

# B'NAI B'RITH

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## Jewish Genetics: To Test Or Not To Test? That Is The Question — And The Answer

*By Rita Rubin*

**H**ila David always knew she wanted a big family. Five kids would be perfect.

But when things started getting serious with her boyfriend, Jon Creme, he decided it was time to discuss something that might derail her dream.

Creme's 22-year-old half-brother, Shaul, had died in 2002 of cystic fibrosis, the most common fatal inherited disease in the United States. Cystic fibrosis is a recessive genetic disorder, which means that people with the disease must have inherited two copies of the mutated gene that causes it, one from each parent.

Like Shaul Creme's parents, about one in every 31 Americans — or more than 10 million individuals — carry one normal copy of the cystic fibrosis gene and one mutated copy. Carriers don't have symptoms and might never know their status unless they conceive a child with another carrier. There is a 1 in 4 chance with each pregnancy that the child of two carriers will inherit the mutated gene from both parents, as Shaul Creme did.

But screening, using either saliva or blood, can reveal whether healthy individuals carry any of hundreds of recessive genetic diseases, some of which are more common among Ashkenazi or Sephardic Jews than in other population groups. One of these diseases, familial dysautonomia, is seen



almost exclusively in Ashkenazi Jews, while others, such as cystic fibrosis, are almost as common in many other ethnic groups as they are in Ashkenazi Jews.

An estimated 1 in 5 to 1 in 4 Ashkenazi Jews carry at least one of the Jewish genetic diseases. Couples who learn before they

get pregnant that they both carry the same genetic disorder can take steps to ensure that their children do not inherit it. They might choose to adopt or use a sperm or egg donor. Or they could opt for in vitro fertilization with pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, in which embryos are analyzed

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Photo by Hannah Broder

Mitchell Eisenberg, 30, and Gabrielle Schechter, 29, complete consent forms for JScreen carrier testing at Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, D.C. The couple is planning a September wedding.

genetically, and then only those with one or no copy of the mutation are transferred to the mother's womb.

Without pre-conception carrier screening, expectant couples wouldn't learn that they carry the same disease unless late testing, such as amniocentesis, showed their fetus had a recessive genetic disorder. At that point, the only way they could avoid giving birth to an affected child would be to end the pregnancy.

"Doing genetic testing does not obligate you to do anything you're not comfortable with," beyond getting the results, Dr. Evelyn Karson, a Bethesda, Maryland, obstetrician-gynecologist and geneticist, said at a recent program on the subject at Adas Israel

Congregation in Washington, D.C. That means a couple once informed they are at risk may decide to take their chances and conceive naturally or use a donor egg or sperm or adopt.

### Clergy in Agreement

Associations of rabbis and cantors all support the need to educate couples planning marriage to get carrier screening for Jewish genetic diseases.

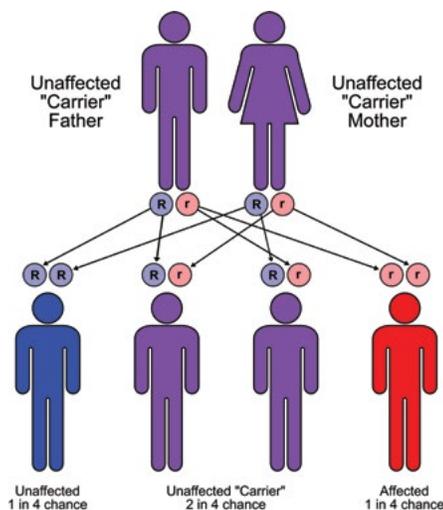
"You call the caterer, you call the band, and you call the Victor Center," says genetics counselor Deborah Wasserman of the Victor Center for the Prevention of Jewish Genetic Diseases, a nonprofit based at Miami's Nicklaus Children's Hospital.



Photos by Hannah Broder

Hillary Kener of JScreen points out the amount of saliva that must be deposited into the collection tube for carrier testing.

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Hillary Kener, assistant director of outreach and marketing for the nonprofit JScreen, based at Atlanta's Emory University, echoes Wasserman, "It's becoming something that people add to their wedding checklist: You get a chuppah, you get JScreen," Kener says. Both the Victor Center and JScreen, for which Karson serves as a consultant, offer screening and genetic counseling to Jews and their non-Jewish partners nationwide. The nonprofits were founded by parents who had children with devastating recessive genetic diseases.

Reform Rabbi Peter Kasdan, an advisor for the Jewish Genetic Disease Consortium, works closely with both organizations. For years, he has required all couples who want him to officiate at their wedding to get screened and show him the results. He even arranges their screening.

"A lot of rabbis now do what I do," says Kasdan, who retired from Temple Emanu-El in Livingston, New Jersey, and now lives in Longboat Key, Florida. "We all recommend pre-conception testing, not post-conception testing, because that's where you get involved in real moral issues."

Back in 1975, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), which represents Reform rabbis, called upon its members to educate couples contem-

Familial Dysautonomia is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern, depicted here. Parents each carry one copy of the mutated gene but typically do not show signs and symptoms of the condition.

plating marriage about premarital carrier screening for Tay-Sachs disease. Since then, the Conference has continued to urge rabbis and cantors to educate congregants about screening, and the number of genetic diseases for which screening is available has grown.

"I take this very, very seriously," Kasdan says. "Over the years, I buried eight of my students who died of one of these diseases."

Like Kasdan, Conservative Rabbi Bill Lebeau, senior consultant for rabbinic and institutional leadership for the Rabbinical Assembly, has advocated preconception carrier screening since the 1970s.

The issue turned personal for Lebeau 20 years ago, when his grandson Ezra was born with familial dysautonomia, three years before the advent of preconception and prenatal testing for the disorder. This

disease affects the sensory nervous system, which controls such activities as taste and pain perception, and the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary actions such as digestion, breathing and the regulation of blood pressure and body temperature.

For his entire life, Ezra has received nutrition through a feeding tube because he can't swallow properly. His lungs are deteriorating, so he must be tethered constantly to a large oxygen tank, which means he can't walk long distances. After Ezra was born, Lebeau, former dean of the Rabbinical School at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, stopped traveling on weekends so that he and his wife could give their daughter and son-in-law a break in caring for their son.

The birth of children with a genetic disease has implications not only for their immediate family but also their extended family. When carrier screening became possible, Lebeau's four other children were tested. Against the odds, none of them was found to be a carrier. Prenatal screening



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Rabbi Josef Ekstein of New York, who founded Dor Yeshorim in 1983, after four of his children died of Tay-Sachs.

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showed that Ezra's now 15-year-old sister was unaffected by it.

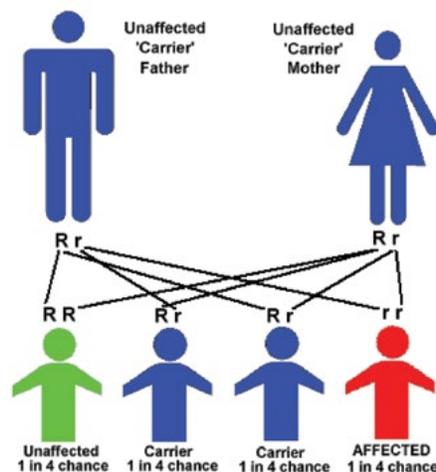
"Once you have testing, then you're in control, and I don't see a downside for any couple," Lebeau says.

Anyone who thinks carrier screening smacks of eugenics would be sadly mistaken, Kasdan says. "It's not a question of creating a perfect child. I'm not a proponent of parents being able to pick out the color of the child's eyes or whether the child will be an athlete."

The oldest and largest carrier screening organization focusing on Jewish genetic diseases is Dor Yeshorim, founded in 1983 by Orthodox Rabbi Josef Ekstein of New York after four of his children died of Tay-Sachs. "I am a Holocaust survivor. I was born in the middle of the Second World War. I hope that I am not a suspect for practicing eugenics," Ekstein told the Associated Press in 2010. "We are trying to have healthy children."

Dor Yeshorim, according to its website, annually screens more than 25,000 "young adults of marriageable age" through private appointments and mass screenings at Jewish schools in the United States, Israel and nine other countries, its approach differs from the Victor Center or JScreen. Dor Yeshorim screens for up to 19 genetic diseases that are more common in the Ashkenazi population and for up to 17 diseases that are more common in the Sephardic/Mizrahi population. (Several diseases, such as cystic fibrosis and Tay-Sachs, are on both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic/Mizrahi screening panels). JScreen and the Victor Center, on the other hand, screen for more than 200 genetic diseases.

But the biggest difference between Dor Yeshorim and JScreen and the other two screening organizations is that it does not disclose detailed screening results. Clients, many of whom are ultra-Orthodox young people working with a shadchan, or matchmaker, are given a unique ID number. When they are considering marriage, they



Tay-Sachs disease is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern.

call Dor Yeshorim's automated hotline and enter their ID number and that of their prospective spouse. Within a few business hours, a Dor Yeshorim representative will call to say whether they are compatible, meaning they don't carry the same genetic disease, if any, or incompatible, meaning they both carry a gene for the same disorder. Counseling is provided for incompatible couples.

Tay-Sachs was the first Jewish genetic disease for which screening became possible. "Tay-Sachs really got people thinking about how families could be more proactive in understanding what their risks are," says Jennifer McCafferty, director of the Nicklaus Children's Hospital Research Institute in Miami, home of the Victor Center. "Our message is that information is powerful and empowering."

There is no treatment for Tay-Sachs, a progressive neurological disorder. Symptoms of the most common form appear at three to six months of age. As the disease progresses, children experience seizures, loss of eyesight and hearing, intellectual disability and paralysis. Those with this severe form of Tay-Sachs usually don't live beyond early childhood.

About one in every 250 people in the general population is a Tay-Sachs carrier. But among Ashkenazi Jews, French Canadians and Louisiana Cajuns, roughly one out of every 27 people carries the disease, according to the National Tay-Sachs and Allied Diseases Association (NTSAD).

Before carrier screening for Tay-Sachs began in the early 1970s, more than 100 Ashkenazi children were diagnosed with the disease in the United States every year, NTSAD Executive Director Susan Kahn says. Today, at most only a handful of children are diagnosed annually with Tay-Sachs in the U.S. Ashkenazi community, thanks to preconception testing.

To reach as many people as possible, the Victor Center and JScreen conduct educational and screening programs at Jewish community centers, synagogues, Hillels and Chabad houses. In just three days in 2016, the Victor Center screened 1,200 individuals at Yeshiva University in New York, says Wasserman.

And in January, JScreen announced it is entering into a partnership with Honeymoon Israel, which provides group trips to Israel for couples with at least one Jewish partner. Honeymoon Israel couples will receive a coupon code to help subsidize the cost of screening by JScreen, which they can use before or after their trip.

### Carrier Screening Is Vital

Four out of every five babies with a genetic disease are born to parents with no known family history of it, according to JScreen.

But it was not yet available when Shaul Creme was born. Before the now 31-year-old web developer Jon Creme had even met Hila David, his brother's illness spurred him to order a test kit from 23andMe, a direct-to-consumer genetic testing company. He spit into a tube and mailed it back to the Mountain View, California, company for analysis.

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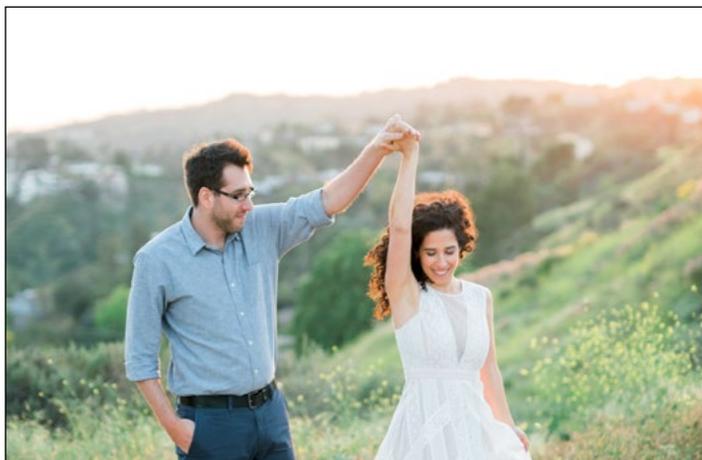


Photo by Anya Kernes Photography

Hila David and Jon Creme.



Photo credit: Fred Marcus Studio.

Paige Aufseeser and Alan Guy.

They weren't yet engaged, but Creme already knew that he and David, who met in Tel Aviv as interns after they graduated college, might want to have children someday. That is why he felt the need to tell her that his 23andMe test revealed that he was indeed a cystic fibrosis carrier, which could present a problem if she, too, carried a genetic mutation for the disease.

