# A SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE PUBLISHED SINCE 1886 Winter 2018 VOL. 132, No. 4 MAGAZINE CELEBRA



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## Editor's Note

ne hundred and seventy-five years is a long time, unless you happen to be an ocean quahog, a species known to live for 507 years, or an Aldabra giant tortoise, up to 256 years. But for any human organization, 175 years is a milestone — and so we mark B'nai B'rith's reaching that venerable age with this special commemorative issue. In it, you will learn about the origins of the organization in the 1840s beer saloon culture of lower Manhattan. You will also learn about how members of B'nai B'rith played important roles in taming the Wild West, not just as merchants but as lawmen, legislators, mayors and more. In the Vault, we learn that the Jews' best presidential friend may have been William Howard Taft, who had special praise for B'nai B'rith.

On the institutional front, we welcome the inaugural column from B'nai B'rith's newly installed president, Charles O. Kaufman, an Austin, Texas, activist with a lot of new ideas and energy to take us into the future. We also replay recollections of recent past presidents who highlight their terms of office.

Along with this organization's milestone anniversary, we mark Israel's 70th birthday from its inception in 1948 as an internationally recognized Jewish state. B'nai B'rith International Executive Vice President and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin writes about ancient ties between biblical Israel and ancient Greece. We bring a new focus to food futures in the Galilee and, continuing with the culinary theme, we celebrate the foods of Tu B'Shevat, the holiday of the trees that comes next on Jan. 21, 2019. Is it too early to say Chag Sameach? If not, well, you heard it here first.

—Eugene L. Meyer

### From the Vault

SPECIAL 175TH ANNIVERSARY SECTION

## **Was William Howard Taft the Jews' Best Presidential** Friend? Who Knew?

By Cheryl Kempler

ho was the Jews' BPF, the best presidential friend? Candidates include Abraham Lincoln, for his knowledge and appreciation of the faith, and Ulysses S. Grant, appointing many of them to political positions and winning Jewish leader Simon Wolf's vote as best president for his co-religionists. A dark horse in the running is William Howard Taft (1857-1930), known for his support of the Jews and for his association with B'nai B'rith, a source of pride for the organization's members.

Taft was raised in Cincinnati, where Jews made an impact. He remembered "sitting at the feet" of the great rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who sometimes traded pulpits with the preacher at the Unitarian church where the future president worshipped.

A liberal Republican like Lincoln and Grant, Taft appointed Jews to political jobs during his presidency, 1909-1913. Pro-immigration, he toured Ellis Island,



Credit: B'nai B'rith Archives, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

Sporting his B'nai B'rith medal, President Taft poses with the Executive Committee after the White House presentation ceremony.

interceded for at least one Jewish family threatened with deportation, and twice vetoed bills that would have subjected new arrivals to literacy tests; at the end of his term, the Jewish population had increased by 33 percent, to 3 million.

Decrying anti-Semitism, he reprimanded the bigoted commandant at Fort Myer, Virginia, reinstated a Jewish soldier he had wrongly discharged, and condemned restricted clubs, including his own.

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# 12 A Mostly Warm Reception for Jews in Sub-Arctic Iceland

Iceland is a hot-spot for tourism, but there is also a tiny Jewish community there living amidst the scenic wonders. With the arrival of their first permanent rabbi, these Icelanders are discovering and embracing their Jewish heritage.

By Jennifer Lovy

16 Harvesting the Galilee's Culinary Riches

With gourmet foods, high quality ingredients and rich ethnic cuisines, the culinary scene in Israel has become a major cultural attraction. Much of the ingredients originate in the Galilee, and boosters have big plans to capitalize on its unique position.

By Maayan Hoffman

## 20 A Fresh Look at Tu B'Shevat

Historically, Zionists have used this holiday to connect the Diaspora with the Land of Israel and its impressive agriculture. Tu B'Shevat has also evolved into a holiday used to promote awareness of the environment and our duty to protect it. *By Paula Shoyer* 

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By Kenneth D. Ackerman

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Pioneering Jews made their way to the Gold Rush and mining boomtowns of the late 19th century, establishing businesses and B'nai B'rith Lodges. *By Cheryl Kempler* 





# FROM THE PRESIDENT 4 B'nai B'rith at 175: While Reflecting on the Past, Planning for the Future

By Charles O. Kaufman, President B'nai B'rith International

## B'NAI B'RITH ODAY

# 43 B'nai B'rith Global Leadership Forum and 175th Anniversary Celebration

New York City was the site of the annual Leadership Forum and Gala Dinner.
Other highlights included the presentation of the Label A. Katz Young Leadership Awards and election of officers for the 2018-2021 term.

# 52 Spotlight on Atlanta

B'nai B'rith has maintained a continuous presence in Atlanta since 1870. Today, Achim/Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith fills its calendar with service activities that make doing something for others a priority.

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Since 2006 B'nai B'rith International has been promoting tolerance and diversity through its Diverse Minds Writing Challenge, which asks high school students to create children's books that educate young people on the importance of accepting other people's differences.

# B'nai B'rith Housing: 2018 Congressional Visits

Each year, our Center for Senior Services coordinates congressional visits to B'nai B'rith housing nationwide, and 2018 included tours of senior residences in Florida, Illinois, Texas and New Jersey.

### **DEPARTMENTS**

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## B'nai B'rith at 175: While Reflecting on the Past, **Planning for the Future**

By Charles O. Kaufman B'nai B'rith International President



rganizations that celebrate 175 years — and there aren't many of them — have a strong mission, great resolve for success and an impressive ability to innovate. They evolve. B'nai B'rith began in the days of the horse and buggy, before the modern Zionist movement, to help widows and orphans.

Fast-forward 175 years, and here we are moving instantly like a magic carpet through the digital age. B'nai B'rith has built a proud history because we've shown that being nimble is the key to longevity. I would argue that we are not an old organization. Moses took 40 years to move more than 600,000 people across the Sinai and never reached the Promised Land.

In a mere 175 years, look what we've built since 1843, when 12 men met in New York at Sinsheimer's saloon: a network of brothers and sisters around the world; 38 senior housing developments in 28 communities; an incubator for a legion of legendary organizations; an influential non-governmental organization at the United Nations; and leadership that has made an indelible impact, from cabinet-level service in the United States to influencing the very establishment of the State of Israel. What's the real message here? We make a difference in the world every day.

The 32nd administration of B'nai

B'rith continues the tradition of innovating with reinvigorated resolve. Jews around the world want to know their organization is making a difference. Further, volunteers want to be empowered to make an impact. With B'nai B'rith International, supporters know that their investment is delivering a high rate of return. Perhaps the greatest dividends are the personal, global relationships. No one does that quite like B'nai B'rith. By definition, we are the children of the covenant. We consider the meaning of that name of paramount importance. It is emblazoned on our media and engraved in our souls.

So what's new for this 175-year-old organization? We are creating new and exciting avenues for people to grow B'nai B'rith programmatically and financially.

### Here's what's in progress:

- BBInnovate will target today's generation of digital and entrepreneurial pioneers, who work to improve life and connect with those around the world, including the Jewish State, to win global allies.
- The Anti-Semitism Action Group. In the face of horrifying anti-Semitism, B'nai B'rith is going to reinvigorate its once groundbreaking work. B'nai B'rith again must do more heavy lifting in this

area — and we have the global network of people to have eyes and ears everywhere.

We will educate and expose through confronting anti-Semitism with this new action group. B'nai B'rith's Never Means Never public Facebook page is a great tool for useful, shareable videos and information. If you have the fire to work with this action group in a nonpartisan way, B'nai B'rith is the place to be.

- The Mental Health Action Group. We will augment our legendary work with senior issues with this added focus. The World Health Organization reports mental health issues affect one in four people in the world. Mental health is a complex issue that affects the lives of people of all ages, from youths to seniors. The program will launch in 2019.
- B'nai B'rith Barristers. B'nai B'rith has a long history of leadership among men and women in the legal profession. This group gives B'nai B'rith a unique opportunity to bring together strategically this group of professionals to influence our work in advocacy, public policy and with technological startups. It promises to be an excellent international networking opportunity.
- Building on Pillar Programs. These groups will build on our Israel advocacy at the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Paris. The great "Hall of Winds" is often a virtual tornado with its built-in bias against Israel. Bold, new messages are

influencing slight shifts in U.N. voting. While the slog may be impossibly long and hard, the U.N. and its agencies, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), remain the places where we can and must point out mounting false narratives against Israel. We are going to raise our voices with greater volume not only to our adversaries but also within our own community in an effort to educate a new generation. Our newly renovated Bronx senior housing development will usher in a new era of creating quality affordable senior housing around the globe, utilizing all available subsidy programs, including the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

• Ambassadors. We are going to provide innovative opportunities for top-level donors in a new Ambassadors program. Perhaps you're interested in becoming an ambassador from your country to the land of your ancestors.

This ambitious program can and will happen because we have amazing volunteers around the world and even more amazing staff. That is no more evident than in the wisdom, skill, style and overall leadership of our CEO, Dan Mariaschin. Dan is recognized the world over as simply the best in the business. In many of our sessions foreign leaders, whose countries face great political adversity, frequently seek his opinion. Throughout his 30-plus year career at B'nai B'rith, I have come to cherish his counsel and friendship.

What I have experienced in four decades in the B'nai B'rith family is that everyone has an opportunity to have

an impact in the Jewish world. The organization works best when its leaders connect people and communicate with each other. We will do both across the spectrum. We are reviving the International Council of B'nai B'rith meetings early in the summer. Where do you want to meet and see Jewish history — and perhaps your heritage — firsthand? Lisbon? Barcelona? Krakow? Rome? Venice? We want to hear from you.

Beyond missions to United Nations agencies, our International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy (ICHRPP) has organized missions in recent years to India, Azerbaijan, Georgia and several European capitals. What's on the horizon? Maybe China? Africa? These missions uniquely offer visits with heads of state and other national leaders, not to mention visits with our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora.

