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Israeli Folk Dancing Lives ... But How Long and for Whom?

By Linda Topping Streitfeld

It's a school night in the social hall of this suburban synagogue, but teenage toes are tapping, middle-aged middles are moving and seniors are stepping to the syncopated rhythm of *Eshebo*.

The ringmaster is Mike Fox, 46, who has led this recreational Israeli dance group since 2009, shepherding its growth from 15 to 20 dancers a week to an average of 70 every Tuesday night at Ohr Kodesh Congregation in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Fox's mixed-age social dance group may be an outlier — and perhaps a sign of hope — in modern Israeli dance circles, where the average age is climbing and the number of participants falling. Though hard data is lacking, dance leaders generally perceive a numerical decline and view it as a threat to a Jewish cultural tradition that is less than 75 years old.

The demographic shift has multiple explanations: A torrent of new, more complex dances shoots around the world at the speed of YouTube, keeping interest high, or killing it, depending on the dancer. Performance groups in several cities are drawing hundreds of new young dancers, but the gap between stage show and social dance is widening, observers say.

Arnold Kling, 64, an American economist and Israeli folk dancer since his student days at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has another theory.



Photo Courtesy of the Israel Folkdance Festival of Boston and Emily Sper.

The Shiluv Israeli Dance Troupe, based in Newton, Massachusetts, directed by Alexis Maharam.



Photo by Neil Roland.

Dance leader Mike Fox at the controls on a Tuesday night dance party in Chevy Chase, Maryland.



Photo by Linda Streitfeld.

The scene at Ohr Kodesh in Chevy Chase, Maryland on a Tuesday night.

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Source: Wikimedia Commons.

A Hora dance at Kibbutz Dalia. Jan. 6, 1945.

Kling, of Silver Spring, Maryland, contends that the nature of engagement in general has changed in 50 years, becoming both narrower and deeper. Increasingly complex new dances discourage beginners from trying Israeli folk dancing. Veteran dancers come for the “oldies,” those choreographed before 1990. That leaves a large generation gap of people who can’t relate to either end of the Israeli dance spectrum — thus the decline.

Kling and his wife Jackie — whom he met Israeli dancing at MIT — are still able to find three local weeknight sessions, as well as a Saturday night “classics” session and other sessions on Sunday mornings and

evenings. Yet, he says, “Compared with 40 years ago, Israeli dancing feels much less social,” discouraging the casual new dancers, while performance dancing continues to grow.

Thus, the 9th annual Israeli Dance Festival DC in March filled the 480-seat auditorium at the Bullis School, in Potomac, Maryland. “It’s the ‘Hamilton’ of the D.C. area,” glowed committee member Beri Kravitz. Indeed, there was standing room only to watch a total of 180 performers, middle school to middle age, from 13 different groups.

While Israeli dance sessions can be found in most major American cities, Washing-

ton’s scene may be somewhat unique in attracting youth. “In other cities, it’s all older people,” said Kravitz, 54.

Origins

The Israeli folk dance phenomenon has its origins in the post-World War II crucible of a new state, struggling to build a unified identity among refugees from all over Europe and elsewhere in the Middle East and the existing population. Dance teacher Gurit Kadman, known as the “mother of Israeli folk dance,” was a main organizer of the first folk dance festival in 1944 at Kibbutz Dalia. That year, most of the dances were European, including the Polish

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Both photos courtesy of Gvanim and Lital Kroll.

Gvanim Dance Camp.

Krakowiak and Russian *Cherkessia*.

Soon, choreographers such as Rivka Sturman and Sara Levi-Tanai went to work. They adapted music and steps from the varied ethnic traditions of Israel's new citizens and began a deliberate effort to build a corpus of dances, with songs like *Eretz*, *Eretz* and *Ma Navu*, reflecting the country's natural beauty and biblical roots.

Three years later, in 1947, a second Dalia festival featured all original Israeli dances, including the national Hora, adapted from a Romanian favorite. These dances had simple steps, and just a few parts, repeated many times. Accompanied by piano or accordion, they were easy to learn, and pretty much everyone did, adding a unifying feature to holiday festivals and weddings.

"It was one of the most effective acts of artistic social engineering in history," said Edy Greenblatt, a dance ethnologist, executive coach and an accomplished dancer herself, who divides her time among Israel, the United States and Canada.

In 1951, an Israeli immigrant to America started the first organized folk dance session in the United States, at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Fred Berk's seminal group eventually spawned regular gatherings in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and South Florida. Today,

the website israelidances.com lists regular weekly or monthly sessions in 35 countries, including 180 in the United States.

Thousands of dancers — no one keeps an actual count — attend. For a fee of \$2 to \$15, they get a few hours of exercise for the heart; a memory workout for the brain, as dancers recall or learn the unique steps of each dance; a jolt of social energy from friends; and a soul-nourishing helping of Jewish culture and history.

"The beauty about folk dancing is that it's mental, physical and social, all in one ticket," said Danny Uziel, 84. He and Ruth Goodman, 67, are at the heart of the New York Israeli dance scene, co-directing the nonprofit [Israeli Dance Institute](http://IsraeliDanceInstitute.org), and leading those flagship Wednesday night sessions at the 92nd Street Y.

Devoted dancers also seek out weekend workshops and dance camps, held around the country throughout the year, where choreographers teach their latest and the dancing goes on well past midnight. In big cities like Washington, D.C., Boston, Miami and New York, annual Israeli dance festivals feature costumed youth and adult groups performing well-rehearsed routines with leaps, lifts and pinpoint timing that are beyond the reach of most social dancers. The largest is Karmiel, in Israel, scheduled

this year for July 24–26, with 10,000 dancers expected to attend.

But at workshops and festivals, and at dance sessions around the country, attendance is reportedly down. Goodman said the crowd at the 92nd Street Y has declined from a peak of 250 a week in the mid-1980s to about 100 today.

The trend extends to Israel as well. Greenblatt estimates that about 250,000 people still regularly dance in Israel, not including performing groups, schoolchildren and the disabled. While she calls the number "extraordinary," it compares to the estimated 400,000 who danced in the late 1980s. At that time, she said, "It was more than disco in the disco era."

It's Complicated

Miriam Handler has been dancing for nearly a half-century and still teaches in the New York area twice a week. She says dances have become too complicated. "Newer dances many times are longer and have many more parts," Handler said. "Today, everything's a challenge."

Fox, the Maryland teacher, agrees that modern popular songs are more complex, and the dances created for them follow suit. "There's more turning, more facing out or in, more movement in and out

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of the circle,” he said. The parts can be twice as long, and there is generally less repetition within a dance. “It’s definitely harder to teach a new dance because of that complexity.”

Still, “Kids definitely prefer the new popular dances, perhaps because of the music, and sometimes because the steps are more intricate,” said Meliss Jakubovic, 36, a lifelong dancer who teaches dance to students at the Epstein School in Atlanta and recently choreographed 250 middle school students in a dance show celebrating Israel’s 70th birthday.

Unlike, say, American square dancing, each Israeli dance has a unique, choreographed pattern of steps and turns, often including arm movements, which must be memorized. The basic steps — mayim, cherkessia, debka and others — are not daunting, but the possible combinations and rhythms are vast. Most dances are conducted in a circle, but the circle moves, and may change direction many times. Add the walking, running, skipping, hopping, pivoting, stomping and clapping, then throw in the occasional cha-cha-cha and a step-ball-change, and you see the beginner’s dilemma.

Greenblatt estimates that about 8,000 dances exist. Only about half are still done, she said, but to participate in Israel, “you need to know at least 400 dances, or be able to follow in real time.”

While many U.S. leaders claim to start their sessions with “beginner dances,” it’s not easy to find a true basic class. “You need to be willing to teach the same dances over and over,” Fox said. And this is a part of his strategy that is duplicated in few other places. For four years, he has offered a 10-week beginner class that starts after Simchat Torah, followed by an “Advanced Beginner” series. Each week, he ramps up the complexity so that students eventually master a small repertoire and have the tools to begin to follow dances at a regular session.



All Photos by Linda Streitfeld.

Mike Fox leading a dance at Ohr Kodesh, in Chevy Chase, Maryland.



A partner dance at the “Classics” night: Debbie Cappel and Nat Deutsch, with Greenbelt, Maryland dance leader and teacher, Ben Hole, in the background.



Three dancers at Ben Hole’s monthly “Classics” party in Greenbelt, Maryland. From left, Robin Hacke, Neil Roland, Debbie Cappel.

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Both photos courtesy of the Israel Folkdance Festival of Boston and Emily Sper.

The Shiluv Israeli Dance Troupe, based in Newton, Massachusetts, directed by Alexis Maharam.

Jason Schaperow, 55, started in Fox's beginner class four years ago with his wife, Rachel.

"The first few weeks were painful," he said. "If you have never danced in your life, it's really too much." Still, they persisted, practicing at home, using videos posted on Fox's website and elsewhere. Now, they are Tuesday night regulars.

Beyond their complexity, new dances are simply more numerous. Choreographers are churning them out by the dozens each month, one for nearly every new hit song in Israel. It is impossible to learn them all. "Because of that, the quality of the dancing is going down," Uziel said. "Not everybody knows the dance."

One antidote: Specialty sessions featuring only "classics" dances, which exist in a handful of cities. Ben Hole, 73, has been teaching Israeli and international dancing for nearly 50 years. Since 1995, he has drawn 20 to 40 dancers for monthly Israeli dance parties in Greenbelt, Maryland, in which all the dances were choreographed before 1990. "It was an immediate hit," Hole said. Several of the classics regulars, like Hole himself, are not Jewish. He started

with an Israeli dance group on campus at the University of Washington in the '60s, and added international folk dance after moving to Washington, D.C.

His classics parties keep those older dances alive, and the hundreds of dancers on his email list know that no matter how many parties they miss, a familiar repertoire is waiting.

The Core of the Choreography

A leader today has to choose new material wisely, Uziel said, keeping in mind the preferences and personality of the group. But because leaders choose different songs, the global community is far more fractured than when longtime Maryland dancer Judy Rodenstein was helping to lead sessions at MIT in the '70s, or Philadelphia in the '80s. "We felt it was really important to have a core of dances that everyone would know," Rodenstein said. "Even when dancers traveled to other cities, the majority of dances were familiar so that everyone could participate."

That a core of dances is necessary is an oft-repeated sentiment, but no one is working to identify what that library

might include, whether it should be part of Jewish education and, if so, who should teach it. Kids are channeled into Israeli dancing through Sunday schools, day schools, community center programs and summer camps, with wildly varying programs.

Many revolve around performing groups, which, as Greenblatt points out, are a world apart from recreational dancing. Modern Israeli dance for the stage is "mechanically different," she said, incorporating moves and patterns that are closer to jazz, modern dance and ballet.

Exhibit A is the Michael-Ann Russell JCC in North Miami Beach, where some 850 dancers between ages 3 and 43 participate in Israeli dance classes, along with Zumba, jazz, hip-hop and ballet. Cultural arts director Roger Weiger, 48, of Brazil, runs the show, assisted by a full-time staff of four and a cadre of dozens of part-time teachers and dance assistants, drawn from their own ranks starting at age 14. The dancers — almost exclusively girls — can audition for performance troupes that appear in local shows and travel to festivals as far-flung as New York, Vancouver,

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To view performance troupes, visit

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LABBL9_pfM



Courtesy of Gvanim and Lital Kroll.

Young dancers are encouraged to attend the Gvanim Dance Camp, held annually in New York.

Mexico, Brazil, Panama and Israel.

Weiger said they do teach a few traditional circle and line dances, "but with so many shows, it's not easy to fit in." Girls who perform at the highest levels spend up to six hours a week in classes.