"We sort of had this moment of panic," recalls David, who turns 29 in April and works in human resources for the TOMS shoe company.

She decided against testing with 23andMe, because it did not offer genetic counseling with the results. A friend recommended JScreen, and one of its genetic counselors reviewed Creme's 23andMe results and felt it wasn't necessary to confirm them with more testing. David was then screened by JScreen, which provided her with the answer she had hoped for: She is not a cystic fibrosis carrier, so none of those longed-for five children could be affected by the disease.

"JScreen made it such a smooth process," said David, who became engaged to Creme in October 2016, shortly after receiving her results. They wed in February and live in Southern California.

Carrier screening put Paige Aufseeser and Alan Guy on an unexpected path.

By their second wedding anniversary, in June 2017, the New Jersey couple began to talk about starting their family in the fall. They're both Ashkenazi, and they're both health professionals — she's an audiologist, he's a sports medicine physician — so they knew that they should be screened to see if they carried any Jewish genetic diseases.

"We weren't ever really thinking it would come back and there would be an issue," says 30-year-old Aufseeser.

But testing through her ob-gyn revealed they both carried a genetic mutation for Gaucher disease, a metabolic disorder of which there are multiple types. Symptoms of Type 1, the most common type, might not appear until adulthood and can range from mild to severe. But individuals with Type 2 can experience life-threatening problems at an early age.

"That kind of threw us into the world of in vitro fertilization, which we didn't know anything about," Aufseeser says.

Testing showed that three of their embryos didn't carry even one copy of the genetic mutation for Gaucher, let alone two. In June, one of them was transferred to Aufseeser's uterus, but it developed into an

ectopic pregnancy, in which a fertilized egg implants outside the womb, usually, as in Aufseeser's case, in a fallopian tube. Ectopic pregnancies don't develop normally and must be removed.

The two other embryos that had no genetic mutation for Gaucher were less likely to result in a pregnancy because, overall, they were of poorer quality than other embryos that carried one mutation. So in September, one of the better-quality embryos with a single mutation for Gaucher was transferred to Aufseeser's



View Paige Aufseeser and Alan Guy's pregnancy announcement video.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=SUjo8F-S1X4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=SUjo8F-S1X4)

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uterus, and she became pregnant. The couple's child will be a Gaucher carrier, like his or her parents. Aufseeser has dealt with morning sickness but, she says, "I worked hard to get the morning sickness, so I'm not complaining."

While progress is being made, too many Jews remain unaware of the value of carrier screening for genetic diseases, says Lois Victor.

After the death of her second daughter from familial dysautonomia, Lois Victor decided to make it her life's work to prevent other Jewish parents from dealing with a similar tragedy. Her daughters, Debbie and Linda, were born in the 1960s, long before

the advent of carrier screening or prenatal testing for this disease.

Debbie lived to age 8, but Linda, who wasn't as severely affected, lived to age 35. After Linda's death, "I started thinking: What could I do to help others?" says Victor, who lives in Boca Raton, Florida. And thus, the Victor Center was born in 2002. As its founder, she serves on the Center's National Advisory Committee.

She tells of a good friend whose great-grandchild was born recently with a Jewish genetic disease to parents who had not been screened. Victor says her friend never told her grandchild about the need for carrier screening. "How can this happen

to a friend of mine?"

The worst part, Victor says, is that "all of these diseases are preventable with one simple test. My feeling is we can't rest until all Jewish children are born free from these diseases."

Resource for our readers:  
The Jewish Genetic Disease Consortium

For further reading:  
Summer, 2016 B'nai B'rith Magazine  
Genetic Testing and the Negev Bedouins,  
by Michele Chabin

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## Editor's Note

In this our spring issue, we examine the growing use of genetic testing among Jewish couples contemplating marriage and parenthood. This move towards prenatal transparency, accepted in all branches of Judaism, allows couples to learn whether or not both partners carry a gene liable to result in inherited diseases or congenital conditions — and then to make informed decisions on how or whether to proceed. These are literally existential questions involving issues of science, ethics and religion.

We also bring you “Shaloha” greetings from Hawaii, where a small but vibrant and diverse Jewish community celebrates traditional Jewish holidays in sometimes untraditional ways. From there, we range across the globe to Paris, where two museums focusing on Jewish art, history and culture draw tourists to the Marais district, a formerly Jewish quarter.

Then, it's on to the Jewish State of Israel, where tattoos, despite halachic prohibitions, are trending, particularly in secular Tel Aviv but also in Jerusalem.

Our Vault column recalls a surprising friendship between Boys Town's founder Father Edward Flanagan and B'nai B'rith leader and philanthropist Henry Monsky. We also feature two children's books with inspiring stories of Holocaust survival. Finally, our regular columnists offer food for thought on the new tax law, the senior housing shortage and B'nai B'rith archives preserved and showcased in Cincinnati. It's quite a varied menu to whet your reading appetite! 🍷

-- Eugene L. Meyer

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## From the Vault

# Monsky and Flanagan: Boys Town's Not So Odd Couple

By Cheryl Kempler

**B**efore completing his Oscar-winning script for the MGM classic “Boys Town,” in December 1937, writer and future B’nai B’rith leader Dore Schary traveled to Omaha, Nebraska to meet Father Edward Flanagan, the founder of the nationally known facility for orphaned and abandoned children.

When Schary asked why he had specifically requested a Jew to tell his story, Flanagan replied: “How do you think this place was built? Because a Jewish man understood what I was doing and gave me money.” The man whose action inspired Flanagan to make this unusual request was B’nai B’rith President Henry Monsky, an Omaha attorney.

When Boys Town began in 1917, the interfaith relationship of the two men was unusual. Dedicated social reformers, Monsky and Flanagan, who ran a men’s shelter, both cared about the disenfranchised. When the priest located suitable housing for homeless boys, Monsky anonymously fronted the first month’s rent. Admitting all races and religions, Boys Town expanded, while Monsky actively served on its board and acted as his friend’s confidant and pro bono lawyer. Both men worked with national charities that helped the poor.

Schary took care to underscore the positive impact of Boys Town’s multi-ethnic character and its governance, for which the boys were responsible. Spencer Tracy received an Oscar for his screen portrayal of Flanagan, driven and defiant, with an unswerving commitment to his emotionally scarred charges. As pawnbroker Dave Morris — a character who represented Monsky, but fictionalized at his behest, the versatile



Father Edward Flanagan (as played by Spencer Tracy, left) and his friend, Dave Morris (as played by Henry Hull), on screen in “Boys Town.”

Henry Hull delivered a solid performance as a man who doubts the efficacy of his friend’s cause but helps him anyway.

Mickey Rooney, at the height of his popularity, was featured as a delinquent teen reformed by Flanagan and Boys Town. A guest at the family’s Omaha premiere, Rooney was remembered by Daisy Monsky, Henry’s second wife. She wrote that at the screening, Rooney was over-the-top, loudly sobbing and honking during the sad parts. Then she realized that Henry was doing the same. ☑



The real friends, Father Edward Flanagan and B’nai B’rith’s Henry Monsky, congratulate Boys Town graduates.

## For Jews in Hawaii, It's "Shaloha"

By Maayan Hoffman

Every Passover on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, some 250 Jews — a mix of Caucasian, Asian, native Hawaiian and everything in between — come together to break matzah at a Seder sponsored by Chabad.

"Here in Hawaii we have a blending of all kinds of people, and we all get along," says Marcia Klompus, a Seder attendee who moved to Hawaii in the mid-1980s.

Then, on Rosh Hashanah, the Jews of Hawaii head to Magic Island, a small man-made peninsula in Honolulu, with its deep green waters and tall-trunked palm trees, for Tashlich, a customary Jewish atonement ritual performed during the High Holy Days.

Participants cast their sins into the water and then change into their swimsuits, go down to the beach and spend the afternoon together until sundown.

It's called living "shaloha," a play on the Hebrew word shalom and Hawaiian word aloha. Shalom and aloha mean hello and goodbye. And just as shalom serves as an expression of peace, aloha is a moral code, an expression of love and connection to nature.

It can be difficult to comprehend how a single word like shaloha can have so many meanings. But to the Jewish community of Hawaii, the complex concept is perfectly comprehensible — even conventional — and in line with the welcoming ethos that keeps visitors from all walks of life coming to this archipelago of islands that comprise the state of Hawaii.

Chabad Rebbetzin Pearl Krasnjansky jokes that when she first moved to Hawaii 30 years ago and was asked her origins, she'd say, "pure Jewish," incomprehensible to many Hawaiians.



Wedding photos courtesy of Larry Steinberg

**TOP:** Larry Steinberg and Diane Farkas were married at Velzyland Beach on the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii in December 2009.

**BOTTOM:** Larry Steinberg and his bride, Diane Farkas



## For Jews in Hawaii, It's "Shaloha"

Split identities are embraced on the island. Someone can identify as a surfer and Jew, another as a father and Jew, and another as Chinese and Jew, says Justin Levinson, a third-generation Hawaiian, whose grandfather helped found Temple Emanu-El, the largest and oldest synagogue, on the island of Oahu.

"We're long past asking why or how people appreciate the Jewishness in their lives," explains Levinson. "We understand that there are so many things going on in people's lives, and in Hawaii we allow them to take all those things and make them a part of their Jewish lives."

There's tai chi in the temple on Wednesdays and Hebrew school on Sundays. Chabad Rebbetzin Pearl Krasnjansky jokes that when she first moved to Hawaii 30 years ago and was asked her origins, she'd say, "pure Jewish," incomprehensible to many Hawaiians.

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Archivist Larry Steinberg got married to his high school sweetheart under a chuppah in an area of land held in trust for native Hawaiians by the state of Hawaii. A fourth of the guests were Mormon, another fourth native Hawaiian, and the rest were Jews from the East Coast and temple members. The ice chest was stacked with lox and Kona beer.

### Jewish Roots in Hawaii

The first mention of Jews in connection to Hawaii was in 1798, when, according to synagogue archives, a sailor on the whaling ship Neptune recorded in the ship's log that Hawaii's king came aboard with a "Jew cook."

Jewish merchants and businessmen arrived between 1850 and 1900 to work in the sugar and coffee and retail clothing industries. Paul Neumann, a Jew, was appointed King Kalakaua's attorney general. The king studied Hebrew and the Bible with Jewish scholar and businessman Elias Rosenberg.

The first Jewish congregation was established in 1901, and the Hebrew Burial Association in 1902. Though the synagogue closed in 1907, the community continued holding High Holiday services for several decades in family homes, until, in 1938, 35 families founded a new synagogue. The congregation, which also served as the local JCC, formally became Temple Emanu-El in 1950.

The congregation was given King Kalakaua's Torah, which can still be seen in the synagogue's chapel. When it moved into its present building in 1959, a representative of Princess Abigail Kawananakoa donated the original sterling silver 1886 yad (Torah pointer) that had come to the islands with

the Kalakaua Torah around a century earlier.

Temple Emanu-El's first permanent rabbi was Francis Hevesi, former chief rabbi of Hungary.

Over the years, several other synagogues have opened on the island. The U.S. Navy established the Aloha Jewish Chapel at Pearl Harbor, staffed by Navy chaplains, for military servicemen in 1950. Congregation Sof Ma'arav, a Conservative, egalitarian congregation, was started in 1971.

Chabad couple Pearl and Rabbi Itchel Krasnjansky arrived in 1987. They moved into their permanent location, adjacent to the popular Ala Moana Hotel on Oahu, in 2010.

In 2012, Emanu-El lost 60 of its 230 member-families over controversial synagogue politics. The rabbi was let go and a new board was elected. The breakoff community formed Oahu Jewish 'Ohana, a second Reform service.

Deborah Washofsky, who first moved to Hawaii in the 1970s, says that at its height, the Jewish community had an active B'nai B'rith unit, thriving sisterhood, educational programs and Jewish Federation. Her husband Mike headed the federation, which closed in 1998, and its Jewish Community Services incorporated as a nonprofit agency to support local Jewish social service needs.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Temple Emanu-El, Honolulu.

## For Jews in Hawaii, It's "Shaloha"

"Most of the people involved in the early days are dead," says Washofsky, while others assimilated into aloha life.

"People come to Hawaii to get away from whatever pressures they had on the mainland," says Klompus. "They want to get away from everything, including religion. We have a lot of Jews unaffiliated with any shul or temple."

There is no official report about the number of Jews who live in Hawaii, which became a state in 1959. Krasnjansky says the number 15,000 is often mentioned, and she assumes at least 80 percent of them live on Oahu, "the Manhattan of Hawaii."

### Building Jewish Unity in "Gan Eden"

In 2012, Emanu-El hired Rabbi Ken Aronowitz, a certified cantor who completed his Reform rabbinical degree online, to lead the temple, and, according to Washofsky, "The congregation is alive again."