B'nai B'rith reaches 175 years not merely reflecting on its past but planning for the future. It is our nature as Jews to strive for high standards, excellence and then for further improvement. We are ambitious and bold. It's who we are. It's what we do. Each year during the High Holiday season we reflect on the past year and focus on our flaws and ask for forgiveness. We repent. But as much as anything, we acknowledge that more is expected of us and we can do better. No matter how successful we are in the coming year, we will strive to improve in the next year and in the next. And that's what allows B'nai B'rith to stand the test of time.

It's an exciting time to get involved.

Reach me at <a href="mailto:president@bnaibrith.org">president@bnaibrith.org</a>

### B'NAI B'RITH M A G A Z I N E WINTER 2018 VOL. 132. NO. 4

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## The Greek Connection, Then and Now

By Daniel S. Mariaschin
B'nai B'rith International Executive Vice President and CEO



ome time ago, my colleague Alan Schneider, who heads the B'nai B'rith International World Center in Jerusalem, told me of a historical connection I'd not heard of before.

Ancient Sparta may have been in contact with the people of Israel sometime in the third century B.C.E., he said. The reference to these ties is from the first Book of Maccabees, where King Areus I, who ruled for 40 years in Sparta, is said to have written to Onias, the High Priest, suggesting a common background from "the stock of Abraham," and, in an offer of friendship declared, "...your cattle and goods are ours, and ours are yours."

My conversation with Alan came against the backdrop of the ever-closer relations being forged among Greece, Cyprus and Israel. The past dozen years or so have seen tremendous strides in the development of natural gas fields in the Mediterranean off the shores of all three countries and in plans to build pipelines to Europe. Tourism has also risen, and there have been closer military ties, as instability and chaos have racked the eastern Mediterranean.

During this period, B'nai B'rith has forged excellent working relationships with two Greek-American organizations, AHEPA (the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association) and the American Hellenic Institute (AHI). In many ways, these relationships are a natu-



The conference logo, rendered in the blue tonalities of the flags of Greece and Israel, incorporates the olive branch motif which identifies the flag of Cyprus.

ral: Jewish and Greek immigrants arrived in the United States in large numbers in the late 19th and 20th centuries. They often lived near each other in big cities and small towns.

In my hometown of Keene, New Hampshire, there were small communities of both groups. Our synagogue was located not far from the Greek Orthodox Church. Greek and Jewish merchants (including my parents) had shops and restaurants on Main Street. We were classmates and teammates and members of local civic clubs and other organizations.

Indeed, AHEPA can look back on a significant act that touched American Jews during a time of great turmoil. As reported in B'nai B'rith's national magazine, members who attended its 1938



Conference participants and sponsors: From left: Dr. E. Lianos Liantis, special secretariat for Cultural Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Victor Batis, president, B'nai B'rith Philon Lodge, Athens; Rita Gabbai, Philon Lodge vice-president; Professor Noah Hacham, Hebrew University; Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith executive vice president and CEO.



Conference participants: From left: Angelos Kolokouris, president, Greek-Israeli Cooperation Institute; Lt. Gen. (ret.) Theologos Symeonidis, director of the Greek Defense Minister's Office; Evangelos Valiotis, former mayor of Sparta; Lt. Gen. Alkiviadis Stefanis, chief of staff of the Hellenic Army; Adamantia Tzanetea, deputy governor of the Sparta region; Stavros Argitakos, mayor of Sparta; Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith executive vice president and CEO; Victor Batis, B'nai B'rith Philon Lodge president, Athens.

national convention passed a resolution against Hitler, "condemning the inhuman and cruel persecution of a race and faith which has given so much to the world. Members of AHEPA and American citizens of Greek descent are bound to their co-citizens of the Hebrew faith with manifold ties."

Relationships abroad, though, have not always been so cooperative. Greece had close relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization for many years and was among the last European Union member states to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. Today, Greece's Golden Dawn party often uses anti-Semitic rhetoric in its public pronouncements, and there have been acts of desecration — graffiti-daubing of Jewish cemeteries and monuments.

But given the turnaround in relations between Greece and Israel some 10 years ago, we looked to our Greek colleagues to see how we could support what has been called the "tripartite arrangement," which includes Cyprus, a majority-Greek island nation. Joined by the leadership of the Conference of Presidents of



After delivering the conference's keynote speech, Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith executive vice president and CEO, is honored with the Institute's 2018 King Areus Leadership Award.

Major American Jewish Organizations, we've organized two high-level leadership missions to Greece, Cyprus and Israel, together with AHEPA and AHI, meeting with top officials and Jewish community leaders to deepen the ties already being cemented.

Meanwhile, at the governmental level, there have been a number of meetings involving the prime ministers of Israel and Greece and the president

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### Was William Howard Taft the Jews' Best Presidential Friend? Who Knew?



Image courtesy of Rodef Shalom Congregation Archives, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Taft's May 1909 arrival at Pittsburgh's Rodef Shalom Congregation, where he became the first president to speak at a synagogue during Sabbath services. Its rabbi, J. Leonard Levy, was a prominent B'nai B'rith member.

Taft was the first president to speak at a synagogue during Sabbath services, and the first to confer at the White House with a rabbinic delegation, when he covered his head in deference. He advocated Zionist aims.

Taft's public statements and private letters evidence the era's positive and negative Jewish stereotypes. He needed their

votes, but he honestly liked many Jewish people, including B'nai B'rith presidents Wolf and Adolph Kraus, whom he addressed as "my friends" in his letters.

Welcoming B'nai B'rith delegates at a White House reception during the 1910 Republican National Convention, Taft received a standing ovation when he spoke at the closing banquet two days

> later. That evening, and in all of his later speeches, Taft especially acknowledged the Jews in Cincinnati whose contributions realized his wife, Nelly's dream of establishing an orchestra there. Taft praised their values and civic spirit: "They are

artistic and appreciate anything that is artistic. They make excellent citizens... the aristocrats of this world make the best Republicans" and described B'nai B'rith as "a model Jewish society.... that can be a model for all societies."

"The Jewish Exponent" judged Taft's remarks as "...a sincere conviction based on his own experience." Whatever his motivation, his words must have moved many who had heard only derogatory comments from leaders in their native lands.

### The Battle over Abrogation

Sincere or not, Taft would experience a rift with the Jewish community. Striving to end violent pogroms, blood trials and forced expulsions, the American Jewish Committee pressed Taft to nullify an 1832 commercial treaty with Russia, allowing Americans unrestricted travel. Since 1890, Russia had violated its provisions by denying admittance to all foreign Jews. AJC leaders were convinced that this nullification would pressure Russia into recognizing the rights of all Jews, including its own. Meeting with AJC and B'nai B'rith in February 1911, Taft announced his refusal, reasoning that abrogation might subject Russia's Jews to retaliation and harm American companies operating factories there. Declaring "This means war," — foretelling his course of action in actively opposing the president's decision — AJC leader Louis Marshall exited the room with philanthropist Jacob Schiff, who declined to shake the president's hand. As historian Carole Fink writes, both were "stung by their government's tacit acceptance of





Geschenk zur Silberhochzeit, 6. Juli 1911 (B'mai B'rith News, Sept. 1911 Nr. 1 S. 3).

Credit: : B'nai B'rith Archives, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

B'nai B'rith members in Germany and elsewhere took pride in the medal and Silver Anniversary present given to Taft, including pictures of them in their newsletters.



Credit: B'nai B'rith Archives, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives,

B'nai B'rith leader, attorney and diplomat Simon Wolf relied on the relationships he maintained with Presidents Lincoln, Grant and Taft to intercede on behalf of causes important to Jews all over the world.

second class citizenship for Jews."

In an historic move, the buttoned down German Jewish AJC members — who had previously approached the solving of problems through private one-on-one meetings — adopted a new tactic, appealing to the public. Speaking out nationwide, Marshall wrote pamphlets and editorials accusing Russia of infringing American values and arguing that when one group is singled out, "every American is insulted." Agreeing with him, Americans who had been fighting against Russia's anti-Jewish policies for some years inundated Congress with letters and petitions, including some from prominent Christian citizens.

B'nai B'rith leaders worked with AJC to accomplish its goal but were careful not to alienate the president. It appears that Taft bore no animosity to Wolf, who continued to see and advise him.

Speaking at an Argo Lodge meeting in May 1911, Taft shared the dais with

Wolf in Washington to call for a statue honoring Haym Solomon, who helped finance the American Revolution. In July, Wolf was at the White House to deliver the Tafts' anniversary gift from B'nai B'rith, a silver Hebrew engraved desk-top version of the Ten Commandments, designed by Kraus.

After 500 ministers staged a pro-abrogation demonstration in early November, Taft conferred with B'nai B'rith members he had appointed to political positions, and talked with Kraus and Wolf on Dec. 6. That month, the vote to abrogate passed by 301 to 1 in the House, and carried unanimously in the Senate. On Dec. 31, 1911, Taft signed the bill with a pen he then gave to B'nai B'rith as a souvenir.

Indignant at America's diplomatic breach, Russia retaliated with economic sanctions; its anti-Jewish policies did not change. After the 1918 revolution, anti-Semitism was outlawed as being antithetical to Soviet ideology, but the climate of hate, discrimination and violence remained the same, to which was now added the new official policy of suppression of all religious beliefs.

At the White House on Jan. 5, 1913, Taft received B'nai B'rith's first President's Gold Medal, its highest award, for "fearlessly, justly and vigorously enunciate[ing] doctrines and maintain[ing] positions on questions in which the Jewish people have been vitally interested." Taft declared that "the genius, the strength of your race, needs a free country like the United State to develop [and] flower, and enable you to show the world ... your wonderful capacity as supporters of law and order in a government of freedom."

Days later, Taft celebrated B'nai B'rith's 70th anniversary at New York's Temple Emanuel, where he accommodated the

overflow crowd by twice delivering his speech about Jewish civil rights in Europe.