He has taken the youngsters to local recreational dance sessions when they travel, but they don't always have fun, especially if the crowd is older and the dancing is slow.

"For them, Israeli dance is what they do, it's much more exciting and lively," Weiger understands what this implies for the future of dance, but feels powerless. "We should all be very worried, because unfortunately it's what's going to happen."

Youthful Optimism

Fox and others are more optimistic. With Marnina Cowan, he co-leads two

youth performance ensembles: Kesem, for middle school and Yesodot for high school students. But these teens don't leave their dance chops on stage. They show up at the recreational sessions on Tuesday nights, where Fox gives them free admission and mixes their new favorite dances with some classics early in the evening.

Yoav Susskind, 15, is a member of Yesodot who enjoys both of his windows into dancing. Before a big performance, he said he gets "a little nervous. You just hope you stick all the lifts." But on Tuesdays, he relaxes. "It makes me happy to dance, and I get to be with my friends," he said.

Like Washington, Boston has also managed to create a pipeline of younger dancers. "We made a concerted effort to teach them in high school, teach them in college," said Alexis Maharam, 34, who

helps produce the annual Gvanim Dance Camp, slated this year for August in New York. She also choreographs and runs an adult performing troupe, teaches Israeli dance to Boston high school students, and leads a weekly adult session that many of the students attend. "Dancing will die if the young people don't continue it," she said.

Erica Goldman, 40, of New York, helps train dance leaders for Jewish summer camps through the Foundation for Jewish Camp, and has started a nonprofit called Ma'agal, or circle, aimed at giving teachers new tools to infuse dance with more Jewish education.

"To me, there's no bridge between dancing at camp or at a day school, and then becoming an adult Israeli dancer who likes to go on Wednesday nights," she said. ☑

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Editor's Note

As every tourist to Israel quickly learns, the Jewish state is an archaeologist's playpen. The New Jersey-sized country contains a treasure trove of ancient sites with priceless artifacts just ripe for excavating — and theft. In this issue, we write about Israel's efforts to combat criminals who would steal the country's history for a price. Tracking down the thieves and their loot often involves an international quest worthy of a page-turning potboiler.

On a lighter note, we look at the relatively recent “tradition” of Israeli folk dancing, which has its roots in the early kibbutzim, then migrated to these shores where it flourished in cities from coast to coast and now faces an uncertain future as older generations leave the dance floors. In another realm of the musical arts, we profile Isa Kremer, a Jewish chanteuse whose repertoire ranged from Yiddish songs to Latin American melodies. Once famous, now obscure, we bring this colorful diva back to life in our online pages.

Those who think Judaism comes in three or maybe four basic flavors — Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox — will read in this issue about yet another, far lesser known sect, the Karaites, who subscribe to a different interpretation of the Torah. Few in numbers, they date back to 8th or 9th century Persia. Our regular columnists are also here: President Gary P. Saltzman on gun control, CEO and Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin on the resurgence of anti-Semitism, and Associate Executive Vice President and Director of the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services Mark Olshan on the less-than-adequate health insurance plans that circumvent the Affordable Care Act.

Some serious stuff, but also, we hope, illuminating and entertaining. Read on! 📖

-- Eugene L. Meyer

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From the Vault

Returning Stolen Goods: A Rare Find of Rare Books

By Cheryl Kempler

Nazi theft of art treasures and rare books during the Holocaust remains an open sore and source of pain to the heirs of those from whom they were taken — not only from affluent Jews but also from far more humble families residing in the Third Reich.

These were museum-quality heirlooms, valuable paintings and sculptures, but also revered books, new and used, each a talisman that contributed to a family's sense of identity.

Since 2010, academic institutions in major German cities and small towns have undertaken a major effort to return or make restitution for the stolen books housed in their libraries. They have traced ownership through evidence from National Socialists' control marks (these books are often stamped with the letter "J" for "Juden-bücher"), as well as clues left by the owners — bookplates, dedications, inscriptions and even scribbled annotations.

In January, Sebastian Finsterwalder, a scholar and librarian in the Department of Provenance Research at the Berlin City Library, who has led the work on the project, contacted B'nai B'rith. He and Anke Geissler, his colleague at the Potsdam University Library, wrote that they had identified in their respective institutions six volumes that had belonged to B'nai B'rith lodges in Konstanz, Heidelberg and Hannover. Among the included authors were Rabbi Moritz Güdemann, the 19th century historian, and Jozef Israëls, an important Dutch painter and writer on art history.

Although B'nai B'rith's archives in the United States contain complete runs of newsletters, pamphlets and books on Judaism published by the lodges themselves,



Designs for B'nai B'rith lodge library book plates, Germany, 1925.

only a handful of books from their libraries were numbered among our holdings. Some came as donations from German members who had survived the Holocaust. Others may have been sent to B'nai B'rith after the war from Offenbach, Germany, where items from the occupied European countries were brought in an effort to give them back or to appropriately place them in synagogues, schools or museums.

What was the fate of these six books? After Hitler shut down B'nai B'rith in April 1937, the Nazis confiscated all its real estate, monies and furnishings. Along with books that had been removed from the headquarters of Masonic lodges, ethnic and religious groups, and left wing and communist political associations, it is likely that they numbered among the

2 million to 3 million publications that the Germans consolidated as a library of "enemies of the state." Stored in Berlin, most were immolated during the course of bombing raids. But the city purchased roughly 500,000 volumes that survived in the mid and late 1940s to restock its libraries, whose holdings had themselves had fallen victim to wartime destruction.

The German libraries will retain the books in digital form but send the originals to the American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, where they will be catalogued as part of the Holocaust and Related Materials Collection of B'nai B'rith. The ongoing, very meaningful work being conducted in Germany, will, we hope, result in further discoveries of books, which can be welcomed to their new home. ☑



From the President

Gun Control: This Time, Something *Must* Change

By Gary P. Saltzman

President, B'nai B'rith International

Gun violence has hit close to home for me, a Colorado native, via some of the most infamous mass shootings in our nation's modern history. The Columbine High School massacre was in 1999, and my youngest child was a high school student at a neighboring school. At that time, with some two decades of service with B'nai B'rith at the local and national levels, I knew many people around the country. And the calls of concern for my family's safety poured in. It was a sobering moment combining the depth and breadth of B'nai B'rith with the utter terror and chaos of gun violence.

In 2012, the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting again led my B'nai B'rith brothers and sisters to write and call to confirm the well-being of my family.

In the years between those attacks and the years since, it seems we have been besieged by gun violence on city streets, at schools, houses of worship, concerts and elsewhere. And too often, the nation spends a few days collectively wringing hands, and then shrugs.

I understand the right to own certain guns. I do not understand this seemingly free and unlimited access to any type of gun, including firearms designed and built as weapons of war. It's too easy to get distracted by arguments over the use of terms like "assault weapon" or "automatic" or "semi-automatic" guns. Those disputes about proper terms and the use and perhaps misuse of these words are just



a senseless diversion from the real issue, an issue that comes up over and over again: We need sensible gun control reforms, and we need them now.

B'nai B'rith International has long called for such comprehensive gun reform measures as appropriate waiting periods to purchase guns, a restriction on volume sales of firearms and background checks for all firearms sales, coupled with significant criminal and mental health reviews. We cannot cede the safety of our schools, houses of worship and other public places to lax gun control and access to the types of weapons that only soldiers should carry. This organization has called for meaningful and effective legislation to limit access to high capacity ammunition magazines, which have only one purpose — to kill in

large numbers in a short time frame.

After each mass shooting, I, along with I'm sure some of you, have thought: This is the one. This is the shooting that will wake up our lawmakers and force them to take action. And then, nothing. Talk, banal "thoughts and prayers," and then silence. And I came to think that, after the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, where first graders — six- and seven- year olds, along with the brave teachers who tried to protect them — were murdered, there could be nothing to rouse this country from its ennui.

And then, this spring, came the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The teen victims, forced to grow up too quickly at the

From the President

Gun Control: This Time, Something Must Change

point of a gun, may, finally, have kicked us all out of our fog and into action. I admired their courage as I watched the signature March for Our Lives in Washington, D.C. (one of 800-some events worldwide), where some of my B'nai B'rith colleagues joined the rally. This is it, I thought, the moment when something will change.

In fighting back, the Parkland students may finally have forced the issue with lawmakers. Poll after poll shows that the majority of Americans, even gun owners, support some common sense gun control measures. But lawmakers haven't represented the will of the people. It's so unsettling that too many in power feel they cannot seriously take up an issue because they are afraid of

losing their jobs. They are afraid that the too-powerful gun lobby will take from them their ability to do their work.

We are NOT calling for taking away all guns. And we know that gun control will not eliminate all gun deaths. But reducing access to guns, and stopping access to guns that can fire so many rounds so quickly, reduces the opportunity for gun violence, reduces the opportunity for mass carnage.

Just a few weeks before this issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine went live, an armed teenager has taken 10 more lives at his high school in Santa Fe, Texas. It seems more of a "when" will the next school shooting take place, rather than a "will" a next school shooting take place.

It's traumatizing when these mass shootings happen. And we can never accept such shootings as the price of being an American. Maybe at this time in history, the "Enough Is Enough" cry of the Parkland students and their supporters will mean something.

In the immediate wake of the March for Our Lives and as this movement is still very new, imploring our government leaders to actually lead on this most basic of issues — safety — is energizing. It is time to pass the appropriate laws to help our citizens live their lives without fear in schools and other public meeting spaces. We can mitigate some dangers in our society. This is one of them. 🇺🇸



For a look at how gun reform is being waged across all age groups, read this analysis by **Evan Carmen**, assistant director for Aging Policy at the B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services, about Grandmothers Against Gun Violence.

<http://www.bnaibrith.org/expert-analysis/grandmothers-and-the-fight-against-gun-violence>

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From the EVP/CEO

An Urgent Task: Confronting and Combating Anti-Semitism

By *Daniel S. Mariaschin*

B'nai B'rith Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer

The dramatic rise in acts of anti-Semitism worldwide has led the Jewish community to react in a multitude of ways. It seems that from every corner — from the left and the right, from the supporters of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, to the Islamic world, to the Holocaust deniers and the Israel deniers — the challenges are many, and daunting.

Some of this we've seen before, and some of it is new. Without question, though, the internet has enabled the haters to spread their message of bigotry and intolerance in ways we never imagined.

With the Holocaust and the end of World War II, the assumption was that anti-Semitism in Europe was, if not gone, taboo. It remained that way for years but has made a frightening comeback. In France, Mireille Knoll, a Holocaust survivor, was recently stabbed to death and then her apartment was set afire. Young people are bullied or attacked on the street, especially if wearing outward signs of being Jewish, like kippot. The French far right has engaged in minimizing the role that the wartime Vichy government played in the deportation of Jews.

In Eastern Europe, political parties have arisen that seek to mimic, in thought, word and deed, the extreme right wing parties of the 1930s, with some even donning paramilitary uniforms and singing songs of that dark, discredited decade.

Some on the European left are also participants in this witches brew of anti-Semitism. Britain's Labor Party, long a supporter



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

On March 28, five days after the murder of Mireille Knoll, thousands participated in a silent march that began at the Place de la Nation and led to her home in the 11th arrondissement in Paris. The Lodges of B'nai B'rith France were mobilized to take part and pay tribute to this Holocaust survivor, the mother of a B'nai B'rith member.

of Israel, is now riven by controversy amid charges that its leadership cavorts with anti-Semites and praises groups like Hamas, which seeks Israel's destruction.

Efforts to ban shechita, or kosher slaughter, and circumcision, have cropped up in European countries that heretofore have seen themselves as bastions of social justice and tolerance.