Aronowitz left a magazine advertising job in Manhattan in search of spirituality in the mid-1990s. He planned on traveling to the Far East to learn ancient healing arts, but, in 1997, "I got stuck in Hawaii."

On his way to Asia, he stopped on the island of Hawaii, also known as the "Big Island," where he met his wife. They adopted two children and he started odd jobs within the Jewish community. When he assumed the role of spiritual leader at Emanu-El, he says he "realized at that moment why I was here."

Aronowitz focuses on unifying the diverse community. A few years ago, he stopped charging for High Holiday tickets. Last year, close to 400 people came to Rosh Hashanah services.

"I see Rosh Hashanah as a universal holiday," says Aronowitz. "Everyone is called on to account for his actions or inactions before God, and we have a choir made up overwhelmingly of non-Jews who love the music and message — it's wonderful and inclusive."

On an average Friday night, there can be 100 participants.

"We debate, but ultimately we're all part of the Jewish community and Jewish people," he says.

Though Hawaii is not home to a large congregation and lacks some of the basic infrastructure available in more established communities, such as a university Jewish studies program or easy access to Jewish scholars, Aronowitz embraces what he has.

"I get chicken skin when I watch my congregation working together," he says. In Hawaiian, chicken skin is goose bumps.

He visits the sick and handles all the community's life cycle events, including weddings, divorces and conversions.

"I try to embrace those wonderful moments and not be too concerned about numbers," Aronowitz says.

The Chabad Krasnjanskys serve mostly tourists and Israeli expats. They host a community Passover Seder for about 250 people and Yom Kippur services for close to 300. The couple has 10 children; two of them run their own Chabads on Maui and Kona islands.



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

King Kalakaua's Torah and yad on display at Temple Emanu-El, Honolulu.



Source: Center for Jewish History/Wikimedia Commons

Sukkot services held at Pearl Harbor with more than 35 children in attendance, Sept. 28, 1956.

"This place is Gan Eden," says Pearl Krasnjansky, using the Hebrew word for garden.

But she says that when she and her husband arrived, it was major culture shock. "It's America, but it's very, very different," she says.

She described Hawaii not only as secular but anti-religion. It is also remote, and in the early years before cellular phones and Internet, she felt as if she "fell off the planet." Yet, "Baruch Hashem," she adds, "we've lasted and outlasted the predictions of the naysayers."

Chabad provides a ritual bath, mohel, mezuzot and a place to say

## For Jews in Hawaii, It's "Shaloha"



Photo by Maayan Hoffman

The author's view from a kayak at the Polynesian Cultural Center on Oahu.



Photo by Maayan Hoffman

Left to right: Talia Assyag, El Ad Assyag and Nadav Assyag.

the mourner's prayer. All the Krasnjansky children are still observant, and while other Hawaiians sport bathing suits and flowers in their hair, Krasnjansky maintains her modest dress.

The majority of Chabad's network is Israeli. There are three kinds of Israelis in Hawaii — those in their 20s and 30s who come to open kiosks in the Ala Moana Center shopping mall on Oahu and make money; those a little younger who come to work for kiosk owners; and older Israelis who came to surf Hawaiian waves 30 years ago and stayed.

### Hebrew Spoken Here

Ala Moana Center is the largest shopping mall in Hawaii, with high ceilings and large chain stores. Down every brightly lit corridor is a series of kiosks from which emanate a chorus of Hebrew chatter. Some Israelis are willing to stop and speak, and others are shy about their ancestry. They all seem to know each other.

Nadav Assyag, 29, from Nahariya, moved to Hawaii six years ago and opened a cellular phone accessory stand with his brother, El Ad, and his brother's wife, Talia. He is married to Orelle, and they live on the island with their dog, Nala.

"We're living the dream," says Assyag.

"The weather's amazing all year. The beach is beautiful, the people are warm, and we're making lots of money."

He first visited Hawaii on a surfing trip. He says he fell in love with the Hawaiian Islands and knew he would eventually live there. He is saving now and sending money back home.

"The best thing in Hawaii is everyone's on vacation," Assyag says. "People come to relax, to leave their problems at home. They love to tell their stories and talk and laugh about their problems at home."

Assyag says customers come to spend \$30 on a pair of headphones, but sometimes spend up to \$300 before the sale is over. "That's the business," he says.

Yet his life is not all work. He has made loads of friends from all over the world. One of his best friends is from Lebanon. "In Hawaii there are no boundaries, no judgment," says Assyag. "There's no racism — just good vibes."

### The Price for Paradise

Still, it is not an easy life for all. Krasnjansky says many come to the island and get swept away by its beauty but then leave for economic, emotional or religious reasons.

Hawaii has one of the highest costs of living in the United States. An average one-bed-

room apartment can cost \$2,000 a month.

"Most couples have more than one job each to make it here," says Klompus. "It's the price you pay for paradise."

In addition, many people get island fever, the feeling that they are disconnected from the outside world, says Krasnjansky.

Finally, for people of any religion, Hawaii can be a challenging place. Those who want more religious infrastructure quickly move away. "There are very few people I know today who were here 30 years ago," says Krasnjansky.

For those who do stick it out, however, "Hawaii is a magical place," says Klompus.

Actress Roseanne Barr, a pro-Israel activist, lives on a 50-acre macadamia nut farm. Former U.S. President Barack Obama, who grew up in Hawaii, spends some of his holidays in a home rented from the Jewish Weinberg family.

Recently, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro vacationed in Hawaii and spoke at Temple Emanu-El.

At bar mitzvahs, congregants wear Hawaiian-flowered kippot. And the temple gift shop sells shirts that say shaloha in a rainbow of colors.

"There are all kinds of paths that people take to Hawaii," says Levinson. "When they get to the island, it's truly a melting pot." 🇺🇸



## From the President

# The Senior Housing Shortage

By Gary P. Saltzman

President, B'nai B'rith International

**A**n older adult of limited income has limited housing options. The average annual benefit for someone on Social Security is just under \$16,000. Can a \$16,000 income get you a safe place to live? How does that money stretch when you also may have to pay for prescriptions? What about eating?

According to The Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition, 5.1 million senior households now use more than half their income on housing, and by 2030 the number of seniors is predicted to double.

As the largest national Jewish sponsor of low-income housing for seniors, we have been deeply involved in the vital, and often overlooked, issue of senior housing for 50 years. Working in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we now have 38 buildings in 28 communities — more than 4,000 apartment units for 8,000 people.

These buildings fall under a HUD program called Section 202, which was created for seniors. For more than 30 years, the program has been severely underfunded. Through our advocacy network, we call on Congress to provide more funding to build more Section 202 housing.

Such housing saves the government money in the long run. The cost to house three people in Section 202 housing units is equal to the cost for just one person in a nursing home.

With 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day, the senior housing crunch will only get more urgent.



The B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat held at Perlman Camp in August 2017 included a training session on advocating for preservation of the federal 202 senior housing program. Front: Sofia Wexler and Carole Ross, B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach, Fla. Back: Gary Cunningham, B'nai B'rith Homecrest House Apartments, Silver Spring, Md. and Heather Dong, Gerd & Inge Strauss B'nai B'rith Manor on Pantano, Tucson, Ariz.

“Absent an increase in housing assistance efforts, by 2030 there will be 4 million very low-income renters left to find affordable and adequate housing in the private market,” according to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University.

B'nai B'rith regularly advocates on Capitol Hill for more funding and to keep existing residents in their apartment units. And we host members of Congress and their staffs at our buildings, so they can see for themselves how important this sort of housing is to so many. Invariably, they leave with the knowledge that aging in place is

the best route for our nation's seniors.

Having a safe, affordable place to live goes beyond preventing homelessness — though obviously keeping seniors off the streets is of great concern. But after that, the benefits of providing seniors with housing they can afford are countless: A home provides more than shelter. It provides a community.

ate last year, I attended the B'nai B'rith annual conference on senior housing in Del Ray Beach, Fla.. The dedication of our housing and policy experts from our Center for Senior Services is unparalleled. They create an informative and energetic

## From the President

### The Senior Housing Shortage

forum for our housing managers and staff of B'nai B'rith housing locations to share best practices. I was deeply impressed with the programs provided at the buildings. The sense of community is paramount. Sessions in emergency preparedness and empowering resident councils help managers share ideas to take back home and invigorate the program.

The senior population in the United States is increasing faster than the rate of housing for seniors.

But there just isn't enough housing for all who need it. For every subsidized apartment that exists nationwide for seniors of limited means, there are 12 people on the waiting list. So we are meeting with individuals who have knowledge and resources to assist in our efforts to find alternatives to the traditional Section 202 HUD programs that we used in the past. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program is about the only program left for groups like ours to create and

maintain affordable housing. Private sector builders can earn federal tax credits when they create affordable housing.

Currently, this credit has funded about 90 percent of all new affordable housing construction — some 3 million apartments — since its launch in 1986. We strongly and tirelessly supported the inclusion of this vital tax credit in the December tax plan that Congress passed. Our own housing network has successfully created new homes using this tax credit in St. Louis at Covenant Place apartments and in Massachusetts at the Coolidge at Sudbury apartments.

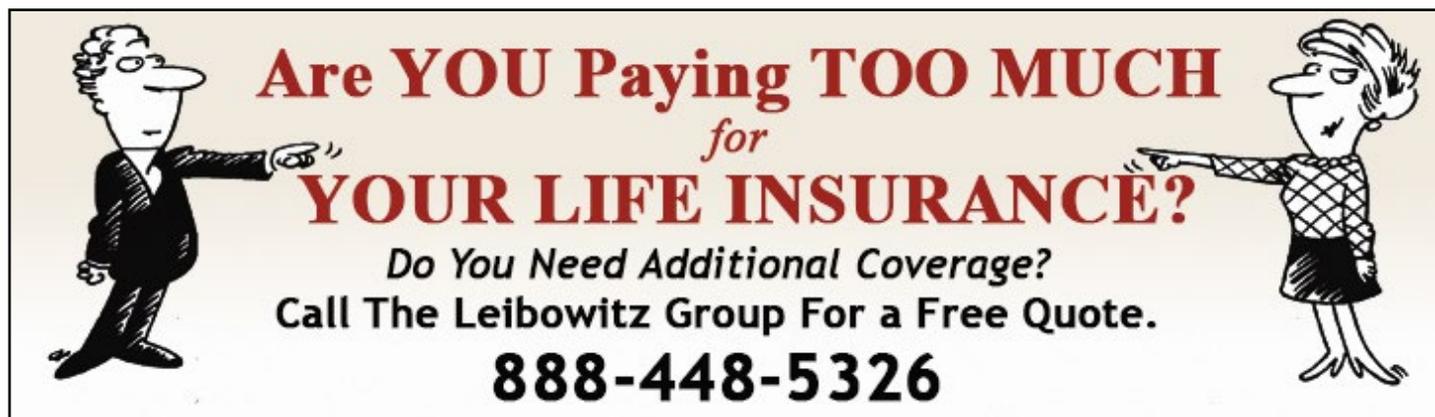
Additionally, we're open to working with developers who might want to add an "affordability" component to their projects — admittedly a difficult, but possible opportunity for creating new homes.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 97 percent of the elderly now collect, or will collect, Social Security. "For 61 percent of elderly beneficiaries,

Social Security provides the majority of their cash income. For 33 percent of them, it provides 90 percent or more of their income." Further, "Reliance on Social Security increases with age, as older people — especially older women — outlive their spouses and savings. Among those aged 80 or older, Social Security provides the majority of income for 72 percent of beneficiaries and nearly all of the income for 42 percent of beneficiaries."

We have long recognized that housing and our nation's social safety nets are intertwined. Our housing program is directly tied to our advocacy efforts. Ensuring enough affordable housing for seniors is of paramount importance for us, as we connect government and private investment to our own nonprofit actions.

