

B'NAI B'RITH

M A G A Z I N E

PUBLISHED SINCE 1886

WINTER 2024

Bagels and Balalaikas: *A Return To Brighton Beach*





ESTABLISHED IN 1840 RAISED IN CALIFORNIA CRAFTED FOR ALL

VARIETAL DRIVEN CALIFORNIA WINEMAKING
FROM AMERICA'S OLDEST WINEMAKING FAMILY

BARON HERZOG



Family Grown Since 1840



CHARDONNAY



CHENIN BLANC



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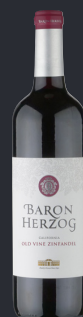
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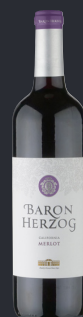
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Editor's Note

Gross Breesen, a manor farm in what was then Germany, seemed an unlikely haven for Jewish youth in the early years of Hitler's Third Reich. But before they hit upon the "Final Solution," Nazi overlords wanted Jews to emigrate, and an agricultural training camp for teens seemed a way to hasten their departure. Among them was George Landecker, who eventually made his way to Upstate New York, where he farmed and raised a family. His daughter Heidi tells the remarkable story of Gross Breesen and her father's survival and immigration to the United States.

Decades ago, Brighton Beach, fronting the Atlantic Ocean in Brooklyn, saw a large influx of Russian-speaking Jews from the former Soviet Union, especially from Russia and Ukraine. Soon, the neighborhood became known as Little Odessa, for the Ukrainian city on the Black Sea. Photojournalist Marcia Halperin first focused her lens on the community in 1979, and now, for B'nai B'rith Magazine, she has returned to show us Brighton Beach in 2024, with its still vibrant, largely Russian-speaking Jewish population of aged immigrants and their American-born children, comprising a unique corner of city life that harkens back to an earlier era.

B'nai B'rith archivist Cheryl Kempler profiles Caraid O'Brien, an Irish-born Catholic theater historian, playwright and actress who has become something of a rock star for those who love Yiddishkeit, translating and performing in the lingua franca of immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe. In another historic realm, we write about Jewish orphanages in America, which served the "most fortunate unfortunates" into the mid-20th century. Author Marlene Trestman is herself an orphan and a product of a social agency that grew out of the Jewish orphanage system in New Orleans.

There is more: We profile Leah Goldstein, a Canadian-Israeli endurance cyclist who at 17 was a world bantamweight kickboxing champion. Now in her 50s, she continues to challenge herself mentally and physically with transcontinental bicycle races. Searching for your roots? One of the leading sources is the Israel-based MyHeritage, whose global database has helped many find long-lost and unknown relatives in the increasingly competitive DNA search field. Finally, learn about the Secure Community Network, since 2004 helping to wage war on acts of anti-Semitism. 🇮🇸

—Eugene L. Meyer

From the Vault

New Histories and Traveling Exhibit Honor German B'nai B'rith Legacy

By Cheryl Kempler

The histories of B'nai B'rith in Frankfurt, Nuremberg and Mannheim, Germany, from 1888 to 1937, when they were closed by the Nazis, are recounted in three illustrated volumes published this year by Frankfurt's Schönstadt Lodge. The lodge is named for the Schönstadt family, who donated the funds for its headquarters.

Produced with funding from the German Ministry of the Interior, the books, published in German, are available in hardcopy, or can be downloaded from the Schönstadt website at bit.ly/bbfrankfurt. Website visitors can also view a short documentary about B'nai B'rith and an

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Photo credit: B'nai B'rith Holocaust and Related Materials Collection, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

A watercolor depicting the headquarters of the three Frankfurt lodges.

10 Bagels and Balalaikas: A Return to Brighton Beach

Same neighborhood. Same familiar community. In this photo essay, Marcia Bricker Halperin, a Brooklyn native, captures the streets of Brighton Beach 45 years apart, where Russian-speaking immigrant elders and their culture still thrive.

By Marcia Bricker Halperin

16 Gross Breesen: A Temporary Haven From Hitler

Heidi Landecker transports us to Nazi Germany in this account of her father's experiences at Gross Breesen, an agricultural school where Jewish youth savored their final taste of freedom, immersing themselves in Jewish culture and learning farming skills before the onset of World War II.

By Heidi Landecker

19 American Jewish Orphanages Housed the Most Fortunate Unfortunates

During the turn of the 20th century, Jewish orphanages aimed to raise children as productive Jewish Americans. Research shows the supportive role these institutions played in nurturing children. Writing to the board of one of 50 Jewish orphanages in the United States, one orphan expressed his appreciation "for all the pains you have taken to educate, support, clothe and bring me up to be honest and true."

By Marlene Trestman

22 Israel-based MyHeritage Has Global Reach

Despite Israel's ban on DNA testing, MyHeritage, headquartered in Tel Aviv, remains a global leader in family ancestry. The founders stress that DNA testing is essential for Jews seeking unknown relatives, especially in light of historic Jewish migrations.

By Michele Chabin

25 Students Confront Anti-Semitism on College Campuses in None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest

For its third year, the B'nai B'rith None Shall Be Afraid essay contest invited rising college students to address the most prevalent issue plaguing universities across the country—virulent anti-Semitism amid hateful protests. Featured is first-place winner Ilana Argentar, who writes in her essay about the parallels between anti-Jewish sentiments in Polish universities in the 1930s and those found on campuses today.

28 With Rising Anti-Semitism, the Secure Community Network Is on Guard and on Duty

With escalating threats against the Jewish community since Oct. 7, the Secure Community Network provides crucial training and serves as the first point of contact for Jews experiencing hate crimes. Amid this increase in anti-Semitism, the nonprofit encourages the community to practice Judaism proudly while taking necessary precautions.

By Juliet Norman

29 Canadian-Israeli Cyclist Gets Good Mileage

Cyclist Leah Goldstein regularly endures sleep deprivation, hallucinations and sweltering heatwaves during grueling competitions. As the first woman to win the Race Across America, her determination to thrive in discomfort knows no bounds.

By Jennifer Lovy

31 The Yiddish Rock Star—From Galway, Ireland!

Caraid O'Brien was in the audience of a Yiddish play revival when a vision of the playwright appeared to tell her: "You know that this is not the play that I wrote." Now, O'Brien keeps the history of Yiddish theater alive through her meticulous translations of the immigrant language, which is enjoying a modest resurgence.

By Cheryl Kempler



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Todah Rabah

By Seth J. Riklin

B'nai B'rith International President



I am writing this final column moments after the end of our B'nai B'rith commemoration of the Oct. 7 massacre, which has been the most important, life changing event of my presidency. The world changed on that horrible day, and as it has for 181 years, so has B'nai B'rith.

Over the last year I have had the opportunity to talk with leaders from around the world about the importance of Israel and the fight against terrorism. I have also consoled released hostages and the families of hostages on behalf of our members.

As I have traveled the world over the last three years as president of this organization, I have felt your support and your love for B'nai B'rith. We are all closer and more united today. Our efforts to bring in new members are having tangible effects. The battle against anti-Semitism has been a focus for all of our brothers and sisters, as the last year has seen a 1,000% rise in such hateful activity. We have together risen to the challenge, and we will continue our fight.

These efforts have paid dividends. B'nai B'rith is stronger financially than it has been in years. The number of members seeking leadership positions is high. The elections that will be held in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 12, 2025,

will be highlighted by the running of a three-way race for the next president of our esteemed organization. Our disaster relief, our senior housing activities and our work at the United Nations have grown in importance and success.

Our CEO, Dan Mariaschin, and the rest of our staff in Washington, New York, Jerusalem, Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Brussels have realized many great accomplishments during my term. Getting to know most of our staff over the last three years, I can tell you that their efforts are a labor of love for our great organization. We are fortunate to have so many amazing, dedicated people to carry out our mission worldwide.

The staff is surpassed in its efforts only by the work of our volunteers around the globe. The vibrancy and work of B'nai B'rith in Europe, Latin America, New Zealand and Australia, touches so many lives in their local communities and in Israel. In many countries, the rise in anti-Semitism has complicated our efforts over the last year. But we will always stand together and stay strong as we continue to work together.

I want to thank all of my senior vice presidents, Treasurer Mike Gellman and Vice Chair Brad Adolph, for their help and support. Our team has worked well together in difficult times. I have been privileged to serve with them.

My predecessor, Chuck Kaufman, has done an excellent job leading the Nominations Committee as we prepare for our next elections and what will be a new slate of officers. We are incredibly fortunate to have one of the strongest groups of candidates in recent memory; all are committed to the success of B'nai B'rith. I am excited about the future of our organization.

I will leave you with my prayer for peace in Israel. The IDF is fighting war on several fronts. They will win these wars. There will continue to be new challenges until the Palestinians decide that they can live in peace with Israel. Zionism has never required the end of the Palestinians. Peace will only come when Palestinian liberation is not conditional upon the delegitimization of Zionism and the State of Israel. We must defeat Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran to allow a true partner for peace to come to power in Gaza and the West Bank. When that partner comes, I believe that Israel and the Palestinians will find a way to finally live in peace and prosperity together. Let It Be So.
בן יהי וצור

Todah Rabah, for the honor of being your president,

Seth



Photo: Leslie E. Kossoff/LK Photos

B'nai B'rith International President Seth J. Riklin at the podium during the May 6 "Unto Every Person There is a Name" Holocaust commemoration held at the Embassy of Austria, the ceremony which closed the 2024 B'nai B'rith Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. Participating delegates included (standing, from left): Gary Javitch; Wayne Meisels; Trey Meehan; Rebecca Saltzman; and Paolo Foà.



Riklin and B'nai B'rith leaders and staff who met with Ambassador Jean Manes, chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Mission to UNESCO during the March 2024 B'nai B'rith mission to Paris. From left: David Michaels, director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs; Riklin; Manes; CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin; B'nai B'rith UNESCO Representative Stéphane Teicher.

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Israel at the U.N.: 75 Years of Resilience Amid Bias

By *Daniel S. Mariaschin*
B'nai B'rith International Chief Executive Officer



More than 75 years ago, on May 11, 1949, Israel was officially admitted to the United Nations as a member state. Only a year and a half before, U.N. resolution 181, after contentious debates spearheaded by opposition of the Arab states and others, had partitioned the British Mandatory Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab.

In the seven-plus decades that have followed, Israel has enjoyed few periods of normalcy inside the world body. To date, it has never achieved membership in the U.N. Security Council. It still is not a member of its rightful geographic regional group in Asia; instead, Israel caucuses with the Western European and Other States Group. It has been on the receiving end of hundreds of biased resolutions, most notably the infamous Zionism=Racism measure adopted in the U.N. General Assembly in 1975. In the wake of that vote, special committees were established by the General Assembly to advance the Palestinian narrative, and a special division of Palestinian affairs was created within the U.N. Secretariat. Countless times, Israel has been hauled before the U.N. Security Council, like some recalcitrant child, to hear rote charges of serial human rights abuses.

Special rapporteurs, who are shamelessly anti-Israel, have been appointed mainly at the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC), whose sole work has



Photo credit: Veni Markovski/Wikipedia.org

Israel was admitted to the United Nations in May 1949.

been to lacerate Israel with charges of carrying out human rights violations against the Palestinians. The current rapporteur is now calling for the Jewish State to be expelled from the U.N. altogether.

The U.N. system, through its vast network of agencies and commissions, acts as a megaphone for this prejudiced, hypocritical assault on Israel in the international arena. The UNHRC, whose members include some of the world's worst human rights abusers, devotes a special, separate item castigating Israel at every council session. The council has now even established a "Commission of Inquiry" with no end date, headed by three commissioners who have made a

career of being first in line to call Israel an apartheid state.

UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) is a special case in point. This U.N. agency has served as a focal point of resistance against the idea of a Jewish state. Its education arm has indoctrinated generations of Palestinians to believe they will all simply "return" to Israel. It inculcates hatred of Jews in its curricula and lesson plans, and has become a working arm of Hamas. Some of its staffers participated in the Oct. 7 massacres, and its schools and administrative centers have been revealed by the Israel Defense Forces to be hiding Hamas caches of rockets, weapons and other materiel.

For years, we expected other U.N. appendages to join the U.N.'s seemingly daily efforts to demonize or delegitimize the world's only Jewish state. After the horrific Hamas massacres of Oct. 7, that concern has materialized. On July 19, the U.N.'s International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a non-binding ruling that Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the eastern part of Jerusalem is illegal. Noteworthy is the absolute absence of context: nothing about Palestinian terrorism, the Arab wars against Israel, or Israel's numerous attempts to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Though not technically connected to the United Nations, the International

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Criminal Court was established through negotiations within the U.N. in 1998. It is threatening now to issue arrest warrants for war crimes against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for prosecuting a defensive war in response to the horrific Hamas attacks in October 2023.

It has been said by many that Israel is the Jew among the nations, meaning that the double standards and accusations directed at Israel at the U.N. are a form of anti-Semitism on an international scale. Bloc voting at the U.N. only serves to amplify its inherent bias. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has 57 members; the African Union (AU) has 55. With just a very few exceptions in the AU, most votes of these states are cast for resolutions biased against Israel.

Still, beyond the United States, there are some consistent friends of Israel within the body: currently, Argentina, Austria, Czechia, Hungary, the Marshall Islands and several others consistently vote against the fusillade of prejudice at the U.N.'s New York headquarters, and in other U.N. agencies.

Sometimes a country is "absent" when these votes are taken. We tend to count most abstentions and absences as positive for Israel, but in reality, this lack of diplomatic will does little to push back against the bloc voting and to alleviate the overall impression that the ganging up on Israel has widespread support.

On occasion, there have been moments of moral clarity in the General Assembly. Some consider then-United States Ambassador to the U.N. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's powerful, prescient speech in response to the Zionism=Racism resolution to be the greatest ever delivered in that chamber. Said Moynihan:

"The terrible lie that has been told here today will have terrible consequences. Not only will people begin to say, indeed they have already begun to say that the United Nations is a place where lies are told, but far more serious, grave and perhaps irreparable harm will be done to the cause of human rights itself."

Sixteen years later, on Sept. 12, 1991, the resolution was repealed in the General Assembly. The world was beginning to take a historic turn; communism had fallen in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the USSR had just imploded a month before. Then Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations John Bolton worked tirelessly to turn around votes that had been cast against Israel in 1975. Representing B'nai B'rith, I was proud to be present in the General Assembly Hall for his eloquent remarks, righting a historic wrong.

Sadly, the die that had been cast in 1975 has enjoyed a revival today. It lives in the halls of the U.N., on college campuses, in the streets of our major cities, in the reportage of most of the world's major

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New Histories and Traveling Exhibit Honor German B'nai B'rith Legacy



Photo credit: © Rafael Herlich

Frankfurt's former Mayor Nargess Eskandari-Grünberg and Schönstadt Lodge President Ralph Hofmann at the Feb. 28 exhibit launch at the German National Library. Many of B'nai B'rith's early leaders in Europe and America had connections to the non-sectarian philanthropy Independent Order of Odd Fellows, whose present-day members were guests on that evening.



Photo credit: © Rafael Herlich

From left: German National Library Director General Frank Scholze and Sylvia Asmus, director of its German Exile Archive 1933-1945, accepting a gift of the new books for the library's collection from Hofmann, who noted: "The B'nai B'rith Frankfurt Schönstadt Lodge took great pride in donating the scholarly books, which are the result of three years of research into original records and primary materials, some of which had never been seen."

online version of a traveling exhibition based on the books, which reproduces pictures of documents, artifacts and architecture, and photos of lodge members.

As is noted on the lodge's website: The German district brought together, under the presidency of Rabbi Leo Baeck, more than 100 individual lodges and sister associations with around 30,000 members. The different political and internal Jewish religious attitudes of the brothers and sisters were considered valuable diversity. The history of the three Frankfurt lodges (founded in 1888, 1919 and 1922), which is told here for the first time, also reflects, not least, the history of the Jewish middle class in Germany.