In the Islamic world, mass circulation dailies still run editorial cartoons of Jews with misshapen noses, top hats, and morning suits festooned with dollar signs. Palestinian schoolchildren, but other Arab students as well, are taught that Jews are "hiding behind every rock and tree" to kill them, so better to strike first. And the Palestinian leadership works overtime at the

United Nations to rewrite Jewish history, so as to remove any vestige of Jewish claims to its historic homeland.

Hatred Here at Home

And, right here at home, the Charlottesville "rally" last summer of far-right demonstrators included chants of "Jews will not replace us" and other anti-Semitic and racist taunts. For me, it echoed memories from the past. As a young boy in the late 1950s, I recall my mother and father discussing the American Nazi Party, then headed by someone named George Lincoln Rockwell. Not long after the end of World War II, the rants of Rockwell, also based in Virginia, were as frightening to Jewish ears then as what we heard in Charlottesville last year.

From the EVP

An Urgent Task: Confronting and Combating Anti-Semitism

The BDS campaign to squeeze Israel economically is another modern manifestation of anti-Semitism — just by another name. This effort knows no borders: Calls to boycott academics, consumer products, entertainers, sports teams and others who have a connection to Israel occur across continents. The U.N. Human Rights Council threatens to release a list of hundreds of companies that do business with Israel, with the intent of harming the Jewish state.

And to demonstrate how ludicrous this has become, the Durham, North Carolina, City Council recently barred its police department from receiving training from the Israeli police, because of the latter's "long history of violence." The City Council had caved to BDS groups known for their call for Israel's demise.

Against this backdrop, Jewish communities and their non-Jewish friends and allies are fighting back. Just this year, there have been two major conferences on combating anti-Semitism, one in Rome and one in Jerusalem. B'nai B'rith participated in both.

From Rome and Jerusalem, a Battle Cry

In Rome, the Italian Foreign Ministry organized the "International Conference on the Responsibility of States, Institutions and Individuals in the Fight Against Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Area." Italy is the current chair of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which includes more than 50 member countries, including the United States.

The Rome gathering brought together a wide range of diplomats and NGO's (non-governmental organizations), including B'nai B'rith. It focused on the question of *responsibility* of lawmakers, civil society, religious leaders and organizations and those who control digital platforms, in combating anti-Semitism. My plenary address, focusing on concrete steps to



B'nai B'rith at the Sixth Global Forum on Combating Anti-Semitism in Jerusalem.

address the issue, followed those of Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Israel's former chief rabbi, and Tzachi Hanegbi, a cabinet member in Israel's current government.

The gathering in Jerusalem, the "Sixth Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism," was convened by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hundreds of participants from the Jewish world — academics, journalists and Jewish professionals — joined an impressive list of political leaders and diplomats (including the president of Bulgaria, France's former prime minister and several ministers of justice from EU countries) and religious leaders in speaking out against anti-Semitism. The broad spectrum of topics covered the rise of the far right and the far left; the detection and prevention of online anti-Semitism; anti-Semitism in the Arabic language mass media; and faith traditions as a resource in fighting hatred.

I chaired a panel on "The Denial of Jewish History in International Organizations; The case of Jerusalem in the United Nations and UNESCO." The former Director General of UNESCO, Irena Bukova, gave the opening keynote presentation.

Some question the value of large international conferences such as these, wondering about follow-up and coordination over the long, or even the short term. I take another view: When you have the opportunity — even in an age of laptops, tablets and cell



B'nai B'rith CEO Dan Mariaschin with former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, in Rome.



B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin (right) with Ambassador Francesco Talo, of Italy, at the OSCE's Rome Conference on Anti-Semitism.

phones — to come together in person with like-minded individuals to share information and best practices in the fight against anti-Semitism, it is time well spent. The creative energy that results from a gathering of those on the front lines in this battle cannot be measured in the usual ways. "Creative" is the key word. Those who traffic in anti-Semitic behavior are constantly finding new ways to peddle and export their wares, so we must be more than one step ahead in countering them.

In Rome, I closed with this:

"Seventy-three years after the Holocaust, and nearly two decades after the start of the current rise of anti-Semitism around the world, one simple imperative can serve as a rallying principle: that the responsibility to confront hatred falls squarely on all of us." 🗨️

Rich in Antiquities Ripe for Plunder, Israel Fights Back

By Michele Chabin

Israel is rich in archaeology, as any tourist quickly learns. By one count, there are 30,000 ancient sites, ripe for historical excavation — and for antiquities plunder.

One case in point: In 2017, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) learned that a priceless coin found in the Judean Hills from the time of the first rebellion against the Romans in 69 C.E. was being sold in the United States at auction.

“We have dealers, a department in the field, a department of interrogation, informers,” Amir Ganor, director of the authority’s Unit for Prevention of Antiquities Looting said, explaining in broad strokes how his team gets its intel.

Once tipped off, the IAA asked the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for help in recovering the coin. The department sent an agent to the auction and stopped the sale.

“Now we’re waiting for the verdict,” Ganor said. “Eventually we hope to get the coin back to Israel, where it belongs.”

The coin’s theft and hoped-for ultimate recovery highlight both the strides Israel has made in the area of theft prevention and prosecution and the challenge it still faces. “In the forest, if there’s a fire, you can plant new trees,” Ganor said. “When a site is looted, you can never put the items back in their place.”

Improvements in the country’s antiquities law during the past six years coupled with cooperation between the IAA and international antiquities policing agencies have led to a significant reduction in Israel-based theft and fraud, from a few thousand to about 200, according to Eitan Klein, deputy director of the IAA’s theft-



Source: Wikimedia Commons

A typical coin found in Judea dating from the time of the first Jewish rebellion against the Romans. This “Shekel of Israel” shows an Omer cup with a pearly rim, the year (3, or 68/69 C.E.) and a sprig of three pomegranates with the inscription, “Jerusalem the Holy.”

prevention unit. “The fact that one now needs to obtain an import permit means that Israel is no longer a preferred target for antiquities laundering,” he added.

Even so, no one expects the illegal trade in antiquities in Israel to disappear completely.

“As long as there is a demand, there will always be people who supply antiquities,” said Eilat Mazar, a Hebrew University archaeologist who excavates in Jerusalem.

The IAA maintains strong working relationships with a wide range of countries, including its neighbors in the Middle East. Although Israel carries out joint investigations with agencies like Interpol, the FBI and Homeland Security, it is sometimes the quiet, behind-the-scenes interactions that result in the recovery of stolen ancient artifacts and the discovery of fake ones, Ganor said.

In 2013, Klein was attending a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) conference in Paris when he was approached by delegates from the Libyan government.

“They showed me photos of a few ancient Roman statues that were in a Libyan museum until 2000, when there was a break-in and many items were looted,” Klein said. That theft led the Libyans on a long international search for the stolen artifacts.

The Libyan authorities told Klein that they had traced one of the stolen statues to an antiquities dealer in Jerusalem. Following the conference, the Libyans sent Klein photos of the missing statue from an old museum catalogue and information related to its discovery during an excavation in the 1960s.

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Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The Israel Antiquities Authority co-sponsored the restoration of the Maon Synagogue and its mosaic floor. Work began in 2006 on this archaeological site in the Negev desert.



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

This aerial photograph depicts one of 30,000 archaeological sites in Israel. Located near Safed in northern Israel, the Jewish city of Merot flourished in the first century. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Then, the IAA launched its own investigation. It discovered a trafficking network “from Libya to Dubai, from Dubai to Canada to America and eventually to Israel,” Klein said. The IAA seized the item and hopes to return it to Libya via Interpol in the near future.

A Full-Time Job

For Israel’s IAA, fighting antiquities theft and fraud is a full-time job. Ganor, Klein and their team, who have the authority of police officers in the antiquities realm, are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

One reason is the large number of Israeli archaeological sites in the country. “Israel has 30,000 sites. Every hill is a site,” Ganor said, seated in his office at the Rockefeller Museum, an archaeological treasure trove located opposite the walls of Jerusalem’s Old City.

Most sites aren’t protected by a fence or guards because of costs. “Our duty is to protect those sites, so much of our job is visiting them,” explains Ganor, “and if we find evidence of looting or digging without a license, we try to identify the offenders.”

Ganor said his team utilizes electronic devices, cameras, drones and even seismic equipment in their fight against theft. He declined to elaborate, fearing the information would help criminals. The IAA also maintains a wide network of paid and unpaid informants in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

On average, he said, 300 Israel archaeological sites are looted every year, and about 200 thieves are caught, “usually red-handed.” Typically, the looters work in groups, and are equal-opportunity

offenders: Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs.

“They do it for the money,” Ganor explained. “If they find some ancient burial cave from the time of the Bible, they can find thousands of pieces of pottery, jars, jewelry and weapons, and they can sell them. If they find 500 pieces in one night and each piece fetches \$200, do the math. That’s a lot of money for one night of digging.”

Looters typically use metal detectors to locate ancient coins and other metal artifacts.

Forming a pyramid with his thumbs and index fingers, Ganor explained that while the thieves, who are often poor villagers, can become prosperous by the standards of their local communities, it is the smugglers, antiquities dealers and ultimately the collectors who can become rich from stolen antiquities in the illegal multi-billion-dollar industry.

“Many collectors want to buy some ancient coin for their collection, and they don’t care if it’s been found in an illegal excavation, without provenience,” he said, referring to documentation showing the precise location where an artifact or organic matter (such as a skeleton) was excavated.

Although lack of provenience makes it easier for smugglers and antiquities dealers to peddle forgeries to eager collectors, that’s not what concerns archaeologists.

Every time a looter or even an amateur archaeologist digs up a site in an unauthorized excavation, “that site is destroyed,” said Aren Maeir, a Bar-Ilan University archeologist who is excavating

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what appears to be the Philistine city of Gath, hometown of the biblical Goliath.

Israeli archaeologists still bemoan the actions of the late Israeli general Moshe Dayan, an archaeology enthusiast and collector who carried out several unauthorized digs and amassed an impressive collection of antiquities — some looted, some not. The Israel Museum purchased many artifacts in Dayan's collection, and his family retains others.

Motivated by Greed, Not History

In contrast to authorized excavations, where artifacts and bones are discovered in situ, and archaeologists measure, photograph and sift through every inch of soil, illegal digging is about greed, not history or science.

Since the introduction of the 1978 Antiquities Law, any ancient object found in a legal or illegal excavation belongs to the State of Israel. Even if you dig a foundation for your home and find a tomb, you are required to tell the IAA. Those who do inform authorities are awarded a certificate and are often celebrated by the media.

At the same time, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that permits a limited number of licensed dealers to buy and sell antiquities — a fact that angers many Israeli archaeologists. When Egypt, Iraq and other nations began to ban antiquities sales, Israel's licensed dealers "capitalized on our law to deal in looted artifacts," Klein said.

The Antiquities Law, which was intended to regulate the antiquities market, was relatively weak and failed to thwart the thriving black market. But since 2016, thanks to an amendment to the law, all licensed antiquities dealers, museums and many collectors have been required to photograph, describe and list in a digital database every item in their possession that dates to 1700 or earlier. When an item is sold, it must be digitally transferred to the buyer's inventory and erased from the seller's stock.

The law also requires the IAA to approve sales of artifacts it deems to be of national value or for export outside Israel. Last year it permitted more than 30,000 sales.

"Now," says Ganor, "an Israeli dealer can buy antiquities only from another dealer, and if he wants to buy something from elsewhere, he needs to bring a provenience document from the source country. If he wants to buy something from Egypt he must prove the item was removed from Egypt before Egypt banned antiquities sales."