The Biblical injunction to honor thy father and mother is at the heart of B'nai B'rith's efforts to provide a safe home for seniors. ♣



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From the EVP/CEO

## The B'nai B'rith Archives: At Home in Cincinnati

By *Daniel S. Mariaschin*

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

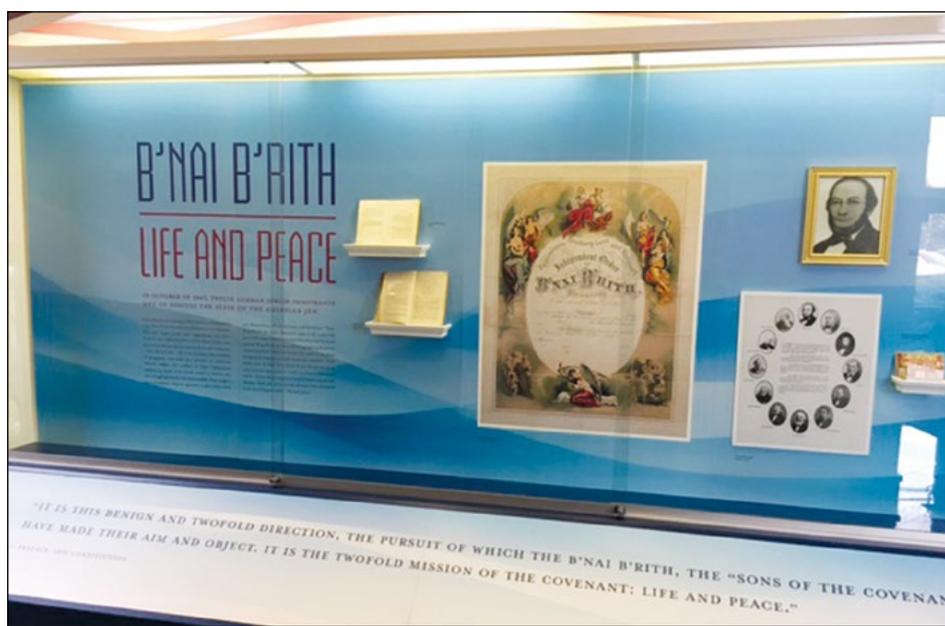
**W**hen we decided to transfer the B'nai B'rith archives to the American Jewish Archives (AJA) on the campus of the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, we knew that our institutional heritage would be well cared for.

B'nai B'rith's connection to Cincinnati goes back almost to the founding of the organization itself. The first lodge in the city was founded in 1849. Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, founder of HUC and the father of Reform Judaism in America, was a B'nai B'rith member. Another Cincinnati, Judge Alfred M. Cohen, who served as president of B'nai B'rith from 1925 to 1937, was a leading and early advocate for civil rights.

The AJA, which is located at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center on the HUC campus, houses an immense collection of important documents about American Jewish life. It already was in possession of an impressive collection of B'nai B'rith material. Under the expert direction of Rabbi Gary Zola, the AJA is a vital resource for scholars and students on a wide range of historical subjects.

Also situated on the HUC campus is the Skirball Museum, which itself has a fine collection of Judaica, Jewish art and artifacts. Based on our positive experience with the AJA, we decided some years ago to transfer our Klutznick Museum collection to the Skirball, where many objects are on permanent display and open to the general public.

This past December, the AJA opened a magnificent exhibition called "B'nai B'rith at 175 Years," which celebrates our rich history



B'nai B'rith historic documents, artifacts and photos on display at the Jacob Rader Marcus American Jewish Archives, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

through numerous documents, letters and posters. At the same time, the Skirball opened an exhibition entitled "Drawing from the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Collection," featuring highly creative drawings of some of our objects — spice boxes, menorahs, shofarot and Torah yads, among others — by the internationally acclaimed artist Mark Podwal.

I was invited to HUC in conjunction with the opening of both exhibits. My presentation that evening was titled "Finding Common Cause in the Fight Against Hatred," focusing on old and new manifestations of anti-Semitism, including that which surfaced in the ugly march and rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the need to

attract allies from outside our community in the effort to combat it.

Before that program, I met with HUC faculty and students, to whom I spoke about "The Challenges of Jewish Leadership." That talk covered a range of issues that I have encountered over my years as a Jewish professional, and how they have evolved over time. Among the topics I covered were the advances in Jewish-Catholic relations, the creation of commissions to study the Holocaust and the campaign for Holocaust restitution for survivors; the impact of the internet as it relates to Israel and to anti-Semitism; and the importance of Jewish communal assistance to the victims of natural disasters.

## From the EVP

# The B'nai B'rith Archives: At Home in Cincinnati

Mark Podwal also spoke at the Skirball that evening. For years I have been an admirer of his work, particularly his many drawings that have graced the op-ed pages of *The New York Times*. His keen observations on Jewish history, and issues that have been challenges for our community over the years, are expressed in a thoroughly unique style. It was gratifying that he now has included B'nai B'rith's Judaica collection in his volume of work.

Also present for our events that day was Rabbi Jonathan Cohen, who is Dean of the college, and who was a key partner in the discussions that led to the transfer of the Klutznick collection to Cincinnati. Joining us for the opening that evening was Harvey Chyette, a longtime leader of B'nai B'rith in Cincinnati and representing Allegheny/Ohio Valley Region on the Board of Governors.

Our landmark archival materials have also been on display at the White House.

Some years ago, Rabbi Zola and I attended an event there commemorating Jewish-American Heritage Month. On view were letters from the Missouri Lodge of B'nai B'rith, written to President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, protesting General Ulysses S. Grant's infamous order expelling Jews from the Tennessee Department during the Civil War.

That letter, now housed at the National



Credit: Janine Spang Photography

The efforts of Rabbi Gary Zola, director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Archives (left) and Hebrew Union College's (HUC) dean, Jonathan Cohen (right) made the event memorable.

Archives, spoke volumes not only about B'nai B'rith's long and distinguished history, but about our role as a defender of the Jewish community, and more broadly, about our being a champion of civil and human rights everywhere — a tradition and commitment now on display as well in Cincinnati.

As we celebrate our 175th year, we are gratified to know that the custodian of B'nai B'rith's story, the American Jewish Archives, is one of our most valued partners. 🇺🇸



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# Finding French Jewish History in the Marais

By Mervyn Rothstein

“French Jewry is like a collage,” says Paul Salmona, the director of Paris’ Museum of Jewish Art and History. “It’s made up of communities from all over Western and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, Turkey [and] Northern Africa. And our museum is in a certain way a reflection of this.”

The historic collection is situated in the Marais, Paris’s old Jewish district. As early as the 13th century, Jews lived in the Marais, east of where the world-famous Louvre art museum is located. Jews from Alsace-Lorraine and from other areas of Western and Eastern Europe largely populated the district in the latter part of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century, and Sephardic Jews from what had been the French colonies in North Africa — Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia — arrived in the 1950s and ’60s, following the colonies’ independence.

The museum, “mahJ,” as it is popularly known (short for Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme) — is one of two opened in the Marais in recent decades that recall both the neighborhood’s and France’s Jewish heritage. It is less than a mile from the Mémorial de la Shoah, honoring the 76,000 French Jews — many from the Marais, and 11,400 of them children — deported from France to the Nazi concentration camps, shipped there with the complicity of France’s Vichy government and its French collaborators.

The Marais isn’t all that Jewish anymore, as a result of both the Holocaust and recent redevelopment and gentrification. To be sure, remnants remain, and in recent years there has been a bit of a renewal of the Jewish presence. There are still a couple of big synagogues and a scattering of small shuls, along with an apparent increase in Hasidim. On and around the rue des Rosiers, the main Jewish artery, are a few traditional bakeries, restaurants and butcher shops and a bookstore — Chir Hadach — with volumes in French and Hebrew, beautiful menorahs, mezuzahs and other religious items. Also on rue des Rosiers is a group of intensely competitive falafel shops, including the world renowned kosher L’As du Falafel, which is closed for Shabbat.

On Friday afternoons, young Chabadniks offer Shabbat candles to women and ask men to put on tefillin. And right after Yom Kippur, folding tables materialize along the rue des Rosiers topped with the symbols of Sukkot, the lulav and the etrog.

But these days the Marais is much more a boutique destination, overflowing with tourists, chain clothing stores, popular cafes and restaurants, avant-garde galleries and individually owned designer



Photo courtesy of mahJ

A ketubah (marriage contract) on display at the Musée d’Art et d’Histoire du Judaïsme (mahJ).

emporiums for fashion, jewelry, tchotchkes and art. On Sundays, most traffic is forbidden on its streets and the neighborhood becomes an outdoor mall for shopping and dining, with crowds of foreigners, Parisians and suburbanites patronizing trendy shops offering little in the way of Jewish identity.

That identity, though, is carefully preserved in the two museums. The Mémorial de la Shoah regularly draws 150,000 visitors a year — but rose to 250,000 in 2017, and at the mahJ, 100,000. The latter’s visitation numbers fell sharply after the Paris terrorist attacks

## Finding French Jewish History in the Marais



Photo by Ruth Rothstein

Sculpture of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, in the courtyard at mahJ.



Photo courtesy of mahJ

14th century Hanukiah, from Lyon, France.



Photo courtesy of mahJ

Tombstones from Paris in the 13th century.

of November 2015 and haven't recovered.

The mahJ is housed at 71 rue du Temple, in what was a 17th century mansion, the Hôtel de Saint-Aignan, which had fallen into disrepair but was saved as part of the effort by Andre Malraux, France's culture minister in the 1960s, to preserve the Marais and prevent the planned demolition of much of the district. By the 19th century, and until World War II, it housed apartments and businesses; many of the tenants were Jews, and Jews — tailors, milliners and furriers — operated most of the businesses. In 1985, Jacques Chirac, then the mayor of Paris and later president of France, arranged for the building to be loaned for use as a museum. With both municipal and federal support, it opened in 1998.

"It's a magnificent museum," says Gerard Leval, a Washington, D.C., attorney who is general counsel to B'nai B'rith and grew up in Paris, just north of the Marais. "It is spectacularly done."

The museum's courtyard features a sculpture of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, per-

haps the most famous victim of French anti-Semitism in the 19th century. He is holding a broken sword, symbolic of the disgrace he suffered when he was falsely convicted of spying and sentenced to prison at Devil's Island, solely because he was Jewish. He was eventually exonerated. His family donated 2,600 documents from the Dreyfus Affair.

Altogether, the permanent collection covers 10,700 square feet and contains about 12,000 objects. The oldest is a Roman oil lamp from the fourth century with a menorah decoration. One of the first sights a visitor encounters is a group of tombstones with Hebrew inscriptions. Most are from a Parisian cemetery, formerly a Jewish burial ground, discovered in 1849 on the Seine's West Bank. The tombstones date to the 13th century. Another rare object is a Hanukiah from the city of Lyon, found at an archeological site in the 19th century that dates from before 1394.

There's a synagogue ark from Modena,

Italy, from 1472, with superbly intricate abstract marquetry. Paintings show scenes of Jewish life in Italy — circumcisions, funerals, burials.

One room features Hanukiah from many lands. On the inner walls of a full-size sukkah from 19th-century Austria are painted landscapes of Jerusalem and the Danube. There's a silver Torah case and scroll from the Ottoman Empire in 1860, and a holy ark from Vienna with colored glass from the 1700s.

The second floor highlights the rise of anti-Jewish prejudice in the 19th century, with an 1889 campaign poster urging the election of "Ad. Willette," the "candidate anti-Semite."

Exiting the permanent collection, a visitor sees a memorial to the residents, most of them Jewish, who lived in the building in 1939. Many were deported and died in the Nazi concentration camps. The names of the victims, their places of birth, often their occupations, have been recorded on pieces of paper attached to the wall.

## Finding French Jewish History in the Marais



Photo courtesy of mahJ

A sukkah from 19th century Austria, with painted landscapes of Jerusalem and the Danube.

“In a certain way, it’s a masterpiece,” Salmona said. “It’s our ‘Mona Lisa.’”

### Memorializing the Shoah

A 15-minute walk from the mahJ, the Mémorial de la Shoah, at 17 rue Geoffroy l’Asnier, commemorates the Jews of the Hôtel de Saint-Aignan and all the others from France who were victims of the Holocaust. It opened in January 2005.

Inside its courtyard stands a stone “Wall of Names” of the 76,000 French Jews sent to Nazi concentration camps. The listing is alphabetical and by the year of deportation. Next to the courtyard stands a monument, stark and imposing, round and brutal in green metal, inscribed on which are the names of the camps where most of that killing was done: Sobibor, Dachau, Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen — and the Warsaw Ghetto.

The courtyard monument, a cylindrical urn, is part of the Mémorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr, dedicated in 1957. The actual tomb below it is encased



Photo by Ruth Rothstein

An 1889 campaign poster urging the election of “Ad. Willette,” the “candidate anti-Semite.”

in black marble.

“In school we needed to study heroes, those who fought the Nazis,” says Thierry Flavian, the memorial’s coordinator of pedagogical services. “So we face the Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr, just as we would be facing the tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the Champs-Élysées. We needed to use symbols of heroism.”

The tomb has six funeral urns. Inside them are the ashes of Jews from the death camps and the Warsaw Ghetto mixed with Israeli soil. “The number six appears many times in this room,” Flavian says. “There are six golden doves around the flame. On the other side, six steps lead to the door of a barracks number six from a French internment camp. There are six remembrance closets — remembrance of the six million Jews who perished.”