### **After the White House**

Taft taught at Yale Law School until 1921, when he was appointed to the Supreme Court. With a reputation as an authority in Jewish matters, Taft quipped that the frequency of his participation at Jewish functions made him feel like a rabbi. Taft's speeches and essays on anti-Semitism, which he attributed to Christian bias through history, advocated an ethical stance he had originally rejected: "...this country has no right to withhold the use of power when the civic equality of the Jews is at stake." B'nai B'rith published texts of Taft's National Geographic Society and Anti-Defamation League lectures on subjects including "The Worldwide Struggle for Jewish Equality."

Cheered in New Haven at a B'nai B'rith event honoring World War I servicemen on Sept. 2, 1919, the former president promoted the Treaty of Versailles as key to Europe's democratization. Celebrating Kraus' 70th birthday banquet in Chicago in 1920, Taft returned to the city to speak at the Ramah lodge, describing anti-Semitism as "the noxious weed that must be cut away. It has no place in free America."

In a letter published nationwide in January 1921, Taft and Woodrow Wilson's names headed a list of 120 prominent gentile academics, artists, authors and statesmen condemning Henry Ford's publication of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," outlining the supposed plan for Jewish world domination. The letter exhorted "our fellow citizens of the Christian faith," particularly clergy, to unite in the fight against anti-Semitism.

### The Greek Connection, Then and Now

of Cyprus. The mutual agendas are becoming longer, as the relationships have moved closer.

For B'nai B'rith, there are historical ties to Greece. The first lodge in that country was organized in Thessaloniki in 1914. Its members were community leaders who pioneered programs in social welfare services, education and publishing. Before World War I, Jews comprised nearly half the population of Thessaloniki. An Athens lodge ("Philon") was founded in 1924, followed by a women's lodge ("Judith"), and its members, too, engaged in important programs in the Athens Jewish community.

All of that came to a tragic end with the Holocaust, which saw 90 percent of Greek Jews killed, most deported to death camps. In 1955, Philon Lodge was re-established and has since carried on the work of B'nai B'rith in the country.

Which brings us back to Sparta.

The leadership of B'nai B'rith Greece, headed by its president Victor Batis, and its vice-president Rita Gabbai, along with Dr. Angelos Kolokouris, chairman of the Greek-Israeli Cooperation Institute, proposed a conference that would serve two purposes: to honor past relationships and to support current initiatives that foster closer ties among the three countries.

The result was the "Sparta-Israel Conference: Renewing an Ancient Friendship." Held at a hotel near the city of Sparta, the gathering attracted political figures, Jewish leaders and scholars from Greece and Israel who spoke about the era of King Areus and the possible ties to ancient Israel. The chief of the Hellenic Defense Forces (the Greek Army) attended, as did the director general of the Greek Ministry of Defense, who briefed the attendees. The mayor of Sparta, the deputy governor of the Peloponnese

region and a representative of the Greek Foreign Ministry all delivered remarks, as did a representative of the Israeli Embassy in Athens, who read a message from Ambassador Irit Ben-Aba.

Topics ranged from the "Jewish Presence in [ancient] Laconia" to "The Aspect of Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean" to the subject of my keynote address, "Global Philanthropy and B'nai B'rith."

The conference in Sparta is yet another flagstone on the path to developing the kinds of meaningful ties that will benefit Israelis, Greeks and Cypriots, together with the Greek and Jewish diasporas. By combining lessons of ancient ties with real-time geopolitical and economic relations, a strong case for future cooperation was made.

Once again, B'nai B'rith, with its longstanding experience as an international organization, is making its presence felt. •

### PODCAST HOSTED BY B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL CEO DANIEL S. MARIASCHIN

# Frank Goldman on His Grandfather's Role As an Advocate for Israel



Learn about B'nai B'rith's incredible role in the U.S. recognition of the nascent State of Israel in this featured podcast. Frank Goldman, president of B'nai B'rith Denver, who earned the 2018 Label A. Katz Young Leadership Award in October, talks with CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin about the Goldman patriarch's role as an advocate for Israel.

Frank Goldman is the grandson of B'nai B'rith President Frank Goldman, who served as president from 1947-1953. "Papa Frank" was instrumental in helping convince U.S. President Harry S. Truman to recognize the State of Israel, and organized a crucial meeting between Truman and Israeli President Chaim Weizmann.

Goldman has spoken about his family's connection to this historical event to B'nai B'rith International, and to Lowell High School in Lowell, Massachusetts, Temple Emanuel in Denver and the JCC in Denver. And now on our podcast.



Tune in here: https://bit.ly/2znJ03l

# SOME HAVE WELL GUARDED TRADE SECRETS





# A Mostly Warm Reception for Jews in Sub-Arctic Iceland

By Jennifer Lovy

ike Levin had a fairly easy time getting matzah for his Passover Seders in Iceland, a North Atlantic island nation located just south of the Arctic Circle. But then the NATO base there closed and the soldiers, including a handful of Jewish troops, left in 2006 and access to the unleavened bread came to an abrupt halt.

Fortunately for Levin and the 30 to 40 other Icelandic residents who planned to celebrate Passover together that year, a pre-Pesach package arrived from Levin's mom in the United States. It cost her \$75 in postage to get five boxes of matzah to Levin who was, and still is, one of a small group of Jews living in Iceland.

Levin, 57, is a Chicago native who met his Icelandic wife while attending music school in Vienna. The couple moved to Iceland in 1986. Despite living there for more than three decades, Levin said he hasn't gotten around to applying for Icelandic citizenship. The couple currently resides in Reykjavik, the country's capital and largest city.

For years, Levin had been the go-to guy on all things Jewish in Iceland. He was occasionally asked to attend events as the representative of the Jewish community, and he was involved in organizing communal gatherings, mostly for Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah and Passover.

"Sometimes holidays would go by without anything happening," said Levin, a Reform Jew whose motivation for coordinating all these get-togethers was to give his children, Icelandic citizens who are now 23 and 25 and still living in Iceland, exposure to their Jewish heritage.

### **Enter Chabad**

Levin got a break as the unofficial Jewish emissary in May 2018 when — by way of Brooklyn — Rabbi Avi Feldman, 28, and his Swedish wife Mushky, 27, arrived in Reykjavik with their two young daughters and established the Chabad Jewish Center of Iceland. Mushky gave birth to their third daughter in Iceland in September.

According to Feldman, the center is operating on a first-year budget of \$250,000, with donations coming

from international sources, members of the local community and visitors. The center does not currently have a physical structure, so the Feldmans host gatherings at various locations, mainly hotels, in Reykjavik.

Aside from some temporary military congregations when British and American soldiers were stationed there during World War II and at the NATO base, which Jewish clergy visited until it closed in 2006, the Chabad center is the first Jewish establishment in Iceland intended to be permanent, with Feldman serving as the country's first long-term rabbi.

Feldman is outwardly upbeat about his new role in Iceland, a country that not only has a relatively homogenous population — more than 74 percent of Icelanders are Lutherans — but also is a nation that has, for centuries, been criticized for anti-Semitism.

Former Icelander and Jewish researcher Vilhjálmur Örn Vilhjálmsson, wrote an article titled "Iceland, the Jews, and Anti-Semitism, 1625-2004." In it, he documented incidents of anti-Semitism, including the 1938 deportation of a German Jewish refugee to Denmark. Icelandic authorities publicly offered to cover all costs for his expulsion to Nazi Germany if he wasn't allowed in Denmark. Other similar incidents became known, decades later, in the late 1990s.

Earlier this year, a Jewish News Syndicate op-ed piece offered harsh criticism of Iceland's treatment and attitude toward Jews. Using words like wretched, its author, Manfred Gerstenfeld, wrote that during Lent, "Daily hymns full of hatred for the Jews are read out by distinguished citizens and broadcast on Iceland's public radio station."

The Feldmans' arrival in this North Atlantic island country coincided with a proposed ban on circumcisions in Iceland. The measure looked headed for passage until international pressure put an end to it. While some argued that this proposal had discriminatory undertones, others maintained it was an ethical debate.

### The Jewish Census

Just how many Jews live in Iceland? According to Levin, there are no more than 50 Jewish residents. "But I count the people who show up. Chabad counts anyone with any Jewish connection."

Feldman's number goes as high as 250, and he's optimistic he will find more among the country's approximately 350,000 residents, because there are many remote villages scattered throughout the 40,000 square-mile island nation.

"It's not about the numbers," said Feldman. "Iceland has a small population in general and a small Jewish population. What's most important are the personal relationships and being able to appreciate each individual."

In the few months that Chabad has been in Iceland, the Feldmans have hosted weekly Shabbat dinners and services, Torah classes and holiday gatherings, and offered a variety of Jewish programing. In the fall of 2018 it introduced a Sunday school program that started with 10 students between the ages of seven and 12.

With 2 million visitors a year, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Iceland is one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in the world, so it's hardly surprising that during the summer months Chabad regularly hosted between 40 and 70 people for Shabbat diners, attracted through word of mouth and the internet.

During these kosher meals, guests typically dine on food such as salmon, challah, fruits, grains and vegetables. Kosher meat is unobtainable in



Rabbi Avi Feldman and Mushky Feldman with their daughters.



Yudi Namdar (Rabbi Feldman's brother-in-law, left) assists a visitor with tefillin on the streets of Reykjavik.

Iceland, due to the country's strict regulations on the importation of meat and the fact that there is no way to perform a kosher slaughter. Feldman is working on getting the necessary permits to import kosher meat, as has been done by Jews in other countries with similar bans and small Jewish populations.

Beyond the meals, Jewish programing and services, Feldman spent his early months building relationships with members of the greater Icelandic community by meeting, for example, with leaders of the similarly small Muslim community, as well as with a number of government officials. He described those interactions as very positive and said much of the conversations were about his plans for Chabad and about allowing the participants an opportunity to get to know each other.