Although some dealers find the updated law onerous, Zak Mishriky, the licensed dealer who owns Zak's Antiquities in Jerusalem, praised it. "Israel is trying to control money laundering and they're doing a good job," he said. The law is helping to prevent corruption and illegal digging and destroying sites. It's a good



Photo courtesy of Bar-Ilan University.

Aren M. Maeir, professor, The Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Bar-Ilan University, and director, The Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project, The Institute of Archaeology.

thing." As for having to register every item, "It's not so difficult" Mishriky said.

The law was updated too late to prevent five Jerusalem antiquities dealers from forging the documentation for 5,500 ancient Iraqi artifacts sold to Hobby Lobby, the giant arts-and-crafts chain, in 2010.

Matters of Provenience

Hobby Lobby President Steve Green, who recently launched the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., is an avid antiquities collector.

Two years ago, a joint Israeli and U.S. investigation discovered that dealers in Israel and the United Emirates had falsely identified the ancient artifacts as modern Turkish ceramic tiles.

Hobby Lobby was required to pay \$3 million to the U.S. government in fines and to forfeit the ancient clay talismans and cuneiform tablets that originated in Mesopotamia. The items were returned to Iraq. Green issued an apology and vowed to employ a much higher level of scrutiny when purchasing antiquities in the future.

The five dealers, out on bail as this is written, were arrested for tax evasion and for illegal possession of not only the Iraqi artifacts but extremely valuable — and unregistered — ancient coins, sculptures and ancient parchments.

The IAA's Ganor said the new regulations are making it much more difficult for Israeli dealers to sell items not in their inventory

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Photos by Michele Chabin.

Professor Aren Maeir next to an Iron Age Philistine altar at the excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath.



Professor Aren Maeir examining an Iron Age vessel found at the excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath.

and has put many dealers out of business. "In 2000 we had 120 licensed dealers. Today we have only 37," he noted.

Klein credited the updated law for the fact that "almost no" illegally obtained antiquities enter Israel today. Until the new regulations went into effect, he said, people were laundering money in Israel through antiquities, just as they do in other parts of the world.

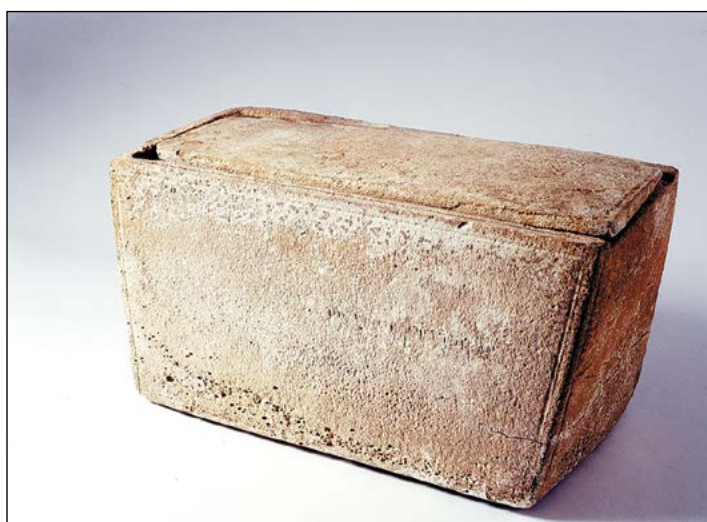
While the IAA also deals with fraud, it is much less common, Ganor said.

"Israel is full of authentic antiquities, so they don't need to try to sell something that isn't authentic," Ganor said. "You don't need to forge something like oil lamps, which are in great supply."

However, some dealers and collectors have been suspected of placing fake inscriptions on legitimate artifacts. In 2005 Oded Golan, an Israeli antiquities collector, was put on trial for allegedly forging the inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" in Aramaic on an ancient ossuary (bone box). Known as the James Ossuary, the box — something commonly used by Jews to bury the dead during the first century — has been dated to between the first century B.C.E. and 70 C.E.

The question at the trial, which lasted seven years, was whether the inscription was authentic. If it was, it would represent the earliest written mention of Jesus outside the New Testament.

Golan said he purchased the ossuary from an antiquities dealer in the 1970s, and that it came with no provenience. That raised red flags at the IAA, which, after examining the inscription at length, deemed it a forgery and filed charges against Golan.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The James Ossuary has been dated to between the first century B.C.E. and 70 C.E.

The court acquitted the collector on the grounds that the IAA failed to prove its lack of authenticity. While the verdict was a blow to the IAA, it hasn't discouraged the anti-theft team in its fight against thieves and forgers.

"We didn't succeed in court, but, since the trial, no one has attempted a forgery like this, and no one in the academic community has wanted to publish articles about items without provenience. We consider that a huge success," Ganor said. 🇮🇱

Cheeseburger, Cheeseburger: If You're a Karaite Jew, It's "Kosher"

Little-Known Sect From 8th Century Survives into the 21st

By Jennifer Lovy

“So, you don’t keep real kosher?” Shawn Lichaa frequently hears such comments after telling others that, based on what is written in the Torah, he is permitted to eat a cheeseburger.

Lichaa, a 38-year-old health care attorney from the San Francisco Bay Area, keeps kosher according to the traditions of Karaite Judaism, a little-known Jewish movement scholars trace back to the 8th or 9th century Persia, in what is today Iran.

“The Torah only says not to boil a kid in its mother’s milk. I think the main purpose of that law is mercy. The milk of the mother, which is intended to sustain the kid, should not be used to boil the kid. So, I believe the prohibition really applies only to the limited example of a mother’s milk and its child,” writes Lichaa in a blog post titled “Yes; I do keep real kosher (And Other Struggles of Modern Karaites).”

Karaites, like Lichaa, follow what is written in the Torah and do not accept as authoritative the Talmud and other rabbinic writings. It’s a movement (pronounced *kar-uh-ahyt*) most Jews have either never heard of or perhaps remember briefly learning about in a historical context.

Lichaa is the go-to guy for all things Karaite Judaism in America, and he writes regularly on his blog, [A Blue Thread](#), commenting on Jewish topics from a Karaite perspective.

Though he comes from a Karaite family, he attended Sunday and Hebrew school at a conservative synagogue because there has never been a school affiliated with the only Karaite synagogue in the United States.



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The tzitzit (strings or fringes tied to each of four corners of a prayer shawl) worn by Karaite Jews must contain at least one blue thread and are braided in a manner to look like chains (instead of being knotted, as is the Rabbinic Jewish practice). Karaites also differ from Rabbinites regarding acceptable sources to make the blue dye, and the thread color may vary from sky-blue to violet-blue.

That synagogue, Congregation B’nai Israel, is located a few miles south of San Francisco in Daly City.

“I don’t think a person can be born a Karaite,” says Lichaa. “You can come from a Karaite family, but Karaite Judaism is such a philosophical framework, either you accept the philosophy or you don’t. Yes, I am from a Karaite family, but I actively chose it as my preferred form of Judaism.”

Discerning the Difference

Walking through the doors of the newly renovated Congregation B’nai Israel on a Shabbat morning will feel familiar to a non-Karaite. Aside from finding Torahs in the ark, men and some women wearing kippot and tallitot, for example, congregants do not wear shoes in the sanctuary. This practice is based on the idea that when God

spoke to Moses from the burning bush, he was told to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Furthermore, because Karaites customarily pray based on the biblical practice of kneeling, there is ample floor space in the front of the sanctuary, but also seating for those who cannot or choose not to kneel.

During a Karaite service, you won’t hear the Amidah or Adon Olam because those prayers grew out of rabbinic tradition. However, the Shema, like other biblical verses, is recited.

“Ninety-seven percent of Karaite prayer comes from the Tanakh, (an acronym for the Bible, which consists of the Torah, Nevi’im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings)). You’ll literally hear biblical passages being read. The prayers are basically a dialogue between the Hazzan

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Except where noted, all photos courtesy of Congregation B'nai Israel and Shawn Lichaa.

Karaite congregants do not wear shoes in the sanctuary. Because Karaites customarily pray while kneeling, there is ample floor space in the front of the sanctuary but also seating for those who cannot or choose not to kneel.

and the community," explains Lichaa, who in addition to his blog, has written extensively about Karaite Judaism, including co-authoring "As It Is Written: A Brief Case for Karaism."

Not much is known about the origins of the modern Karaite Jewish movement. Many people trace it back to an 8th century schism, while the Karaites themselves trace their movement back to biblical times. The name comes from an old Hebrew word *kara*, which means scripture. The Karaites adopted it because they are scripturalists.

In more modern times, the largest Karaite population could be found in Egypt. However, when Israel became a state, many immigrated there, according to Hakham (the term used for a Karaite rabbi) Moshe Firrouz, an Israeli Karaite. Firrouz says there are 14 Karaite synagogues in Israel, with approximately 40,000 Karaites living there and 10,000 more in the diaspora.

In the Bay Area, there are an estimated 800 Karaite families. Lichaa bases the number on those who are descendants of Karaites. Of those families, he says that 100 of them are involved in the Karaite community, attending services, holiday celebrations and other events at the synagogue, which does not collect dues and therefore has no official members at the only Karaite synagogue in America.

As to how the Karaites ended up in Northern California, there is no inspirational or compelling story except to say that when the Karaites left Egypt as refugees in the late 1950s, a few families receiving help from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) happened to settle in Daly City. Because HIAS helped a lot of the



Hazzan Fred Lichaa, of Congregation B'nai Israel, in Daly City, California.

Karaites leave Egypt, as is common with resettlement efforts, the organization relocated many Karaites to that area.

In need of a place to worship, this growing Karaite community initially used space in a nearby conservative synagogue until acquiring a place of its own. Several years after acquiring a synagogue, they embarked on a \$1.2 million fundraising campaign in order to renovate it. The building recently reopened following a year-long construction period. It also houses the Karaite Jews of America, a nonprofit organization serving as a resource for Karaite Jews throughout the United States and, for the first time, a Karaite Cultural Center.

Mixing and Matching

Tomer Mangoubi is a 25-year-old Yale University economics research analyst who was born and raised in Boston. He grew up speaking French with his father, an Egyptian Karaite and his mother, a native of Germany who converted to Judaism. His family, he says, has a mix of Jewish practices because there isn't an established Karaite community outside of Daly City. Mangoubi attended a Jewish day school from kindergarten through 12th grade, prays mainly at Orthodox congregations and maintains mostly Karaite customs at home.

Such mixed practices are common among the Karaites living in America. Beyond the Bay Area, Lichaa knows of a handful of families in cities such as Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles.

Ken Lane, a 30-year-old who works in marketing and lives in

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Tulsa, Oklahoma, converted to Judaism with a Modern Orthodox rabbi but says he found Karaite Judaism appealing because the Karaite practice is so reliant on the text and not on rabbinic interpretation.

"The more I studied with the Modern Orthodox rabbi, the more I came to embrace orthodox halacha (Jewish law)," Lane says. "But the deeper I got into the Karaite tradition, the more I embraced both the rabbinic and Karaite perspective, keeping an open mind to both. We don't do anything that violates rabbinic halacha. It's a weird balancing act because we don't light Shabbat candles, but we don't mix milk and meat. I don't consider myself officially a Karaite Jew. Some of my thoughts are more rabbinic than Karaite and some more Karaite than rabbinic. I basically have a foot in both worlds," says Lane, who, contrary to Karaite practices, has mezuzot on doors in his home and lays tefillin.

"I don't know if there is an actual mitzvah in wrapping tefillin, but I enjoy the process," says Lane, who worships at a nearby conservative synagogue. "It helps my focus when I am praying. I don't know if you will even find a Karaite that owns tefillin."

Living outside a Karaite community can present challenges for those wanting to practice Karaite Judaism. For Lane, being part of a physical Jewish community is of primary importance. Aside from the Karaite practices he adopts in his home, much of his connection to Karaite Judaism comes from the internet.