At the memorial, are two sentences in Hebrew taken from the lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah, words that are read on the holy day of Tisha B’Av: “Look and see if there is a pain that is like my pain,” reads

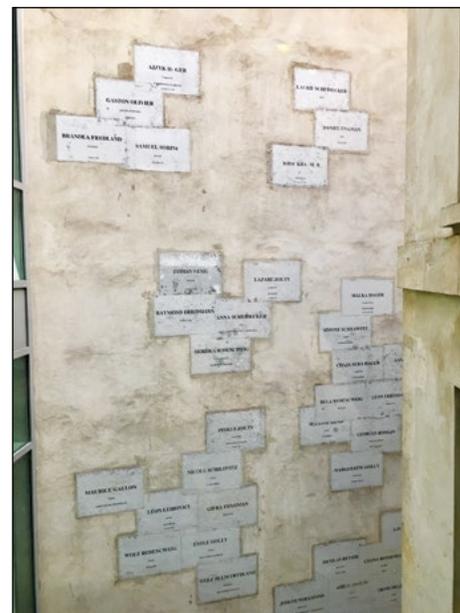


Photo by Ruth Rothstein

Memorial to Holocaust victims, former residents of the building that now houses the mahJ.

the first. “Young and old, our daughters and our sons, fallen by the sword,” reads the second.

The basement also holds a selection of files kept by the Vichy government on French Jews that were used by the Nazis and that record where the deportees were sent.

“We do not want the visitor to leave thinking about how horrid the Shoah was without knowing that we are speaking of a Jewish population that existed before the horror, a people that had a full and meaningful life,” Flavian says. “And we want them to know that anti-Semitism was not invented by the Germans but existed from the Middle Ages, and before that. So we need to tell them the story of Jewish life before the war, and how far back it goes, and how the first signs of anti-Semitism came to life, and what was the Christian thinking about it, so they will also understand how the Nazis took their inspiration from something that actually already existed.”

Down the hall is a room with walls of 2,500 photos — “the children’s memorial

## Finding French Jewish History in the Marais



Photo by Ruth Rothstein

Monument in the courtyard at the Mémorial de la Shoah.



Photo by Ruth Rothstein

Tomb with six funeral urns, encased in black marble, below the courtyard memorial.

showing the faces of 3,500 children, in 2,500 pictures,” Flavian says. Most were murdered, though some survived. “They are displayed so you are able to look in their eyes,” Flavian says, “and they are able to look at you. The light is behind their faces, so you can exchange looks.”

The museum also has a branch in Drancy, in the Paris suburbs, site of an internment camp and then a “regroupment camp”

where 63,000 of the 76,000 deported Jews were sent before being shipped to the extermination camps. It receives some 30,000 to 40,000 visitors annually.

In November and December each year, the museum takes schoolchildren from all over France on one-day visits to Auschwitz. “We leave early in the morning, fly to Krakow, tour the camp and fly back that night,” Flavian says. They do not visit Drancy.

Of the 250,000 yearly visitors to the memorial, he says, 50,000 are children. “I would say that 70 percent of these children have no idea of what a Jew is,” he says. “They have never seen a synagogue. They don’t even know the word synagogue.”

“We are dealing with Jews who had a long and rich history,” Flavian says of the museum’s mission. “And with showing the public who those Jews were who died.”

### IF YOU GO:

**[Museum of the Art and History of Judaism](http://www.mahj.org)**  
[www.mahj.org](http://www.mahj.org)

Hôtel de Saint-Aignan  
 71, rue du Temple, 75003 Paris  
 Permanent collection: Tuesday – Friday: 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
 Saturday and Sunday: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
 Temporary exhibitions: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday:  
 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
 Wednesday: 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
 Saturday and Sunday: 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
 National holidays: 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
 Admission: 10 Euros

**[Mémorial de la Shoah](http://www.memorialdelashoah.org)**  
[www.memorialdelashoah.org](http://www.memorialdelashoah.org)

17 rue Geoffroy l’Asnier, 75004 Paris  
 Admission is free  
 The museum is open every day except Saturday: from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and on Thursday until 10:00 p.m. The multimedia learning center and the reading rooms are open every day except Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursday until 7:30 p.m.  
 The Memorial is closed on Saturday, on national holidays and on certain Jewish holidays.

# Surviving the Holocaust: Tales Told for Children

By Cheryl Kempler

As time distances succeeding generations from the events of the Holocaust, recording its history as fully as possible becomes imperative. Fortunately, two men saved from certain death as children have joined with relatives to translate their experiences into critically acclaimed books for young readers.

Tamar Meir's rhymed text and Yael Albert's pictures combine to tell the tale of *Francesco Tirelli's Ice Cream Store*, a book intended for children ages 5 and older. In this sweet fantasy, young Peter and his parents are hidden by a friend and fellow gelato lover, the man of the title--after Hitler invades Hungary in 1944. Inspired by the memories of the author's father-in-law, the research scientist and academic professor Yitzchak Mayer, who was actually hidden by Mr. Tirelli, the book imagines a wintery Budapest where Nazi

banners are buffeted by the wind and Jewish pedestrians walk fearfully past armed soldiers and vicious dogs patrolling the streets. It is there that the sun disappears from the sky as terrified flocks of birds scatter, replaced by planes whose shadows loom over the snow.

Inspired by the memories of the author's father-in-law, the research scientist and academic professor Yitzchak Mayer, the book imagines a wintery Budapest where Nazi banners are buffeted by the wind and Jewish pedestrians walk fearfully past armed soldiers and vicious dogs patrolling the streets. It is there that the sun disappears from the sky as terrified flocks of birds scatter, replaced by planes whose shadows loom over the snow.

In the book's pivotal moment, when Francesco decides to put his plan into motion, the moon shines through his window, forging a path of light that leads to Peter, and his



Illustrations courtesy of Keter Books, Israel



Photos courtesy of Tamar Meir

The real Peter, in a photo taken around 1931.



Author Tamar Meir, her son Binyamin and Peter (now Yitzchak) Mayer.

## Surviving the Holocaust: Tales Told for Children

mother and father, who are shown on the next page. The ice cream, and its colors and flavors, associated with Peter's happier days, later acquire a greater significance to the people who endure conditions in the dark, shuttered store.

The real Francesco Tirelli's secret put him in danger more than once. But, despite tremendous risks, he never abandoned the Jewish people he protected. For months, until the Germans were defeated, he hid Jews in locations throughout Budapest, where he brought them food, attended to their needs, and kept the spaces clean. A modest man, he did not speak about his acts of heroism. In 2008, his name was enshrined "Righteous Among the Nations" at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Peter, the Hungarian boy, became Yitzchak when he immigrated to Israel, built a career, had his own family and became a leader in B'nai B'rith.

In Israel, the book has been awarded the 2017 Yad Vashem Prize for Children's Holocaust Literature, and, most recently, the Devorah Omer Prize for Children's Literature. An education specialist and activist on behalf of women's causes, Meir

said "that in a country where the events of the Holocaust are known to even the very young," her six children delighted in hearing how "grandpa hid in an ice cream shop" and gradually understood more as they grew older"

Children's intelligence should be respected and their literature should not be infantilized," she said. "Although holidays often celebrate Judaism's triumph over those who wanted to annihilate us ... sometimes Gentiles are the good guys. When we talk about the Holocaust, we often ask 'how could people be so evil?' 'Francesco Tirelli's Ice Cream Store' is a book about good, and not evil." Since its release, Mayer has been reunited with several people, some of whom now live in the United States, who were also hidden in Tirelli's shop. "His story was also their story, which they told to their own children, and later, their grandchildren," Meir says.

A 2017 entry in Macmillan's "Books for Young Readers" series, "Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz," was written by Michael Bornstein and his daughter, Debbie Bornstein Holinstat, whose attention to detail and

simple, direct prose enervate this testament to a family's endurance.

Describing many events that others witnessed — gathered from personal accounts and archival sources — "Michael" narrates in the voice of a young person the harrowing, unimaginable odyssey, which takes

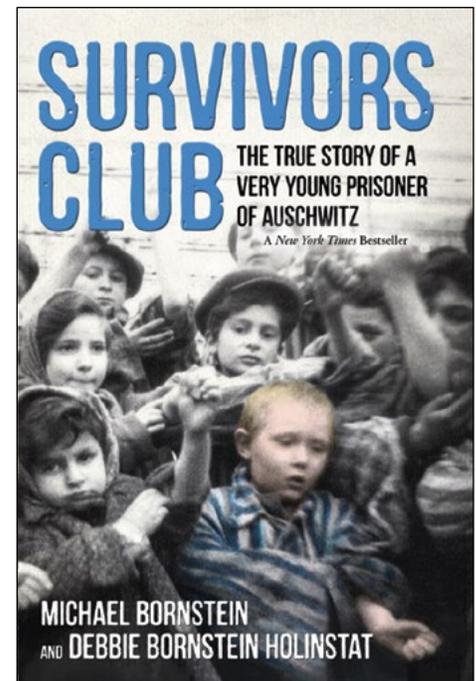


Photo courtesy of the Brama-Cukermana Foundation

Michael's mother and his brother, Samuel, who was murdered in Auschwitz.



Photo courtesy of Michael Bornstein and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat

Survivors Club Authors Michael Bornstein and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat.

## Surviving the Holocaust: Tales Told for Children



Photo courtesy of Michael Bornstein and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat

In June, 2017, Michael reunited with two survivors who are seen in the footage of the camp's liberation.



The Bornstein family visit to Auschwitz.

[http://videos.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/6/9/116999275/family\\_in\\_auschwitz2017\\_975.mp4](http://videos.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/6/9/116999275/family_in_auschwitz2017_975.mp4)

Bornstein Holinstat, said: “When I first started working on the manuscript, I did so in third person. But about 50 pages in, it became clear that there was a disconnect . . . I was writing a story more personal to me than any other, and if I was going to do it justice, I had to put myself right into my father’s childhood shoes. It broke my heart to write in first person and visualize the world exactly as my dad saw it. I knew it was the right thing to do, though.”

As an experienced television producer and writer, and as someone who has heard her father speak since she was a baby, she said it was not difficult to find an appropriate voice for the “Survivors Club” young narrator.

Seemingly defying death itself, Michael’s mother, who favored bright yellow dresses and wore heavy makeup, succeeds in saving her four-year-old son in the death camp. After Soviet liberators film Michael, one of the few children to emerge from Auschwitz alive, he is greatly affected when the footage resurfaces years later. From the book’s beginning chapters, passages describing the wanton brutality inflicted on the innocent are hard to forget.

Like Tamar Meir and her father-in-law, the Bornsteins have forged relationships with readers from all over the world; some were photographed with Michael exiting through the gates of the death camp. Initially reluctant to relive events, Michael now does not regret his eventual decision to join his family on their trip to Poland, where a video of his visit was filmed. “I really never thought I would see my story published. I never wanted to talk about the past,” he says. “But anyone who knows my daughter knows she eventually gets her way.

“Now that we are traveling the country talking to young readers, I see that it was the right decision to speak out. If what I revealed teaches remembrance and brings readers optimism, too, then it was worth it to sit down and tell my story.”

him from his native town in Poland to Auschwitz, and then miraculously culminates in his rebirth as an American, where he became a research scientist.

Of her year of research, followed by nine months of writing and editing,

## Trending in Israel: Tattoos for Healing

By Michele Chabin

In 2016 Kay Wilson responded to a call from Artists 4 Israel, an organization offering free tattoos to victims of war and terror through a new project called Healing Ink.

Six years earlier, Palestinian terrorists had attacked Wilson, an Israeli tour guide, and her friend Kristine Lukan as they were hiking near Jerusalem. Wilson was stabbed 13 times and sustained other life-threatening injuries. Lukan was murdered.

Wilson felt drawn to Healing Ink and its mission to help victims of violence “reclaim their bodies.” When Wilson arrived at the Israel Museum, where a Healing Ink event was taking place, she requested an Arab tattoo artist, who did the inscription.

“This was important to me because as much as I hate evil — and the Palestinian Authority is an evil regime — I’m careful not to extend my anger toward every Arab or Muslim,” she says.

Of all the tattoos she could have chosen, Wilson requested the Modeh Ani prayer that observant Jews say upon waking in the morning:

“I give thanks before you, King living and eternal, for You have returned within me my soul with compassion; abundant is Your faithfulness.”

Wilson, a vocal critic of terrorism and those who fund it, says the prayer tattooed on her right wrist “stops me from being a grump. It reminds me to be thankful to God, to accept and recognize that I don’t need to understand why the terror attack happened. But that I do need to take responsibility to make sure it won’t happen to someone else.”

Wilson knows that Jewish law forbids tattoos, but she feels her emotional well-be-



All photos by Debbie Hill.

Kay Wilson, a survivor of terrorism, participated in Healing Ink at the Israel Museum.

ing had to take precedence over halacha, especially since her body had already been irrevocably altered by knife wounds.