Although information about these regional lodges has been published before, the books are the most important texts ever written about the history of B'nai B'rith in Germany. B'nai B'rith's charitable endeavors there included the establishment of and/or support for

facilities for the aged, hospitals, libraries and children's homes. Most importantly, its members were dedicated to the cause of humanity and the enhancement of life for all.

Frankfurt lodge members whose achievements made a positive impact on the life of the Jewish community included financier Michael Moses Mainz, the founder of a hospital for Jewish children in the town of Nauheim. Banker Meier Schwarzschild established both a kindergarten and a Jewish nurses' training school. Teacher Salo Adler funded scholarships for impoverished young people. The lodge's first president, Charles Hallgarten, organized Jewish schools and orphanages in pre-state Israel.

The books also document the fate of the lodges' members during the Holocaust, most of whom did not survive. After the end of World War II, Baeck helped to reconstitute B'nai B'rith in

Europe. The lodge in Frankfurt was initiated in 1961.

Some 300 people attended a celebration for the books and the exhibit at the German National Library in February this year. Birgit Seemann and Edgar Bönisch, the historians who researched and wrote the books, spoke, along with Schönstadt Lodge President Ralph Hofmann, who praised Sylvia Asmus, director of the library's German Exile Archive 1933-1945 for her understanding of the significance of the publications and dedication to honoring B'nai B'rith's legacy.

Under the sponsorship of Frankfurt Lord Mayor Mike Joseph, the exhibit was installed in the [Frankfurt Town Hall] town hall in late August. It was organized by the Schönstadt Lodge in conjunction with a conference focusing on issues of concern to the Jewish community. B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin was a featured speaker. 📺

Israel at the U.N.: 75 Years of Resilience Amid Bias

media outlets, on social media, in the halls of Congress and parliaments and from senior government officials on a global scale. The charge of racism waged against Zionism, Israel and its supporters has now been joined by a chorus of blood libels against Israel for committing “genocide” against the Palestinians in Gaza.

We have said many times in this space and elsewhere how vital the work of B’nai B’rith is at the U.N., where we’ve advocated for Israel and called out the incessant bias by an international organization founded in 1945 on the ashes of the Holocaust.

What then are we to do in this year of the 75th anniversary of Israel’s admission to the community of nations? Is this something to celebrate? To commemorate? Or, simply “to mark.”

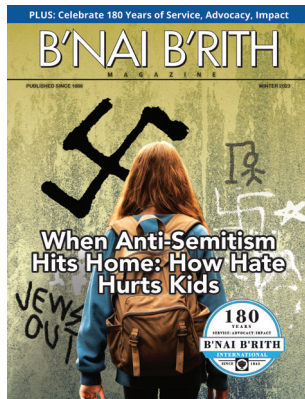
In 1945, we had no state, no voice and few friends. That changed in 1948, when Israel declared its independence.

I continue to be amazed by the resilience of Israel and its people. Despite its enemies and detractors, Israel has contributed greatly to the world, improving countless lives in the 20th and 21st centuries. When its ambassadors sit behind the “Israel” desk sign at the U.N., we are reminded of the treacherous millennia-long journey the Jewish people have taken, as we say in the Shehecheyanu prayer, “to reach this day.”

The real challenge at the U.N. is not only to Israel but also to us, the Jewish people. Facing attacks from Iran, its proxies, and the spread of lies and libels in the international community, the Jewish

world must unite to push back and set the record straight. Unity at this very existential moment should not be seen as a cliché; we can agree to disagree on many points, but not on speaking up for an Israel which its enemies are actively seeking to make an international pariah.

In the meantime, B’nai B’rith is, has been and will always be present when and wherever the U.N. at its key agencies convene: at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly, in New York, making the case for Israel, meeting on the sidelines with a long list of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers; in Geneva and in Paris in early 2025, doing the same. In Israel’s 75th year as a member of this many-times antagonistic organization, it is a duty we gratefully, and eagerly, accept. 🕊



Congratulations to our own B’nai B’rith Magazine Winter 2023 issue for a top prize in the American Jewish Press Association Rockower Awards for Excellence in Jewish Journalism.

FIRST PLACE:

Award for Excellence in Writing About Young Families/People

“When Anti-Semitism Hits Home: How Hate Hurts Kids”
by Beryl Lieff Benderly

Read it here: bit.ly/bbmag2023

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Bagels and Balalaikas: A Return To Brighton Beach

Photographs and text by Marcia Bricker Halperin

The Q train turns onto Brighton Beach Avenue having rumbled through the quieter parts of Brooklyn to reach a crowded world by the ocean. I have returned to photograph Brighton Beach 45 years after I first documented the arrival of Russian immigrants there in 1979. The neighborhood came to be known as “Little Odessa” because the majority of the original émigrés arrived from that industrial city on the Black Sea.

I stand on a sunny winter day at the crossroads of Brighton Beach and Coney Island Avenues where I encounter the Tashkent Supermarket facing the Vostochny Bazar. The neighborhood continues to be a haven for immigrants with the arrival of Central Asian Muslims as well as people from Uzbekistan, Georgia, Russia and Ukraine.

The Russian language is all around on the signs and in the crowds. Older people pass with shopping carts

and walkers, alone or with caretakers. Nearly a third of the residents are at least 60 years old, compared to 12% of the Brooklyn borough-wide population.

I am greeted in Russian when I enter shops. More than half the population of Brighton Beach were born either in Russia or Ukraine, and Russian was the primary language spoken in 35% of the households in 2022. As they have prospered, the younger families have moved to other communities, in Sheepshead Bay, Queens and Fair Lawn, New Jersey. But many return to dine in the restaurants, to shop and to visit the many salons and spas.

Visiting this neighborhood feels like time travel. Commerce spills onto the avenue under the speckled shadow of the elevated train line. At this far southern edge of Brooklyn, people are open to a stranger. I find it easy to meet new people, young and old, and photograph them. 📷

THEN

КОВРЫ

Brighton Beach Avenue 1979

Here the streets were filled with a variety of people more willing and more able to be themselves than in other parts of the city.

In the 1970s the city of New York was facing bankruptcy, and neighborhoods like Brighton Beach were in decline. Businesses were moving out and landlords weren't investing in their properties, thus perpetuating a cycle of deterioration and increasing crime. The easing of visa restrictions for Jews in the Soviet Union in the early 1970s led to a new wave of immigration that halted the progression of Brighton's decline. Nearly 20,000 Soviet Jewish émigrés would arrive in Brighton between 1975 and 1980 to form the largest community of new Russian Jewish immigrants in this country.



THEN

Chanukah party 1979

Holidays like Chanukah are celebrated in Brighton Beach to make public customs and rituals that were private or secret or even forgotten for many years in Russia and Ukraine.



Brighton Beach Boardwalk pavilion 1979

Memories of early trips to the shore are associated with my childhood in Brooklyn. The area reminds me of my grandparents and my parents, who found the sea air restorative. My photographs of Brighton Beach, while documentary, are also personal explorations.



NOW

Brighton Beach Jubilee Street Fair 2024

Amidst the vibrant hustle of the 46th Annual Brighton Jubilee, a long-time resident proudly showcases her collection of necklaces.



Brighton Beach Boardwalk 2024

Groups of older people are a common sight on the boardwalk and are most often speaking Russian. There is a senior housing apartment building nearby.



Brighton Beach Avenue 2024

Outside the St. Petersburg variety store, a man plays traditional Russian tunes. Many passersby show their appreciation by slipping bills into his suitcase.



Brighton Beach Avenue Newsstand 2024

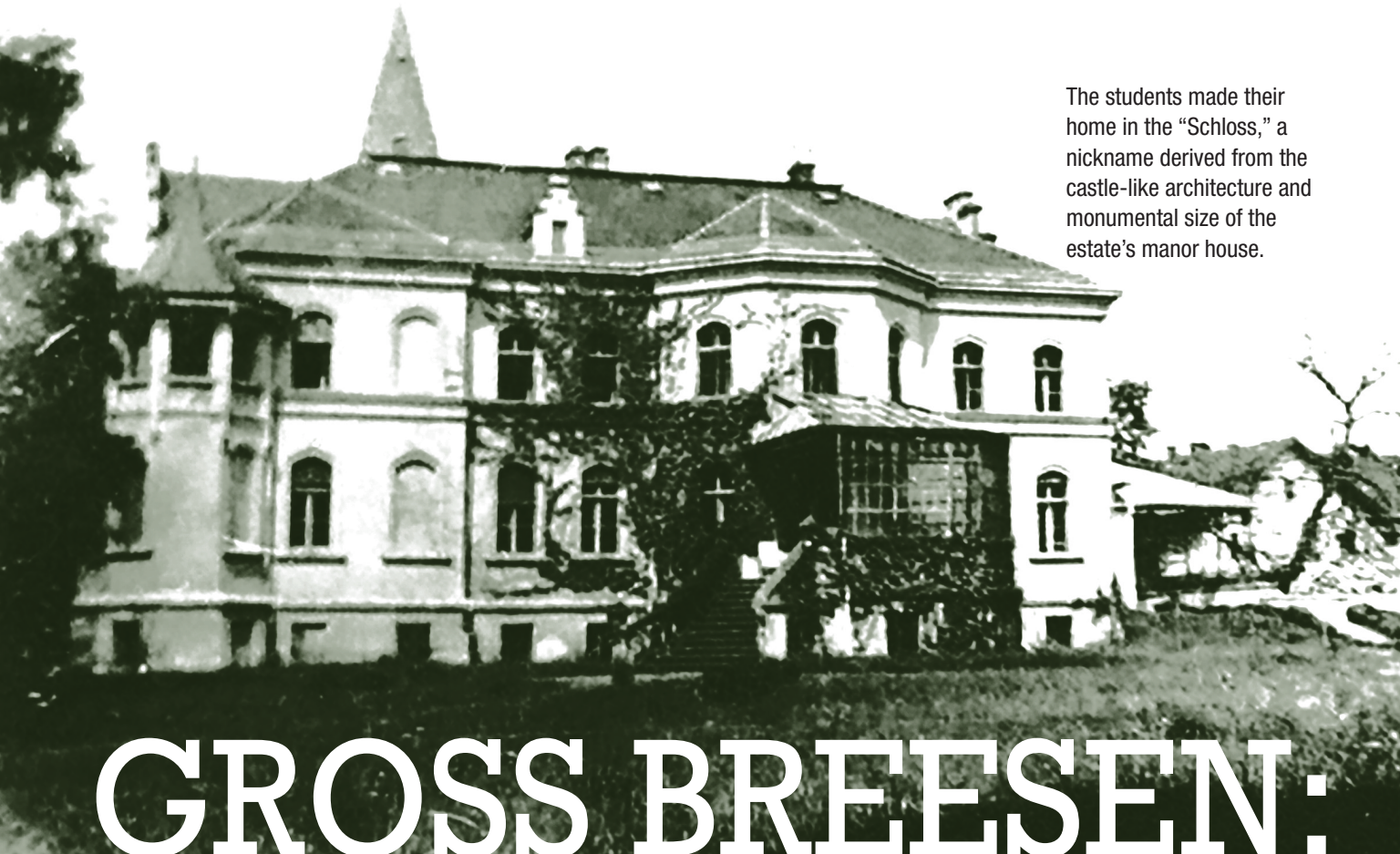
Within days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, community shop owners demonstrated their support for Ukraine. Still, newsstands and shops reflect customers' strong longing to retain Russian language and culture, from beloved childhood candies to Cyrillic puzzle books.



NOW

Vostochny Bazar 2024

A traditional Uzbekistan bread, Samarkand bread is made in a cylindrical clay oven fired to a high heat. The traditional Uzbek disks of dough are baked vertically.



The students made their home in the “Schloss,” a nickname derived from the castle-like architecture and monumental size of the estate’s manor house.

GROSS BREESEN: A Temporary Haven From Hitler

By Heidi Landecker

In May 1936, my father, George Landecker, arrived at Gross Breesen, a manor farm in Breslau, Silesia, then in Germany. The farm occupied a former nobleman’s estate on 567 acres, and it had just become an agricultural training school for Jewish teenagers, established because the few countries accepting refugees from Nazi Germany wanted farm workers. Dad came from a small town outside Königsberg, a day’s train ride to the north. He was 17.

Breesen had been owned by Willi Rohr, a Polish Jew who leased the estate at no charge to the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden (National Council of German Jews), which was setting up such facilities for teenagers no longer allowed to attend German schools.

The council was an umbrella group of Orthodox, Zionist and progressive Jewish organizations, formed in September 1933 to represent German Jewry to the Nazi government. At its head was Rabbi Leo Baeck, president of B’nai B’rith in Germany, who immediately wrote to Adolf Hitler requesting a meeting to discuss the Jewish situation under National Socialism. Baeck received no response.

The council raised money from wealthy members and state and international Jewish organizations to help those who had



The red marker on the map indicates Gross Breesen’s present-day location in Poland. Before World War II, the town and the estate were situated in the same place, Silesia, which was then a part of Germany.

lost employment. After the Nuremberg laws of 1935, which stripped Jews of German citizenship and their children of the right to public education, it built schools for Jewish youngsters and centers like Breesen for German Jewish youth. By early 1936, with no hope of education or jobs, tens of thousands of Jewish teenagers like my father could only try to emigrate.

Members of the “cow barn team.” The author’s father, George Landecker, grasps the ox’s rope.

Baeck and other leaders, including Otto Hirsch and Julius Seligsohn—who would both die in concentration camps—established some 30 training farms across Germany by 1937, funded by Jewish donors and agencies from Germany and America. Most were Zionist, teaching agriculture and Hebrew for resettlement in what was then Palestine. Breesen was non-Zionist.

The Breesen my father knew ended on Nov. 10, 1938. As part of the Kristallnacht pogrom that began on Nov. 9, the Gestapo arrested all Jewish males over 18. They were sent by train to Buchenwald. My father was by then working on a sheep farm in Bavaria, awaiting papers that would take him and 36 other Breeseners to a farm in Virginia, but while visiting his girlfriend in Frankfurt, he was arrested on the street.

Headmaster Curt Bondy, a professor of education who had been kicked out of the University of Göttingen in 1935, was arrested at Breesen, too. He and the others arrested there that day would survive.

Back in 1936, when the Reichsvertretung chose Bondy to teach farming to 100-plus teenagers in the countryside, he was a 42-year-old social psychologist who had directed a juvenile prison in Hamburg. That April he began selecting about 130 young people, ages 15 to 17, to learn farming.

A large pool of applicants

Bondy interviewed more than 400 candidates, mostly urban kids from across Germany, asking grueling questions about character, religion, moral values and goals.

My father had grown up in an East Prussian village and was also forced to leave school. Dad had captained his soccer team; suddenly, at 15, he wasn’t allowed to play. He found work in a clothing factory in nearby Königsberg—now Kaliningrad, in Russia—and joined a Jewish youth group established by the Reichsvertretung. There he read about Gross Breesen, which might help him settle in another country. The road to becoming a teacher, his dream, was now closed, so he applied.

Most applicants were the children of doctors and lawyers who paid tuition. Dad did not. My grandfather worked for the railway, ferrying goods by horse cart from the train station to Nordenberg’s merchants. Even though Opa, as I called him, earned an Iron Cross fighting for Germany in the First World War, Germany forced him to stop working in 1935. My father was the oldest of five; the family could never have afforded tuition.

At Gross Breesen, the students lived in the manor house, which they called the “Schloss” (castle). The sprawling estate’s livestock, crops and produce were maintained by non-Jewish



laborers whose families had worked there for generations. These “Instleute,” or permanent farmworkers, were paid in housing and produce from the estate and given a small wage. It was almost a feudal arrangement, according to Werner T. Angress, a Breesener who became a historian.

The kids in the manor house had plumbing and electricity; the “Instleute,” living above the cow barns, had neither. In “Witness to the Storm: A Jewish Journey from Nazi Berlin to the 82nd Airborne, 1920-1945,” Angress writes that the adult workers had an outhouse; their children used a collective dung heap.