In order to help those like Lane maintain a sense of connection, Mangoubi is one of a number of Karaite Jews who translates and summarizes Karaite text and makes his work available online in a way that is easily understandable.

Another, more significant, challenge to being a Karaite in America is the perception that Karaite Judaism is not a legitimate Jewish movement. Because the Karaite beliefs are so different from what is practiced by other Jews, a number of Karaites either don't tell others about their beliefs or have been made to feel like outsiders within the Jewish world.

Because Lichaa lives in an area that has the largest Karaite population in America, he says that aside from an occasional snide comment, he can't complain.

Karaites versus Rabbinites

"Here you see a lot of people give a lot of dignity to the distinction between Karaites and Rabbinites (a Karaite term for those who follow rabbinic traditions). Because there are so many of us here, it's very easy to be welcoming," says Lichaa.

A more extreme illustration is the experiences of Zahava Yod. She is a 20-something Australian Jew who uses a fictitious name because she comes from a Chabad family that does not approve of her following Karaite practices.



A Purim party at Congregation B'nai Israel.



Credit: Michael Ovadia, Congregation B'nai Israel.

Members gather in the newly renovated Congregation B'nai Israel, in Daly City, California. The expanded facility also houses the nonprofit Karaite Jews of America and a Karaite Cultural Center.

"I don't think they can deal with it. So they just pretend that everything is normal. It's definitely not easy," says Yod, who first discovered Karaite Judaism after learning about it in an 8th grade history class.

Yod lives with her parents and regularly goes to shul with her family. She has a Karaite boyfriend in Israel, and says she will be making aliyah soon. "And then I will be able to keep things the way I believe."

Living with her parents presents a unique set of challenges for her. Unlike Lane, who says he has a foot in both the Karaite

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and rabbinic world, Yod must privately follow Karaite practices. And, because the Karaite calendar is always based on the physical sighting of the moon, there are times when holidays do not fall on the same days.

So when the Karaite and Rabbinite celebrations of Passover didn't coincide, Yod simply could not observe according to the Karaite calendar. When Yom Kippur fell on two consecutive days she fasted for two days, sneaking a few bites of food on the day the rest of her family was observing Yom Kippur.

"At home, sadly, I also have to light the candles before Shabbat. That's hard because that's against what I believe, but I really don't have a choice. I have to keep that secret and try to follow it the way I believe," says Yod, a self-described "closet Karaite." "I can't talk about it with anyone."

Despite the challenges, members of this small Jewish movement are doing what they can to ensure the future of Karaite Judaism and its long-standing customs and practices. For example, having a newly established Karaite Jewish Cultural Center attached to the synagogue in Daly City gives locals something that was not seen outside of Israel, until now — a Karaite museum, learning center and a place for social gatherings. It also helps that younger Karaites like Lichaa and Mangoubi are passionate about their religion and working hard to ensure that Karaite writings are easily accessible and understandable. A few years ago Lichaa created the Karaite Press for that purpose. Each is cautiously optimistic that their efforts will help keep the movement alive.

Says Mangoubi: "Making these texts available and understandable means anyone can gain a greater understanding of



A memorial service is led by Hazzan Fred Lichaa at Congregation B'nai Israel.

the fundamentals of the religion, and that is ideally a building block to bring the community together. Every generation will be able to open the Torah and become familiar with it. If we can continue to transmit the complete Karaite historical perspective, it lets people connect and transcends generations."

"I know Karaites who are born into the community are not that knowledgeable or religious and haven't been to a Karaite service in years, but when they hear that Karaite prayer or they hear about Karaite Judaism, they are interested, excited and drawn to it. It drives them back to their traditions." 📺

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A photograph of a group of people, including children and adults, smiling outdoors. They are wearing hats and casual clothing, suggesting a tour or outdoor activity.

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Recalling Isa Kremer, Revolutionary Diva

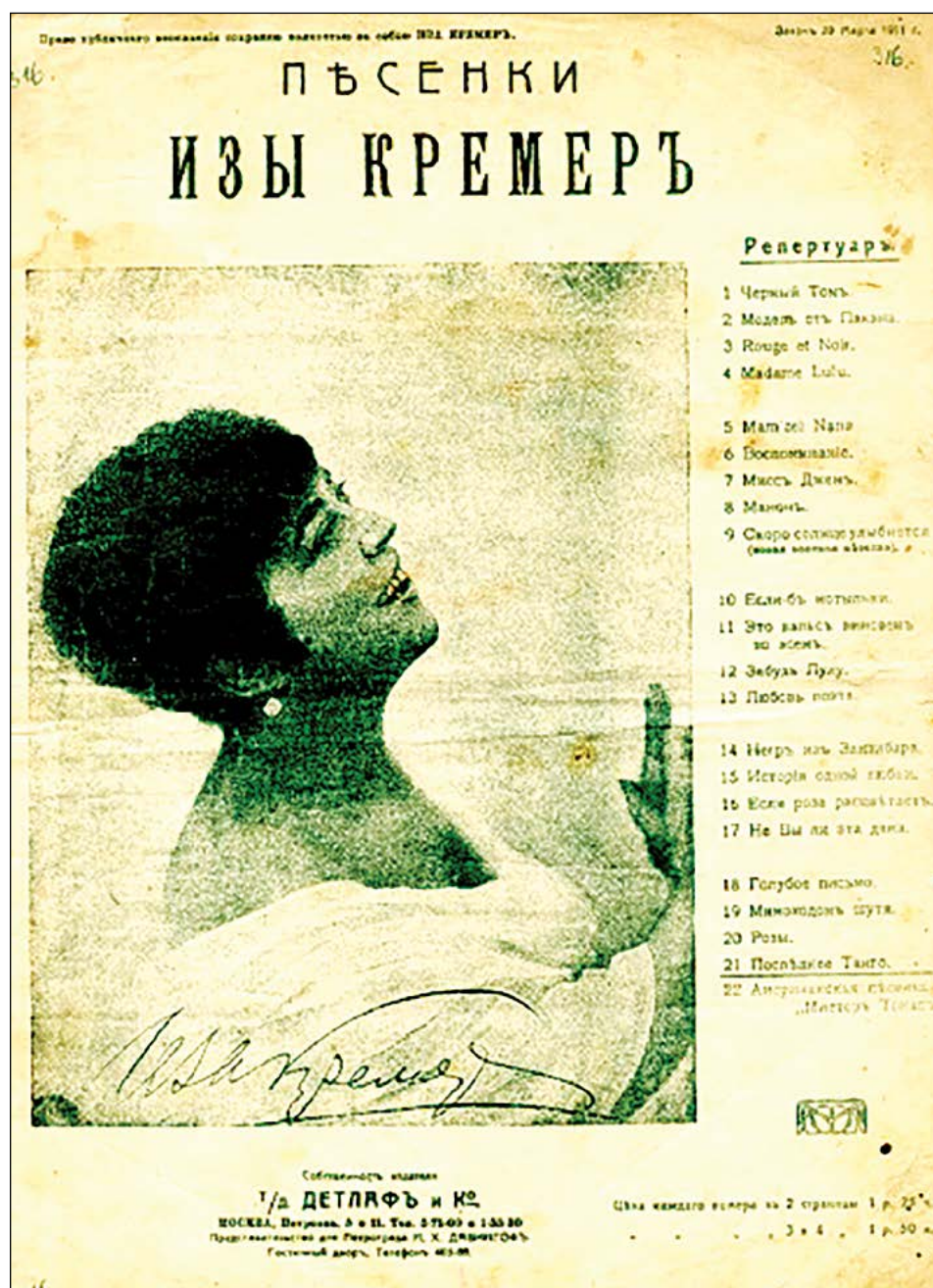
By Cheryl Kempler

In a career spanning more than four decades, her name was legendary. Onstage, this exotic, dark-eyed beauty dressed in glamorous gowns and glittering jewels to perform the music of the down-trodden, the worker and the immigrant.

An activist during times of political and social turmoil, she worked on behalf of causes that mattered to her audiences. This was Isa Kremer, who lived from 1887 to 1956. She was both a folk singer and classical artist, and the first woman to bring the Yiddish song to the concert stage. Writing of the esteem in which she was held, one critic observed, "All received her alike: joyously... from crowned heads to humble peasant."

Now largely forgotten, she was called "the people's diva," also the title of a 2000 documentary about her life. She remains known, however, to aficionados of Yiddish music, both for her own artistry and as the woman whose recordings inspired and influenced others in the genre. Her life and career took her from czarist Russia to Europe to the United States and Argentina, where, already widely known, she became a Latin American musical icon.

The daughter of a Russian military officer, Kremer was publishing poetry calling for the overthrow of the czar at age 15. Perhaps her parents were relieved when she traveled to study music in Italy, where she remained for a decade. Returning to Russia, Kremer sang opera and classical music in Moscow and St. Petersburg. But she achieved celebrity status only during World War I, as a performer of Russian, French and Italian popular songs in cabarets and nightclubs. Adapting an Argentine dance tune, Kremer drew standing room crowds when she sang her own hit



Source: Podlaska Digital Library, Poland.

Sheet music cover for Kremer's hit "The Last Tango."

Recalling Isa Kremer, Revolutionary Diva



The city of Odessa, c. 1900. Source: Wikimedia Commons



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Kremer's Odessa literary circle: Sholem Aleichem poses with the oar; Hayim Nahman Bialik stands at the extreme right.

composition "The Last Tango," whose story of jealousy and murder later became a movie.

Married to a Jewish journalist and living in the cosmopolitan, culturally diverse city of Odessa, Kremer was part of an intellectual circle that included the great novelist Sholem Aleichem and other writers whose books and plays celebrated shtetl life and the hardships, joys, spirituality and customs of its rural inhabitants. It was in this milieu that Kremer would redefine herself, making a connection with her own ethnic heritage the basis of her art.

Interviewed in 1924, Kremer spoke about the circumstances that led to a fateful decision, the result of a request made to her by the famed poet Hayim Nahman Bialik. Hearing one of her recitals, he observed, "Anyone with a voice can sing this classical music," and then he asked, "...why don't you do something for your own people?" As one who spoke but had not previously sung, in Yiddish, she found that learning the three songs he gave her was a natural fit, a "simple matter and a pleasure," she said in the interview. In contrast to the rigors of the aria and the art song, their words and music may have evoked Kremer's own memories of the Yiddish songs she heard from her mother during her childhood.

Recalling Isa Kremer, Revolutionary Diva

Kremer would develop this new repertoire into her show, “A Jewish Life in Song,” in which each song was treated as a miniature drama. She would be in costume and perform each lullaby, love song and ballad against a colorful Chagall-like backdrop. Those in attendance remembered these special evenings as a nostalgic trip to the people and places they had left behind.

Diverse Musical Styles

Applying her training as a classical artist, Kremer acquired an expertise in the diverse musical styles of each nation whose songs she sang, revealed today through her legacy of commercial recordings. Lorin Sklamberg, sound archivist at New York’s YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, summed it up in an interview: “Kremer’s concern for authenticity embodied World Music before there was World Music.”

Kremer had her songs “adapted and arranged to both accommodate her vocal range and to convey its essential authenticity,” Sklamberg says. “Never detached from her material, she was always intensely involved in their narrative, and the emotions which drove them — sentimental, religious, comic, raw, [and] even violent.”

Fans loved her remarkable voice, which grew deeper and more expressive over the years, but were always struck by her charismatic magnetism. For Sklamberg, “Kremer’s Yiddish recordings, reissued several times in the years since her death, are historical treasures, which, when studied in tandem with Kremer’s collected songs, published in 1931, have become a ‘how to’ for several generations of both male and female performers. We are still very much indebted to her.”