“My body looks like a cross-stitch quilt,” she says with a sigh. “Healing is too big a word to describe my tattoo, but it helps me to be thankful that I’m still alive. If the tattoo helps, thank God for tattoos.”

Even five years ago, organizing a tattooing event like Healing Ink — held at a venerable Jerusalem museum, no less — would have been unimaginable in Israel, where the Jewish prohibition against altering one’s skin still holds sway in much of Jewish society.

For decades, most Jewish Israelis abided by the prohibition in Leviticus 19:28 to “not make gashes in your flesh for the dead, or

incise any marks on yourselves.”

That Jews sent to Nazi concentration camps were tattooed with numbers on their arms may also have played a role in the national aversion, which began to dissipate about 20 years ago.

### Breaking With Halacha

The widely held, erroneous belief that tattooed Jews cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery or be called to the Torah was also a deterrent.

Yet today, dozens of tattoo parlors operate in the heart of Tel Aviv, Israel’s most fashionable and secular city. Several others operate in Haifa and Jerusalem, including a centuries-old tattoo business owned by a Christian

## Trending in Israel: Tattoos for Healing



Avi Vanunu, owner of Psycho Tattoo, pictured on the right, with a customer.

Arab family in Jerusalem's Old City.

Some of Israel's best tattoo artists emigrated from the former Soviet Union in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Others encountered tattooing during post-army visits to Europe or the Far East. And thanks to social media, Israelis no longer have to wait a few years to learn about the latest trends from outside the country.

Avi Vanunu, the owner of Psycho Tattoo, a popular studio in the Dizengoff Center mall, recalled how, 25 years ago, he opened Tel Aviv's first storefront tattoo parlor.

"At the time, there were three or four other parlors, in basements or apartments, but we were the first to open in the light," Vanunu says as he consults with a customer preparing

to get a tattoo on his leg. "We called this place 'Psycho' because at the time a lot of people considered us psychos or criminals."

Now tattooing in Israel is so mainstream that "banks show tattoos in their TV commercials," he says.

### Tattoo Tourists

Vanunu's clientele is largely made up of secular Jewish Israelis and Christian tourists. Muslims, he says, rarely get tattooed because Islam forbids it.

"Clearly, religious prohibitions against getting a tattoo are almost never a problem for the people who come here, but I sometimes warn them about the problems they could encounter."



A floral design is drawn by Vanunu, following a template, before the tattooing begins.

Vanunu relates how one of his Jewish Israeli clients who lives in the U.S. was beaten up because he has a Star of David and an angel tattooed on his arm.

"This is a big guy. He does martial arts. But he's planning on getting the star removed due

## Trending in Israel: Tattoos for Healing



A samurai, armed with two knives fighting a huge dragon represents Nativ Tatoo's life from age 20 to 40.

to anti-Semitism, and I think that's incredibly sad," he says, shaving the hair from off a client's leg before starting the tattoo.

Vanunu says the tourists who come into his shop often request tattoos with Hebrew lettering, while Israelis prefer English lettering.

His most popular Jewish symbol is the Star of David, followed by one of the 72 names in the Kabbalah and phrases from the Torah. Some request the word "Emunah," Hebrew for "faith."

"There's been a societal shift in Israel in the thinking about tattoos," says Craig Dershowitz, executive director of Artists 4 Israel. "As tattoos have become much more popular in world culture as a whole, it is becoming accepted by subcultures, including Jewish Israeli culture."

Dershowitz says his organization came up

with the idea for Healing Ink years ago, "but we met with resistance from some of our Jewish supporters. We didn't feel comfortable doing this until about two years ago."

Feedback on the event was "so overwhelmingly positive," he says, that his organization held another tattooing session for Israeli and Palestinian victims of violence this past October.

David Sulimanov, manager of Kipod Tattoo, a tattoo and body-piercing salon located just down the street from Dizengoff Center, estimates that 70 percent of his parlor's clients are Jewish Israelis, the rest tourists.

"Actually, many of the tourists are Jews as well, and they like Star of David tattoos but often choose to place them on a private part of the bodies," he says.

Although clients can get very simple tattoos in any studio, the most intricate ones

can take years to complete.

"We see two types of clients: Those who choose a tattoo because it's attractive, and those who choose tattoos that reflect their life's journey," Sulimanov says as he climbs up two narrow flights of stairs into a small room at the top.

There, Michael Kozlenko, the Russian-born Israeli tattoo artist who co-owns Kipod, is carefully adding a section to an enormous painting-like tattoo on the chest, back, arms and legs of Nativ Tattoo, one of his most enthusiastic clients.

Lying face down on a long table, Tattoo — yes, that's now his legal name — has been coming to Kozlenko for the past couple of years.

### Tattoos for "Tattoo"

"Michael has made my dream come true.

## Trending in Israel: Tattoos for Healing



Michael Kozlenko, co-owner of the Kipod tattoo parlor, has tattooed a blue-eyed tiger over Nativ Tattoo's heart.

It cost a lot of pain and money — about \$15,000 — but I'm happy I made this decision," says the 51-year-old Tattoo, who is Israeli and Jewish.

Tattoo says his colorful body art has transformed his life for the better.

"Every image etched onto my body represents a period of my life. My parents essentially abandoned me when I was 13," he says, relating how he was sent to live with his grandmother, and how his father completely disappeared from his life when Tattoo was in the army.

The koi fish that stretches from Tattoo's ankle to his knee represents his youthful search for direction. The bold samurai, armed with two knives fighting a huge dragon represents his life from age 20 to 40. Over his heart and extending down his arm is a blue-eyed tiger set among flowers."

"It's a happy place," Tattoo says. "The tattoo is 95 percent done. I'll complete it with children once my partner and I have children."

Tattoo says the tattoo has helped bring his inner pain to the surface. "The pain is no longer in my body, and when people see my tattoos they open up, tell me about their lives. It's changed my life for the better."

Although he isn't outwardly religious, Tattoo says he asked a rabbi whether he could wrap tefillin around his tattooed arm. "The answer was yes!"

Not all Jews, Orthodox or otherwise, are as understanding of tattoos as this rabbi.

When, as a teenager, Liora (a pseudonym), decided to go under the tattoo needle, it never occurred to her that she might one day adopt a strict Orthodox lifestyle.

"I've always been a very spiritual person,

even though my family isn't religious, so when I was in university I decided to have the Hebrew word for ancestor tattooed on the skin over my ovaries," Liora recalled. "It was my way of saying all of the generations before me were Jewish and that all the generations after me will be Jewish."

Later, Liora had the milestones of her life tattooed onto much of her upper body. She memorialized a friend with a nightingale on a cherry blossom, and noted life's transience with a Japanese temple. A Russian doll, as a symbol for motherhood, is etched on her left arm.

She began to study Jewish texts in her mid-20s, "because there was something calling me to Torah."

On the second date with the man who would become her husband, Liora screwed up her courage to tell him about her tattoos.

## Trending in Israel: Tattoos for Healing

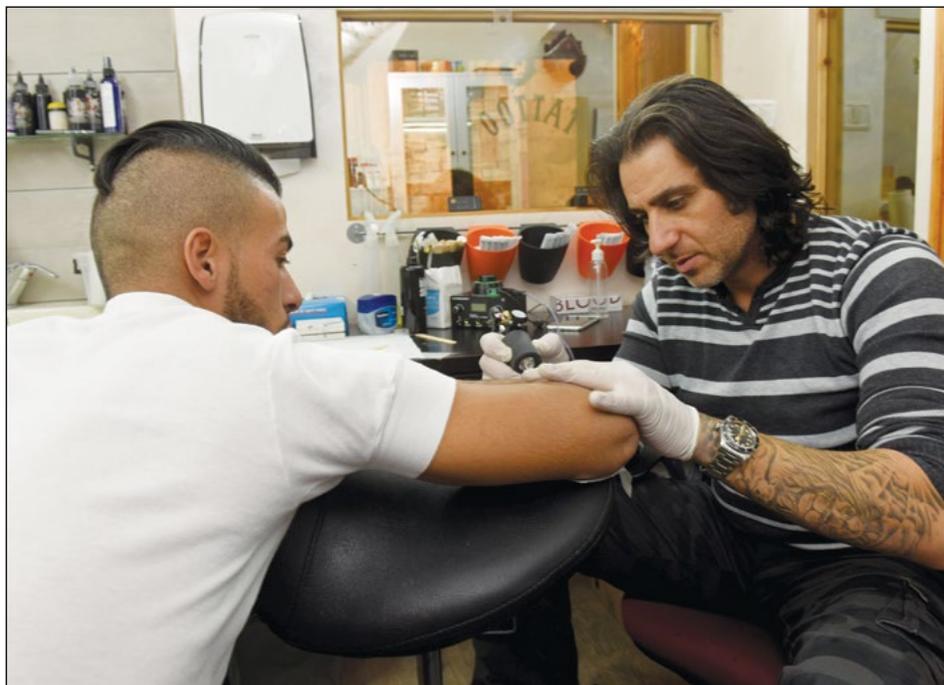
“He said, ‘The matchmaker told me about them. They aren’t a problem.’”

Although Liora dresses modestly, sometimes her tattoos peek out from under a collar or sleeve.

“It’s strange. I move in a world where religious men aren’t supposed to speak to religious married women, and yet they have no trouble asking me whether I plan to get my tattoos removed,” she says. “One woman told me of a place that will remove them for free because so many schools won’t allow children to enroll if their parents have tattoos. Needless to say, I don’t want my children to go to schools with this policy.”

Nor does she plan to remove her tattoos.

“I’m so grateful for my journey and feel Hashem [God] loves me. I haven’t gotten more tattoos because they’re prohibited by halacha, but I don’t plan to remove the ones I already have.”



Wassim Razzouk at work in his studio.

### A History Lesson

For Sarah Tuttle-Singer, getting a tattoo at Razzouk Tattoo in the Old City of Jerusalem was not only an assertion of her evolving identity as an immigrant to Israel but also a history lesson.

During a ramble through the Old City, Tuttle-Singer, who spent the year there writing a soon-to-be published book about its four quarters, stumbled upon Razzouk Tattoo, the enterprise the Coptic Christian Razzouk family has run for 700 years, 500 of them in Jerusalem.

There, in the tiny studio, where Wassim Razzouk and his father, Anton, display several of the tattoo templates and tools their ancestors used for hundreds of years, the Wassim Razzouk told how Jacob, Wassim’s grandfather, made ink out of the soot of oil lamps mixed with wine. “The mixture ensured that his clients didn’t get infections,” he said.

The majority of his clients are local Christians and Christian pilgrims who want a tattoo of a cross, Saint George or a church

to remind them of their Holy Land pilgrimage.

In Egypt, Anton notes, Christians tattoo their children’s wrist or forearm with a cross “so they can never deny their Christianity, even during times of persecution.”

Tuttle-Singer, who is Jewish and made aliyah from California, chose a mermaid.

“It symbolizes someone who is an ‘other,’” she says, gazing at the tattoo on her right arm. “After moving to Israel I realized I couldn’t go back and be fully American, and I can never be fully Israeli. That’s the immigrant experience. That’s my identity and looking at my mermaid helps me embrace it.”



Wassim Razzouk in front of Razzouk Tattoo, the enterprise the Coptic Christian Razzouk family has run for 700 years, 500 of them in Jerusalem

For more information and to view videos from Healing Ink, please visit: <https://www.healingink.org/>

## 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:**

**Tommy P. Baer**  
**B'nai B'rith President (1994-1998)**

Serving with humility and gratitude, I believe that my achievements as B'nai B'rith president made a difference.

Following the Holocaust, Poland's government had no contact with Israel or the Jewish people. After the Polish ambassador to the United States expressed his government's desire to re-establish ties, I invited President Aleksander Kwasniewski to join me in leading the March of the Living in April 1996; it was the first time that the Polish government would participate in the annual program held on Yom Hashoah in tribute to all the victims of the Holocaust. The president had a conflict, but, together, Poland's secretary of state, Israeli Chief Rabbi Meir Lau, and I walked ahead of several thousand Jewish teenagers from Auschwitz to Birkenau.

At the state event which followed at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, Jewish music played while several hundred Jewish and Polish teenagers mingled for the first time since the Holocaust. The president spoke eloquently of reconciliation. At that historic moment, I heard the strains of "Hava Nagila" with tears in my eyes.

B'nai B'rith and I played a major role in the capture of the notorious SS captain, Erich Priebke, responsible for the murder



B'nai B'rith International President Tommy P. Baer and Jordanian King Hussein during Baer's 1994-1998 tenure as president

of 335 Italians, including more than 70 Jews, in the Ardeatine caves outside Rome. ABC News reporter Sam Donaldson, who interviewed me on national television, later said that if it were not for us, Priebke would be on the back burner of justice.

