewish children, many of them orphans, who had experienced firsthand the horrors of the Holocaust.

While helping with temporary housing for new immigrants, B'nai B'rith also set its sights on renewing its settlement activities. At the urging of lodge president Jesaias Yehoshua Press, the Jerusalem Lodge established in 1924 the B'nai B'rith Palestine Housebuilding Fund with money provided by the Constitution Grand Lodge in the United States. Press had his eye on an area of 25,000 dunams of wasteland on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, and, in the same year, B'nai B'rith purchased the land and established Achuzat B'nai B'rith, the nucleus of what is today's Bayit Vegan neighborhood. The neighborhood's synagogue still bears the B'nai B'rith title though most current residents would be hard pressed to explain why. It was in Bayit Vegan that American B'nai B'rith Women decided to build permanent quarters for the Children's Home, which includes sophisticated educational and treatment facilities.

B'nai B'rith also established Ramat Aharon, a settlement near Rehovot, in memory of Aharon Eizenberg, one of the leading figures of the Yishuv at the time and a founder of Rehovot. In his life, Eizenberg had been a vocal advocate for greater settlement activity by B'nai B'rith through the establishment of small settlements near the more established moshavot. When he passed away, his family bequeathed 26.5 dunams of land to B'nai B'rith upon which the settlement was founded, with the B'nai B'rith Palestine Housebuilding Fund providing loans to each settler.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

In the years leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel, as the Zionist leadership laid the groundwork for independence, B'nai B'rith in Palestine focused most of its energies on the social and welfare needs of the local Jewish population—on refugees from war-torn Europe, on maintaining its building funds, on its many cultural and educational facilities for children, teenagers and adults.

While B'nai B'rith in the Yishuv was able to recede, quite naturally, from the political arena, American B'nai B'rith worked tirelessly to ensure that independence would be achieved. As Jewish immigration and settlement resumed following World War 1, the B'nai B'rith Supreme Lodge Convention in 1925 in Atlantic City passed a resolution expressing “full sympathy with the practical work and construction” in Palestine.

In 1934, Chaim Weizmann proposed to B'nai B'rith in the United States that it purchase land in order to help create Jewish-owned acreage. An unheard-of sum of \$100,000 from the Emergency Relief Fund was designated to buy 1,000 acres of land. It was an unprecedented move: American Jewry's oldest and largest organization was concretely supporting a continuing Jewish presence in Palestine. With these funds, land was purchased in the lower Galilee upon which *moshav* Moledet B'nai B'rith was founded in 1937 by a group of German refugees.

Two years after the British issued their



Bayit Vegan—general view.



Ramat Aharon

infamous White Paper in 1939 severely restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine, an additional \$100,000 was pledged at B'nai B'rith's 16th General Convention for the purpose of buying land, also in the lower Galilee, to create another refuge for European Jewish refugees. The *moshav* was founded in 1942, and after the death of B'nai B'rith president and ardent Zionist Henry (Zvi) Monsky, it was renamed Ramat Zvi.

During his tenure as president, Monsky appealed to leaders of the United Nations and to State Department officials to safeguard the rights of the Jewish people in their historic homeland. A few days after Monsky's sudden and untimely death on May 2, 1947, grieving delegates to the Supreme Lodge's triennial meeting in Washington passed a resolution demanding the cancellation of the White Paper and calling upon the U.N. “to facilitate the



Ramat Aharon



Moledet B'nai B'rith—1937. First truck unloads in the plowing fields.

establishment of a homeland for Jewish people in Palestine.”

In September 1947, when it became clear that by a majority report, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was going to recommend the partition of the country into two states, one Jewish, the other, Arab, Frank Goldman, the newly elected president of B'nai B'rith, sent a telegram to President Harry Truman, appealing to him for an “immediate public statement supporting the principle of UNSCOP majority.”

Jewish rejoicing over the Partition Resolution, adopted on November 29, 1947, was soon followed by grave concern. The resolution was rejected by the Arab states. This sparked riots throughout Palestine, and the U.S. State Department, always sympathetic to Arab interests and



Moledet B'nai B'rith—1937. Erecting the walls.

opposed to Jewish statehood, succeeded in changing U.S. policy at the U.N. with a proposal that partition be suspended in favor of a “temporary” U.N. trusteeship over the area. The Zionist leadership recognized that adoption of trusteeship could doom the hope for a Jewish state.

The Zionist leadership in the United States attacked the White House incessantly, infuriating President Truman. The doors to the White House were bolted shut to all Zionist and Arab leaders. The president of the WZO, Chaim Weizmann, who had traveled to the United States in early February 1948 to appeal personally to the American president to restore U.S. support for partition, lay ill in bed at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, unable to get an appointment to see the American president.