Kremer was on tour outside of Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, and she endured great anguish until she could smuggle her jewels back to her family in Odessa to pay ransom for their escape. After World War I, she traveled the continent, making important friends like



Isa Kremer relaxes on her Brooklyn veranda, c. 1930. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division, Washington, D.C.

Albert Einstein on her tours. In 1922, after Warsaw’s prominent Jewish leaders pressed her to sing Yiddish songs during her guest appearance with the Philharmonic, an anti-Semitic riot ensued. Kremer made the decision to leave Europe and come to the

United States with her daughter.

In America, the impresario Sol Hurok became her manager. His roster already included Russian greats like the ballerina Anna Pavlova, and he billed Kremer as “the renowned international balladist” during

Recalling Isa Kremer, Revolutionary Diva

several seasons beginning in 1922, when she gave concerts of folk and classical music of many nations at Carnegie Hall and the Manhattan Opera House.

Attracting people of various nationalities and economic levels, these concerts were marketed particularly to Jewish intellectuals with an interest in all things Russian and whose political ideals were of a decidedly Socialist bent. For them, Kremer's programs, including folk music and labor anthems, ballads and marches — music of the poor and disenfranchised — reflected their own passions and concerns. At the same time, Kremer lived in a large house, where she hosted members of Hollywood's large German exile community, after the Nazis seized power.

Radio, Vaudeville, Argentina

Taking advantage of the latest technology, the singer was introduced to thousands of potential devotees when she sang over New York's station WNYC in one of the first live broadcasts sponsored by the Jewish Daily Forward, in May 1926. The next year, and in 1929, she was featured in early Warner Bros. sound films. Inevitably, she was showcased in "The Song of the Ghetto," a Second Avenue musical written especially for her, which included a number she made famous, the autobiographical "Belz, My Little Village... where I would sit and laugh with all the children ... I would run with my prayer

book every Shabbat ... and sit under the green tree."

Responding to public demand, Kremer continued to tour in the company of prominent musicians and actors. She made her vaudeville debut in 1927 at Manhattan's Palace Theater and then played across the country to audiences totaling more than 35,000 weekly.

Although Kremer was faced with the cataclysmic events in Europe, she did not abandon her public travels to Canada, Europe, Africa, Palestine and Latin America. Defiantly, she refused to eliminate Yiddish songs from her programs, even in Nazi Germany, where she sang for a Jewish audience in Berlin in 1938. Both before and after World War II, Kremer was the headliner at many benefit concerts for the Workmen's Circle and Jewish philanthropies that assisted refugees and projects in Palestine, which was then administered by the British under a

League of Nations mandate.

Reflecting the experience of many creative people active at the time, Kremer was bereft by the events of the Holocaust; her first husband had remained in Paris and was murdered by the Nazis.

In 1946, she moved to Argentina, where she married Gregorio Bermann, an eminent psychiatrist associated with the activities of the country's Communist party. When the dictator Juan Perón assumed power, Bermann was arrested and imprisoned. The couple endured further hardships after both were blacklisted. Kremer gave her last Carnegie Hall concert in December 1950 and died six years later in Córdoba, Argentina. Never forgotten, and still recognized by many today as "the best Yiddish singer of any time," Kremer left an extraordinary archive of songs in 24 languages which is housed at the Jewish Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina. 🇦🇷



Listen to Isa Kremer's two recordings of the lullaby, "Ven ikh volt gehat dem keyzers oytsres" (If I had the Emperor's Treasures), included in Sound Archivist Lorin Sklamberg's blog devoted to YIVO's collection of Yiddish recorded and sheet music.

<https://yivosounds.com/2010/12/15/back-to-isa-kremer/>



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B'nai B'rith at 175: Honorary Presidents Reflect on Our Stellar Legacy

When new B'nai B'rith International officers are elected, the Board of Governors may elect the outgoing president to serve as an Honorary President. For the remainder of their lives, these leaders share their treasure trove of experience and expertise with the current leadership. As B'nai B'rith commemorates its 175th anniversary and celebrates its legacy of accomplishments, we asked the eight living honorary presidents to reflect on the most significant events during their presidential terms, to be published in chronological order.

In this issue, we feature:

Joel S. Kaplan

B'nai B'rith President (2002–2006)

It is 2005, a hot July day in Cordoba, Spain, and I am one of 700 international and human rights leaders attending a conference on Islamophobia.

The Spanish government sponsoring the conference arranges for a special lunch for 100 of the participants, hosted by King Juan Carlos. In this long and beautiful room, the King and his party occupy the head table and, as B'nai B'rith president, I sit with the most important dignitaries at table #1, closest to His Highness'.

Early on, I turn to my tablemate and say: "I'm sorry, but you have to excuse me, I must leave after this course." When he answered "But, you are lunching with the King..." I told him that I was traveling to Rome for an audience with the Pope.

After my Vatican trip, I returned to Spain for the rest of the conference.

Can a middle class, Jewish boy from Brooklyn eat lunch with a King before his appointment with the Pope? The answer is yes, but only if he becomes president of B'nai B'rith.

Moishe Smith

B'nai B'rith President (2006–2009)

As I reflect on my time as president, implementing the partnership between B'nai B'rith International and the AEPi fraternity stands out as my introduction to the top position.

At my inaugural convention, I met with AEPi brothers Andy Borans and Gary Anderson as well as with B'nai B'rith Honorary President Richard D. Heideman to begin discussing how to implement the partnership. Although I was not the visionary behind this, it was my great pleasure to put into practice the framework that Richard Heideman and the AEPi brothers had agreed upon a year or two before. It was a great partnership waiting to happen.

I became an honorary brother. All presidents since have become honorary brothers as well, and AEPi with B'nai B'rith has provided



In Santiago, B'nai B'rith President Joel S. Kaplan met with Chilean President Ricardo Lagos in June 2003.



U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met with B'nai B'rith President Moishe Smith in April 2007.

B'nai B'rith at 175: Honorary Presidents Reflect on Our Stellar Legacy

hands-on disaster assistance in U.S. cities.

Both during my presidency and for a number of years prior, I worked with our brothers and sisters in Latin America. As a B'nai B'rith senior executive, I attended many meetings of the Organization of American States. It was a pleasure working with Eduardo Kohn, our director in Latin America, preparing our annual presentation to the OAS. It is important that B'nai B'rith exercise its voice on issues of the day, affecting not only the Jewish community but communities as a whole in Latin America. Of course, we expressed our concern about anti-Semitism but also on arms dealing, money laundering, human rights and poverty.

For many years the commemoration of Kristallnacht was a key program for B'nai B'rith in Uruguay. I had the honor of being present for this event on many occasions. And I was always impressed

by the high level of attendance not only from the Jewish community but also from within Uruguayan government circles and the diplomatic corps.

With the help of Dan Tartakovski, a B'nai B'rith leader in Mexico, and Kohn, we successfully pushed for Holocaust remembrance ceremonies in Mexico. Alberto Jabiles, director of B'nai B'rith Northern Latin America and the Caribbean, and I visited other Latin American countries with the same result. We were also able to enhance programs already in place and help open new lodges.

It truly was a great honor to represent our organization and to do my part in keeping B'nai B'rith vibrant in more than 60 countries around the world. Please remember that B'nai B'rith International is the "global voice of the Jewish community." Repeat our slogan with pride.

Allan J. Jacobs

B'nai B'rith President (2011–2015)

B'nai B'rith is in a period of change, yet its position on the world scene is undiminished. Today, as in the past, we are recognized as an organization relevant to what is happening in the world on Jewish issues, on anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination, and on Israel.

During my four and one half years as president, I was honored to represent the organization in meetings with kings, presidents, prime ministers and other world leaders. This enabled me to express our concerns over happenings on the world scene.

I met with the newly elected president of Paraguay who appeared to be changing his country's position on Israel at the United Nations. While we were setting up meetings in New York at the United Nations, he indicated that he would like to meet with a delegation from B'nai B'rith. Due to another meeting, I was delayed. But instead of canceling, he waited for me and our meeting went on. To me, this indicated the importance he placed on B'nai B'rith as an organization.

On another occasion, I traveled to Germany in connection with our work with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It was during the run-up to the election when Angela Merkel was going to be re-nominated. We were invited to the Christian Democrats' convention in Hanover where I was seated in the first row. The day before, Germany had changed its position in the United Nations from opposing recognition of the Palestinians to abstaining. Following Merkel's nomination, I met with her and expressed our disappointment. Despite this change, she wanted us to get out the message that Germany would continue to be Israel's best friend in Europe.

Not all meetings with foreign leaders went our way. On another occasion, I was among a group of Jewish leaders who met in New



Israeli President Shimon Peres met with B'nai B'rith President Allan J. Jacobs in August 2012, in Jerusalem.

York with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. I raised the issue of Iran's new president proclaiming the same as his predecessor: "Death to Israel!" The foreign minister, who was sitting directly across the table, pointed his finger at me and denied that it was so. Later that evening I researched the matter and confirmed that I had been correct. Would that have changed his opinion? I doubt it. But, just maybe we were heard.

It has been an honor to have been B'nai B'rith president and to represent our organization. 🇮🇱

B'NAI B'RITH TODAY

B'nai B'rith Honors Three as It Celebrates 175 Years

By B'nai B'rith staff

In the nation's capital, B'nai B'rith International's 175th anniversary year celebration began with an event on April 25 honoring three exemplary individuals for their outstanding commitment to make the world a better place.

B'nai B'rith selected U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) to receive the Excellence in Public Service Award; Rebecca Rubin, founder, president and CEO of Marstel-Day, LLC, to receive the Spirit of Humanity Award; and Ambassador Richard Schifter to receive the Distinguished Humanitarian Award.

"Each honoree here tonight has contributed something unique and special and shares the ideals and principles that our organization was founded on back in 1843," said B'nai B'rith President Gary P. Saltzman.

"The diversity of the honorees and awards we give tonight parallel the diversity of what we do," added Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith executive vice president and CEO. "Each honoree in their own way has given back to the community and is a beacon to others."

Eliot Engel represents New York's 16th Congressional district in the U.S. Congress, where he serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Subcommittee on Health, and the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology. He is the founder and co-chair of the House Oil and National Security Caucus, which is seeking clean, energy-efficient alternatives to America's over-reliance on oil. He also sits on the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, the Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Anti-Semitism, the HIV/AIDS Caucus, the Long Island Sound Caucus and the Animal Protection Caucus, among others.

Upon receiving the Excellence in Public Service Award, Engel remarked that B'nai B'rith is "fight-



U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) receives the B'nai B'rith International Excellence in Public Service Award; presented by B'nai B'rith President Gary P. Saltzman (left) and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin (right).



From left to right: B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin; Rebecca Rubin, recipient of the B'nai B'rith International Spirit of Humanity Award; Ambassador Richard Schifter, recipient of the B'nai B'rith International Distinguished Humanitarian Award; and B'nai B'rith President Gary P. Saltzman.

B'nai B'rith Honors Three as It Celebrates 175 Years

ing against discrimination wherever it rears its ugly head” and that “an organization doesn’t stay 175 years on its looks. It stays on its actions.”

Marstel-Day, LLC is an international environmental consultancy that Rebecca Rubin established in 2002 to provide expertise in the areas of climate, habitat conservation, open space planning, water resource management, resilient infrastructure, energy conservation and sustainability, land use and natural resource conservation issues. Her passion is wilderness, and she maintains a focus on land and water conservation, habitat protection and the delivery of ecological services.