"Everyone here has been so nice and friendly. We've really enjoyed meeting the local community," says Feldman. "All kinds of people walk up to me and ask if they can take a selfie with me because they see us in the news."

### The Jewish Demographic

Who are the Jewish Icelanders? They have included the former Icelandic first lady Dorrit Moussaieff (2003-2016), a wealthy Israeli jewelry designer and businesswoman who

married the nation's former president Olafur Ragnar Grimsson. However, Levin said she never connected with the local Jewish community, despite several invitations to participate in a number of Jewish celebrations.

Most of Iceland's Jews live in or near the capital city of Reykjavik, where a majority of them are married to Icelanders. For as few Jews as there are in Iceland, there are even fewer couples where both spouses are Jewish.

Israeli-born Andrea Rose Cheatham Kasper is one of the few Jews whose husband is also Jewish. During the five years they spent there, one of the places they lived was a remote fishing village along the northern coast where Jacob worked at a marine research facility.

When the couple first arrived in Iceland they had a six-month old daughter. Their son was born there and both children learned to speak English, Hebrew and Icelandic. A job ultimately brought the family back to the United States. They currently live in West Hartford, Connecticut, where Kasper is the head of a Jewish day school.

While in Iceland, Kasper had conversations with other Jewish residents about getting Judaism recognized as an official religion. Other religions, including Islam and Buddhism, in addition to the dominant Lutheran

religion, have designations that allow tax dollars to be used for religious purposes.

Because getting such a designation carries the requirement that a certain number of individuals from the religion register with the government, many Jews, particularly those from Europe, are reluctant to pursue it, said Kasper.

Kasper and other Jews in Iceland acknowledged incidents of anti-Semitism but said they had not personally experienced outright discrimination. In some scenarios, they felt, it was more an issue of ignorance than hate. Levin mentioned an incident where many years ago he received an anonymous message stating: "Jew, go back to New York," but nothing recently.

"We found that people in Iceland had no exposure to Judaism but were open and curious," recalled Kasper. "There definitely is a strong voice against what Israel does, and that can feel threatening and uncomfortable for some people."

Similarly, a number of Israeli tourists visiting during the summer found Icelanders to be inquisitive about their religion and nationality.

Israelis Ran and Dorit Cohen, along with Zvika and Shoshi Hadash, spent 16 days traveling around Iceland last

dory Grove

Photo credit: Jennifer Lovy

A resident of Iceland since 2004, California transplant Glenn Barkan, owner of the Café Babalu in Reykjavik, displays the menorah sent from the United States by his mother alongside Iceland's flag.

summer. They went to catch a glimpse of a country that boasts some of the most beautiful and diverse topography in the world, including waterfalls, geysers, glaciers, volcanos, lava fields and black-sand beaches.

The Cohens and Hadashs are among an increasing number of Israeli tourists looking for new and unique summer vacations. WOW Air, an Icelandic-based low-fare, no-frills airline, took notice of the uptick in Israeli tourists and in September 2017 began direct seasonal service between Reykjavik and Tel Aviv. Expanding into the Israeli market presented somewhat of a learning curve for this airline that initially offered ham sandwiches to passengers.

One of the highlights of the trip, according to Dorit, was staying at a bed and breakfast in the Westfjords, the most sparsely inhabited region of Iceland where they got to know their hosts well. The hostess, upon learning they were Israeli, asked if they needed kosher meals.

"Iceland is becoming more and more popular with a lot of Israelis. Everyone was so friendly. One waitress got so excited to talk to us when she heard us speaking Hebrew," said Dorit.

Among the full-time Jewish residents is Glenn Barkan, who was living in Los Angeles when he met Thorhallur Vihjalmsson, an Icelandic citizen working in the United States on a temporary visa. When Vihjalmsson's visa expired, same-sex marriages were not yet an option in the United States, so he had to leave the country. But in Iceland, they were already legal.

With his 94-year-old grandmother's blessing, Barkan moved to Reykjavik, where the couple wed in 2004. The ceremony was performed by a priest and a family friend. They had hoped

to have a cantor but couldn't find one to travel to Iceland so close to the High Holy Days.

The priest learned and recited some Hebrew wedding prayers. Barkan made a chuppah and together the newlyweds stomped on a glass, as guests responded with shouts of "mazel tov" and "skál" — a traditional Viking toast. They also had members of the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra incorporate Yiddish klezmer into their celebration.



Photo credit: Jennifer Lovy

Attracted by Iceland's unique scenic beauty, Jewish tourists receive a warm welcome at the Chabad.

# Harvesting the Galilee's Culinary Riches

By Maayan Hoffman

ith gourmet foods, high-quality ingredients and rich ethnic cuisines, the culinary scene in Israel has become a major cultural attraction. Many of the ingredients originate in the Galilee, and boosters have big plans to capitalize on its unique position.

Strikingly, some 40 percent of Israel's gross food production is taking place in the area bordered by Lebanon on the north and the Hula Valley to the south. In the Galilee region, farmers cultivate some of the country's finest spices and wine grapes, and some of the most advanced agricultural products are supplied to the entire State of Israel.

Yet, for decades the Upper Eastern Galilee region has lost population, especially among those in the 20-to-40 age bracket (a -.6 percent per year trend), according to Eric Michaelson, chief Israel officer for Jewish National Fund-USA (JNF). He said unemployment numbers in the region are high, lack of quality jobs is a "weak link," and upper level education opportunities are limited.

### BUT SOME SAY THE TIDE WILL SOON TURN.

Credit for all photos except the map: Maayan Hoffman.

Recently, Israel Initiative 2020 (ii2020) — a nongovernmental organization working to expand Israel's "Startup Nation" image to all of its sectors and regions — JNF, local academic institutions and research centers, and the national and municipal government joined together around a common vision: to turn the Upper Eastern Galilee into a global center of food-tech and agri-tech.

"We want to be the Silicon is Valley of food," said Ofir Senjamin, a lecturer in the food science department at Tel-Hai College in northern Israel.

Erel Margalit, ii2020 founder, said a long process began in 2014 to identify the technological issue where the Galilee can lead, not only in Israel but globally.

Margalit, whose company Jerusalem Venture Partners (JVP) recently ranked among the world's six top-performing venture capital firms, established Jerusalem's media quarter, turning a British Mandate-era National Mint and Ottoman-era store-houses into an innovation and cultural hub housing JVP, startups, a business accelerator and performing arts organizations.

Then, he took his vision to the southern city of Beersheba, where JVP created a cybersecurity innovation hub that helped attract large multinationals, which opened cybersecurity research and development centers, sometimes after acquiring Israeli startups, transforming a city where camels roam to a world cybersecurity leader.

Now, he hopes to do the same in the Galilee, bringing an expected 15,000 new tech jobs and 25,000 additional jobs to the area within the next five years.

"The biggest problem for young people in Kiryat Shmona [the Upper Eastern Galilee's largest city] is job opportunities," said former Eastern Galilee Region ii2020 director Ofir Yehezkeli. "The education



The Galilee, situated in the north of Israel, is characterized by its beautiful lush land-scape and its agriculture. This picture was taken from the rooftop of Tel-Hai College.

system in the area is good. So, you get educated and leave for the army with many dreams and tools to achieve them. Then, you realize you cannot achieve your dreams if you return home to northern Israel, so you settle in the center of the country. I came back to change that."

Yehezkeli said it became immediately obvious that for the region to succeed, it could not just "helicopter in an industry from somewhere else" but needed to play off its existing strengths.

There are already seven agricultural technology incubators and small research centers,

surrounded by 80,000 acres of farmland. The local agricultural industry — fresh produce, food-tech and other agricultural assets — is valued at more than \$2 billion per annum.

In September 2015, Rutgers University, Tel-Hai College and the State of New Jersey formed the New Jersey–Israel Healthy, Functional, and Medical Foods Alliance, which works with Galilee-region startups developing technology for healthier prepared foods.

Moreover, "the unique topography and climate," said Dr. Orna Harel, business development vice president for MIGAL—Galilee Research Institute, "makes it that some 70 percent of all types of crops grown around the world can be grown in the Galilee."

Globally, the ag-biotech industry is estimated to have about \$35 billion a year invested. By 2030, it is expected to be a \$111 trillion industry, according to ii2020 spokesman Nisan Zeevi.

The new plan for the Upper Eastern Galilee involves building the Beit Asher innovation center for the food industry that will include a culinary academy, restaurants, hotels, agricultural research and development and food companies using new technologies to produce better, safer or more affordable food.

Beit Asher — a food-tech hub Zeevi called the project's "beating heart" — will be a center for economic and urban development. The hub will

bring together agricultural research centers under one roof to create a power center of knowledge. Work by ii2020 began on Beit Asher in November.

"Beit Asher is an opportunity to realize a dynamic vision of a startup nation's ability to lead the global food-tech industry from Kiryat Shmona," said JNF's Michaelson, noting that Kiryat Shmona as the area's largest city will serve as the main catalyst.

Zeevi said several major companies — from PepsiCo, Nestle and Tesco to Mondelēz International, DuPont and Ferrero Rocher — have already toured the area or expressed interest.

Further, in January 2017, the government approved \$450 million in incentives to support this food-tech vision. That could save companies interested in relocating to the north up to 25 percent in taxes. The government also committed funds for expanding regional academia, establishing a food-tech clinical research center, opening the National Food Research Institute, relocating the Wine Research Institute and designating a regional industrial zone for food-tech.

The National Food Institute Biotechnology Incubator will also open, linking science and the agriculture industry and attracting strategic international entrepreneurs and investors to establish startups.

"A student will finish at Tel-Hai College with a food-tech startup in mind," said Yehezkeli. "The



A research team at Tel-Hai College focuses on creating a palatable version of bread made of grasshopper and fly flour.



Researchers at MIGAL Galilee Research Institute are studying how to increase production and maximize grasshoppers' protein content. Shown here: a small grasshopper cage located in a team member's private office.

startup will enter the accelerator and get the help it needs to transform itself into a company. Then, it will move into the technology incubator and get support from the Food Research Institute. Eventually, the company will move into the Beit Asher food-tech park. We'll be to food-tech what Beersheba is to cyber."