A Jewish farm manager, Erwin Scheier, supervised the trainees’ farming lessons; a gentile boss, Herr Gamroth, managed the workers. Dairy cows, horses and mules had to be fed. A Jewish master carpenter taught the boys to build. A non-Jewish blacksmith taught them to shoe the animals that hauled machinery. The 25 female students handled cooking and laundry, as expected everywhere of women in the 1930s. A few escaped to work in the cow barn, and in summer everyone pitched hay.

Scheier managed the haymakers, somehow preventing injury among novices wielding pitchforks and scythes. His wife, Ruth, oversaw the women, who baked bread, gardened, canned vegetables, darned socks and washed clothing—by hand—for a community of at least 140, which included “interns,” the students’ slightly older counselors.

The non-Jewish workers labored alongside the young Jews, an affiliation that was largely peaceful if not—by Nazi race law—friendly. Breesen had a cranky old tractor that my father developed a knack for. The workers let Dad drive it; most of the trainees feared it.

Bondy’s three pillars

To settle the students abroad, Bondy taught “three pillars”: farming, German culture and Judaism. After a day in the field, students read aloud from German literature or staged plays.



Photos: © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric F. Bowes

Dr. Curt Weiner Bondy (1894-1972), director of the Gross Breesen agricultural training school, with his horse, Edgar. Prior to the advent of the Nazi regime, Bondy had a successful career as a psychologist, scholar and educator. In addition to teaching his pupils the necessary skills for farming, Bondy attended to their literary education and their moral and spiritual development.

the Reichsvertretung was searching frantically for countries to accept them.

When Dad was arrested, he was deported east to Buchenwald. That he met the Breeseners there was fortuitous because they had blankets, and Dad had nothing. It was also easier to resist the Nazis as a group, practicing Bondy's life lessons. The trainees were strong from working outdoors, and helped one another in the camp, sharing food and helping the elderly to the latrine. Years later, Dad would call that meeting in the concentration camp the first Gross Breesen reunion. The happy pictures in the photo albums made by one Breesener, which many carried out of Germany, hide the reality of life beyond the farm and their uncertain fate.

Dad died at 93, in 2012. He rarely talked about his two months in Buchenwald, but my husband once asked him what the first night was like. Dad replied that he remembered being too frightened to go to the latrine, with inevitable results.

At Breesen there'd been many plans for resettlement as a group, to Brazil, to Australia, to Kenya. None succeeded, although small groups of Breeseners did eventually immigrate to those countries and to Palestine. But in January 1939, to get out of Buchenwald, they needed visas to another country to prove they could leave Germany, complying with Nazi policy. Angress, who had escaped to Holland before Kristallnacht, worked every channel with the Reichsvertretung to get Dutch visas for the

prisoners to immigrate to a refugee camp near Amsterdam. When they succeeded, the Gestapo freed the Breeseners, telling them to leave immediately or face rearrest.

With a college teaching job in Richmond, Virginia, Bondy was able to obtain a U.S. visa. He continued helping Breeseners emigrate. My father and Angress were part of a longstanding project with William Thalhimier, a Jewish businessman in Richmond, who bought a farm in Nottaway County. Thalhimier persuaded the U.S. State

continued on page 21



The young Jewish men who received training at Gross Breesen learned to handle and care for all livestock including dairy cows, pigs, horses and mules.

The philosopher Martin Buber visited and gave seminars. In the evening, a string trio performed. My father learned to love opera at Breesen. On the farm in Upstate New York that Dad bought in 1946, the cows in our dairy barn included Aida, Carmen and Tosca.

Religious teaching was part of Bondy's mandate, and students celebrated the Sabbath every Friday night.

On Saturdays, Bondy delivered "life lessons," lectures on values. He asked students what they had learned from daily incidents on the farm, discussing generosity, self-awareness and working with others. He stressed that the community was more important than the individual. By the trainees' accounts years later, he was a strict disciplinarian but a charismatic teacher.

Were the Nazis aware of Breesen? Of course. But Bondy encouraged discussion of current events and had a newspaper delivered every day, so the students knew they lived on an island of security, even if they didn't know how temporary it would be. Angress writes that, according to the Russian State Military Archives opened in Moscow after the Soviet Union fell, the Schutzstaffel, or secret service, knew the details of daily life on the farm. Perhaps the manager, Gamroth, had been the informer.

In 1936-38, well before the "Final Solution," to murder Jews on a massive scale, the Nazis allowed farm schools like Breesen to exist because they were helping Jews leave Germany—a goal of the government determined to make the country "Juden" free. And

American Jewish Orphanages Housed the Most Fortunate Unfortunates

By Marlene Trestman



Photos credit: Jewish Children's Regional Service, New Orleans

A Hebrew class conducted at the Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans, known as "the Home," c. 1890. From 1856 until 1946, the institution provided a shelter for children who were orphaned or whose parents were unable to care for them.

In 1866, as he set out into the world to fend for himself, Nathan Goldstein thanked his caregivers "for all the pains you have taken to educate, support, clothe and bring me up to be honest and true." Writing not to parents or relatives, the 14-year-old was expressing gratitude instead to the board of the Jewish Orphans' Home of New Orleans, where he had lived for four years following the death of his Polish immigrant father.

So, too, Edgar Goldberg later lauded the "loving care" he received from 1884 to 1891 in the same "dearly beloved institution" in New Orleans. "The Home," as it was known since its founding in 1856, was one of some 50 Jewish orphanages

that operated across this country prior to the mid-twentieth century, born as much from the biblical commandment to care for widows and orphans as from fear of discrimination if Jews did not "care for their own."

Highly regimented and isolating, often abusive by today's standards, orphanages did not always engender such glowing praise from their alumni. Nathan and Edgar, however, illustrate the reality that Jewish orphanages, like their many non-Jewish counterparts, once regularly offered a stable and desirable environment for children whose parents—suffering from maladies and misfortunes, if not dead—could not provide the necessary care. Together these 50 Jewish orphan-

ages, including at least five that B'nai B'rith established or sustained, sheltered, fed, clothed and educated tens of thousands of American Jewish children.

These institutions varied greatly in size, with residential populations ranging in the early 1900s from about 90 children at Philadelphia's Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum and 166 at San Francisco's Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum to 500 at Cleveland's Jewish Orphan Asylum and 1,700 at New York City's Hebrew Orphan Asylum. Whether called orphanage, asylum or home, or whether the original impetus arose primarily from yellow fever fatalities (New Orleans), Civil War deaths (Cleveland), or rising Eastern European immigration (Atlanta), these Jewish orphanages sought to raise children within the faith and properly educate them to take their place in society as productive Jewish Americans. Although a handful of these institutions adhered to traditional Orthodox observances, such as the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home in Chicago and the Orthodox Jewish Orphans Home in Cincinnati, the vast majority, largely founded and run by German Jews, followed Reform Judaism and reared their charges to embody the values of their prosperous and highly assimilated benefactors. These children would serve, in the words spoken by B'nai B'rith leader Simon Wolf at Atlanta's Hebrew Orphans' Home in 1891, as "a rebuke to our enemies and encouragement to our friends."

Home hallmarks: education, socialization and assimilation

Education was a hallmark of Jewish orphanages, many of which sent their children to public schools, citing the importance of outside socialization to foster good American citizens, supplemented by industrial programs to teach marketable skills. The Home in New Orleans stands out for prioritizing such socialization. In 1904, dissatisfied with the education its children were receiving in public schools, the Home opened the Isidore Newman Manual Training School for its wards to learn alongside

children from the community, regardless of religion (but open only to whites in the racially segregated city), whose parents could afford to pay tuition. As a result, “only two classes of society” attended the prestigious school, humorously remarked Home alumnus Louis Peters about his Newman classmates: “The children of the affluent and the children of the Home.”

The design and location of Jewish orphanages served as bold and tangible measures of Jewish philanthropy and the respect accorded by the surrounding communities. B’nai B’rith’s Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, for instance, opened in 1868 in a large, brick former sanitarium on a seven-acre tract bordering an elite German community that housed many of the city’s most distinguished families. In 1886, in partnership with B’nai B’rith, New Orleans’ Jewish orphanage prominently positioned its new structure, lauded as a “magnificent monument to Hebrew benevolence,” amid the city’s stately mansions. “We are making history today,” declared Leo N. Levi, B’nai B’rith District Seven president and future national president, at the laying of the cornerstone as “American Jews, whose wanderings and blistered feet have found a hospitable welcome here, where the constitution of a free and enlightened people guaranteeing equal rights to all men before the law, touches and exalts the persecuted heart like a divine benediction.” After thanking B’nai B’rith for erecting its “Venetian-style” orphanage in his city, Atlanta Mayor John T. Glenn praised Jews “for protecting and sustaining the unfortunate” and for doing “the world good and not harm by living in it.”

Jewish orphanages varied in policies and practices amid evolving standards of childcare. While the New Orleans and Cleveland asylums, for example, adopted “self-government” programs in the early 1900s, placing older children in charge of younger peers to teach their charges responsibility and citizenship, the Atlanta orphanage expressly rejected the innovation, instead aiming to simulate normal family life. The Atlanta facility also responded to mounting criticism of

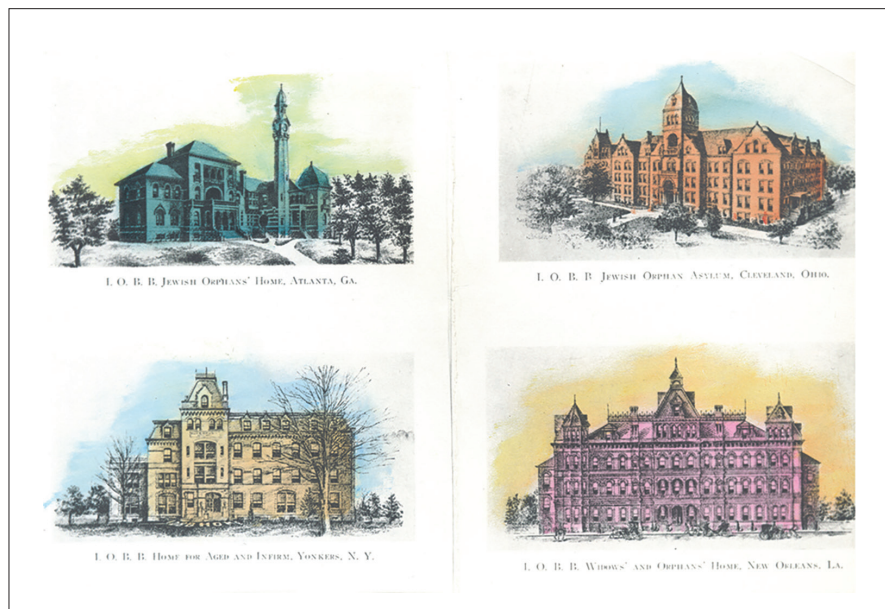


Photo credit: B’nai B’rith Archives Collection, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

A tinted postcard depicting B’nai B’rith philanthropic institutions including orphanages in Atlanta, Cleveland and New Orleans, c. 1900.

institutional care by embracing parent subsidies and foster care. In contrast, the New Orleans orphanage responded by creating the most “home-like” environment possible, which by the late 1920s included transforming large barracks-style dormitories into small, personalized bedrooms, winning local praise as “The Institution That Is Not an Institution.”

A new mission for Jewish orphanages

By 1940, however, national trends—including the advent of Social Security, declining mortality among child-bearing adults and increased wages—converged to drastically reduce American orphanage populations. Most Jewish orphanages closed and transitioned to provide non-residential services, such as the Jewish Educational Loan Fund in Atlanta, the Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Greater Philadelphia and the Jewish Children’s Regional Service in New Orleans.

Jewish orphanage founders correctly viewed orphan care as a long-term investment. In 1918, for example, B’nai B’rith Second District President Joseph Seligman described the benefits the organization derived from its orphanage partnerships. “The many thousands of wards have made the B’nai B’rith

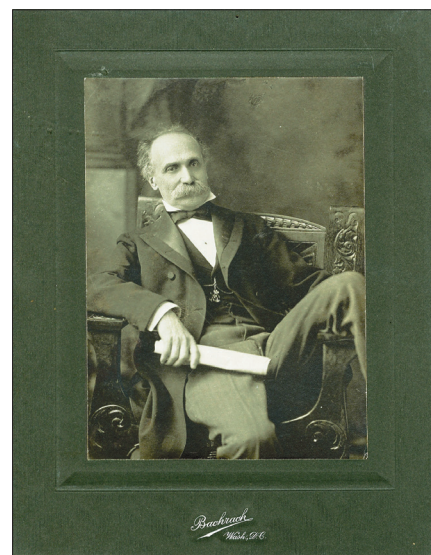


Photo credit: B’nai B’rith Archives Collection, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

A nationally known Jewish leader who served as B’nai B’rith’s president in 1904-05, Simon Wolf (1836-1923) was a founder of and major contributor to the Atlanta B’nai B’rith Hebrew Orphans’ Home.

worthwhile. In these children our work shall live, not only in this generation, but in many generations yet unborn.” Many orphanage alumni fulfilled Seligman’s prophecy, including a few notable examples from the New Orleans orphanage.

Following his discharge from the Home, Nathan Goldstein prospered

The Creed of the Jewish Orphan Home

I am the Jewish Orphan Home.

My children are Jewish children. Judaism is their approach to God. They shall pray as did their fathers in the spirit of the Jewish Prophets.

My children are orphans. They began life with a loss. That loss must be made their opportunity. They shall build against it, and weakness shall become strength.

My children are part of me. I am their home. I am their father. I am their mother. I am their servant. Whatever my heritage and whatever my acquisition, I shall pass it on to them.

I am their father. I provide their sustenance. I afford them food that their bodies shall become keen and strong. I afford them education. Their minds shall be shaped and grow. I prepare them against the great adventure of life.

I am their mother. Out of my love I would create in them the spirit by which men live. With God I would fashion their soul. They shall walk bravely, deal kindly and seek oneness with the One Purpose.

I am their servant. I come in the guise of an institution. I come in the person of a foster mother. I come as a messenger of good tidings. I help the family to live on under its own roof and at its own board. I come to heal hurts, and I believe that by many paths we find God.

I am the J. O. H. Every child ever learned at my knee is mine. Feeble or strong, he is mine. Distant or near, he is mine. Does he forsake me, he is still mine. He has warmed himself at my fires. He has eaten at my table. He has been comforted at my breast. He is my child.

I am the Jewish Orphan Home.

[23]

Photo credit: B'nai B'rith Archives Collection, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

The “Bellefaire Creed” appeared in one of the institution’s fundraising magazines, c. 1930-40. Established as the B’nai B’rith Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum, it was known for its innovative childcare methods, and operated from 1868 until 1943. After that year, Bellefaire changed its orientation to specialize in the treatment of boys and girls with emotional and psychological problems.

his debt of gratitude through service. In 1908, he founded the Jewish Herald, the first subscription weekly newspaper for Houston’s burgeoning Jewish community. Two decades later, B’nai B’rith honored Goldberg, citing not only his work as chair of the order’s most recent

convention but also the “unstinted support” he had given Jewish causes as an individual and through his newspaper. Even after his death in 1937, Goldberg’s good work continued through another Home alumnus. Joe Samuels lived in the Home from 1929 to 1936, after which he founded B’nai B’rith’s Down-town Lodge in Houston and organized frequent reunions for fellow “ex-Home kids.” In 1973, after the death of Goldberg’s successor, Samuels purchased the newspaper, today called the Jewish Herald-Voice, in which he carried on Goldberg’s legacy of supporting the Jewish Children’s Regional Service, B’nai B’rith and other Jewish causes until his death in 2011. Samuels’ daughter and grandson run the paper today. 📍

Researching the histories of Jewish orphanage residents

For descendants of orphanage alumni and other family historians, JewishGen (“The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy”) recently launched an online tool through its USA Research Division. The Jewish Orphan database (bit.ly/jewishgen) currently includes a spreadsheet identifying the 1,623 children and 24 widows who lived in New Orleans’ Home, along with birth dates, parents’ names and other information compiled from the Home’s handwritten registry books. In addition, the Jewish Orphan database includes a link to an extensive state-by-state roster of American Jewish orphanages, orphan benevolent societies and their successors, which, although compiled in 2004 and no longer actively maintained, offers a great start to locating Jewish orphanage records.