Rubin was named by President Barack Obama as a White House Champion of Change for Community Resilience and currently serves on Virginia’s State Air Pollution Control Board by appointment of the governor. She also serves as chairman of the Board for the National Wildlife Refuge Association, which protects America’s wildlife heritage across 850 million acres and 565 national wildlife refuges in the United States. B’nai B’rith was proud to recognize this leader who does so much to improve the environment now, and to safeguard it. “This award gives me hope,” Rubin said. “It recognizes why we need to keep our covenant with nature.”

Richard Schifter’s distinguished record of service spans decades and is rooted in his deep commitment to serve the United States and advocate for human rights. He arrived in the United States from Austria in 1938 as a teenage refugee. His parents, unable to qualify for a U.S. visa, were murdered in the Holocaust. He joined the U.S. Army in 1943, trained in intelligence work, and returned to Europe — a story told on film in “The Richie Boys.” From 1984 to 2001, Schifter held positions in the U.S. State Department and the National Security Council, including as U.S. Representative



Rebecca Rubin, founder, president and CEO of Marstel-Day, with B’nai B’rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin at the 175th anniversary kick-off event in Washington, D.C., which honored Rubin with the Spirit of Humanity Award.

in the U.N. Human Rights Commission, deputy U.S. Representative in the U.N. Security Council, with the rank of ambassador, assistant secretary of State for

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, and special assistant to the president and counselor on the National Security Council. He is now chairman of the



View a video about him here:

<http://www.bnaibrith.org/ambassador-richard-schifter-story.html>

B'nai B'rith Honors Three as It Celebrates 175 Years

board of directors of the American Jewish International Relations Institute. He is a longtime partner with, and supporter of B'nai B'rith.

Mariaschin thanked the Schifter family for their support: "In recognition of the ambassador's lifelong efforts in support of democracy around the world, the Schifter family has helped B'nai B'rith International establish the Ambassador Richard Schifter Fund for United Nations Reform. We are truly grateful for the very generous lead gift from them that will help us further our work at the United Nations now and into the future."

In accepting his award, Schifter said, "We need to get the United Nations back to what it was founded to do, to maintain peace in the world. ... I believe it is in the interest of the United States and Israel that we deal with the problem posed by the United Nations and we need to deal with it effectively."

The co-chairs for the event were Sherri Goodman, former deputy undersecretary of defense (environmental security) and senior fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; Rick Schifter, partner at TPG Capital and



Ambassador Richard Schifter with U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), House Minority Whip (at left).

the ambassador's son; Adam M. Fried, CEO of Atlantic Builders, Ltd.; and Lee Halterman, partner, general counsel and CFO at Marstel-Day, LLC.

"Beyond the honorees," added Mariaschin, "we also celebrate Israel's 70th anniversary and recognize the vital part a

strong safe and secure Israel plays in our hearts and our lives. It is part of our history that B'nai B'rith was instrumental in the State of Israel's founding." The evening also featured the world premiere of a new video about B'nai B'rith, created especially for its 175th anniversary. 📺

B'nai B'rith International Celebrates 175 Years

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=xYkkU5yWEcI



B'nai B'rith Europe Co-organized a Conference at the European Parliament on International Women's Day

By Felice Caspar and Hanna Kalmenson



Left to right: Nehama Dina Uzan, program director, European Jewish Community Centre; Yael Leibovitz, a human resources consultant; Chani Zisman, an Israeli knowledge development expert; Alfiaz Vaiya, coordinator, European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup; Wajid Khan, member, European Parliament; Manel Mselmi, a reporter for Ecofeminism; Inès Wouters, co-founder of Bodhicharya; and Hanna Kalmenson, director, B'nai B'rith Europe. Photos courtesy of the European Parliament.

In observance of International Women's Day, an annual global event on March 8 that celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, B'nai B'rith Europe (BBE) and the European Jewish Community Centre co-organized a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Hanna Kalmenson, director of BBE, said, "In light of B'nai B'rith values, it was crucial to give a voice to women from different backgrounds to raise awareness at the European Parliament on gender equality and diversity of culture within working environments, to address these topics as a precondition for meeting today's challenges and as a way to instill peaceful evolution in our society."

Jonas Dafner-Markowitz, an intern for BBE and a master's degree student in European public policies, assisted with organizing the conference.

Members of the European Parliament Wajid Khan and Roberta Metsola introduced the theme, "Double-glass ceiling? Experiences of Christian, Jewish, Muslim & Buddhist women — Challenges facing women in patriarchal and secular societies."

To begin the program, Kalmenson spoke on behalf of B'nai B'rith Europe and its members from 25 European countries. She also offered a personal perspective on the conference theme, emphasizing the importance of parity in the workplace. She said, "Equality is giving the same rights to everybody. Equity is giving each person what they



At the Conference, B'nai B'rith Europe Director Hanna Kalmenson spoke.

B'nai B'rith Europe Co-organized a Conference at the European Parliament on International Women's Day

need to be successful. ...Women's equity and diversity of cultures within working environments reinforce business, build bridges between communities and are a way to instill peaceful evolution in today's society."

The program was moderated by Alfiaz Vaiya, the European Parliament's coordinator for the Anti-Racism and Diversity Inter-group. Presenters included Yael Leibovitz, a human resources consultant (and a secular Israeli); Chani Zisman, a knowledge development expert from Israel (and Jewish observant); Manel Mselmi, a reporter for Ecofeminism; Inès Wouters, co-founder of Bodhicharya and an attorney specializing in human rights and religious discrimination; and Nehama Dina Uzan, program director of the European Jewish Community Centre. The speakers expressed their perspectives professionally and as women of different faiths. The conference brought to light different opportunities open to secular and religiously observant women, with concrete examples. Panelists noted the communication challenge between people from different cultural backgrounds and highlighted what needs to be done to end discrimination in the workplace. Wajid Khan reminded everyone that women's rights must be protected, "not only today, but also every single day of the year."



The European Parliament in Brussels was the site of a conference, co-organized by B'nai B'rith Europe, on International Women's Day.

For International Women's Day last year, another innovative program was hosted by B'nai B'rith Canada in Toronto. The Woman Refugee Art Exhibit highlighted the experience of women refugees from around the world, both historical and modern-day, featuring original pieces of art (paintings, drawings, photography and new media).

Attendees met the artists and discussed motifs and themes. They had the opportunity to purchase original pieces of art and socialize. Funds raised at the exhibition and reception supported the human rights advocacy and community care programs of B'nai B'rith Canada.

International Women's Day has been celebrated annually since 1911. With the current strong global momentum striving for gender parity, the theme this year is "Press for Progress." "International Women's Day belongs to all communities everywhere — governments, companies, charities, educational institutions, networks, associations, the media and more," its website says. "Whether through a global conference, community gathering, classroom lesson or dinner table conversation, everyone can play a purposeful part in pressing for gender parity." 🌐



Video clip:

<https://vimeo.com/260962018/5c-9462cd4d>

Lest They Forget: Names of Holocaust Victims Read Aloud Annually

By Felice Caspar



Photo courtesy of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington.

Teens participated in the "Unto Every Person There Is a Name" program at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia in Fairfax, Virginia.

On Yom Hashoah, the program known as "Unto Every Person There Is a Name" provides an opportunity for communities to assemble and remember the victims of the Shoah by reading their names aloud. Since 1989, B'nai B'rith International has been the North American sponsor of this program held each spring under the auspices of the president of Israel on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.

Through its Center for Jewish Identity and its World Center-Jerusalem, B'nai B'rith is honored to work with Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust and its international committee.

As Israel marks a milestone anniversary in 2018, the designated theme was "70 Years of Remembering and Building: Holocaust Survivors and the State of Israel."

"The annals of the Holocaust survivors who made aliyah to Israel are apparently unparalleled in the history of human migration," said Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. "From the

day they reached Israel, the survivors took on two simultaneous missions: shaping and preserving the memory of the Shoah on the one hand, and constructive social action on the other."

The program seeks to educate the public about the Holocaust at a time when few survivors remain to tell the story firsthand. In his letter to the Jewish communities around the world, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin wrote, "By reading out names of our fellow Jews murdered in the Shoah, we can help give them back their human face, their place in our shared Jewish destiny."

B'nai B'rith assists many communities and local organizers to incorporate the "Unto" ceremony into a variety of programs. In suburban Washington, D.C., B'nai B'rith participated in an event on April 8 at the Jewish Community



Photo courtesy of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington.

B'nai B'rith Chesapeake Bay Region President Jerold Jacobs with a reader taking part in the Unto Every Person There Is a Name ceremony, in Fairfax, Virginia, at the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia.

To read the full statements from Rivlin and Shalev, go to:

<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/2018/pdf/letters-reuven-rivlin-avner-shalev.pdf>

Lest They Forget: Names of Holocaust Victims Read Aloud Annually



Photo by Eric Berger, Courtesy of the St. Louis Jewish Light.

An “Unto Every Person There Is a Name” program was held at the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and Learning Center. Diane Maier (left) of the Jewish Community Center read names with students from a Jewish day school and a Christian school.



For their “We Walk to Remember” observances for Yom Hashoah, B’nai B’rith provides materials to Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi). The students distribute flyers and wear stickers that say “Never Forget” during the processions at colleges and universities.

Center of Northern Virginia. Barbara Brenman, past B’nai B’rith Chesapeake Bay region president, organized the name reading, which was led by current region president Jerold Jacobs. Also reading names were Ira Bartfield, chair of the B’nai B’rith Center for Jewish Identity; U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.); Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring; and many state legislators and representatives of other religions.

The program included a discussion of “hate speech and the Holocaust” for teens, an artwork display and an early evening memorial service honoring Holocaust victims and rescuers.

“Seeing the teenagers line up, eager to participate by reading names aloud is so heartening,” Bartfield said. “It is truly a time when l’dor va dor, passing our traditions and our story from generation to generation, is put into action in a way that is meaningful and will be long-lasting.”

In St. Louis, the B’nai B’rith event was held on April 24 in the lobby of the Jewish Federation building, in front of the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and Learning Center. The entire community was invited to participate in the name-reading ceremony. Survivors and their families joined in the reading. Students from Christ Community Lutheran School and the Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School also took part.

As they have for 29 years, volunteers from West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky gathered at B’nai Sholom Congregation in Huntington, West Virginia for the annual Holocaust remembrance ceremony and a worship service on April 15. Displays depicted the Nazi rise to power and their persecution of Jews and others. Between 3,000 and 4,000 names were read aloud during the all-day ceremony, according to a report in the St. Louis Herald-Dispatch.

As Rhonda Love, director of the B’nai B’rith International Center for Jewish Identity, notes, “For many on these lists of victims compiled by Yad Vashem, this is the only time their names will be said aloud as their entire family was murdered or there is no one left to remember them.”

At colleges and universities, B’nai B’rith works with Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi), a Jewish fraternity, to bring awareness about the Holocaust and remember the victims. The “Unto Every Person There Is a Name” program is now on 130 campuses in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. It is held in conjunction with AEPi’s “We Walk to Remember” observance for Yom Hashoah. B’nai B’rith provides informational flyers and stickers that say “Never Forget” that participants wear on black tee shirts during the processions.

Lest They Forget: Names of Holocaust Victims Read Aloud Annually

The program is promoted at AEPi winter conclaves and is included at the B'nai B'rith International outreach/information table at the annual AEPi convention in August. Links to stories published about events at the University of Central Florida, Kent State and the University of Pittsburgh provide an overview.

- **University of Central Florida:**
<http://knightnews.com/2018/04/ucf-fraternity-honors-holocaust-remembrance-day-with-silent-march/>
- **Kent State University:**
http://www.kentwired.com/latest_updates/article_3daf5cf6-3f1e-11e8-8a4f-13d462b2da5e.html
- **University of Pittsburgh:**
<https://pittnews.com/article/130741/news/pitt-honors-holocaust-victims-in-annual-remembrance-walk/>

News coverage of the ceremonies held in St. Louis and West Virginia and of some of the AEPi events cited the findings of a survey commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also known as the Claims Conference. Released on Yom Hashoah, the results show that

many Americans do not have an understanding of the facts of the Holocaust. This underscores how essential it is for such programs to continue.