### From Baklava to Grasshoppers

MIGAL Galilee Research Institute, an organization specializing in biotechnology, environmental and agriculture sciences, along with Tel-Hai College, is to play a key role in the region's transformation from the periphery to the center of Israel's food industry.

MIGAL has 300 employees, who help farmers make more efficient use of water and pesticides and adopt best agricultural practices.

Recently, MIGAL researchers developed a miniature sensor for assessing water potential. The sensor optimizes irrigation, reduces water consumption and increases fruit production and quality. Harel said the sensor is embedded in tree trunks, vines, and plants — "basically doing surgery on the tree" — and then provides information based on statistical analysis.

Less than a 10-minute drive away, at Tel-Hai College, students focus on food innovation. Last year, one student developed a low-sugar baklava. Another created apples infused with vegetable juices. This year, one lab is working to make bread from grasshoppers and flour.

Students are testing these flours to determine

how best to maintain the protein in grasshoppers while ensuring a palatable smell and taste. If it works, Benjamin said, grasshopper flour could play a major role in countering world hunger.

"Grasshoppers have 40 percent to 50 percent more protein than meat," said Benjamin. "The idea would be to bring this to developing countries. It is much easier to deliver bags of flour than cattle, and we could also in theory help them learn to grow these insects."



Map of Upper Galilee.

Hargol FoodTech, located in the Galilee's Moshav Elifelet, is doing just that at the world's first commercial grasshopper farm.

Chief Executive Officer Dror Tamir said when he discovered that grasshoppers are one of the world's most efficient sources of protein he wanted to tap into the market. Hargol — the word for grasshopper in the Bible — has cornered the grasshopper market.

First, it came up with a system to raise grasshoppers year-round. Second, Hargol reduced the grasshopper incubation period from 40 to two weeks, making it possible to farm more grasshoppers. Its vertical farming cages allow Hargol to increase grasshopper production 10 times over what would occur in nature.

"Demand is 100 times higher than production capability," said Tamir, noting that in the last year, PepsiCo, Whole Foods and IKEA announced they would start using grasshopper protein.

"People eat it fried in oil with salt and pepper," said Tamir. "In Mexico, they have it with chilis; in Japan, with teriyaki sauce ... It's kosher and halal, and in the New Testament, John the Baptist ate grasshoppers dipped in honey. Some even believe grasshoppers were the manna from heaven."

### **Beauty and Diversity**

Then again, those who live in the Galilee think heaven is their home.

"We're the most beautiful region in Israel," boasted Eastern Galilee Regional Cluster CEO Nurit Tsur Rabino.

Indeed, the Upper Galilee is a microclimate where fertile lands, mountains and rivers create a thriving agricultural region. There is as much diversity in the products grown as in the people who harvest and use them. Citrus and apples grow alongside wine grapes, avocados, corn, olives, herbs, pomegranates and stone fruits. There are also well-known caviar producers,

an immense fishing industry, cattle, dairy, lamb and poultry.

Kiryat Shmona is also home to a diverse population that includes Lebanese, Syrians, Druze, Moroccans and Persians.

"I hope to bring these disparate flavors and cultures together around a common table," said spice blender and chef Lior Lev Sercarz, who with the support of JNF will oversee the final ingredient of this edible transformation: a "Culinary Village" that will strive to immerse students in a challenging and inspiring farm-to-kitchen education.

"We'll have a farm dedicated to the institute, so students can work with farmers and see how the produce they use is made," said Sercarz.

The Culinary Village will collaborate with Tel-Hai College, Beit Asher, MIGAL, local agriculture, wineries, breweries, restaurants and an international culinary institution. It will offer degrees in culinary science, nutrition and in the business of culinary arts. Groundbreaking on the \$3.5 million facility is planned for October 2019.

"The academy will attract a growing community of people who are passionate about travel and culinary experiences," Michaelson said.

"Already, the cuisines are very original, unprecedented and not seen anywhere else in the world and tell Israel's story through the beautiful food," he said. "The Galilee is a culinary paradise. Soon, it will be Israel's 'Food Capital."



Photo: Paula Shoyer

Dried fruit stand display at Machane Yehuda market.

# A Fresh Look at Tu B'Shevat

By Paula Shoyer

he Tu B'Shevat holiday celebrates the New Year for trees on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. It typically takes place in late January, when many of us in the Northern Hemisphere do not see anything growing outside.

Tu B'Shevat is not mentioned in the Torah but in the Talmud and is generally not considered a major holiday. Jewish communities both in Israel and the Diaspora have developed creative ways to make the day meaningful, from culinary, spiritual and environmental perspectives. I have discovered that Tu B'Shevat has a fully modern message for all of us.

Tu B'Shevat marks the beginning of the fruit-growing season for trees in Israel. The importance of the date is that it told growers how to calculate when the first fruit offerings were given to the Temple and when fruit could be consumed or sold. For the first three years trees are grown, no fruit may be eaten from them. In the fourth year, the fruit is given as tithe to the Temple priests, the kohanim. In the fifth year, fruit may be eaten or sold. Although these laws do not apply in the Diaspora, farmers in modern Israel follow them.





After the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., Tu B'Shevat could have disappeared forever, as there was no longer a need to bring fruit offerings to the Temple. Sixteenth century Kabbalists of Tzfat developed a new way to celebrate by creating a Tu B'shevat Seder in which the fruits and trees of Israel were given symbolic meanings. The spiritual focus was on the sacred status of trees as a source of life and on the ideas of renewal and potential. Participants even drank four cups of wine as we do during the Passover Seder. In 1753, the Kabbalists created a Hagaddah for Tu B'Shevat. Since the birth of Zionism, Zionists have used this holiday to connect the Diaspora with the Land of Israel and its impressive agriculture.

Tu B'Shevat has also evolved into a holiday used to promote awareness of the environment and our duty to protect it. Organizations use Tu B'Shevat to promote environmental social action projects. The holiday is celebrated by planting trees or by donating money to the Jewish National Fund to plant a tree in Israel. The fires that have destroyed so many trees in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Greece and elsewhere in recent times serve to remind us how precious our trees truly are.

On this holiday we eat foods made from the Seven Species of grains and fruit that are native to Israel and mentioned in the Torah: wheat, barley, grapes, olives, figs, pomegranates and dates. Many eat almonds as well because those trees blossom in Israel at this time of year, and other foods cultivated in Israel, such as honey. At Tu B'Shevat Seders today, the custom is to drink four different colors of wine in each of the four cups, to symbolize the colors of the landscape of Israel, the four seasons and four spiritual concepts outlined below.

Chef, author and businesswoman Levana Kirschenbaum recalls elaborate Tu B'Shevat celebrations in Morocco, where she grew up. "There was a feast of savory dishes made with both fresh and dried fruit, such as curried parsnip and apple soup, Moroccan lamb and dried fruit Tagine, fruit cake made with oranges, lemon, ginger, raisins and bananas, and brown rice with apricots and almonds."

Growing up in Jewish day school, I remember fondly receiving a bag of dried fruit to take home every year on Tu B'Shevat. It included "bokser," Yiddish for the carob pod, to remind us of the fruits of Israel. Apparently, if you chew the rock-hard exterior long enough, a chocolate flavor would come through, but my teeth usually gave up before then. In any event, it was exciting to eat something new when avocado was the most exotic food item I'd ever experienced.

I often celebrate Tu B'Shevat by searching the stores for a new fruit, one I haven't eaten before or for a long time, and recite the shehecheyanu blessing, in which we thank G-d for "sustaining us and enabling us to reach this occasion." Try an Asian supermarket to find an unusual fruit, which will make you truly wonder at the majesty of our natural world. I have a Tu B'Shevat babka in my *Holiday Kosher Baker* cookbook that has wheat, almonds and orange marmalade in it, all ingredients grown or produced in Israel. Years ago, I created a "Seven Species Strudel" for *Whisk Magazine* that had wheat, olive oil, barley, orange, figs, dates, pomegranate seeds, honey and grape juice, basically packed with everything associated with Tu B'Shevat. Any recipe with these ingredients can be used to celebrate this holiday.



Photo Courtesy of Hazon Hazon's Tu B'Shevat Seder.

recommended. Although originally only Sephardic Jews held the Tu B'Shevat Seder, it has expanded in recent years. Susan Barocas, Washington D.C.-based freelance writer, teacher, caterer and filmmaker, co-leads a joyous Tu B'Shevat Seder at the Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, D.C., along with the

practices, and care for trees and the land. The Jewish organization Hazon, which means vision, states that its mission is to "create healthier and more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond." It accomplishes this through conferences and other programs such as The Adamah Fellowship, which is a leadership training program for Jewish young adults in their twenties that integrates organic

Jewish Study Center, that features food, speakers working in

we remind ourselves of our connection and responsibility to

the earth" through elements such as the original seven species

native to Israel, awareness of seasonal and sustainable growing

environmental areas, singing and creative arts projects. She calls

Tu B'Shevat the first "environmentally dedicated holiday when

Of Tu B'Shevat, Hazon founder Nigel Savage writes: "The encounter of postmodern urban life with contemporary environmental challenge is renewing Jewish life in unanticipated ways. It is an opportunity to deepen our roots and to branch out afresh to engage the world."

farming, sustainable living and Jewish learning.

Hazon has produced a beautiful Tu B'Shevat Hagaddah. It provides a framework under four Kabbalistic concepts that are correlated to different symbolic foods and a corresponding cup of wine. There are other versions of the Seder online, but all focus on these four components: action, formation, thought and spirit. During each section of the Seder, blessings are made, a different shade of wine is enjoyed and a fruit eaten that relates to each concept.

"Action" focuses on the physical, our relationship to land and place. One should eat a fruit that has a shell or inedible outside, such as nuts, bananas, coconuts, passion fruit and citrus. Mystics believed that these fruits connect us to the physical world. A glass of white wine should be consumed.