Herself an orphan, Trestman is the author of *Most Fortunate Unfortunates: The Jewish Orphans Home of New Orleans* (LSU Press, 2023), and hosts a companion website that includes nearly 100 alumni profiles, detailed appendices and a spreadsheet she shared with the JewishGen USA’s Jewish Orphan Database.

in Greenville, Mississippi, as a retail merchant and banker, donating time and treasure to numerous civic and charitable causes. Within the Jewish community, besides founding and leading Greenville’s Hebrew Union Congregation for 55 years, Goldstein remained grateful to his orphanage, serving on its alumni association before becoming the first alumnus to win election to its board of directors. At its 1929 convention, B’nai B’rith District Seven honored 79-year-old Goldstein.

Edgar Goldberg, too, sought to repay

Gross Breesen: A Temporary Haven From Hitler

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Department that these young German farmers on his land wouldn’t be an economic burden, and Washington let them in. In 1940, when Dad arrived, only 4,000 Germans were admitted even though the quota was 26,000.

And Breesen? After Kristallnacht, some of the “Insleute” ransacked the castle, smashing the piano. The farm training continued under a new director until August 1941, when the Gestapo shuttered the school and converted it to a labor camp. By October, Jews were not allowed to leave Germany. This last generation of Breeseners was deported

to Auschwitz, where they died.

In 1984, my father organized the second Gross Breesen reunion, in Upstate New York, and helped arrange many that followed, including one in Israel. I attended those, and when I was in my 20s and 30s, Breeseners in Berlin, Costa Rica and the U.S. hosted me for visits and dinners.

Today, Breesen is Pałac Brzeźno, a golf resort in Poland, near Wrocław, the former Breslau. I e-mailed its owners some of my father’s photos of their hotel’s history, but they never replied. 📍

Israel-based MyHeritage Has Global Reach

By Michele Chabin

When Halle Farber from Teaneck, New Jersey, wanted to learn about her Jewish family's murky origins, she bypassed the world's largest

family roots research firm, Ancestry.com. Instead, she utilized the resources of a plucky Israeli startup to learn about her heritage. MyHeritage was able to uncover the mysteries of Farber's genetic family tree.

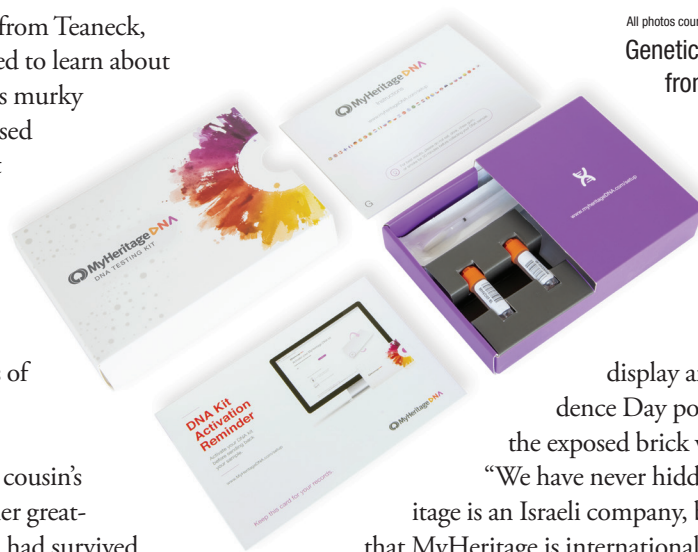
Farber was shocked—and delighted—to discover a Russian cousin's family tree, which revealed that her great-grandfather's parents and siblings had survived World War II after being forcibly relocated from Ukraine to Siberia. Once the Iron Curtain came down, many of their descendants moved to Israel, the U.S. and elsewhere.

MyHeritage—one of the world's premier family ancestry companies—could be based just about anywhere, but its headquarters are located in Israel, in a nondescript building in Or Yehuda, a Tel Aviv suburb.

Since its formation in 2003, the company has grown from a tiny venture based in its founder Gilad Japhet's home on Moshav Bnei Atarot, about 10 miles east of Tel Aviv, to an enterprise with over 500 employees in six locations, including Ukraine and the United States.

Japhet's interest in family research stems from an eighth-grade roots project. He went on to study computer software at the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology and worked for a time in Silicon Valley before returning to Israel to start MyHeritage.

At the firm's headquarters, sleek glass cubicles, colorful modern furniture, free snacks in its several kitchens and wood-planked rooftop decks shout “international startup.” Also on



All photos courtesy of MyHeritage

Genetic testing results obtained from a MyHeritage DNA kit connect clients to their ancestors, whose lives provide the nourishment for cultivation of a family tree's roots and branches.

display are vintage Israel Independence Day posters and antique maps on the exposed brick walls.

“We have never hidden the fact that MyHeritage is an Israeli company, but what's important is that MyHeritage is international,” said Aaron Godfrey, the company's vice president of marketing.

Covering more geographic regions

Though it has a far smaller database than Utah-based Ancestry (8.2 million vs. 25 million samples), MyHeritage “covers more geographic regions than any other test,” DNA Weekly wrote in a recent review of the company (DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, a molecule containing a genetic code unique for every person).

“MyHeritage, in particular, often has people who tested outside of North America which may not have tested anywhere else,” said Michael Waas, co-founder of U.S.-based Hollander-Waas Jewish Heritage Services, which utilizes the resources of many DNA testing companies to create family trees, finding clients' long-lost relatives or tracking down heirs.

For clients who are Jewish or suspect they have Jewish ancestry, “we always start on Ancestry, which has the largest DNA database by far,” Waas said. Once the results come in, Waas typically transfers the data to FamilyTreeDNA, a commercial genetic testing company, and MyHeritage, greatly expanding the potential pool of matches.

While DNA testing is an important resource for all family-seekers, it is a “crucial tool” for Jews searching for unknown relatives, Waas said, “given the enormous upheavals in global Jewish life in the 19th and 20th centuries.” This is especially true in areas where records and archives have been lost due to the Holocaust or other calamities.

As the interest in family history has soared over the past few decades, so too has the demand for resources that allow individuals to explore their genetic and historical origins and build a family tree from the comfort of their homes.

Though less well known than Ancestry and 23andMe, MyHeritage has security features, an easy-to-use, multi-lingual format and a trove of 50 million family trees and 20.7 billion historical records that have made it one of the most popular platforms for amateur and professional genealogists.

Like Ancestry, MyHeritage allows you to build your family tree and analyzes DNA to pinpoint recent ancestors’ ethnicity and their geographic origins. It provides DNA matches to near and distant relatives in its database.

But MyHeritage also offers services most companies don’t. In contrast to Ancestry, which supports only six languages, MyHeritage provides support in an unprecedented 42 languages—ensuring a much more diverse and international database of DNA and family trees. MyHeritage also allows people who have already tested their DNA through Ancestry or another company to upload their results to its DNA database. This boosts the chances of finding relatives in many more countries. An additional tool for photo repair/enhancement and colorization can bring old, damaged or faded photos to life.

At the RootsTech 2024 family history technology conference, Japhet announced that MyHeritage was able to analyze DNA from stamps his late grandfather licked decades ago through a cutting-edge process called artifact DNA extraction. The technology will eventually become available to MyHeritage customers, he said.

Given the private information that DNA and family trees can reveal, MyHeritage does not share a client’s DNA with

third parties, including law enforcement agencies, health insurers and pharmaceutical companies. Nor does it store credit card information. Still, data breaches can happen. In 2018 the company tightened its security after a file containing users’ email addresses and passwords was found on a private server.

Finding relatives via DNA testing or old-fashioned document research can yield family photos, handwritten family trees, birth, marriage and death certificates or other written documentation of a family’s life in the Old Country.



A lab technician extracts and processes DNA samples collected from MyHeritage kits.

A remarkable roots “trip”

Such was the case for Farber, who had been told that her great-grandfather was one of several children. The problem was, she never knew what happened to his parents or siblings after he emigrated from Eastern Europe to the U.S.

“I didn’t know any of their names, or what city or country they had lived in,” Farber said. My great-grandfather had changed his last name to a much shortened American-sounding one. I assumed that his family had died in the Shoah and that research wouldn’t yield any survivors.”

But since the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, Farber said she has felt “a strong pull to connect to other Jews, especially those on my family tree.” Soon afterward, she decided to explore her roots on MyHeritage.

Farber’s discovery, made in tandem with the site JewishGen, offered different spellings of her grandfather’s surname. The tree also revealed that her great-grandfather was the oldest of eight, and the only one to leave Eastern Europe.



A family tree generated online by MyHeritage. The site features a global collection of billions of archival records in 42 languages, including birth, marriage and death certificates from 60 countries; family trees; historical newspapers; gravestone inscriptions and locations; photos and census data.



“Before” and “after” images of two vintage photos transformed by MyHeritage technology, which supplies color, enhances facial features, sharpens sartorial details and brings out important elements in the surrounding environment.

Farber has since connected with cousins in four countries, who have shared photos of her great-great grandparents, and of family graves in Ukraine.

She has been touched by their stories.

“My new cousins confirmed that my great-grandfather tried to be as generous as he could, and that he sent money and care packages back home to his parents and younger siblings. They said one time he hid money in the heels of a pair of boots and mailed them and a separate letter to his father in Ukraine. His father opened the package and decided the boots would fetch a nice price on the black market, so he sold them. Unfortunately, the letter explaining where the money was hidden arrived too late. Oops!” Farber said.

As useful as DNA testing is for genealogical purposes, “we can never know what the DNA will show,” said Daniel Horowitz, MyHeritage’s genealogy expert. “About 99% of the time clients are fine with the results.” But surprises abound. Children may learn that they are adopted, conceived via a donor egg or sperm, or the result of parental infidelity.

In Jewish families, a married woman’s infidelity with a Jewish

man can produce a *mamzer*, a child born of a relationship that is forbidden in Judaism. The fear of discovering that a child is a *mamzer*, the most taboo status in Judaism, is evidently the main reason that DNA testing in Israel is illegal unless ordered by a court for reasons of health (such as testing embryos for a genetic disease) or establishing paternity.

As a result, many Israelis take the test while abroad or ask friends to bring the kits with the results to Israel, Horowitz said. Despite the DNA testing ban in Israel, MyHeritage recently helped Elana Milman, a 77-year-old Israeli woman born in a European displaced persons camp, meet the half-brother she never knew she had. When Japhet, the company’s CEO, read about the woman and her yearning to learn the identity of her father, he asked the company’s research team to offer their expertise. Through six months of intensive document research and DNA testing, the team determined that the woman’s father had been a Polish resistance fighter. Milman flew to Poland to meet her sibling, who gave her a warm welcome.

“This is why we do what we do,” Horowitz said. 

B’nai B’rith Talks

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Students Confront Anti-Semitism on College Campuses in None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest

It's a scary time to be a Jew on campus. In the wake of the savage Hamas attacks against Israel last Oct. 7, anti-Israel protests over the past year have escalated into virulent anti-Semitism, including verbal threats and even instances of physical violence that have created a hostile learning environment. It's understandable that Jewish students on campuses around the country are afraid to wear their Magen Davids or kippot.

This spring, B'nai B'rith hosted the third annual None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest for college students. Judges reviewed over 150 essays outlining proposals universities can use to address and combat verbal threats against Israel and Jews on campus. The top three winners were awarded scholarships of \$2,500, \$1,000 and \$500, respectively.

B'nai B'rith created the contest to keep a focus on anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in our society. None Shall Be Afraid was inspired by the 1790 letter from George Washington to the congregants of Touro Synagogue in Rhode Island, where he quoted Micah 4:4, "Everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid."

First-place winner Ilana Argentar, a freshman at Bradley University, shares her family's experiences leaving Poland in pursuit of a better life in the United States. In her essay, published below, she ties similarities between the persecution her family faced in the 1930s to the discrimination against Jews today, suggesting that universities take complaints of threats against Jews seriously and address them more decisively.

Second-place winner Rachel Applebaum, a junior at the College of Wooster, writes in her essay about the importance of education and open discussion to confront naive discrimination.

In her essay, third-place winner Faith Ann Lord, a junior at the University of Toledo, emphasizes that by bringing Jewish scholars and speakers to campuses and promoting academic exploration of anti-Semitism, universities can foster a more informed and compassionate student body.

To learn more about B'nai B'rith's None Shall Be Afraid initiative, visit our section on Combating Anti-Semitism on our website, bnaibrith.org. 

WINNING ESSAY BY ILANA ARGENTAR

Bradley University, class of 2028, Freshman

A trunk full of books, a bicycle and 30 dollars. That's what my mom says she and her family had with them when they left Poland as refugees in 1979. My grandparents and great grandparents survived the Holocaust but life in Poland after the war was still not great for Jews. My grandmother was born in Belarus where Jewish children were spit on in the streets and Shabbat candles were lit and prayers whispered behind closed curtains. As an adult in Poland, my Bubbie became accustomed to the word "zyd" used as an insult or, as a compliment, being told that she was, you know, was not like the other Jews. She understood the power and meaning that hateful words possess.

Led by my Bubbie, my family gave up their citizenship and left Poland, with the hope that their children would be more free in the United States to live safely as proud Jews. They were right to do it. As she grew up, my mom's Jewish identity was firmly planted and grew at preschool, summer camp, Hebrew School and through holidays and celebrations.

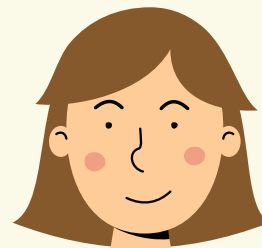
I asked my Bubbie her thoughts about the recent sharp rise in anti-Semitism on college campuses. Her response was that "nothing has changed." She recalled her mother-in-law sharing the story of mandatory "Jew-free Tuesdays" on the university



Ilana Argentar, whose None Shall Be Afraid essay won first place, is a student at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill.

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Favorites in Jewish Media From 5784



Working at a Jewish organization, many of us at B'nai B'rith are avid consumers of Jewish media. Here are our staff's recommendations from the Hebrew calendar year 5784 that our readers should be watching, listening to and reading. 📺

Shari & Lamb Chop, *Documentary*



Shari Lewis: courtesy White Horse Pictures/Shari & Lamb Chop

Years before Elmo and Cookie Monster won the hearts of America, the antics of the sweetly insouciant puppet Lamb Chop and her good buddy, beautiful ventriloquist Shari Lewis, conveyed life lessons to generations of kids all over the world. Showcasing decades of archival video and photographs, Lisa D'Apolito's documentary "Shari & Lamb Chop" pays tribute to a pioneering and multi-talented Jewish artist, an inspiration to boys and girls who spent their childhood tuning in to her show. Lewis' multiplicity of talent is revealed through rare films dating from the early days of television that will surprise, delight and rekindle memories for her fans.

"Shari & Lamb Chop" is screened at Jewish film festivals nationwide; scheduling dates can be found at shariandlamb-chopdoc.com. B'nai B'rith's podcast, hosted by CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin, which features both D'Apolito and Mallory Lewis, Lewis' daughter, can be viewed on our YouTube channel, and our website. [bit.ly/bbishari]

—Cheryl Kempler, Contributing Editor and staff writer



We Were the Lucky Ones: (Photo: Vlad Cioplea/Hulu)

We Were the Lucky Ones, *Miniseries*

Set in the thick of World War II, the television miniseries "We Were the Lucky Ones," follows a close-knit family of Polish Jews as they become separated during their escape from Nazi persecution. This series, both heartbreaking and full of hope,

helped me understand the plight that my ancestors faced as it vividly depicts all that was lost during the Holocaust. Based on real events, the story was a powerful reminder of the importance of family that truly epitomizes the resilience of the Jewish people. You can watch "We Were the Lucky Ones" on Hulu.