For example, while 6 million Jews are estimated to have been killed in the Holocaust, 31 percent of all respondents and 41 percent of millennials, aged 18 to 34, believe that number is 2 million or less, according to the survey. Forty-five percent of all respondents could not name a concentration camp or ghetto from World War II. But a majority of Americans recognize that fewer people care about the Holocaust than in the past and believe that a genocide like the Holocaust could occur again.

To read the executive summary of the survey, visit:

<http://www.claimscon.org/study/>

The 30th anniversary of the "Unto Every Person There Is a Name" commemoration is scheduled for May 2, 2019.

To learn more about organizing a program in your community and downloading names to read aloud, visit:

<http://www.bnaibrith.org/unto-every-person.html> 



www.herzogwinecellars.com

Planned Giving

Cy Gruberg: Carrying on the "Papa Joe" Legacy of Helping and Giving

By Ben Simkovich

Cy Gruberg beams whenever he talks about his former students, and it is no surprise that his students love to keep up with him whenever and wherever they can. If they don't bump into him on the street, which happens surprisingly often, they keep in touch through Facebook, email and even the occasional phone call.

Since he first entered the public school system professionally in 1949, Cy has been advising students from New York to Florida as their guidance counselor. During that time, he's helped students navigate social situations, make school choices and choose careers.

Helping others was a trait he learned from watching his father, Joseph, known to everyone as "Papa Joe," who could always be counted on to assist a neighbor in need in their Hudson Valley town of Kingston, New York, in the summer and Weston, Florida, in the winter.

Papa Joe was a self-taught electrician who, as a favor, would repair his friends' and neighbors' broken appliances in his home. "Everyone knew him," says Cy, "and he was always helping." As Papa Joe did the repairs, his wife Sara looked after Cy and his three siblings, Jack, Frieda and Jerry.

An entrepreneur and founder of the Ulster Electric Supply Company, which became the first licensed electrician company in Kingston and grew to become one of the top wholesale electrical suppliers and contractors in the region, Papa Joe cared deeply about his heritage and community.

Before work every morning, Papa Joe would attend services at Ahavath Israel, the local conservative synagogue (that his



Mike Oligmueller, current college counseling director at the University School, Nova Southeastern University (NSU) (at left) and the NSU School's Head of School William Kopas (at right) with Cy Gruberg at the ceremony naming the Counseling Center in his honor. All photos courtesy of Nova Southeastern University.

father had helped establish) and he was a lifetime member of B'nai B'rith. Papa Joe inspired Cy to work hard and adopt a similar approach to life.

Cy graduated from Kingston High School in 1938 and attended Ryder University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, until 1941, when he enlisted in the army. He served in the South Pacific until the end of the war. He returned to finish college and went on to earn a master's degree and a doctorate in philosophy. He continued his education at Teachers



Cy Gruberg cuts the ribbon at the naming ceremony for the Dr. Cy Gruberg Center for Guidance and Counseling at the University School at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Cy Gruberg: Carrying on the “Papa Joe” Legacy of Helping and Giving

College, Columbia University and New York University.

For 35 years, from 1949 through 1984, Cy was a guidance counselor and director of guidance in Nassau and Westchester counties. He then moved to Florida to become the director of college counseling at the University School, Nova Southeastern University, in Fort Lauderdale. In 2000, he became a private counseling consultant. In March, the University School, Nova Southeastern University renamed the guidance center after him. It is now “The Dr. Cy Gruberg Center for Guidance and College Counseling.”


Though he spends winters in Florida, his Upstate New York connection remains. Every summer he returns to his childhood

home in Kingston and continues to give back to his community. The Jewish Federation of Ulster County, New York, gives the Dr. Cy Gruberg Award to promising high school students, and a deserving graduate of his high school in Kingston may receive a Dr. Cy Gruberg scholarship.

Like his father, Cy is a community leader and dedicated supporter of B'nai B'rith. For many years, Cy regularly attended lodge meetings on Sunday mornings. Cy remembers reading his father's B'nai B'rith magazines when he was younger, and now, as a lifelong member, Cy receives and reads his own.

Along with his annual membership and participation, Cy has listed B'nai B'rith as a beneficiary in his will and has established

a number of charitable gift annuities. “The concept of legacy has always been strong for me,” Cy says. “My dad enjoyed his years with B'nai B'rith and I can say that I did, too. These gifts are a strong way of honoring my father's memory and creating a legacy in the Gruberg name. Father cared deeply about helping others and loved the State of Israel.”

Planned gifts, like the one Cy has designated for B'nai B'rith, can affect generations — as has the advice he imparted to his students. He made it his mission to listen to them and offer guidance on their educational and personal concerns, often with lasting impacts on their families, friends and futures. A legacy gift to B'nai B'rith can do the same. 

Author's Note:

To really know someone, I feel it's best to meet them face to face for a conversation, and I'm happy Cy and I have found time over the years to simply sit, relax and talk. It was from those conversations that I truly got a sense of how much Cy cares about others and makes it his mission to enhance the lives of everyone around him.

In fact, Cy's perspective on life and his career has always reminded me of the famous Jewish philosopher and teacher, Maimonides, and his concept of tzedakah (charity): Tzedakah can mean giving money directly to someone in need, but also helping someone become self-sufficient. In today's world that may translate to an interest-free loan, or helping others start their business, or, in Cy's case, career guidance and counseling. This approach to charity can also be found in the great Chinese Philosopher Lao-Tzu's proverb, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Cy teaches others to fish, and between guiding thousands of students and establishing planned gifts, Cy has built a legacy of helping others. A legacy that would have made Papa Joe proud.

Ben Simkovich is Assistant Director of Planned Giving, B'nai B'rith International.

[Click here to find out how you can leave a legacy with B'nai B'rith.](http://www.bnaibrith.org/planned-giving--endowments.html)

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About Seniors

A Zombie Apocalypse? I Guess I'm Covered.

By Mark D. Olshan

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

There's a popular TV ad campaign these days for a home warranty. A policy holder says, "I'd like to file a claim. My central air stopped working and needs to be replaced."

"Oh, sorry," the agent explains, "your homeowner's insurance policy doesn't cover air conditioners." However, the agent goes on to say: "Earthquakes, volcanoes or a zombie apocalypse — no problem."

Now, clearly, there's something wrong with the concept of selling an insurance product that would only be effective if you're involved in an episode of "The Walking Dead."

But, that's exactly what the administration means when it comes to the continued dissolution and breaking apart of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). While numerous attempts to "Repeal and Replace" the ACA have failed, there has been a consistent and relentless attempt to gut the spirit of the law and its most important reforms, so that it eventually just fails of its own weight.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently proposed regulations that would permit the sale and purchase of "short-term" insurance plans good for up to 364 days. These were also available under the ACA, but only for a shorter, three-month period. They were considered to be "catastrophic" plans, offering skimpy benefits that appealed to mostly young and healthy people generally between jobs or students taking a semester off from school.

They were developed with specific types of individuals in mind and helped people who became uninsured maintain some coverage until they could enroll in a new long-term plan.



Photo source: Wikimedia Commons

Some short-term insurance plans are sometimes referred to as "buffalo plans," a nickname they acquired because they don't cover you unless — you guessed it — you were run over by a herd of buffalo.

They don't have to be issued to persons with pre-existing conditions. Nor do they have to cover essential health benefits and preventive services as do ACA-compliant plans. You may have to pay a premium, yet not be covered for prescription drugs or cancer treatments. Under the ACA, most insurance plans have to spend 80 percent of the premiums they collect on treatment and associated costs. These short-term plans do not.

They are also sometimes referred to as "buffalo plans," a nickname they acquired because they don't cover you unless — you guessed it — you were run over by a herd of buffalo.

These lightly regulated, short-term plans

are generally much less expensive than ACA-compliant ones. But, the reason they are so inexpensive is that the overall coverage is far less comprehensive. Yet, that is not always apparent when they are being sold. If they become automatically renewable to last up to one year, more people will have bad coverage without realizing how vulnerable they are. Meanwhile, premiums in the comprehensive insurance market will continue to rise because healthier risk takers will choose the low-cost, low-coverage option.

Overall, the system will suffer. In general, premiums will be higher for most people, and many who choose this low-cost option and face significant health problems will also face catastrophic financial losses.

A Zombie Apocalypse? I Guess I'm Covered.

Not surprisingly, there are carriers more interested in gaining your premiums than providing the services you think are offered. Unfortunately, the research is replete with examples of “scams,” “bait and switch” policies, “predatory” sales practices and the like, and, of course, always at the consumer’s expense. In some of the more egregious cases involving these plans, insurers have even pulled coverage immediately after a cancer diagnosis or heart attack, leaving people without access to needed medical care, while, at the same time, facing enormous medical bills.

To make this even more unsettling, insurers are allowed to “medically underwrite” these short-term plans. This allows them to charge sick people, older people and women even higher premiums, or refuse to sell plans to those they might deem potentially more expensive.

Even if one were able to purchase one of these “buffalo” plans and then fall sick, the insurer could provide the needed coverage for the moment but might decline to renew the plan once the three-month period expires. At that point, a sick patient would become uninsured at the very moment they most need the coverage. And, they would remain uninsured until the next individual-market open enrollment period, which could be as long as nine months away.

I am not saying that these types of plans are new. They existed before the ACA. But, by restricting their use for only a limited period of time, and for the very specific types of situations mentioned earlier, they had a certain value in the total insurance landscape.

However, this type of insurance policy shouldn’t be allowed to become the “norm.” It’s bad for the system, it’s bad for high-risk people and it’s bad for the gamblers who choose this coverage and lose — as we know many will.

Yet, not surprisingly, these plans remain popular. The prospect of being able to “afford” insurance is attractive, especially to those with modest incomes who don’t qualify, or often don’t know they qualify for subsidies to purchase much better coverage through the ACA. The increased availability of these plans will siphon off some young

and healthy people from the more regulated and comprehensive ACA exchanges and further destabilize the individual insurance markets. A greater number of older insureds will cause premiums to spike, causing both younger and more healthier people to leave, driving up costs even higher. Thus, the cycle continues...

Idaho recently decided to encourage insurers to offer long-term health coverage lacking many of the benefits currently required by law, according to *The Washington Post*. These could include maternity care (arguably not needed for a single 55-year-old male) or certain coverage for pre-existing conditions — critical for any coverage, regardless of age or gender.

How do they expect to be able to provide these “buffalo” plans? They plan to simply define them as “short-term” health plans, and allow them to be “renewed” from year to year.

Currently, under Idaho’s rules, insurers that sell at least one health plan that complies with ACA guidelines may offer other plans that do not comply. Older consumers can be charged higher premiums than allowed under the ACA and pay more for prescription drug coverage. Further, if an individual was “uninsured for a period of 63 days” prior to obtaining this coverage, the insurer may not cover costs associated with any pre-existing medical condition.

I’ve traveled through Idaho on various occasions. I even camped along the Elk River back in the day. But, I cannot remember ever seeing any herds of buffalo roaming freely — although I did encounter one while driving my VW beetle in Custer State Park. They are really, really big!

Maybe I should be thankful for this: It now appears that I can purchase a health insurance plan that will protect me in the unlikely event that I am run over by a buffalo — or face a zombie apocalypse. At least I’d be covered. ☐

Mark D. Olshan, who holds a doctorate in psychology, is the Director of the B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services as well as Associate Executive Vice President of B'nai B'rith International.

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