"Formation" is about our emotional life and our relationship to community. We eat pitted fruits such as olives, avocados and cherries. The idea is to move beyond our inner selves and participate in Jewish communal life. Hazon suggests the minyan as one venue for involvement. A glass of half white and half red wine is

"Thought" is our intellectual life, our relationship with the world. We eat soft fruits such as berries, figs, grapes, kiwis and kumquats. These fruits have no outer protection and are simply open to the world. At this stage, a glass that is 1/4 white wine and 3/4 red wine should be combined and consumed.

Finally, "Spirit," our spiritual life, is our relationship with G-d. For the "Spirit" section, however, the Hagaddahs suggest red wine with a drop of white but no food. Hazon recommends a meditation about how we impact the world around us.

As with all Jewish holidays, you can focus solely on the food or inject deeper meanings into your commemoration. Tu B'Shevat can be an opportunity to celebrate Israel and promote environmental well-being everywhere. I also believe, as the Kabbalists did, that we can use a holiday that centers on the blossoming of fruit trees to consider how we, too, can use the gifts inside us to create and share something new with the world.

- To download Hazon's Hagaddah, visit: https://bit.ly/2Qpz1gs
- To read more about the Machane Yehuda market, see: "Trendy Yet Traditional: Jerusalem Market Becoming One of Israel's Hot Spots" by Hillel Kuttler in the Spring 2014 issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine in our online archives: https://bit.ly/2qsBr2p}
- You may also enjoy: "Green Jews: It Started with Creation" by Sam Seifman in the Fall 2016 issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine in our online archives: https://bit.ly/2D68eBJ

If you walk through Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda market, you will be asked more than once to put out your hand so a vendor can give you a sample of his tea mix. It will not look like tea because you'll see cubes of dried fruit. The mixes come in a multitude of flavors, and some have actual black or green tea leaves. Some flavors you can find in the market are tropical blends with pineapple and mango, melon, lemon, mint and passion fruit.

### Here I have created my own.



Both Photos: Paula Shoyer

Ingredients for mango and ginger tea. Note the cubed fruit in the cup.

### **Mango and Ginger Tea**

This recipe makes one cup of tea. It can be easily doubled or quadrupled for more servings in a teapot or a coffee press. You can also add a black tea bag to the cup or pot for a caffeinated drink. The tea needs no additional sweetener, but you can add a little honey to taste because, after all, Israel is a land of milk and honey.

- 1 tablespoon crystalized ginger, chopped into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon dried mango, chopped into 1/4-inch pieces (a flat-blade knife works best)
- 2 large fresh mint leaves, chiffonade (sliced into ribbons), or more to taste
- 2 one-inch pieces of orange peel, twisted
- 1 cup boiling water

Place the ginger and mango pieces, mint and orange peel into a teacup or mug. Add 1 cup of boiling water and let sit for 10 minutes and enjoy. Be sure to eat up the softened dried fruit at the bottom!



Including ingredients that are indigenous to Israel, the author has revised the recipe for Pizza Ebraica, a big fruit-filled cookie that originated in the Rome ghetto and which Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has described as his favorite dessert.

### Pizza Ebraica for Tu B'Shevat

The origin of this recipe is the Jewish ghetto in Rome, where it is sold every Friday. There it is burnt to a crisp, but I prefer it a little less scorched. The following is a new version using ingredients native to Israel such as dates, figs, pomegranates and oranges. You can find the dried pomegranate seeds online. Serves everyone, until it's gone.

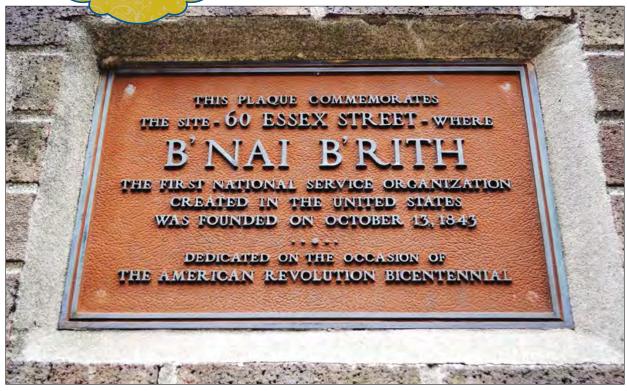
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 egg white
- 1 teaspoon orange zest (from 1 orange)
- 4 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup dried cranberries soaked in 1 cup of white wine for 10 minutes
- 1 cup whole almonds, with skins
- 6 dates, cut into 1/2-inch pieces, tossed with 1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
- 6 dried figs, cut into 8 pieces each
- 1/2 cup shelled pistachio nuts
- 1/4 cup dried pomegranate seeds
- 1/2 cup golden raisins

Preheat oven to 400°F. Cover a jelly roll pan with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Set aside.

Place the olive oil, egg white, orange zest, flour, salt and sugar into a large mixing bowl and mix. The mixture will be very dry crumbs. Add the cranberries and wine and mix with a wooden spoon or your hands. Add the almonds, dates, figs, pistachios, pomegranate seeds and golden raisins and mix with your hands until combined. Dump onto your prepared cookie sheet and shape into a large oval or rectangle, almost the size of the cookie sheet. Pat the top down to make it even.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until well browned on the edges. Let cool. To eat, break into pieces. Store at room temperature for up to five days, if it lasts that long.





A plaque mounted at the original site of Sinsheimer's saloon on New York's Lower East Side honors a historic milestone, B'nai B'rith's birth in 1843.

# How an Immigrant Saloon of 1840s New York Gave Birth to B'nai B'rith

By Kenneth D. Ackerman

Beer and brewing had marked German culture since pre-Roman times. For Germans, beer came with songs, customs, steins and weisen glasses. Beer brought people together, in halls, clubs and festivals, a tonic to cement friendships, traditions, families and communities.

In the early 1800s, spurred by political unrest at home, a large number of Germans decided to leave and come to America. In New York City, they settled into a cramped neighborhood on the city's then-northern fringe they

called *Kleindeutschland* or Little Germany, later the Lower East Side. Here, they found a beer-political culture waiting for them. By the 1830s, New York immigrant saloons flourished as centers of politics. Many future congressmen, aldermen and party bosses started as saloon keepers, using beer and whiskey to cement alliances.

So it should come as no surprise that beer and a saloon would play a key role in one such deal, the 1843 founding of a communal organization called the Jewish *Sohne des Bundes*, the Independent Order of the B'nai B'rith.

Jews had lived in New York since at least 1654, when a small group landed in Manhattan seeking refuge, descendants of Spanish Jews expelled in 1492 who'd lived in Brazil ever since. Fewer than 400 by as late as 1817, by 1840 their numbers had grown to about 10,000, primarily German. The city's population quadrupled between 1820 and 1860, topping 860,000 by the Civil War.

Immigration was reshaping America during this period, and in no place more than New York City. By mid-century, more than half its residents were foreign born. Irish formed the largest ethnic block, but Germans followed close behind, including the many German Jews. (The massive waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe would not start until the 1880s, after the assassination of Russian tsar Alexander II.)

These German Jewish newcomers settled mostly into a crowded four-block stretch between Rivington and Canal streets. Few spoke English; most shared their countrymen's taste for beer.

Around 1840, one of them, Aaron Sinsheimer, opened a saloon on the ground floor of the three-story brick building at 60 Essex Street, one of dozens of beer halls in the neighborhood. Sunday mornings drew a regular crowd to Sinsheimer's. We know their names: Henry Kling, Isaac Dittenhoefer, Henry Jones, Isaac Rosenbourg, and the others. These were observant Jews, members of the recently founded synagogue *Ansche Chesed* on Henry Street that catered to new German immigrants. But here, over beer and coffee, they talked about problems they faced in America: prejudice,

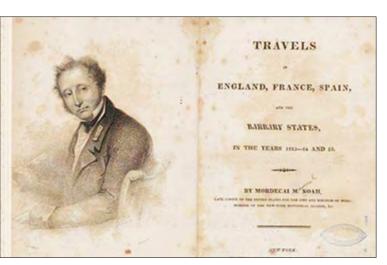
poverty, isolation, "the deplorable condition of Jews in this, our newly adopted country," as Rosenbourg put it.

### New York in 1843

The New York City they encountered in 1843 was a teeming, smelly, dirty place. Animals — pigs, cows, horses, chickens, rats — shared many mud streets with people and wagons. Money flowed into the city from the Erie Canal, opened in 1825, and trade flourished. But Jewish Kleindeutchland sat not far from the Five Points, already New York's most notorious slum. Summer brought diseases and stenches. Street gangs like the Irish Dead Rabbits and the nativist Bowery Boys fought pitched battles and preyed on greenhorns. By the mid-1840s, New Yorkers grew so alarmed over crime they formed their first embryonic police force, the Night Watch.

Jewish immigrants in New York mostly enjoyed relief from Old World prejudice. In 1821, the New York State legislature in Albany had expanded voting rights dramatically, eliminating property requirements and offering suffrage to any white male over 21 with six months' residency who either paid taxes, served in the militia or worked on public roads. Black males could vote if they had property. Tammany Hall, already the preeminent club for New York Democrats, pushed to register masses of immigrants (often ignoring residency requirements). Irish, Germans and Jews were welcome.

The most prominent Jew in New York back then was 58 year-old Mordecai Noah, playwright, diplomat and politician.



Credit: Wikipedia Commons

With dreamy eyes and tousled hair, Mordecai Noah's likeness graces the frontispiece of one of several books he wrote.



Credit: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

A colored engraving depicting Lower Manhattan's bustling harbor, circa 1850.

President James Madison had appointed Noah as U.S. consul to Tunis in 1813 where Noah helped rescue a group of Americans held as white slaves. Back in New York, Noah had founded and edited four newspapers, written successful plays for the New York stage and became a leader in Tammany Hall. Noah shocked Jewish leaders in 1825 by purchasing land on an island in the Niagara River to build a Jewish refuge called "Ararat." The scheme never got off the ground, but in 1844 he delivered a groundbreaking "Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews" that became an early precursor of 20th century Zionism.