—Juliet Norman, Deputy Editor

My Friend Anne Frank, *Memoir*

This remarkable memoir by Hannah Pick-Goslar, a childhood friend of Anne Frank, was completed shortly before the author died at the age of 93 in 2022. Dina Kraft, who is an award-winning contributor to B'nai B'rith Magazine, collaborated with Pick-Goslar to share her heartwarming and heartbreaking story of a friendship that began when they were next-door neighbors in Amsterdam and ended when they were briefly reunited in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp shortly before 16-year-old Anne and her sister Margot succumbed to typhus in February 1945. The story traces the increasingly dire plight of Jews as the German "Final Solution" proceeded apace. Thankfully, Pick-Goslar survived and immigrated to the British Mandate for Palestine in 1948. There she worked as a nurse, raised a family and lived to tell her story.

—Eugene L. Meyer, Editor, B'nai B'rith Magazine

Table Manners, *Podcast*

Several years ago, British Jewish singer-songwriter Jessie Ware decided it was time for her to ask the questions—about food, family and everything in between. Seeking a new creative outlet, Jessie and her mother, Lennie Ware, a social worker, launched their hit podcast "Table Manners" in 2017. During each episode, they prepare and serve meals for visiting celebrities—from musicians and actors to chefs, athletes and even a Beatle (it's Paul). I tuned in for the thoughtful conversations with interesting guests; I stayed for Jessie and Lennie's banter and the warmth of two proudly

Our Staff Picks



Anne Frank: Maitaine Azumandi/commons.wikimedia.org

Table Manners: Moody 75/commons.wikimedia.org



WINNING ESSAY BY ILANA ARGENTAR

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campus in Poland she attended in the 1930s. While the Holocaust had not yet officially started, the seeds of hate had already been firmly planted in the DNA of campuses in Europe.

In November 2023, the ADL and Hillel published a poll which stated that 73% of Jewish college students experienced or saw anti-Semitic incidents since the beginning of the school year. Sadly, November 2023 feels worlds away from today, April 2024. Without looking at a new poll, I am confident that we all know that number must have risen exponentially since the fall. Even my TikTok algorithm has stepped up its game, sharing more and more videos each day featuring students rhyming those familiar chants, threatening the destruction of our people and homeland.

Unfortunately, it seems our top universities are leading the way, inspiring and allowing hate to grow, often under the guise of “free speech.” Of course, all speech is not free, and there are limits to free expression in every public environment. Schools must ensure that one person’s right to free speech does not shut down a Jewish student’s right to safety and security.

If they don’t already have one, universities must create a mechanism for students who have witnessed or encountered anti-Semitism or verbal threats against Jews or Israel to submit a complaint and then they must provide the resources necessary to follow up on those complaints. It is important that they work with university police and local law enforcement to take swift and decisive action against all verbal threats. The word must get out: You cannot make threats against Jews and Israel and get away with it.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. teaches that the Holocaust was preventable. Verbal threats are actually warning signs. By taking immediate action, universities still have the opportunity to lead the way, slow down the hate train and ultimately even save Jewish lives. Left unchecked, history has taught us that verbal threats can become actionable and then it is too late.

Remarkably my great grandmother managed to complete her master’s degree in Pedagogy in Poland in the 1930s. This was in spite of the many odds stacked against her, which included the university sanctioned “Jew-free Tuesdays.” Not long after that, most of her family was deported and murdered at Auschwitz, while she escaped and survived by hiding in the Ural Mountains.

As a teenager who has always invited friends over for Shabbat dinners, traveled to Israel and worn my Star of David necklace daily and proudly, this story can’t help but feel like a scary fairy tale from long ago. Yet, when I think about going to college next year and hear the threats against Jews and Israel that have spread throughout campuses, this unbelievable history sadly becomes a little closer and more real to me. Times are definitely scary for Jewish students on campuses. Universities must do what they failed to do for Jewish students in the past and act now to deter and shut down verbal threats before the hate becomes more institutionalized and it is too late. 🕊

Jewish mothers. Some of my recent favorite guests include Ben Platt, Millie Bobby Brown and Cher. *You can listen to “Table Manners” on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.*

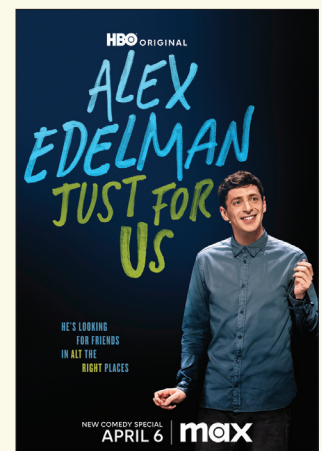
—Alex King, Director of Digital Strategy

Alex Edelman: Just for Us, Comedy Special

A nice Jewish boy attends a meeting of white nationalists and comes away with a funny and thought-provoking show. A masterclass in storytelling by the award-winning stand-up comedian Alex Edelman combines humor, intelligence and heart in his comedy special. He tackles a complex topic with a mix of amusing observations and deep and even moving insights. It’s easy to connect with Edelman’s themes of identity, culture and belonging. While telling this astonishing tale, Edelman offers respect and consideration for his subjects—no small feat given

his encounter is with white supremacists. Weaving together mundane and deeper experiences from his life, Edelman’s show works on many levels. “Just for Us” demonstrates how a comedy special can go well beyond simple entertainment: It can also inspire and move us. *You can watch “Alex Edelman: Just for Us” on Max.* Edelman won an Emmy Award on Sept. 15 for outstanding writing for a variety special.

—Sharon Bender, VP of Communications



Just for Us: Courtesy HBO



With Rising Anti-Semitism, the Secure Community Network Is on Guard and on Duty

By Juliet Norman

Twenty-four hours a day at a command center in Chicago, a team of agents fields reports of anti-Semitic incidents, responds to potential attacks and monitors the dark web for suspicious activity, all in an effort to safeguard the Jewish community.

Over the past year, the nonprofit Secure Community Network (SCN), founded in 2004, has ramped up efforts to combat anti-Semitic incidents throughout the United States. In 2023, there was a 774% increase in swatting against Jewish targets—where someone calls in a fake threat to a facility—and bomb threats, rising from 115 in 2022 to 1,005 last year. Nearly 200 of these threats, mostly targeting synagogues, were reported over a single Shabbat weekend in December.

Threats targeting the Jewish community surged dramatically in the wake of the Oct. 7 terrorist attack on Israel and the ensuing Israel-Hamas war.

Laura Strashny, a mother of four from Rockville, Maryland, had never experienced anti-Semitism before the war. Now, she says, her family has encountered anti-Semitic incidents almost every time they go shopping. As a modern Orthodox family, her sons typically wear kippot and tzitzit daily, clearly identifying them as Jewish.

“We’ll walk in the store and one woman’s giving him a dirty look,” Strashny said, referring to her son. “I didn’t feel safe leaving him alone with the cart to get something. I felt afraid.”

A few weeks before Passover, Strashny and her sons were shopping at their local Safeway when a man shouted directly at them: “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Her sons now frequently remove their religious garb or cover up their kippot with hats before leaving the house. These experiences have prompted her to pull her children out of public school and enroll them in Jewish schools. “If you don’t know what’s going on, just put a kippah on and go shopping and see what happens,” Strashny said. “It’s really shocking.”

Photo: Courtesy of the Secure Community Network

Secure Community Network (SCN) National Director Michael Masters speaks from its Chicago-based Jewish Security Operations Command Center. A nonprofit, the official safety and security organization of the Jewish Community in North America was founded in 2004 under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents. Currently, it partners with 146 federations, 50 partner organizations, over 300 independent communities and other public, private, philanthropic and academic groups.

The first point of contact

With a direct line to the FBI’s National Threat Operations Center, the SCN is often the first point of contact for civilians and organizations experiencing hate crimes or attacks. Last year, it helped coordinate security responses for the “March for Israel” solidarity rally on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

The nonprofit’s situational awareness and active shooter trainings are open to the public, which Patrick Daly, SCN’s principal deputy director, recommends individuals and organizations attend annually.

While the vast majority of threats target synagogues, SCN also collaborates with Jewish community centers, summer camps and organizations like Hillel to guide campus security.

Survivors of the 2018 Tree of Life Pittsburgh synagogue massacre and the 2022 Colleyville, Texas, synagogue hostage crisis credited their participation in SCN training with knowing how to immediately respond during the attacks.

“People live because they were trained,” said SCN Senior National Security Advisor Brad Orsini. “Those hostages weren’t rescued; they saved themselves.”

One of the tactics stressed in training in the event of an attack is: “Run. Hide. Fight.” Victims are instructed to distract their

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Goldstein battled record-breaking heat while riding in the June 2024 Trans Am Bike Nonstop, an ultra-distance race whose route spans 10 states: Bikers must compete alone, without the aid of assistants.

Canadian-Israeli Cyclist Gets Good Mileage

By Jennifer Lovy

Leah Goldstein is not a quitter, and never has been, despite a lifetime of challenges that might cause others to settle into a more traditional, less daunting lifestyle. The Canadian-born, Israeli-raised Goldstein, has instead made a career of succeeding against all odds.

A star athlete, she won the 1989 World Bantamweight Kickboxing Championship when she was just 17. For nine years, she served in the Israel Defense Forces as the first female elite commando instructor and worked as an undercover Israeli police officer.

In 2021, the ultra-endurance cyclist became the first woman in the event's 39-year history to win the Race Across America (RAAM), completing the grueling 3,000-plus-mile race from California to New Jersey in 11 days, three hours, and three minutes.

Her bicycle paths have not always been smooth. She broke her hand during a race in Pennsylvania in 2004. A year later, after winning several races, she crashed during the Cascade Classic, which hospitalized her for more than two months. It seemed then that her career could be over.

But, as she has time and again, Goldstein bounced back. With an unrelent-

ing work ethic, she has continued to move forward at warp speed and, now, at age 55, Goldstein has no plans to slow down.

During the 2021 Race Across America, Goldstein endured a heat wave so intense that most participants dropped out. Sleep deprivation caused her to hallucinate and to fall asleep on the bike. Saddle sores, sunburn and other ailments left her riding in constant pain. She says she's learned to "be comfortable being uncomfortable."

With a mile left in the race, a dehydrated and depleted Goldstein struggled to stay on her bike. Lori Friend Moger, her pit crew chief and close friend, says, "It was torture for her" and "scary as hell." As her heart rate rose to a dangerously high 200 beats per minute, Goldstein stopped frequently, taking breaks to lie in ditches along the route.

Yet Goldstein endured, walking her bike across the finish line and beating her closest competitor by 17 hours.

A "Pollyannaish" view

Moger, who holds a master's degree in sports psychology, describes her friend as "Pollyannaish," remarkably upbeat and optimistic: "She doesn't

have doubts like the rest of us. That is the secret sauce to people who do extraordinary things. We're trained to be realists, and Leah has not harnessed herself in that."

Goldstein's philosophy and track record have made her a sought-after motivational speaker.

Her credentials and philosophy are manifest in her book, co-authored with Moger: "No Limits: The Powerful True Story of Leah Goldstein—World Champion Kickboxer, Ultra Endurance Cyclist, Israeli Undercover Police Officer," published in 2016.

"While most people would be afraid to take on a race like this, I was scared not to," she writes. "I feared that if I stopped racing, I would lose part of myself. That thing that pumps me full of adrenaline and makes me feel alive would be lost, and I'd never be the same. Competition was like my best friend, and I wasn't ready to lose it."

Goldstein credits her family as a source of inspiration and dedicates the book to her maternal grandmother Frieda, who always told her never to use the words "I wish."

Her parents Simcha and Ahoova were equally influential. Her mother lived in northern China, and her father

came from the Soviet Union. Her mom moved to Israel to escape communism and her dad left because of anti-Semitism. They met and married there and relocated to Vancouver after her dad, a sailor, docked in the city, saw financial opportunities. Goldstein was born two months later. Her parents' examples instilled in her the mindset of never giving up.

In June, Goldstein was among the 49 cyclists who participated in the 4,200-mile Trans Am Bike Race, across 10 states from Oregon to Virginia.

Unlike competitors in the Race Across America, Trans Am participants have no pit crew to aid them. Instead, they are responsible for their own navigation and transporting all their supplies. She placed third overall and was the first woman to cross the finish line. During the ride she faced mechanical issues and navigational challenges, including being chased by dogs and a bear.

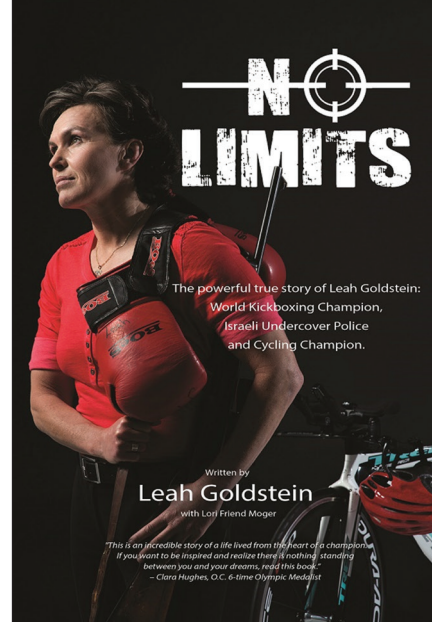
Goldstein, as a motivational speaker, draws on her vast life experiences, often sharing her mantra: "You shouldn't stop living when you're still alive."

"We're so focused on age," Goldstein says. "I think I am more of a role model



Enlisting in the Israeli army, Canadian-born Leah Goldstein (at right with fellow soldier) was fast-tracked through specialized basic training and held the rank of sergeant when she graduated. She went on to become a teacher of Krav Maga, a grueling hand-to-hand combat system developed specifically for Israel Defense Forces troops and military security.

now because others look at me and say even at this age, she can still do what she does. I get a lot of messages from people saying, 'I was thinking of running a marathon or going back to



Israeli army officer, disciplined martial arts trainer, champion kickboxer and cyclist, and inspiring motivational speaker, Goldstein is a force of nature who offered a brutally honest assessment of her exploits in her autobiography "No Limits."

school, and you've inspired me.' If I can keep motivating people to do the things they've been thinking about for years, then yay to them, yay to me, all the power to all of us." 🌐

With Rising Anti-Semitism, the Secure Community Network Is on Guard and on Duty

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attacker. The rabbi in Colleyville threw a water bottle at the perpetrator, giving members a chance to escape.

Rather than pausing Jewish life out of fear, SCN encourages the community to continue practicing Judaism regularly and proudly, while still taking necessary precautions.

Daly urges civilians to report incidents, even after they've occurred. He notes that people often hesitate to report what may not be explicit threats, but even a small piece of information can contribute to solving a larger issue.

"There's a balance between living in a world of paranoia or being a bit attuned to a scenario," he said. "If I'm on the subway, do I know where the exits are? What am I going to do if something occurs here? Empowerment trumps fear."

Check your surroundings

Be aware of your surroundings, Daly says, and never engage. "The goal is always de-escalation," Daly advises. "We don't rise to the occasion; we fall back on our level of training."

Orsini emphasizes the importance of securing at-risk facilities: "Lock the front door. Have procedures and policies on who we're letting in and out of our building."

With nearly 30 years working as an FBI Special Agent, Orsini said he's never seen so many hate crimes aimed at Jews. He stressed that Jews cannot solely rely on law enforcement for protection.

Preparedness is paramount. With advanced technology, organizations should routinely test alarms, cameras and panic buttons in addition to conducting facility walkthroughs with the local police department.

"We want the community to be open and thriving," Orsini said. "We don't want anybody to stop their event. It's really important for everybody to continue to be vigilant but continue to be Jewish; continue to celebrate."

See something suspicious? You can reach SCN's 24/7 Duty Desk by calling 844-SCN-DESK or dutydesk@securecommunitynetwork.org. 🌐

THE YIDDISH ROCK STAR —FROM GALWAY, IRELAND!