I also became intensely involved in securing the arrest of Dinko Sakic in Argentina and in setting conditions for his trial in Croatia. The notorious butcher of

the Jasenovac concentration camp, where hundreds of Jews were killed, he was the last living Nazi commandant. During four years of "shuttle diplomacy," I met with Argentine President Carlos Menem, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and the Croatian ambassador to the United States. I witnessed the conviction of Sakic, whose 20-year sentence was the maximum for crimes against humanity in Croatia.

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

There were so many other highlights: meetings with Pope John Paul II, Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan, and with four Israeli prime ministers, plus the White House State Dinner, with my wife, Betty at President Bill Clinton's table. All memorable.

### **Richard D. Heideman** **B'nai B'rith President (1998-2002)**

Serving as president of B'nai B'rith International, and previously as Grand Aleph Godol (president) of AZA in the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), was indeed a great honor, particularly as my family and I are "products" of the leadership training, traditions and proud activities of B'nai B'rith's rich history.

My election as president in 1998 in Jerusalem was a special moment, as was my first meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was a privilege as B'nai B'rith president to meet with and discuss important issues of the day with presidents, prime ministers and heads of state. Dinner at the White House with President George W. Bush and Israeli President Moshe Katsav in 2001 was a historic experience.

B'nai B'rith's standing and role at the United Nations are legendary and important. As B'nai B'rith president, as chairman of the Conference of Presidents' United Nations Committee and as Head of Delegation to the September 2001 U.N. Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, I led the walkout with the U.S. and Israeli ambassadors due to the virulent anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel U.N. "Hatefest."

Special experiences during my term included creating the "Enlighten America – Enlighten the World" program in response to violent and intolerant acts and in-school hatred incidents that were afflicting the nation; launching the Communities in Crisis Program — our first campaign contributed an initial \$5 million of humanitarian aid to Argentina during the depths of its financial crisis; being decorated for humanitarian service with the Merito de Mayo Award by the president of Argentina; and standing up for human rights, dignity and the good name of Israel, Zionism and the Jewish people.

Working together with Dan Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith's excellent



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and B'nai B'rith International President Richard D. Heideman, during Heideman's 1998-2002 tenure as president.

executive vice president and key public policy voice for the global Jewish community, and B'nai B'rith's leadership in communities and countries, we were committed to expanding and strengthening B'nai B'rith's standing and impact throughout the world, locally and globally.

Each experience speaks loudly about the importance, strength, vitality, relevance, history and future of B'nai B'rith International and our contribution in helping to make the world better for humankind. 🇮🇸

# B'NAI B'RITH TODAY

## A Judaica Journey: from Washington, D.C. to Cincinnati, Ohio

By Felice Caspar



All photos by Janine Spang Photography

Mark Podwal's works on paper inspired by Judaica from the B'nai B'rith Collection, on exhibit at the Skirball Museum, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

On Dec. 4, 2017, B'nai B'rith's historic archives and treasures of Judaica took center stage on the campus of Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College (HUC). It was the celebratory culmination of a years-long process.

B'nai B'rith joined forces with HUC in 2012, when its archives — revealing the connection between B'nai B'rith's history and its impact on Jewish political and cultural life worldwide — were transferred

to the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives there, facilitating their study by historians and other scholars.

Three years later, the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum collection — secular and religious fine and decorative arts and artifacts spanning ancient to modern times — was acquired by the Skirball Museum, also on the HUC campus, to enhance and expand the scope of the

works housed in the museum's galleries.

Then, this past December, the archives and artifacts were highlighted on display for the public to see.

The Skirball showcased the jazzy and playful drawings of artist Mark Podwal, installed as a backdrop to the B'nai B'rith objects that inspired their creation. Visitors were treated to an intimate viewing of 18 sacred and secular artworks and artifacts, mostly dating from the 19th and 20th

## A Judaica Journey: from Washington, D.C. to Cincinnati, Ohio

centuries, including a silver Italian Torah crown, a Czech menorah from the late 1920s commemorating the anniversary of B'nai B'rith's Prague lodge and a rare seal used by a Jewish community in Eastern Europe to stamp Kosher meat.

Featured from the Archives was an impressive show of B'nai B'rith records, never before seen or studied, that shed new light on the founding, inner workings and philanthropic projects of the lodges during the years between 1843, when B'nai B'rith was established, through the early 20th century. The photos, books, lodge minutes and personal letters on view were accompanied by labels whose extensive texts illuminated the show's rich content.

On opening day, B'nai B'rith Executive Vice President and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin led a dialogue with HUC theology, education and nonprofit management students on the challenges of Jewish leadership. In the evening, he gave the keynote speech, focusing on issues of hate and prejudice. The event, to which the entire Cincinnati community was invited, was sponsored in part by the B'nai B'rith



Speaking on the growing issue of anti-Semitism, B'nai B'rith International CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin addresses guests at the evening's event at the Jacob Rader Marcus American Jewish Archives, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

of Greater Cincinnati's Alfred M. Cohen Unit #4, one of the organization's earliest lodges.

Hebrew Union College, the academic

and spiritual center of Reform Judaism in the United States, was founded in 1875 by a B'nai B'rith member, the eminent rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. 

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## B'nai B'rith Recognizes Jews who Rescued Jews in the Holocaust

*By B'nai B'rith staff*



Photo credit: Sergio Cravero – Italy

Enzo Cavaglian (seated). Left to right: His granddaughter Sara Cavaglian and son, Dr. Alberto Cavaglian; Dario Disegni, president, Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah; Paolo Eliezer Foa, president, B'nai B'rith Milan Lodge; and Alan Schneider, director, B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem.



Photo credit: Sergio Cravero – Italy

In the historic synagogue of Cuneo: Left to right: Paolo Eliezer Foa, president, B'nai B'rith Milan Lodge; Alan Schneider, director, B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem; Enzo Cavaglian's son Dr. Alberto Cavaglian; Dario Disegni, president, Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah.

For the past seven years, B'nai B'rith has annually recognized Jews who rescued Jews from imprisonment and death during the Holocaust. In January, two more names were added to this roll of honor.

In ceremonies in Milan and New York City, B'nai B'rith recognized Jews who risked their lives in northern Italy and Slovakia in Eastern Europe to save others of their faith. To date, B'nai B'rith has honored nearly 200 rescuers in Germany, France, Hungary, Greece, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Holland and Italy.

On Jan. 21, B'nai B'rith Milan, B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem and the Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jews who Rescued Fellow Jews During the

Holocaust cited Enzo Cavaglian, 98, for saving the lives of Jewish refugees in northern Italy during the German occupation.

In his 20s, Cavaglian, was one of the 14 founding members of the partisan group "Italia Libera" (Free Italy), established on Sept. 12, 1943 — the same day that Cuneo, Italy, was occupied by the German First SS Panzer Division. The group, including Enzo's brother, Riccardo, hid in the sanctuary of the Madonna del Colletto, about 11 miles west of Cuneo. In addition fighting the Germans and Italian Fascists, Enzo and Riccardo helped Jews who sought refuge in villages around Cuneo.

More than 1,000 Jewish men, women, children, the elderly and disabled scaled the Maritime Alps from France into Italy, only to find the Germans already established in

the region. About 300 were captured and sent to Auschwitz. The rest found refuge among the local peasant population. Enzo and Riccardo found hiding places for many, furnished them with the necessary documents and hid them in the mountains in order to evade the Nazis. Survivor Harry Burger credited Enzo and Riccardo with saving his life and his mother's by warning them that the Nazis were hunting for them. Another survivor, Alfred Feldman, later wrote that he witnessed Enzo and Riccardo's theft of identity cards from the Vignolo mayor's office that were then falsified and distributed to some of the refugees.

The presentation of the Jewish Rescuers Citation award, at Enzo Cavaglian's home, was followed by an afternoon ceremony at the Cuneo Synagogue in nearby Contrada

## B'nai B'rith Recognizes Jews who Rescued Jews in the Holocaust



B'nai B'rith International President Gary P. Saltzman welcomed Aron Grunhut's granddaughter, Yael Goren, who accepted the rescuers' award on behalf of her family.



United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination Fabrizio Hochschild of Chile, spoke about his late Jewish grandfather's efforts to save Jewish refugees. In introductory remarks, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination Fabrizio Hochschild, of Chile, spoke about his Jewish late grandfather's little-known efforts, from Bolivia, to save thousands of Jewish refugees by helping them immigrate to that country

Mondovi. The program hosted by B'nai B'rith Milan President Paolo Eliezer Foà featured speeches by key government officials, B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider and Enzo's son, noted history professor Alberto Cavaglion, who formally accepted the award.

Ten days later, in New York, in commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the United Nations, B'nai B'rith International presented the Jewish Rescuers Citation in honor of the late Aron Grunhut for his extraordinary efforts saving Jews in Slovakia.

Grunhut was an Orthodox businessman and leader in several Jewish organizations in what is now Bratislava, Slovakia. In 1938, he helped save Jewish refugees sent to Hungary from Austria. At the same time, he had a tent camp built for stateless Jews in Slovakia and organized their journey to British-controlled Palestine. In 1939, he chartered two steamboats to smuggle 1,365 Jews from Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Austria to pre-state Israel.

Grunhut was arrested in Slovakia in 1943

for his activities. Released, he joined his wife and young son, who were hiding under false identities in Hungary. From there, Grunhut contacted the Hungarian underground and financed the smuggling of Jewish refugees by train from Budapest to Damascus, saving some 300 children. He lived with his family in the basement of the former Czechoslovakian embassy in Budapest until the end of the war. The family then returned to Bratislava but left for Israel in 1948.

Grunhut's granddaughter, Yael Goren, accepted the Jewish Rescuers Citation on behalf of her family.

"My grandfather, though many times he was the leading force behind his deeds, could not act alone," she said. "He had to have the support of other Jewish fighters, and this is what they were, even if they didn't carry a weapon. Those that were younger kids during the war are now at least in their 80s. We have very limited time to make sure that all of these unknown brave stories are told and documented before we won't have [anyone] to ask anymore."

B'nai B'rith President Gary P. Saltzman

noted, "While for decades significant attention was justly focused on acknowledging and honoring non-Jews who heroically helped rescue Jews during the Holocaust — many of them are recognized by Israel's national Holocaust authority, Yad Vashem, as 'Righteous Among the Nations' — there has been far less awareness of Jews who, frequently enduring the most trying and precarious of circumstances themselves, took the initiative and risk to aid others facing Nazi persecution and mass murder."

Schneider and Haim Roet, chairman of the Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jews who Rescued Fellow Jews during the Holocaust, spoke at the event by phone from Israel.

B'nai B'rith's program preceded the official U.N. Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony — addressed by the body's secretary-general, Antonio Guterres — which leaders of the organization also attended. B'nai B'rith played an active role in the United Nations' adoption of Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005. 🇺🇸

# Ceremony in Chile Commemorates International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust

*By Jorge Zeballos Stepankowsky, Executive Director, B'nai B'rith Chile, Peru and Bolivia*

*(translated from Spanish)*

**B**'nai B'rith Chile, along with the Jewish Community of Chile (CJCh) and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commemorated International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust on Jan. 31 at the Hall of Honor of the former National Congress. The anniversary recalls the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp complex on Jan. 27, 1945. The United Nations established this international recognition in 2005, with input from B'nai B'rith International.

The ceremony began with the lighting of six candles in remembrance of the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust. National and community leaders, accompanied by survivors of the Shoah who reside in Chile, lit the candles. Minister of Social Development Marcos Barraza lit the first candle. Other participants included Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Edgardo Riveros and Cardinal Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati Andrello, who spoke of the importance of this ceremony.

After the candles were lit, two of the survivors present, Uri Sharony and Gunther Seelman, gave their testimonies. Sharony shared what he called his “personal Holocaust” and related how, once he and his parents were released from the Transnistria Ghetto, on returning to their home in Romania, they found themselves at the door with a sign saying, “This apartment cannot be used except by its owners,



All photos by Gonzalo Álvarez

Attendees gathered in the Honor Hall of the Former National Congress for the ceremony in Santiago, Chile on January 31, 2018.

because it is under the protection of the Consulate of Chile, due to intervention of former Chilean consul Samuel del Campo.”

Seelman recalled that, “after the Night of Broken Glass, my grandmother took me to observe the still-smoking ruins of the historic Aachen Synagogue. In the early morning, my father was arrested and taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp, along with many more. In 1939, we took refuge in Holland and once the war broke out, we left for Chile in search of freedom.” In Chile, after the coup d'état of 1973, Seelman was arrested and sent to Quiriquina Island, then eventually released.