Bigotry certainly existed, and Jews got their share. Even Noah. When Tammany once nominated Noah as its candidate for New York county sheriff, protests erupted that a Jew ought never be permitted to hang a Christian. Noah won the job regardless.

Mostly, though, "dirty Irish" and Catholic "Popery" bore the brunt of xenophobia in mid-1800s New York. Battles between Irish and nativist gangs were commonplace. Secret nativist societies claimed to "know nothing" about anti-immigrant violence; finally they adopted the name and a formal Know Nothing Party ran candidates throughout the 1850s, winning 23 percent of the popular vote for president in 1856. In Philadelphia, Lewis Charles Levin became the first American Jew elected to Congress running on an anti-Catholic platform for the Native American Party.

### The Problem

What was the "deplorable condition" of Jews that troubled the circle at Sinsheimer's saloon those Sunday mornings in 1843? It wasn't just poverty. These men, all German-born immigrants, had built respectable lives in their new home: a blacksmith, a mechanic, a goldsmith, one owned a barbershop, another sold real estate. Like their neighbors, most Jews were still unable to read English, but they'd established schools and stressed educating the young. Jews had a newspaper, the Asmonean, soon to be joined by the Jewish Messenger. (The Forward would have to wait until 1897.) They had synagogues, over 30 congregations by some counts, and the first properly ordained rabbi had arrived from Europe in 1840.

But what they lacked was a voice and any sense of unity. Divisions gnawed at the community, with talk of brawls, jealousies, hostile camps, fears that Jews might disappear as a distinct people in America. City directories would list some 50 Jewish clubs by 1849, but none spoke for more than a tiny faction.

Religion, the unifying glue, only divided New York Jews into warring camps. Early Portuguese settlers practiced



The men who met at Sinsheimer's: leader Henry Jones (top row, center) and the other founders of B'nai B'rith.

Sephardic worship; Germans Ashkenazic. Reflecting New World freedoms, Jews had begun experimenting with religious practice, prompting more arguments. A Philadelphia hazan named Isaac Leeser had started delivering Shabbat sermons in English and opened a Jewish Sunday school, ideas borrowed from Christians, and published an English translation of the Torah. Many German immigrants preferred "Reform"-style Judaism, already developed in Europe. Mordecai Noah, at an 1834 synagogue dedication, had shocked the audience by advocating English-language prayers and synagogue music. Other radical changes, such as men and women sitting together and dropping the second day of holidays like Passover and Sukkot, became so divisive as to prompt lawsuits.

Portuguese Jews looked down on German Jews, who despised *Ostjuden* (Eastern Europeans), who resented Hungarians, and so on. Individual *shtetls* organized *landsmen* clubs and burial societies, but these charities excluded Jews from other towns or regions. Who would look out for Jewish people as a whole, for widows, orphans, the crippled and unemployed, at a time when government social safety net programs didn't exist and church charities generally helped only their own?

### The Independent Order

Pondering these questions, the men at Sinsheimer's found much to like in groups like the Freemasons and the Odd Fellows, popular, secular fraternities promoting charity, fellowship and mutual aid. At these clubs, Jews sat with Christians as neighbors. Several American founding fathers, including George Washington, had been Masons, though the group's secrecy and rituals made it controversial. Feelings



Photo Credit: B'nai B'rith Archives, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio In the mid-nineteenth century, German Jews living in New York still relied on their native tongue, as indicated by the printed cards which admitted members and their female guests — note the lacy border — to an 1859 Washington Lodge event.

against Freemasons in particular had peaked after the unsolved 1826 disappearance of a critic named William Morgan from Batavia, New York, feared murdered. During the 1830s, anti-Masonic prejudice became a political movement, spawning a third political party — the country's first — which won 7.8 percent of the popular vote in the 1832 election.

At least four of the men from Sinsheimer's café-saloon were Masons or Odd Fellows, and they decided to use these organizations as models for their new fraternity. Though Jewish, the charter they wrote contained no mention of God, synagogue, Torah or Talmud. Rather, its motto was "Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Harmony," its mission "uniting Israelites" to promote common interests, its first act to create a pension fund for widows. For its first lodge, it would rent space at the Masonic Home on Henry Street.

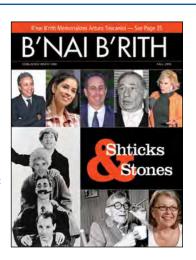
On October 13, 1843, they capped their work with a formal meeting at Sinsheimer's to vote on the creation of their new organization. The minutes for that meeting, in German, note that they collected five dollars apiece (equal to \$170.27 in 2018) to cover the costs. At Sinsheimer's, this doubtless included a round of beers. Though the building is

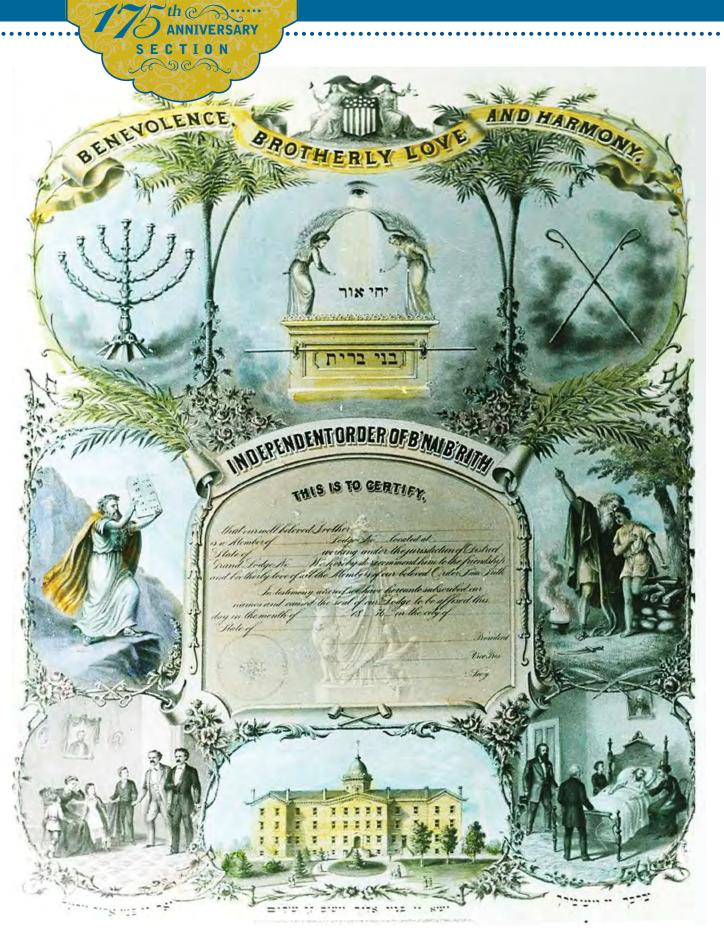


Photo Credit: B'nai B'rith Archives, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio Seal used for official documents issued by New York's Henry Jones Lodge, established in 1867.

gone, a plaque today marks the spot at 60 Essex Street. The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, 175 years old, far outlasted the saloon and the neighborhood *Kleindeutschlan*d that gave it birth. Today, we can celebrate with a good cold lager. •

To read more about Mordecai Noah, see "Mordecai Noah: The World's First Zionist" by Jules Rabin and Eugene L. Meyer in the Fall 2015 issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine in our online archives: https://bit.ly/2OyDYBX





SPECIAL

# B'nai B'rith Flourished in the Wild West

### By Cheryl Kempler

oncentrated largely in urban areas, Jews also settled the American West and played an integral role in places where those afflicted with gold fever came to strike it rich.

Like the others, Jews were pioneers who braved danger and unimaginable hardships in the desolate territories that later became states. When a significant gold, silver or mineral "strike" was made, tent enclaves quickly transformed into towns, as the promise of permanency and decent wages motivated the miners to send for their families.

Drawing customers to their shops, and later, to their department stores — a new concept in retailing — Jewish merchants supplied life's basics, and eventually, much more, as purveyors of luxury goods, fancy food, expensive furniture and clothes. Jews also managed restaurants and theaters, opened schools, imported liquor and cigars, bankrolled new mines, purchased land and ran for office. They were mayors, legislators and lawmen.

In boom times, Jews with disparate beliefs and backgrounds came together and organized B'nai B'rith lodges as part of their social and philanthropic networks. Serving as synagogue, burial society and community center, the lodges often welcomed non-Jews to extravagant parties and balls that reflected the wealth and status of its members.

The boomtowns flourished between 1870 and 1890, when new, mechanized mining equipment enabled the extraction of large amounts of ore each day, creating employment for the approximately 1 million immigrants from Europe, Asia and the ravaged former Confederate states. An 1876 census of Jews in the West tallied 16,000 in San Francisco, while another 5,000 lived in scattered mining towns.

Despite rampant prejudice against Chinese and Latin Americans, there was little if any overt anti-Semitism. Conversely, even the most devout Jews, far from urban centers and dependent on their Gentile neighbors, accepted invitations to join the Catholic Knights of Columbus, the Odd Fellows and the Masons, as well as B'nai B'rith, whose lodges were ubiquitous but sometimes short-lived. From the strictly Orthodox to the non-observant, Jews bonded, if only to establish and maintain a separate cemetery.



A vintage postcard of Butte's Temple B'nai Israel, dedicated in 1904.

With its foul-smelling mines, breweries and brothels, Butte, Montana was hardly a garden spot, but, with three brick-and-mortar synagogues, its Jewish community was cohesive and well-organized. Henry Jacobs, a German Jewish immigrant, was elected as Butte's first mayor in 1879. Members of the Baron de Hirsch Lodge, established in 1892, included theater manager A.A. Sheurman and one of the West's most influential Reform rabbis, British-born Montague N.A. Cohen.