By Cheryl Kempler

Theater historian, playwright and actress Caraid O'Brien is a rock star to fans of Yiddishkeit. This might seem unusual for an Irish Catholic.

O'Brien's love of languages began with Irish, her ancestral tongue, which she learned from her grandparents in Galway. And that, surprisingly, led her to Yiddish, as an expert in the lingua franca of Eastern European Jews.

David Mazower, writer, bibliographer, researcher and chief curator of the permanent exhibit "Yiddish: A Global Culture" at the Yiddish Book Center, a museum and library in Amherst, Massachusetts, has observed that: "As translator, director, producer, actor, scholar, curator and mentor, she is irrepressible, and the most generous collaborator anyone could wish for."

O'Brien grew up in Boston. As a high school student in the 1980s, she nurtured a love for Ireland's great writers—Oscar Wilde and W.B. Yeats, whose plays and poetry are in English, and J.M. Synge, who wrote in Irish—and also for Yiddish books in English by Chaim Grade and Isaac Bashevis Singer, and for modern Jewish authors like Philip Roth.

Immersed in the cultures of seemingly disparate peoples, O'Brien grasped their connections: Rooted in legends of the supernatural, Irish and Yiddish literature reveal the histories of resilient peoples who endured poverty, prejudice and isolation but who derived strength from their traditions and family bonds. Each community, O'Brien realized, was "absolutely defined by religion. [Their

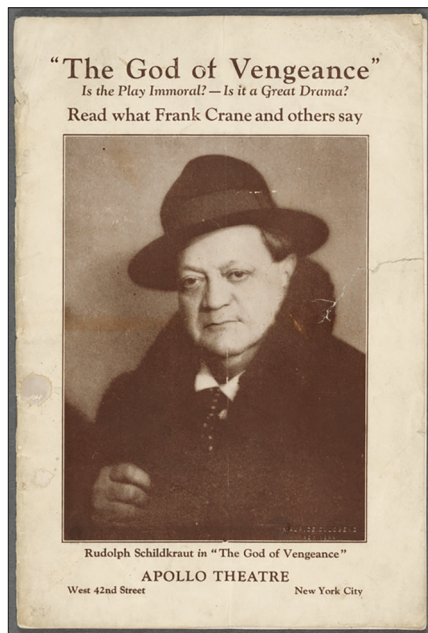


Photo: Collection of the New York Public Library

An actor famous in Europe and America, Rudolph Schildkraut, star of the Broadway run of Sholem Asch's "Got fun nekome" (God of Vengeance), was arrested on charges of obscenity with the other cast members.

writers] shared the same self-deprecating humor." And they did so in their own unique languages.

Learning from luminaries

While attending Boston University, O'Brien interned at the Yiddish Book Center and then studied Hebrew and Yiddish literature at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. She moved to Manhattan, where she worked on New York University's Yiddish website and, making the most of her Yiddish fluency, forged connections with legendary stars of the

Yiddish theater, then in their 80s and 90s. They had been cheered by audiences throughout their long careers on Second Avenue, home to Manhattan's legendary Yiddish theaters, and on Broadway, radio and television. They offered her access to their scripts, scores and recordings, treasures which yielded exciting discoveries. Regarding them as "my greatest friends," O'Brien became determined to "document the history of Yiddish theater through the experiences of people who lived it."

Inspired by her special relationship to singing actor and radio personality Seymour Rechtzeit, whom O'Brien calls "the last great troubadour of the Yiddish theater," she would go on to write his biography.

A new translation

In 1998, O'Brien was in the audience watching an English language performance of "Got fun nekome" (God of Vengeance), a Yiddish play about a Jewish brothel owner and his innocent daughter's affair with a prostitute, when she said she experienced a vision. In the darkened theater, an apparition of the work's long-dead author, Polish-born Sholem Asch (1880-1957), appeared before her eyes, as a voice admonished: "You know that this is not the play that I wrote." Taking the message to heart, O'Brien would pen an English translation, which garnered praise for bringing new life to the century-old piece.

"Got fun nekome," which premiered in 1907, has a fascinating history. Although

theatergoers were accustomed to seeing plays about adultery and crime by the time it opened on Broadway in English in 1922, the events on stage ignited outrage in the Jewish community. The actors were arrested for indecency, increasing the production's notoriety, and inspiring many to defend its content. "Got fun nekome" maintained its worldwide popularity for decades and, in the 21st century, celebrated playwright Paula Vogel dramatized the 1922 scandal in her work "Indecent."

In 1999, an experimental theater staged "Got fun nekome," using O'Brien's new translation, on the "go-go" platform at Show World Center, a Times Square sex show emporium, which the city had recently shuttered. Its bawdy décor took the play out of its turn-of-the-century milieu, creating an immersive experience for patrons. "The audience was very intellectual," O'Brien recalled. "Yiddish-speaking grandmas came. We put pictures of the Yiddish alphabet up around the stage. It was a mixture of the sacred and the profane, much like Yiddish literature."

O'Brien described the way her translation "left in a layer of Yiddish, including Asch's own dialogue from the original script," revealing the "beauty and musicality of the language" to evoke the play's original time and place. Some characters spoke only in Yiddish. Even now, her translations are influenced by cast members who enervate and "wake up the script."

Dedication and brilliance

As Yiddish classes were added to university curricula, and as interest in learning about the amazing scope of Yiddish culture has spawned new generations of enthusiasts, O'Brien's talents and knowledge have been in constant demand.

The Yiddish Book Center's Mazower, who is the great-grandson of Sholem Asch, has commented: "In recent decades, nobody has done more to keep Yiddish theater alive and relevant than Caraid O'Brien. And nobody has done it with more energy, dedication and all-round brilliance." 📖



Photo: Ronald L. Glassman

Caraid O'Brien has played principal roles in her own translation of Asch's drama, and more recently in a Yiddish language production.



Photo: Courtesy Yiddish Book Center, Amherst, Mass

O'Brien acts in an excerpt from her translation of Asch's "On the Road to Zion" during 2023 opening festivities for the Yiddish Book Center's exhibition, "Yiddish: A Global Culture." As co-curator of its theater section, O'Brien developed the installation's audio component.

In addition to her other activities this year, O'Brien directed a large cast in a staged reading of "Miryeml," a play about children and anti-Semitism at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research last spring and on Sept. 19 premiered her one-person show about Asch's heroines, "Land of My Soul," at Manhattan's Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Photo: Louie Correia/© Caraid O'Brien

O'Brien hosts New York City radio station WBAI's annual reading of James Joyce's masterwork, "Ulysses." In the photo below, she performs the monologue of the central character, Molly Bloom, in her own staging of the novel.



B'NAI B'RITH IMPACT

B'NAI B'RITH IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE GLOBE

We are truly honored to bring you the latest edition of IMPACT, where we dive deep and go wide into the stories, insights and innovations of B'nai B'rith, in your community and beyond. Every quarter, we aim to highlight the incredible work accomplished by staff and volunteers, share valuable knowledge and keep you connected with developments that matter most.

This issue is packed with inspiring features, expert perspectives and updates on projects making a real difference. Whether you're here to stay informed, get inspired, or find new ways to contribute to B'nai B'rith, there's something for you.

As we approach the shocking first anniversary of the Hamas terror attack on Oct. 7, we keep Israel close. In this issue, you'll read about how we are illuminating the plight of the remaining hostages, through a powerful exhibit meant to evoke what it's like to be held in a Hamas terror tunnel. It is imperative that we continue to share the story of the hostages until they are all home.

Our Jewish homeland has many needs at this time, and we encourage you to pledge your ongoing support to our Israel Emergency Fund.

However our newsletter impacts you, we thank you for being part of our journey and we wish you peace and comfort in the days and months ahead. 🕊

—Best wishes from the IMPACT team

IMPACT is published quarterly, online – posted on the home page, with back issues archived.
Please visit the website to read new additional content.

HAPPY
CHANUKAH
FROM B'NAI B'RITH!



B'nai B'rith Israel Emergency Fund Aids Israelis Impacted by Terror Attacks

B'nai B'rith has mobilized efforts to raise funds for Israelis who have been impacted by the Israel-Hamas war over the past year. Our B'nai B'rith Israel Emergency Fund has raised more than a quarter of a million dollars, which has been used to donate supplies including warm socks, towels, face masks, base layers, thermal gear, and windbreakers to IDF soldiers and to support individuals and communities experiencing devastation and disruption.

Following a Hezbollah rocket strike in July that killed 12 Druze children on a football field in the Northern Israel community of Majdal Shams, we launched a fund to aid the community, including many families directly impacted by the attack.

Following a B'nai B'rith donation of an all-terrain vehicle to the Mevo'ot HaHermon Regional Council in northern Israel in May, a second donation of firefighting equipment was presented to the council following destructive airstrikes in the area. Donated items included a rugged terrain vehicle outfitted with water and fire suppressive foam and back-mounted blowers and extinguishers, fire-retardant clothing, helmets and protective gear. Six of the council's communities near the Lebanese border have been evacuated for nine months, with fires from Hezbollah rockets, missiles, and drones devastating homes and thousands of acres of forest and farmland. Even as the equipment was provided, mountainous areas around the council were still smoldering.



B'nai B'rith World Center Director Alan Schneider (left) presented much-needed firefighting equipment and protective gear to Beni Ben Muvchar (right), Mevo'ot HaHermon regional council head, in northern Israel on behalf of the B'nai B'rith Israel Emergency Fund. B'nai B'rith had previously donated an RTV to the same location.

"We were gratified that the equipment was put to almost immediate use when the regional council's extensive rehabilitation center was hit by a rocket, causing millions of Shekels in damage," said B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider, who presented the equipment to the council.
continued on next page

Fort Worth's Garsek Lodge 2024 Jewish Person of the Year

On June 2, 140 friends and family members celebrated the life of Roz Rosenthal, z"l, the posthumous recipient of Isadore Garsek Lodge's 2024 Jewish Person of the Year award, accepted by her granddaughter, Ashli Blumenfeld. Rosenthal was praised for her activities helping people in the Jewish and Fort Worth communities.

At the ceremony, the lodge also presented grants to new college freshmen Jonathan Feldman (Georgia Institute of Technology) and Stewart Slotter (Texas Christian University).

Speaker Noah Bearden described his time working in an Israeli agricultural

community, substituting for members called up for military service after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel. His sister, Savannah, spoke about the current situation in Israel.

Garsek instituted the Jewish Person of the Year award, which pays tribute to the accomplishments of a Fort Worth Jewish resident, in 1951. 🇮🇱

Ashli Blumenfeld (l) accepted the Isadore Garsek Lodge's 2024 Jewish Person of the Year award on behalf of her grandmother, Roz Rosenthal, z"l, which was presented to her by 2023 honoree, Sophia Nason.



Boston Interactive Hostage Tunnel Installation Sponsored by B'nai B'rith



The corrugated shipping crate, which transported and housed the installation.



B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin spoke to the media about the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks. “The objective of Hamas is to destroy the State of Israel. And that glimpse that we had in the beginning on Oct. 7, similar to what was seen every day for six years in the Holocaust, was indeed reminiscent of all the other attempts in history made to erase our people and to erase the State of Israel.”

B'nai B'rith was the primary sponsor for an immersive exhibit replicating the conditions endured by the men, women and children captured by Hamas during the Oct. 7 terrorist attack on Israel. Featuring a walk-through simulation of a Hamas tunnel, photos and audio recorded by the terrorists during their savage attacks, the installation was previously seen in Europe, as well as Washington, D.C. Close to 1,200 people signed up to see “Boston Unites Against Terror: Hostage Tunnel Immersive Exhibit,” which ran from Aug. 18-20.

Developed in consultation with the released hostages, the

display reveals the inhumane conditions and brutal treatment they encountered and is intended to motivate both reflection and action across political divides to urge for the release of those still held, nearly a year after their capture. An immersive environment, the exhibit was housed in the large black shipping crate in which it was transported. Supported by a number of the city's Catholic and Jewish groups, “Boston Unites Against Terror” was visited by various city officials and by diplomatic personnel from countries including Germany, Latvia, Japan and Israel. 📍

B'nai B'rith Israel Emergency Fund Aids Israelis Impacted by Terror Attacks

continued from previous page

The fund also facilitated a medical mission to explore the feasibility of establishing an emotional support space at the Chabad Houses in Bangkok and Phuket, Thailand, for Israeli travelers affected by the ongoing war. During the mission, volunteer therapists specializing in trauma conducted workshops and provided therapy to help survivors

cope with the psychological distress of the conflict.

The B'nai B'rith Israel Emergency Fund was recognized by the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel (FLAI) for providing critical support to Israeli communities after Oct. 7, during the annual MuniExpo conference in Tel Aviv. You can donate to the Israel Emergency Fund at bit.ly/bbi-israel-fund. 📍

Director of EU Affairs Alina Bricman will Chair IHRA Committee

B'nai B'rith EU Affairs Director Alina Bricman, a member of Romania's delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) since 2020, was appointed as future chair of IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial. Her tenure will overlap with Israel's presidency of the IHRA.

Bricman noted: "I'm honored to chair IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial during 2025-26. IHRA's work in preserving Holocaust memory, challenging denial and distortion and addressing anti-Semitism is indispensable and has yielded one of the most important tools we have at hand in this fight: IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism."

She added: "I look forward to facili-

tating further action at this especially perilous time for the global Jewish community, where Jew-hatred and Holocaust glorification and distortion are abruptly on the rise."

IHRA—known for its essential working definition of anti-Semitism—is an intergovernmental organization of representatives from 35 member countries. The organization consults with hundreds of experts and government officials to offer guidance for policy-makers, educators and practitioners in the field.

In July, IHRA met in Glasgow under the current British presidency, adopting the theme "In plain sight." Bricman chaired a session on AI & anti-Semitism—of increasing concern for those who monitor AI's potential for abuse. 



B'nai B'rith Director of EU Affairs
Alina Bricman.

STAND WITH ISRAEL AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Support B'nai B'rith's Israel Emergency Fund today. Your generosity will provide vital aid to those in need, helping to rebuild homes, communities and lives.



**B'NAI B'RITH
INTERNATIONAL**

bit.ly/bbi-israel-fund

B'nai B'rith Conducts Mission and Facilitates Testimonies from Hamas Attack Survivors at Paris and Geneva United Nations Meetings



Mission participants in Geneva at the office of Ambassador Meirav E. Shahar (near center, in light colored blazer), permanent representative of Israel to the United Nations and International Organizations.



During their time in Paris, B'nai B'rith leaders and staff members met with Ambassador Jean Manes, chargé d' affaires at the U.S. Mission to UNESCO. From left: David Michaels, director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs; President Seth J. Riklin; Manes; CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin; B'nai B'rith UNESCO Representative Stéphane Teicher.

In early March, B'nai B'rith President Seth J. Riklin and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin led more than two dozen of the organization's international leaders from nine countries during a mission that included meetings and dialogues with more than 50 ambassadors and other officials coinciding with the first U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) sessions convened since the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorist attacks.

The group also attended the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) executive board meetings in Paris. Addressing issues vital to the Jewish community worldwide, the B'nai B'rith cohort communicated directly with meeting participants, speaking out for the fair treatment of Israel at global venues.

Mariaschin noted that: "The imperative for our meetings in Geneva was never more vital. At a time when Israel is under a barrage of diplomatic criticism for its rightful war of defense against Hamas, our sitting face to face with ambassadors to call out the seriously tilted, rote and biased denunciations of Israel at the UNHRC is a vital part of our work at the United Nations."

B'nai B'rith urged acknowledgement of Israel's ongoing need to defend itself—and the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas terrorists during the Oct. 7 attacks.

During this same time, representatives of B'nai B'rith, a

U.N.-accredited organization, presented multiple official statements at the UNHRC, which routinely condemns Israel more than all other countries combined and singles out the Middle East's sole democracy alone for scrutiny under a permanent agenda item.

Victims Tell Their Stories

After the conclusion of the trip, B'nai B'rith facilitated eyewitness testimony from four victims of the Oct. 7 attacks, who spoke in recorded messages during ongoing UNHRC sessions on March 21 and March 27.