It was the B'nai B'rith leadership that broke the deadlock. Frank Goldman, in a chance meeting with Weizmann's aid in the hotel lobby, learned of Truman's refusal to meet with Weizmann. Goldman then contacted Eddie Jacobson of Kansas City, Missouri, a long-time B'nai B'rith member and World War I friend of Truman's and his former partner in a Kansas City haberdashery.

Jacobson had once told Goldman that he was not a Zionist, but he reluctantly agreed to see what he could do and visited Truman on March 13, 1948. After exchanging personal greetings, Jacobson brought up the subject of Palestine. Truman became tense and grim, saying he was sick of the way the Zionists had badgered him. Despite all of Jacobson's powers of persuasion, the president remained firm and immutable in his refusal to meet with Weizmann. When Jacobson was about to leave he noticed a statue of the president's hero, Andrew Jackson, on his desk. Jacobson turned to Truman and said: “Harry, all your life you have had a hero. Well, I too have a hero, a man who is, I think, the greatest Jew who ever lived. I am talking about Chaim Weizmann.” A few seconds passed. Truman eventually looked Jacobson straight in the eye: “You win, you bald-headed son-of-a-bitch,” he is quoted as replying.

Elaborate precautions were taken to conceal Weizmann's presence in Washington

from the press. He registered at a Washington hotel in the name of the B'nai B'rith executive vice-president, Maurice Bisgyer. On March 18, 1948, Weizmann entered the White House through a side door. The discussion lasted nearly an hour and was cordial. Weizmann's unfailing dignity and charm had their effect on the president, and U.S. support for partition was restored. "When he left my office," Truman later wrote, "I felt that he had received a full understanding of my policy and that I knew what it was he wanted."

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of the State of Israel, the first sovereign Jewish state in 19 centuries. Moments later, President Truman extended de facto recognition to the State of Israel, the first country to recognize the new state and on January 31, 1949, Truman extended de jure recognition. The only guests invited to the signing ceremony in the Oval Office were Jacobson, Goldman, and Bisgyer.

In May 1965, at the Supreme Lodge Convention in Israel, the new B'nai B'rith building was dedicated in Tel Aviv to the memory of Eddie Jacobson. At the ceremony, a message from Harry Truman was read to the audience: "Although my sympathies were already active and present in the cause of Israel, it is a fact of history that Eddie Jacobson's contribution was of decisive importance."

So, too, was that of B'nai B'rith. It had fought hard for the revival of Hebrew and for the cultural unity of a people in their ancient homeland. B'nai B'rith actively encouraged resettlement of the land; aided new immigrants and veteran soldiers and supported educational endeavours for the young and old, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, religious and secular. It had fought long and hard for enlightenment, for tolerance and for justice. When the State of Israel came into being, a chapter of B'nai B'rith's history had come to a successful close. A new one was already beginning.

The activities undertaken by B'nai B'rith on behalf of Israel following independence, both by its international leadership and members and by its members in Israel, are too numerous to cover in this publication.



Moledet B'nai B'rith—1941. The guard tower.



From left to right. U.S. President Harry Truman, Eddie Jacobson, Maurice Bisgyer and Frank Goldman at the birth of the State of Israel.

The following are just a sample of some of the major initiatives.

Immediately after Israel had proclaimed its independence, the armies of seven Arab nations invaded the fledgling state. B'nai B'rith's response was immediate. Food, clothing, medical supplies, trucks, and jeeps were carried by ship after ship to Haifa port. The total value of these shipments was well over \$4,000,000.

During the Six-Day War in 1967, under



Capt. Shalom P. Doron (far left), an unidentified woman and Capt. Yehoshua Yardeni examining food parcels marked “B’nai B’rith Food for Israel”—New York, 1949.

the presidency of Dr. William A. Wexler, and again during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, under the presidency of David Blumberg, B’nai B’rith members demonstrated their ability to mobilize manpower and rally behind the State of Israel. Not only did B’nai B’rith succeed in selling millions of dollars in Israel Bonds—more than any other Jewish organization—but through local Hillel

foundations enlisted scores of volunteers for service in Israel. Perhaps most moving were the rallies of solidarity for the beleaguered Jewish state.

Of course, B’nai B’rith did not limit its efforts to wartime activities. At the B’nai B’rith International Convention in 1950, two resolutions were passed concerning the new state. One called upon the United

States and the U.N. to use “their respective good offices to bring about the cessation of the flow of arms and ammunition to the Arab countries.” The second resolution was passed to protest the U.N. resolution to internationalize Jerusalem. The same year, the 200th Hillel unit was established at the Hebrew University and in the 1950s, B’nai B’rith donated funds to build recreation centers for Israeli war veterans. Until B’nai B’rith brought these institutions into being, the disabled Israeli veterans had only the crudest kind of recreational facilities. B’nai B’rith also established a Rehabilitation Fund, granting loans to new immigrants, in particular for the purpose of establishing small businesses.