Following the invocation of “El Malé

Rachamim” by Rabbi Eduardo Waingortin, Jewish Chaplain at La Moneda, Benjamin Pupkin, vice president of CJCh, spoke about why it is our duty to remember the victims of the Shoah and stated that “this fierce fact of history should serve as a lesson for us to know how to conduct ourselves in the present and manage ourselves in the future ... It is our duty, our obligation to raise our voices and prevent horrors like this from happening again.”

At this ceremony each year, the “Light and Memory” award is also presented. This year it was awarded to Dr. Christian Beals del Campo, nephew of the ex-consul of Chile in Romania Samuel del Campo.

## Ceremony in Chile Commemorates International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust



Marcos Barraza, minister of Social Development, Eva Rogazinski (Holocaust survivor), Jaime Fuchs, president of B'nai B'rith Chile, Peru and Bolivia, Piotr Frelak, Polish Embassy in Chile consul.



Jaime Fuchs, president of B'nai B'rith Chile, Peru and Bolivia, Benjamin Pupkin, vice president Comunidad Judía de Chile, Dr. Christian Beals (Samuel Del Campo's grandson), Edgardo Riveros, secretary general Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jonathan Bar-El, first secretary Israel Embassy in Chile.

Between 1941 and 1945 — even against the instructions of the government of the time — del Campo handed out hundreds of Chilean visas and passports to Jews from Romania and Poland who were being persecuted by the Nazis. It is estimated that the courageous action of del Campo saved some 1,400 Jews from death in the concentration camps, and that, thanks to these efforts, the properties of dozens of Jewish families were protected, Sharony recalled.

Jaime Fuchs, president of B'nai B'rith Chile, Peru and Bolivia said, “This was a very well accomplished program which fulfilled the objective of solemnly remembering the memory of the victims of the Shoah, of honoring the survivors who are the living testimony of it and of recognizing those who put their lives at risk to save Jews during the Shoah, who Yad Vashem distinguishes as the ‘Righteous Among the Nations.’”

In his speech Riveros said that “there is no doubt that the preservation of this history is what allows communities not to repeat those events that have caused so much pain.” Speaking to the survivors, he

highlighted how “these testimonies of life and historical memory like those we have heard today have allowed us to understand and approach a substantial part of the history of humanity, and, in turn, in the sense of the act that it summons us to individual stories such as the ones we know as ‘Righteous Among the Nations.’ This group of extraordinary people who faced the situation of the Jews in the Holocaust decided that despite being of a different nationality and religion, could not remain undaunted, opting to help save human lives, often going against the policy of their government, their authorities or even risking their own lives. These samples of human quality are those that are necessary to rescue in the face of such traumatic events.”

The ceremony concluded with the inauguration of the traveling exhibition “Beyond Duty,” hosted by the Embassy of Israel in Chile, in which distinguished diplomats are honored as “Righteous Among the Nations.” As Jonathan Bar-El, first secretary of the embassy, explained, “In Israel — which was founded only three years after the end of World War II — the

remembrance of the victims of the Shoah is a fundamental task. The organization, Yad Vashem, is officially charged with organizing these efforts.”

Adolfo Gelerstein, member of the B'nai B'rith Chile Executive Committee, said, “We have fought to give meaning to this important anniversary and, in my opinion, this ceremony succeeded. Today, the recognition of Samuel del Campo serves as a gesture of justice for those who risked everything; if there were more ‘Samuel del Campos’ I am sure we would live on a better planet.”



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## Planned Giving

# Planned Giving — the Great Equalizer

By Marna Schoen

**M**ost people have heard the term “planned giving.” It’s usually part of the package of charitable gift options you’re offered by your favorite organizations. Planned giving includes bequests, charitable trusts, life insurance policies and charitable gift annuities. These vehicles are considered “legacy gifts,” meaning, the gift continues to support the organization, and your charitable intentions, well beyond your lifetime.

During my two decades at B’nai B’rith International, I’ve heard many myths and misconceptions about planned giving. Here are five facts to help set the record straight:

### **Planned giving is not limited to people of significant wealth.**

I’ve worked with teachers, postal workers, small business owners, physicians, administrators, lawyers, artists and others. Many individuals are on a fixed income. Planned givers come from all walks of life. My greatest professional pleasure has been getting to know people from all backgrounds who feel connected to B’nai B’rith in some way.

**Planned giving does not take away from gifts you want to bequeath to your family and friends.** We’re an organization steeped in Jewish values. Of course, we understand you want to provide for your loved ones. You can always make B’nai B’rith a contingent or residual beneficiary. This means that after your loved ones are provided for, your charitable organizations can receive the remainder of your estate.

**Planned giving does not require a minimum gift.** Although some vehicles, such as income-producing gifts like charitable gift annuities, may require a minimum, many gifts do not. A bequest can be any amount you’d like, and we will never ask you how much you intend to bequeath.

**You do not have to be a member of B’nai B’rith to make a planned gift.** Many people have fond memories of B’nai B’rith. Some have a family member who spoke highly of B’nai B’rith. Many



are simply “friends” of B’nai B’rith, who connect with the organization’s mission of caring for and speaking up for those in need, around the globe.

**You do not have to be a senior to establish a planned gift.** People of all ages create planned gifts. If you are old enough to create a will or trust, or buy a life insurance policy, you are able to designate B’nai B’rith as a beneficiary.

Please take a moment to view the photo collage, above. **These are the faces of B’nai B’rith planned giving.** Their ages, income levels and life experiences vary significantly. Although these people come from disparate backgrounds, they share one common motivator — they care about the future of B’nai B’rith and will continue to support the organization for generations to come through their legacy gift.

*For more information on how to leave a legacy with B’nai B’rith through your will or trust, please contact the Planned Giving office at (800) 656-5561; or by e-mail at [plannedgiving@bnaibrith.org](mailto:plannedgiving@bnaibrith.org).*

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## About Seniors

# The New Tax Law, the Deficit and the Definition of Chutzpah

By Mark D. Olshan

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

I watched with interest the evolution, or more accurately, the revolution, of the tax cut as it wound its way through Congress. I had expected to see the usual histrionics between fiscal conservatives, who view any dollar spent for goods and services by the federal government particularly abhorrent and unacceptable, and the more moderate members who occasionally demonstrate their understanding that there are “real people,” who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in a position where they might actually have to rely sometimes, on the “kindness of strangers” to survive. I had hoped reason would prevail.

Then, in relatively quick order, Congress passed the largest tax reduction legislation in modern history: a plan, which, by most accounts, will “gift” to the largest corporations and top 1 percent of the population a significant and permanent reduction of their overall tax burden. By most traditional financial indicators, a tax cut this large was not only unwarranted but also unnecessary, as corporations, sitting on piles of cash, were already benefiting from record stock market gains in a growing economy with nearly full employment.

Nonetheless, the argument went that the country needed “a win,” and while it seems like a “win” for the very well-off, it’s far from certain that much of the gain will “trickle down” and lift up those left below. At the same time, more conservative estimates of the cost of this tax reduction are in the neighborhood of \$1 trillion added to our debt during the next 10 years.



B'nai B'rith co-sponsored a HUD Section 202 Rally at the U.S. Capitol in June 2017.

Now, forgive me, but I used to think that being fiscally conservative meant being dedicated to “reducing” the debt. But alas, I’ve now learned that increasing deficits is no longer the key issue. It’s okay to enlarge the deficit by reducing the amount of taxes collected, because we can always reduce those deficits by, you guessed it, cutting the “spending” side of the ledger even more.

Unfortunately, the Administration has signaled that it’s the “entitlements” that are ruining the financial health of this country. And, according to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, “We are looking at welfare reform as a way to reduce spending.”

However, such antiseptic terms as

“welfare reform” and “entitlement reform” are really code for plans to shrink basic assistance for those less fortunate.

So, what does this mean to those unable to benefit from the holiday tax gift? How about further reducing their ability to afford basic health care and other assistance to struggling families, children, people with disabilities and others less fortunate? We know that Medicaid expansion is on the chopping block. Given that nearly half of Medicaid spending goes to seniors and persons with disabilities, there’s no way to make reasonable cuts without affecting them.

Workers were once told to rely on a “three-legged stool” for retirement: Social

# The New Tax Law, the Deficit and the Definition of Chutzpah

Security, pensions and savings? Well, today, traditional pensions have virtually disappeared, and other retirement plans have been reduced as more and more companies complain about their cost. As corporations merge or are bought, the employee pension plan is often the first benefit to go. This trend leaves more and more people dependent on Social Security for at least half of their retirement income.

These are benefits that wage earners, through withholding taxes for Social Security and Medicare, have been contributing to throughout their working years.

Slipped into the final tax bill was a provision removing the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act that required those who did not obtain health insurance to pay a penalty — an amount that helps support the system. Abolishing it all but ensures that health insurance premiums will rise, making an already expensive necessity even more so. As a result, the Congressional Budget Office estimates, 4 million people are expected to lose their insurance in 2019 and that number is expected to grow to more than 13 million uninsured by 2027.

Other areas already under consideration for cuts are certain to include the SNAP Program (formerly known as food stamps), which helps feed some 42 million low-income persons, including children, seniors and other adults with serious disabilities, and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which also affects this population.

In the Dec. 17 Washington Post, columnist Allan Sloan noted that the passage of the tax bill and the projected assault on the safety net programs in the guise of “welfare reform” are the pure definition of “chutzpah.” It is a colorful Yiddish word generally interpreted as “gall.” Perfect, I thought. I could not have stated it any better!

Passing the huge tax cut, with the implications for the debt, was apparently not enough for those who were advancing the legislation. The House Speaker immediately pivoted, and suggested that in the coming year, Congress will pursue cuts in programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, because, we now need to get the deficit under control.

To sum up: The new law adds to the deficit by permanently cutting taxes for corporations and the very well off, while “phasing out” whatever benefits that might inure to the rest of us after 10

**Medicaid cuts and caps hurt US**

1 in 5 Americans relies on Medicaid to stay healthy and independent. Medicaid cuts and per capita caps mean less care, lost jobs, and greater hardships for families, especially in rural areas.

**Congress: Don't cut and cap Medicaid**

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- United Cerebral Palsy
- The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
- The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
- Working Nurse Associations of America (WNA)

In June 2017, B'nai B'rith joined with 112 other organizations to express reservations about proposed cuts to Medicaid funding. This advertisement was in Politico.

years, and then its leading proponents “immediately” disclosed their intention to reduce the very debt the bill created by cutting the social programs that help the “not-so-well-off.”

In other words, in my humble opinion: Chutzpah!”

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

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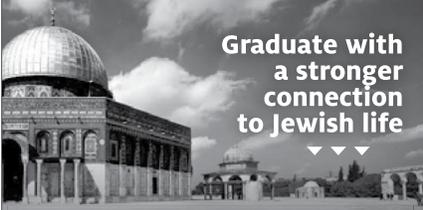
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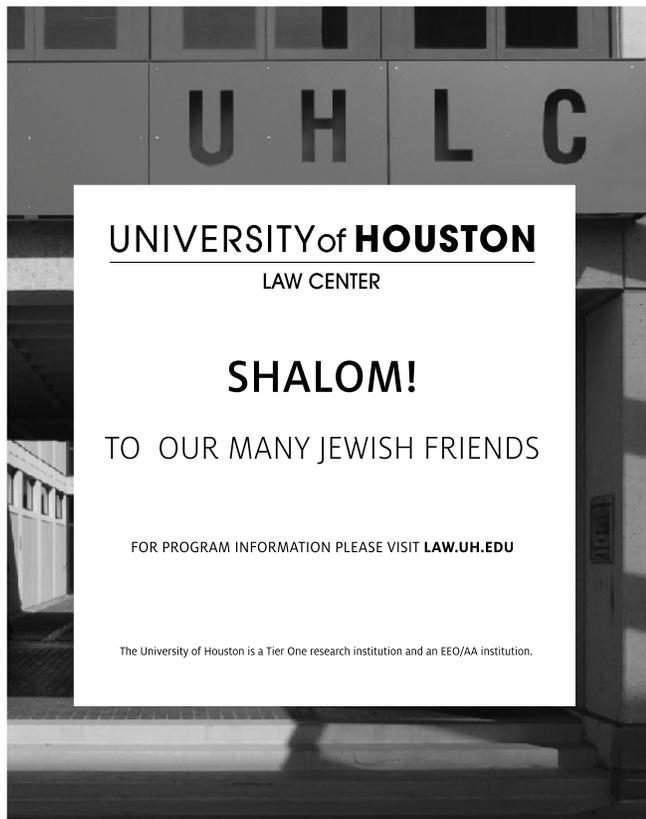
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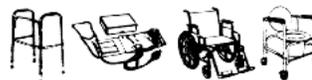


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