Of varying ages, ethnicities and backgrounds, these individuals described their harrowing struggle for survival, and the trauma they continue to endure resulting from the murder or kidnapping of their partners and family members, some of whom are young children. Freed hostage Aviva Siegel, 62, whose husband is still held in Gaza, concluded: "I plead to the world and Human Rights Council—put an end to our suffering, to the suffering of all the hostages, to the crimes against humanity. Speak out against the existence on our planet of this terror organization. Free the hostages."

With dedicated United Nations offices in Europe and the United States, B'nai B'rith has led Jewish communal engagement with the world body since its inception in 1945. 

B'nai B'rith Annual Leadership Forum Honors History and Addresses Urgent Issues for Israel and the Worldwide Jewish Community

Credit for all photos: Leslie E. Kossoff/LK Photos



Taking place from May 4-6, the forum brought together B'nai B'rith delegates from the United States, Latin America, Europe and Australia. President Seth J. Riklin launched the proceedings with his State of the Organization speech. He described the impact of B'nai B'rith's Israel Emergency Fund and volunteer efforts in support of Israel after the Oct. 7 terrorist attack by Hamas. He underscored the need to convey a message that "the days of Jews cowering in fear are over."



Senior Vice President James Altman, B'nai B'rith New South Wales, spoke about Courage to Care, a community program in Australia that enlists Holocaust survivors to mentor, engage and encourage students to protest racism and prejudice.



Millie Magid, B'nai B'rith chair for United Nations Affairs, introduced a video recorded by B'nai B'rith staff Janel Doughten, associate director of the Center for Senior Services and Evan Carmen, legislative director for aging policy, highlighting the organization's advocacy for older Americans.



On May 5, CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin's presentation, "The Jewish World Since October 7," surveyed the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the tragic rise in anti-Semitism worldwide and the proactive measures which must be taken to combat it. Praising the scope of Israel's multi-faceted accomplishments, he then went on to observe: "Our organization, from the establishment of its first lodge in Jerusalem in 1888, has stood behind and bolstered the idea of Jewish sovereignty and its rebirth in a modern state in Israel for the Jewish people....We are living in a pivotal moment in Jewish and world history."



From left: Panelists, Barnard College sophomore Jessica Brenner; Harvard Divinity School graduate student Shabbos Kestenbaum; and University of Miami junior Jamie Sharabani discussed campus anti-Semitism. They described the threats, hatred and ostracism that they endure, and spoke out about the need for college administrators to enforce rules to protect them.



Mariaschin with keynote speaker Brigadier General Asaf Vardi, Israel's deputy defense attaché and Air & Space Force attaché to the United States, who provided detailed information about the ongoing war in Gaza.



Jewish Insider Editor-in-Chief Josh Kraushaar provided an insider's view of the 2024 presidential election, sharing his insight into issues that are of importance to the Jewish and non-Jewish community nationwide: "[Voters] are sensing that the world is spinning out of control: They're not feeling economically better than they were four years ago."



Rabbi Eric Fusfield (at podium), deputy director of B'nai B'rith's International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy, moderated a special program with survivors who remembered their journey on board the *St. Louis*, an ocean liner whose persecuted German Jewish passengers were refused admittance into Cuba, the United States and Canada in 1939. The ship returned to Germany, where many of them would be murdered. Seated from left: Robert Krakow, founder, the SS *St. Louis* Legacy Project, and survivors Hans Fisher, Eva Wiener, and John Shilling, who all presented a proclamation of gratitude to B'nai B'rith for its assistance in passing Senate resolution 111, recognizing June 6, 2009, as the 70th anniversary of the tragedy.



Readers included forum delegates Harold (Hesch) Steinberg (at podium) and (standing, from left): Gary Javitch; Trey Meehan; Wayne Meisels; Rebecca Saltzman; Paolo Foà and Seth J. Riklin.



On May 6, Yom HaShoah, the forum concluded with an Unto Every Person There is a Name ceremony hosted by the Austrian Embassy. Ambassador Petra Schneebauer, Austrian ambassador to the United States, welcomed the delegates, delineated the history of the Holocaust in her country and participated in the reading of the names of Austrian victims.

B'nai B'rith Sheds Light on Humanitarian Consequences of Oct. 7 Terror Attacks, at Geneva and Paris Events

B'nai B'rith held events in Paris and Geneva during Chanukah that highlighted the dehumanization and incitement behind terrorism following the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks in Israel.

Coming on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), “The Ideology Behind October 7: Dehumanization and Hatred of Jews and Israelis” was held at the Palais des Nations, the European headquarters of the United Nations.

The panel, featuring analyses from leading experts, discussed the objectives of violent Jihadists. Moderated by B'nai B'rith Director of U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs David Michaels, the program occurred alongside Israel's Mission to the U.N. and was attended by ambassadors and diplomats from various countries, along with European Union representatives.

B'nai B'rith also met with officials including U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, addressing anti-Semitic incitement and international efforts to secure the release of hostages in Gaza and safeguard Israel's right to self-defense.

During the same week, Michaels spoke at a rally advocating for the release of hostages, held at the U.N. complex in Geneva and moderated by Nurit Braun, a B'nai B'rith Geneva volunteer leader.

In Paris the following week, B'nai B'rith and the Permanent Delegation of Israel hosted a discussion titled “7 October Is Not Over: An Urgent Humanitarian Appeal,” focusing on the humanitarian crises resulting from Hamas' Oct. 7 atrocities.

Commencing with a menorah lighting, the meeting included the firsthand accounts from attack survivors and the screening of disturbing footage from Oct. 7, much of which was recorded and



In Paris, distinguished panelists shared their views about the war in Israel at a symposium hosted by B'nai B'rith International and the Permanent Delegation of Israel to the Multilateral Organizations in France. From left: B'nai B'rith UNESCO Representative Stéphane Teicher; B'nai B'rith Director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs David Michaels; Haim Assaraf, ambassador of Israel to the Multilateral Organizations in Paris; Dr. Joel Mergui, president of the Consistoire of Paris; philosopher, filmmaker and author Bernard-Henri Lévy.

broadcast by the terrorists themselves.

Preeminent French public intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy criticized claims of Israel's “disproportionate” response to the attack, urging global pressure on Hamas to surrender. He proposed issuing Interpol arrest warrants for Hamas leaders and concluded that a ceasefire would only prolong the war.

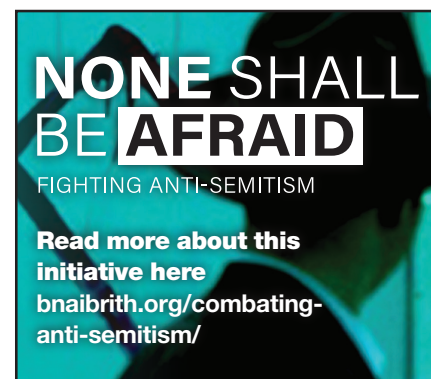
Family members of Israeli Arabs taken hostage shared their concerns, including the father of a hostage abducted by Hamas in 2015. The Ziyadna family also spoke, expressing their pain after four relatives were kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7, two of whom were later mistakenly killed by IDF soldiers in Gaza.

A survivor of the Nova Festival massacre, Matan Boltax, recounted his harrowing ordeal as he witnessed his friends being murdered and kidnapped.

Joël Mergui, leader of the Consistoire de Paris, and Michaels also remarked.

“If only for the sake of its own people, Hamas could end the hostilities today—by ending its violence and releasing all its hostages,” Michaels said during the event. “But it chooses not to. Indeed, its senior official said in an interview that it plans to perpetrate October 7th over and over and over again.”

B'nai B'rith delegates return to Geneva to attend the March meetings of the United Nations Human Rights Council. 🌐



Center for Senior Services Hosts Community Service Project Alongside Annual Housing Network Meeting

The annual B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) Housing Network Managers and Service Coordinators meeting was held in Los Angeles from May 15-17.

The group prepared food boxes at the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank prior to the Housing Network meetings, a tradition of community service paired with the meetings, which began in 2019 when attendees volunteered at local farms in Puerto Rico planting vegetables and preparing food packages for hurricane victims.

The Housing Network program featured issues of concern for older Americans and non-profit senior housing stakeholders and employees, including fraud and investment education from the Securities and Exchange Commission, emergency preparedness hosted by MySafe: LA, which educates adults and children about fire prevention and public safety, and Social Security Administration and social service program updates.

Particularly relevant for administrators at Jewish-sponsored residences, security enhancement was addressed in response to the rise in anti-Semitic incidents following the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks and Israel's defensive war with Hamas.

As the largest national Jewish sponsor of non-sectarian subsidized housing for the elderly in the United States, B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services is committed to educating its building administrators at residential facilities for older Americans. It is the mission of CSS and the building staff to protect and improve the quality of life for the residents in each building. 🌍



The B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting kicked off with a community service project at the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. Joining forces with volunteers from other philanthropies, CSS Associate Director Janel Doughten (center, in green) and meeting attendees who work at B'nai B'rith sponsored senior residences around the country, packed 2,604 food boxes for people in need.



Included in the schedule of meetings was a workshop devoted to a new non-profit that encourages charitable giving, Random Acts of Kindness (ARK). The yellow, ark-shaped bank symbolizes ARK's "tikkun olam": giving back to the community and the world.

Read past issues of B'nai B'rith Magazine at
bnaibrith.org/bnai-brith-magazine/

Mexico Honors B'nai B'rith's 180th Anniversary with a Stamp and an Exhibition

In recognition of B'nai B'rith's accomplishments over 18 decades, including its assistance to Eastern European immigrants to Mexico in the aftermath of World War I, a B'nai B'rith commemorative stamp and a photo exhibition focusing on the organization's history were unveiled in Mexico City on Dec. 6 and 7.

B'nai B'rith leaders at the Dec. 6 stamp ceremony arranged by the Mexican Postal Service included: President Seth J. Riklin, Vice Chairman Brad Adolph, Senior Vice President Gina Strauss, B'nai B'rith Mexico President Silvia Kleinberg and Board of Directors representative Dan Tartakovski. Also present were members of B'nai B'rith Mexico and the B'nai B'rith South Florida Unit, founded in 2018. Strauss, who serves as president of the South Florida Unit, played an integral role in arranging the Mexico City activities.

Adolph began his remarks with an expression of solidarity for Israel and went on to summarize B'nai B'rith's early activities in Mexico:

"The Mexican Bureau was established in 1924 to help immigrants. The B'nai B'rith House [its headquarters] included dorms, a restaurant, a clubroom and a

gym. The employment agency supplied training and job placement. Language classes were conducted. There was also a shoemaking class, and an apprentice program; eventually, there were doctor and dental services..."

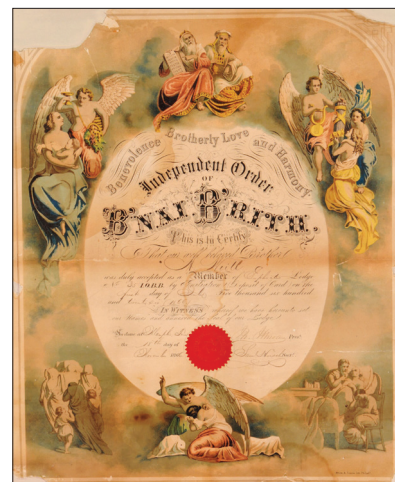
The first Mexico City lodge was founded in 1934.

On Dec. 7, guests at the Mexico Israel Institute enjoyed a festive evening that included a Chanukah menorah lighting ceremony and a first look at the B'nai B'rith history display of 55 images illustrating its past and present achievements. 📺

Opening on Dec. 7, the B'nai B'rith exhibit at the Mexico Israel Institute included photos of archival materials like this early membership certificate.



From left: B'nai B'rith International President Seth J. Riklin and Vice Chairman Brad Adolph with an enlarged version of the B'nai B'rith stamp, whose design features the organization's distinctive menorah logo. The stamp was premiered at Mexico City's Postal Palace.



U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs Director David Michaels Elected Treasurer of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations

B'nai B'rith U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs Director David Michaels was elected treasurer in August of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consulta-

tions. IJCIC, of which B'nai B'rith is a member organization, is the official Jewish dialogue partner of key world faith groups, including the Vatican. 📺



B'nai B'rith U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs Director David Michaels

Members of Congress Tour B'nai B'rith Senior Residences



Rep. Juan Ciscomani (standing, fourth from left) spoke with residents and staff at Tucson's Gerd and Inge Strauss Manor on Pantano.



Cherfilus-McCormick remarked that the building was: "...a great example of our community's dedication to providing affordable housing for seniors... The stability provided by such housing allows them to concentrate on their health, engage with their communities and maintain a high quality of life."

Arizona Rep. Juan Ciscomani visited the B'nai B'rith Gerd and Inge Strauss Manor on Pantano in Tucson, Ariz., in June, where residents offered feedback about various issues including the importance of affordable housing programs for seniors. Florida Rep. Sheila

Cherfilus-McCormick met with residents at the B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach, Fla. on Sept. 4. B'nai B'rith is the largest national Jewish sponsor of affordable housing for seniors in the nation. 

Volunteer Efforts Bring Meals to Those in Need During Passover

This Passover, B'nai B'rith lodges again participated in Project H.O.P.E. (Help Our People Everywhere), an annual tradition where the community distributes kosher-for-Passover food to elderly and low-income families in need.

The initiative provided Passover meals to hundreds of households this year, led by lodges around the country. Participating for the 27th year, Philadelphia's Liberty Region packed and distributed 700 bags to local families. The New York area MetroNorth region delivered 288 bags across Connecticut and Long Island.

The Isadore Garsek Lodge in Fort Worth, Texas, organized the delivery of 48 quarts of soup and other Passover

foods from a kosher restaurant to local seniors.

"For most of the seniors, our lunch is the only celebration they have for Passover and it makes them extremely happy," said Alex Nason, former president of the Garsek Lodge. "Seeing their smiling faces is a huge reward for the members of Garsek Lodge."

As part of our relief efforts abroad, Passover food was provided to 500 families in Sderot, Israel, and the surrounding area, who have been displaced from their homes due to the ongoing war against Hamas. B'nai B'rith also sponsored Passover seders for hundreds of Ukrainian refugees *continued on page 45*



Earmarked for donation in Connecticut and on Long Island, 288 Project H.O.P.E. Passover packages were assembled and delivered by B'nai B'rith MetroNorth Chapter members and volunteers.

B'nai B'rith Calls for Justice on the 30th Anniversary of the AMIA Bombing in Buenos Aires

On July 18, 1994, a van carrying explosives destroyed the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) building—the heart of the Jewish community—in Buenos Aires,

killing 85 and wounding hundreds. Those responsible were never arrested or tried.

This year, an Argentine court ruled that Hezbollah terrorists acted as agents for Iran, as was widely believed. The ruling

also characterized Iran as a terrorist state.

For three decades, B'nai B'rith has worked to achieve justice for the victims, their families and the Argentine Jewish community. 🇮🇸



Photo: Jaiuj/commons.wikimedia.org

A roster of Jewish and non-Jewish victims of the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires—the deadliest terror attack in Latin American history—serves as a memorial demanding justice for those who were murdered.



This year's demonstrations in Argentina reflected ongoing outrage at the 2015 assassination of Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who was working to prove that the attack was orchestrated by Iran.

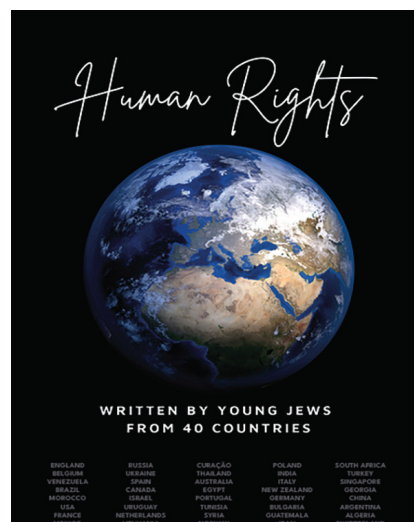
B'nai B'rith Portugal Sponsors Book on Human Rights

A book released in June, “Human Rights: Written by Young Jews from 40 Countries,” has been published by B'nai B'rith Portugal in conjunction with the group International Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR). The essay writers' ages range from 16 to 30 years old.