In 1954, B’nai B’rith launched a monumental project—the planting of half a million trees as a memorial to both B’nai B’rith members who perished in the Holocaust and European lodges that had been destroyed. A grotto was also hewn out of solid rock to serve as a central memorial. When the Martyr’s Forest was fully planted in 1965, in time for the 1965 Convention held in Israel, a decision was made to plant another half million trees. The result is one of the Jerusalem area’s most popular picnic and recreational spots. Set in the midst of the forest is the B’nai B’rith “Scroll of Fire” Monument. Dedicated in 1972, it is an evocative relief sculpture, commemorating the victims of the Holocaust and the triumphant birth of the Jewish state.



Shalom P. Doron presenting tribute to Authur Leliveld, director, B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundation; Prof. Hugo Bergman; and Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky, the first director of Hillel in Jerusalem—1952.

Always an organization of firsts, in 1959 1,300 B'nai B'rith delegates gathered in Jerusalem for the first international convention of any Jewish group ever held in Israel. B'nai B'rith President Philip Klutznick opened the Supreme Lodge Convention in Jerusalem's new (the roof was not yet finished) convention center, Binyanei Ha'uma. The highlight of the convention was Prime Minister Ben Gurion's nighttime address at the Hebrew University amphitheater at Givat Ram. B'nai B'rith held another convention in Israel in 1965, electing Dr. William A. Wexler—who, after retiring from professional activity, became the only B'nai B'rith president to settle in Israel—as successor to Label Katz. B'nai B'rith's third convention in Israel was held in 1974. Originally planned for London, the '74 convention was moved in answer to the British government's pro-Arab policies during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. B'nai B'rith was the first Jewish group to visit Egypt, at the invitation of President Anwar el-Sadat—only six weeks after Israel and Egypt signed the Camp David Accords. And when the U.N. Security Council voted in 1980 for an Arab-sponsored move not to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, B'nai B'rith responded by establishing its World Center in the nation's capital.



Entrance to the grotto at the B'nai B'rith Martyr's Forest Memorial Shrine.



Entrance to B'nai B'rith Martyrs' Forest in Israel. Since its opening in 1954, over 1,088,000 trees have been planted.



"Scroll of Fire" Monument. Dedicated in 1972, set in the midst of the B'nai B'rith Martyr's Forest.

AFTERWARD

The B'nai B'rith World Center in Jerusalem is a unique institution within the B'nai B'rith international network. Established in 1980 by acclamation of the Order's supreme body—the International Convention—upon the initiative of Israel District #14, the World Center was charged by the International Board of Governors with a number of weighty tasks:

- to serve as the permanent and official presence of B'nai B'rith in Jerusalem
- to serve as the central B'nai B'rith project in Israel
- to serve all B'nai B'rith agencies working for Israel and for the unity of the Jewish people
- to serve as a major bridge linking the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora

The impetus for that initiative was the withdrawal from Jerusalem of nearly all the foreign embassies in reaction to passage by the Knesset of the Jerusalem Law, which extended Israeli sovereignty over all of the united city. Under the slogan “When they move out, we move in,” B'nai B'rith acted like no other Jewish organization at the time to show support for the Israeli government in its decision to place the entire city under Israeli sovereignty and in support of the Jewish people's claim over Jerusalem as its heart and soul.

As told earlier, B'nai B'rith had been present and very active in Eretz Yisrael since the establishment of the Jerusalem Lodge in 1888. But in 1980 there was a clear sense among the local and international

leadership of B'nai B'rith, and among Israeli government officials as well, that this new challenge to Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem called for an extraordinary response—the establishment of an institu-



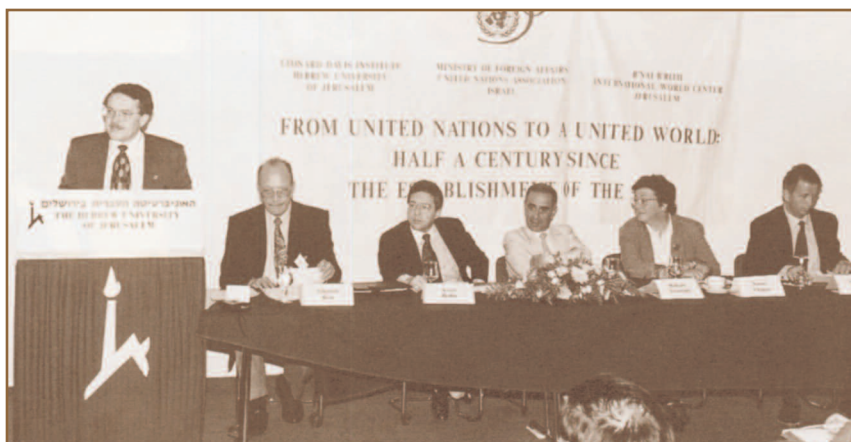
Meeting of the B'nai B'rith World Center Board of Trustees—Jerusalem, 1982.



Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek addressing B'nai B'rith World Center Board—1982. Sitting left to right: Jack J. Spitzer, hon. chairman; Fred S. Worms, chairman, Board of Trustees; Shalom P. Doron, chairman; G. Rabinowitz, president B'nai B'rith Israel; Avigdor Warsha, director, World Center.



Participants in World Center Leadership Seminar—1994.



U.N. Conference—May 1995.



International Conference on Religion and Politics—November 1997.

tion that would directly link B'nai B'rith headquarters in Washington and B'nai B'rith districts around the world with the realities, challenges, and promises of Israel. This was the background upon which the World Center was established.

Ever since the World Center began operations in 1982, its volunteer leadership and professional staff have striven to provide a high level of services to the leadership of the Order, to the international departments housed at B'nai B'rith headquarters, to districts and lodges around the world and to individual members. The World Center has also represented B'nai B'rith in various international bodies, has coordinated B'nai B'rith's delegation to the WZO and the Jewish Agency and has provided on-the-spot reporting on developments and trends in Israel. In addition to other fundraising efforts, the World Center's volunteer bodies—Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, Council, and Executive—contribute sizably to its budget. Those who were engaged in the work of the World Center in the past and those who continue to be engaged today do so in the best spirit of the great founders of B'nai B'rith in pre-state of Israel - to strengthen our people's unity and national character on the basis of pluralism, equality and tolerance.

The list of projects and initiatives undertaken by the World Center over the years is beyond the scope of this article, but a description of some of its most outstanding initiatives is in order:

- It has conducted Leadership Seminars for B'nai B'rith leaders from around the world, providing an opportunity to learn in-depth about the Israeli reality. These seminars were subsidized by funds raised by the World Center.
- It has conducted numerous conferences and symposia on some of the most con-

troverfial and important issues facing Israel today: Israel and the Arab World, religious-secular relations, restitution, tolerance, and pluralism, and the economy.

- It established in 1990 its “Award for Journalism” in memory of Wolf Matsdorf, a member of its Executive Committee. The award recognizes excellence in reporting on the Diaspora in the Israeli media, helping to direct more journalistic attention to this vital issue.
- It has initiated programs that have become the mainstay of BBI programming, particularly the international Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name,” conducted now by B’nai B’rith in over 250 communities across the United States.
- It has been instrumental in raising tens of thousands of dollars in funding and in-kind services for various B’nai B’rith projects such as the B’nai B’rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, the International Convention, district, and lodge activities, etc.
- It has broken new ground in receiving grant funds from outside institutions such as the Israel Ministry of Tourism; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF); the Hebrew University; and the German Federal Ministry of Women and Youth. Plans are underway for a second international conference on religion and politics for which KAF has allocated 100,000 DM.
- It has developed close professional links and has provided consistent assistance to B’nai B’rith national departments and Districts in implementing their Israel



Tolerance and Pluralism mission—conducted with UNESCO funding.



Award for Journalism—1997. Sue Fiskoff receiving award from MK. Addisu Messele, Shalom P. Doron and Executive Committee member Asher Weil.



Visit to Israel by B’nai B’rith Uruguay—“Fraternidad Award” winner Carlos Carzogilo—1998.



Congressional Staff Mission—January 1998.

programming prerogatives. These include B'nai B'rith Uruguay, the Center for Public Policy, B'nai B'rith Chile, B'nai B'rith Canada, B'nai B'rith Europe, B'nai B'rith England, the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, the B'nai B'rith Center for Community Action, and the B'nai B'rith Center for Jewish Identity. Most recently, the World Center and the Center for Public Policy conducted a mission to Israel for U.S. congressional staffers.

- It has planned and organized visits to Israel by B'nai B'rith international presidents, district presidents, center directors, and other senior members of the volunteer leadership and professional staff.



Ezer Weizman, President of Israel, and B'nai B'rith International President Tommy Baer (center) with World Center Chairman Shalom P. Doron and Director Alan Schneider—1996.



B'NAI B'RITH WORLD CENTER

5 Keren Hayesod St. —P.O.B. 7522
Jerusalem 91074 Israel
tel. 972-2-625-1743
fax. 972-2-625-8097
e-mail: bbrith@netmedia.net.il