The book is available free online in English and Hebrew at bneibrit-humanrights.org.

In 2023, IOHR and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recognized B'nai B'rith for “contributing to the construction of a safer, more tolerant, just, fraternal and humane world.” 🇮🇸

B'nai B'rith Portugal's newly published book of essays by young authors.



Volunteer Efforts Bring Meals to Those in Need During Passover

continued from page 43

and Jewish communities in Chişinău and Tiraspol, Moldova.

Since the 1960s, B'nai B'rith has provided Passover meals to the community through volunteer efforts. Project H.O.P.E. continues to bring holiday cheer every spring, thanks to the dedication of B'nai B'rith volunteers in communities across the country. 🇺🇸

For the 27th year, the Liberty Region's Project H.O.P.E. Center for Community Action team prepared and delivered ritual and holiday food items for economically challenged families and individuals in the Philadelphia area. Samuel Domsky and Sara Domsky served as co-chairs.



The B'nai B'rith Podcast: Conversations with B'nai B'rith

Discover insightful and inspiring discussions on Jewish life, culture and current affairs with the B'nai B'rith Podcast. Each episode delves into critical topics that matter to the global Jewish community, featuring expert guests and thought leaders who share unique perspectives on history, culture, politics, religion and more. Whether you're interested in learning about contemporary challenges facing Jewish communities worldwide or exploring rich cultural traditions, the B'nai B'rith Podcast is a platform for engaging and informative conversations.

Tune in to stay informed, inspired and connected with the issues and ideas that shape our world. Subscribe today on your favorite podcast platform and join the conversation with B'nai B'rith, and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin, where every episode offers something new and valuable for listeners of all backgrounds. 🇺🇸

In this issue of IMPACT, let us steer you to some of the conversations you may have missed, including these highlights:

- MEP David Lega on the future of EU-Israel Relations post-Oct. 7 and more
- Israeli health-tech firm NeuroKaire's quest to revolutionize healthcare
- The Incredible story of Joseph and Rebecca Bau
- Israeli Druze and proud Zionist
- Celebrating the legacy of Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop
- How Iran's proxies pose an increasing global threat

- How Jewish Americans Fought in WWII

And be sure to watch our Lens on Latin America series, in Spanish with English subtitles, including:

- Soccer commentator Hernán Feler calls for release of hostages and supports Israel
- Remembering the 1994 bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires

Catch up on all of our Podcasts here: bit.ly/bbipodcasts

World Center-Jerusalem Conducts Israel Mission for Latin American Journalists



In February, B'nai B'rith-World Center sponsored a trip to Israel for a group of Latin American journalists, whose itinerary focused on the effects of the Israel-Hamas war, which impacted the lives of residents of the country and Jewish people around the world.

As guests of the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem, journalists from Latin America experienced a deep dive into the realities of the Hamas-Israel War during a trip that took place from Feb. 15-19.

Selected and invited by B'nai B'rith affiliates in their countries, 11 reporters from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay met with experts and viewed sites where the war is being waged. They were briefed by Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan; Prime Minister's Office Coordinator for Hostages and Missing Brigadier General (Ret.) Gal Hirsch; Foreign Policy Director Dr. Ophir Falk; Member of the Security Cabinet Minister Gideon Sa'ar (New Hope); Minister of Economy MK Nir Barkat (Likud); Opposition MKs including Evgeny Sova (Yisrael Beiteinu) and Dr. Matti Sarfati Harkavi (Yesh Atid); Police Superintendent Mirit Ben Mayor; Ambassador Jonathan Peled, MFA deputy director general of Latin America and the Caribbean; Alon Simhayoff, director, U.N. Political Affairs Department; IDF Spokesman Maj. Roni Kaplan; Capt. (Res.) Shadi Khalloul; Itamar Marcus, director



The journalists outside the Knesset. B'nai B'rith Director of Latin American Affairs Eduardo Kohn (in black coat), appears at the left-hand side, second right from the menorah.

of Palestinian Media Watch; and Victor Harel of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, among others.

They also talked with Nova music festival survivors, families of hostages captive in Gaza, and released hostages and evacuees from Israel's northern border. The itinerary included visits to Ofakim and Nir Oz in Southern Israel, which suffered significant casualties on Oct. 7, Hadassah Hospital's Gandel Rehabilitation Center, Magen David Adom's Jerusalem headquarters, Gush Halav, Kiryat Shmona, Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

B'nai B'rith Latin American Affairs Director Eduardo Kohn and Gabriel Ben-Tasgal, an Argentinean expert on Israel, led the group. This is the fourth mission of Latin American journalists hosted by the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem and the first since Oct. 7.

World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider said the mission was intended to emphasize the impact of the terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens and its repercussions for the Jewish community worldwide and demonstrate the country's resilience in the face of extreme adversity. 

B'nai B'rith would like to recognize and thank the Ruby Diamond Foundation for its recent generous contribution.

American Jewish Archives Awarded Grant to Preserve B'nai B'rith Films

The American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College (HUC) received a \$43,985 Recordings at Risk grant in July from the Council on Library & Information Resources (CLIR), supporting its project “The Global Voice of the Jewish Community: Saving the Films of B'nai B'rith International.” The grant application included recommendations from B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin and Jonathan Sarna, noted historian, whose books include “Lincoln and the Jews: A History,” among others.

Included in the inventory of the B'nai B'rith Archives, the videos and films were transferred in 2012 from B'nai B'rith to HUC's Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Many subjects are not identified, but it is known that some are educational in nature, while others are records of live events. The grant will



Photo: Wikipedia.org/dsmith815

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives on the Hebrew Union College campus in Cincinnati, Ohio, houses the B'nai B'rith Archives.

fund the process of their transfer to modern formats, for viewing by scholars, students and others.

Recordings at Risk, administered by CLIR, supports the preservation of rare and unique audio, audiovisual and various other media of high scholarly value through digital reformatting. 🌐

Genetics Student Awarded the 2024 Sally and George Schneider Scholarship

The 2024 Sally and George Schneider Scholarship was awarded to Leslie Fournier from Yonkers, New York. Fournier is pursuing a master's degree in Human Genetics at Sarah Lawrence College with the goal of becoming a genetic counselor. She has a particular interest in pediatric cancer genetics and researching conditions that more commonly affect the Ashkenazi Jewish population.

“I truly appreciate having been chosen to receive this scholarship by the Schneider family,” Fournier said. “I’m looking forward to using the knowledge and skills I’m developing through my studies to be able to make a real differ-

ence in the lives of others as a genetic counselor.”

Later this year, Fournier will expand her experience in various genetic counseling specialties through clinical placements. She is also actively involved in her college's “Campus Climate Committee,” formed to address the rise in anti-Semitism on campus since Oct. 7. In her free time, she enjoys playing soccer and participating in Zumba.

The Sally and George Schneider Scholarship is awarded each year to a female Jewish graduate student in the metropolitan New York area attending a graduate program in a field benefiting humankind. 🌐



Leslie Fournier, who attends Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y., is the 2024 winner of the Sally and George Schneider Scholarship. The \$1,000 prize is awarded to a female student working toward a graduate degree in fields including science and medicine, and who demonstrates a commitment to Jewish life.

Backstory: The Dream of the Hebrew University

Zionist leader and the future president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann wrote this 1924 B'nai B'rith Magazine essay on the new Hebrew University (left) that he had founded with Albert Einstein. It features a beautiful illustration of the planned “Dome of Synthesis,” designed by English architect Frank Mears. Mears had collaborated on the Mt. Scopus campus with Patric Ged-

des, a pioneering city planner remembered for his work in Tel Aviv and other pre-State Israel cities. Later, Jerusalem architect Benjamin Chaikin would complete the project with Mears.

The Moorish style structure echoed the Islamic Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, visible from the site. Mears and Geddes envisioned Jerusalem's three faiths—Jewish, Christian and Islam—unified through architecture.

Proposed as early as 1874, the Hebrew University was an essential component of the Zionist program. The first buildings opened in 1925. Reservations were expressed about an

institution of higher education where classes would be conducted in Hebrew, then in the process of developing a full range of technical terminology.

That year, sacred and secular books and periodicals from the Midrash Abravanel, established in 1902 by B'nai B'rith's Jerusalem Lodge, were incorporated into the holdings

of the University's Wolffsohn Memorial Library, later known as the National Library of Israel, open to the public. In 1926, B'nai B'rith donated \$2,000 toward the building's maintenance.

In 2023, the National Library opened 480,000-square-foot facilities in between the Israel Museum and the Knesset. IMPACT's Summer 2023 issue included a preview in an article whose link is below. [🔗](#)

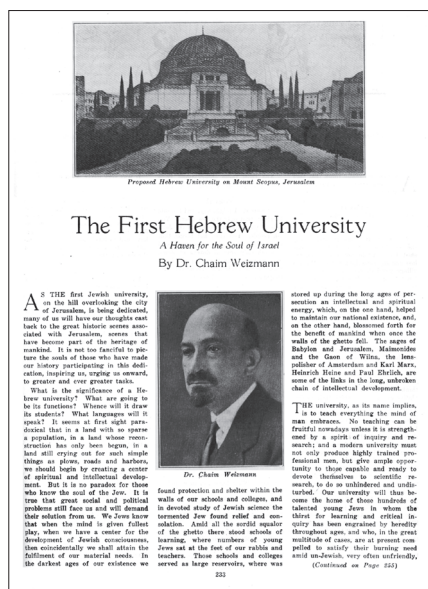


Photo: American Colony, Jerusalem, Collection. Library of Congress, Prints and Photos Division, Washington, D.C.
Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus, 1925.

B'nai B'rith Leader Meets with President Isaac Herzog

B'nai B'rith Israel executive committee member, author Ilan Shchori, presented Israeli President Isaac Herzog with a copy of his new Hebrew guidebook, “My Tel Aviv,” a highly personal account of the iconic city over the last century.

Included is an in-depth examination of B'nai B'rith's history in Israel. Important Tel Aviv lodge members have included poet Chaim Bialik, economist Yakir Behar and Tel Aviv Mayor Meir Dizengoff.

During the July meeting, Herzog proudly reflected on his B'nai B'rith lineage, noting his own connections to “this wonderful organization.” “My grandfather, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi,

Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, was a member of the historic Jerusalem Lodge, and my dad, Chaim Herzog, Israel's sixth president, was also an active member.”

He observed: “I have great respect for B'nai B'rith, this important large Zionist organization and I am happy that the book includes...a large chapter on B'nai B'rith in Israel, its establishment and the Sha'ar Zion office [one of pre-state Israel's earliest lodges, formed in Jaffa, later headquartered in Tel Aviv] that was established in 1890.”

Shchori also serves as B'nai B'rith's chairman of the Tel Aviv Regional Council and advisor to the president of B'nai B'rith Israel on international relations, history and heritage. [🔗](#)



B'nai B'rith Israel leader Ilan Shchori (l) with his new Tel Aviv guidebook, which he presented to President Isaac Herzog. Herzog singled out praise for its chapters on B'nai B'rith.



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B'NAI B'RITH MAGAZINE

Technology: A Love-Hate Relationship

By Mark D. Olshan

Associate Executive Vice President, B'nai B'rith International

I have a colleague at work who is always talking to me about blogs, Outlook calendar invites and “the cloud.” With a smile on my face, I tell him the Internet is just a “fad,” and eventually it will go away. I see no reason why my hard copy daily calendar with yellow sticky notes can’t suffice. Who doesn’t use a pencil to write in their calendar?

Of course, these comments are made tongue in cheek by a man in his late 70s, who still fondly remembers using an IBM Selectric typewriter with five carbon sets.

Often, it feels like the pandemic changed everything. Especially for seniors like me, who are hesitant with new technology. For example, instead of video calls being a “nicety,” the technology has become a “must.” Walking into someone’s office to discuss things and engaging in unscheduled collaboration is no longer possible. Everyone has had to learn “video” calling. While it seems like second nature now, in the spring of 2020, I was still learning how to use all the online buttons and “log in.”

Of course, in 2024, you would have to live under a rock not to appreciate how technology has made our personal and professional lives easier, if not actually better. I can Zoom with colleagues around the world with ease. Plus, my wife and I can FaceTime with our granddaughter in college. And, while it’s always nice speaking with her on the phone, every grandparent prefers seeing a grandchild over video!

So, if you ask me, technology really has made life better.

However, it’s not all rainbows and butterflies! It can be difficult for seniors to keep up with technology that is



The Pasadena Interfaith Manor in Pasadena, Texas, maintains a computer center open to all residents.

constantly being updated. I suspect this causes frustration among many older Americans, as it does for me. Once you have mastered an app, it feels like you go back to square one when the update comes out.

Additionally, there have been many everyday “things” that have moved to the Internet, which can be exasperating for seniors. Recently, I was at the pharmacy and, despite being a customer for 20 years, I had to jump through 10 hoops to order my prescription through the in-store app.

During the pandemic, and understandably so, restaurants moved menus exclusively online. Fortunately, with the pandemic long over, establishments have brought back actual menus. For the restaurants that have not, what are older persons supposed to do if they don’t have a smart phone? Or people like me who

like to hold the menu in their hand and actually read it?

To say the experiences have been aggravating would be an understatement. And I can’t imagine I’m the only one who feels this way.

B’nai B’rith bridging the technology gap

At the B’nai B’rith Center for Senior Services (CSS), we understand that many older adults are challenged by new technology. To bridge the gap, we have offered a variety of programs at our 35 Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-sponsored senior housing properties around the country. We have created “Tech Tutor”, a downloadable workbook to get residents familiar with using applications and maintaining internet safety and using online banking and credit cards to catch

fraud instantly, instead of waiting for the monthly mailed statements.

Additionally, we have joined with Bank of the West to provide grants for our sponsored buildings to offer programming for frauds and scams, including those found online, for residents, as well as training for staff at our annual Managers and Service Coordinators Meetings.

We have worked with the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to train staff to create programming in the buildings around financial literacy and the internet. Furthermore, CFPB requested that CSS provide feedback to develop additional financial literacy and scam/fraud resources and programming for older adults. My colleague, Janel Doughten, associate director, Center of Senior Services, participated in a CFPB Faith-Based Elder Justice webinar series in January to talk about what we are doing with our housing network to combat scams/fraud in our buildings.

All this work is important, as more older Americans seek to become tech savvy. A few of our sponsored buildings have been able to get building-wide Wi-Fi, enabling residents to better connect their phones, tablets, computers and televisions to the internet at no per-



In Tucson, Arizona, residents of the Gerd and Inge Strauss Manor on Pantano learn to use the latest technology, assisted by Austin Garland, who works as the Network Center coordinator.

sonal cost. Residents who are connected can talk with family and friends more easily, and thus battle social isolation, see their doctors and pay bills online.

Other organizations are also trying to make older adults more comfortable with technology. Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), sponsored by AARP, offers programs to make seniors

more comfortable. OATS' goal, according to its website, is to "harness the power of technology to change the way we age." It trains older adults to use technology. Through its flagship program, Senior Planet from AARP, and with in-person and online options, OATS has reported they have been able to make seniors more confident and connected to the world.

It seems quite clear, technology, when used properly, has made life more convenient. It would just be nice if that technology didn't change every 38 seconds and wasn't also misused for fraud. With all the changes and scams, sometimes, I just want to throw my computer and cell phone out the window and break out my old IBM Selectric. However, if I did that, I wouldn't be able to FaceTime with my granddaughter, and like every other grandparent, I know I'm not giving that up!

To be better connected to those we love, technology is helpful. It would just be nice if the people designing the technology would keep older adults like me in mind. 📺

Mark D. Olshan, who holds a doctorate in psychology, is associate executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International and director of the organization's Center for Senior Services.

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