Credit: B'nai B'rith Archives, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

*Previous page:* A 19th century B'nai B'rith membership certificate, including a central image of Moses Ezekiel's "Religious Liberty," a statue commissioned by the organization for the American Centennial, illustrates the organization's allegiance to American and Jewish values.

Nearly 100 lodge members attended weekly talks on topics including "The Jewish Problem in Relation to Race and Nationality." They also worked with local law enforcement to identify Jews involved in prostitution and sex trafficking, and mounted a campaign to expunge offensive stereotypes from the stage.

### **California Dreaming**

In 1861, Jacob Levison, a California marshal who later served in the state legislature, founded Garizim Lodge #43 in Grass Valley, in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Over the years, other prominent Garizim members included German brothers Jacob and Joseph Weissbein, businessmen with interests in mining, banks and land. Levison also headed the Jewish cemetery association. The lodge survived for more than 40 years. Jews owned 17 of the town's 19 clothing stores, patronized by miners who had emigrated from Cornwall, England.

After rich lodes of silver and gold were found in 1859, California prospectors flocked to the Nevada Territory's remote Comstock region; within two years, the population jumped to 16,000. Miners purchased clothes and provisions from Jewish merchants in Virginia City, a comparative metropolis.

According to authority John Marshall, economic and religious disputes in the Jewish community impeded its

Credit: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

One of Rabbi Bien's books, published in 1883, includes poetry based on Arabic and Jewish fables, many of which describe the joys and sorrows of wine drinking. The design and calligraphy of its title page underscores the poems' biblical and Middle Eastern sources.

progress. The men who joined the wealthy Nevada Lodge and the less wealthy King Solomon Lodge, founded in 1864 and 1865, respectively, fomented a rivalry that scuttled a joint effort to build a public library. The lodges consolidated with 113 members soon afterwards. Plans to build a synagogue were thwarted as well, so worship services in various public spaces were led by B'nai B'rith's Herman Bien, an itinerant rabbi whose New York-based brother. Julius, would lead the organization as international president. When Nevada achieved statehood, Bien, who had just inaugurated Virginia City's first Jewish school, was appointed to the legislature, where he contributed to the writing of Nevada's constitution.

Parties, it seems, were events that everyone enjoyed. A guest gushed over an 1865 B'nai B'rith banquet: "My mouth waters when I [recall] the many delicacies: turkeys, chickens, ducks — roasted, fried, baked and stewed. After dinner, there were numerous speeches and toasts." Virginia City's gentile citizens vied for invitations to the lodge's annual Purim Balls, all-night affairs featuring dazzling colored lights and costumes created by a noted San Francisco designer.

Nevada Lodge member Jacob W. Davis was a tailor with a shop in Reno who used rivets to reinforce work pants made of heavy-duty denim procured from Levi-Strauss in San Francisco. Davis held the patent but made his fortune by joining with the textile company to produce the still iconic jeans known as "Levis." He moved to San Francisco himself but continued to pay his lodge dues, as did the many members who left Virginia City after the mines were played out, after 1890.

Prominent Jewish men living in Cripple Creek, Colorado, and surrounding towns initiated a lodge there in 1901, when the Jewish population totaled about 150. An event reported in a 1908 issue of "The Menorah," published by B'nai B'rith, described the legendary location as "the world's greatest Gold Capital: the name implies 'blood & thunder' to outsiders." Yet, "... a small band of enthusiastic Jews presented a playlet, recitations and music by the Sabbath school, under the auspices of Nellie Porges, daughter of one of the members." The previous year, a Jewish orchestra had played. Many Jews left the community in the midst of a long and violent miners' strike in 1904.



Credit: Levi Strauss & Co.

The "Levi's" story is recounted on a denim-colored plaque erected at the former site of Davis' Reno tailor shop — where the iconic ieans were first conceived and fabricated.



Credit: B'nai B'rith Denver

The original wrought iron entrance to Leadville's Jewish cemetery, rescued, preserved and maintained by organizations including B'nai B'rith Denver.

The names of Jewish families like the Guggenheims who amassed wealth investing in mines located high in the mountains of Leadville, Colorado, still carry weight. David May, who opened his own store in Leadville in 1877 and went on to establish the May Department Stores Company, founded Rocky Mountain Lodge #322. Members held at least one opulent ball before it closed in 1881, after less than two years.



Credit: R'nai R'rith Denver

Two participants in the annual Leadville cemetery clean-up crew enjoy a break, and a kibitz.

Dedicated in 1880, Leadville's Jewish cemetery, where 100 people are buried on land donated by legendary silver mining mogul Horace Tabor, a non-Jew, fell into disrepair. But, in 1997 Denver Lodge initiated a cleanup and restoration project that is ongoing. Each summer, more than 100 people enjoy a weekend camping, worshiping and maintaining the grounds and headstones. For more information, contact B'nai B'rith Denver at Admin@BnaiBrithDenver.org (303-393-7358).





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

hen 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. Gary P. Saltzman was elected to this office in October 2018, upon completion of his 2015-2018 term.

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. We are pleased to reprint those essays that were published in the online Winter 2017, Spring and Summer 2018 issues of B'nai B'rith Magazine, still available at: <a href="https://www.bnaibrith.org/magazine-archives.html">https://www.bnaibrith.org/magazine-archives.html</a>



### **Gerald Kraft**

B'nai B'rith President (1982-1986)

I take pride in B'nai B'rith achievements on behalf of Soviet Jewry during the early-mid 1980s, including its organization and implementation of the history-making 1984 International Day of Concern and Solidarity for Soviet Jewry, when 110 worldwide communities participated. We were in the forefront of activities during the November 1985 Geneva summit, when hundreds of congregations conducted special services and observed a



minute of silence. Later, England's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told me how impressed they were with our initiative.

Three of 24 state visits in which I participated stand out: meeting German Chancellor Helmut Kohl after U.S. President Ronald Reagan's controversial 1985 visit to the Nazi officers' cemetery in Bitburg, Germany; a conference with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak focusing, not on Israel but on the military aid his country was receiving from the United States; and a South African trip in connection with American sanctions imposed during apartheid.

Perhaps the most emotional experience of my presidency occurred during a November 1984 Thanksgiving celebration in Ethiopia, when B'nai B'rith was involved with the first airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Assisted by the Jewish Agency, France's President Jacques Mitterrand, U.S. Vice President George H.W. Bush and Reagan, this monumental undertaking continued as we worked with then Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the Chief Rabbis to settle the refugees in their new country.

Mayor Andrew Young of Atlanta and President Gerald Kraft at a meeting of National Conference on Soviet Jewry, January 1985.



Prime Minister's Conference on Jewish Solidarity with Israel. Closing ceremony at Western Wall. March 22, 1989. Right to Left: Finance Minister Shimon Peres, B'nai B'rith President Seymour D. Reich, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the program narrator.

### Seymour D. Reich

B'nai B'rith President (1986-1990)

It was an honor for me to lead our organization as B'nai B'rith rallied the world community to acknowledge the plight of Russian Jews, suffering as prisoners in their own country, and enduring harsh punishments for practicing their faith.

In 1986, I boarded a small chartered plane as part of a consortium of Jewish leaders bound for the historic Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik, Iceland. There we made our voices heard during a press conference covered internationally. Human rights issues were incorporated into the summit discussions. We traveled back to the States on the same day, Oct. 10. This was one of my proudest memories.

I had another marathon trip in November 1988. I was to participate in the dedication of a footbridge constructed by B'nai B'rith in Jerusalem. But U.S. President Ronald Reagan had requested my attendance at a special White House meeting focusing on Jewish concerns. I returned to the air at 1 a.m., and flew for 17 hours to keep the appointment. While I was away from Israel, my wife Helyn became my able representative at the festivities, where, along with B'nai B'rith leaders and Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, she left her handprints in the bridge's wet cement for posterity.



B'nai B'rith President Kent E. Schiner (left) with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

### Kent E. Schiner

B'nai B'rith President (1990-1994)

B'nai B'rith's reputation as a powerful voice of the Jewish people was called into action in 1990, shortly after I was elected, when Lebanon fired Scud missiles at Israel. While we were there, we had our first experience with gas masks and warning sirens. We were in three missile attacks, so we know the feeling of anxiousness and concern for the safety of its people.

During this trip, which was unprecedented in scope, Dan Mariaschin, then-Director of Public and International Affairs, and I met with European heads of state, including German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel, Polish President Lech Walesa, and, in Israel, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

There were some special, gratifying moments. Walesa delivered an impromptu denunciation of anti-Semitism, vowing to eliminate it in Poland. At our suggestion, Chancellor Vranitzky sent Israel emergency aid, and Havel agreed to be honored at a Washington, D.C. dinner. I spoke at the opening of the Prague lodge, the first in Czechoslovakia in more than 50 years. Then, as now, B'nai B'rith continues to advocate for Israel globally with government officials and others.

In 1993, more than 1,000 guests attending our 150th anniversary Havdalah service at the Jefferson Memorial heard a superb cantor and choir, stirring words from "Exodus" author Leon Uris and — the evening's high point — President Bill Clinton's speech praising our humanitarian mission. Greats, including former Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Abba Eban and French leader and humanitarian Simone Veil, celebrated that milestone year with us.

I was honored to be a part of our organization's history.

### 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



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

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 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.

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



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

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 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.

### Joel S. Kaplan

B'nai B'rith President (2002–2006)

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

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

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



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

that I was traveling to Rome for an audience with the Pope.

After my Varican trip. I returned to Spain for the rest of the

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

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

### Moishe Smith

B'nai B'rith President (2006–2009)

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

At my inaugural convention, I met with AEPi brothers Andy Borans and Gary Anderson as well as with B'nai B'rith Honorary President Richard D. Heideman to begin discussing



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

how to implement the partnership. Although I was not the visionary behind this, it was my great pleasure to put into practice the framework that Richard Heideman and the AEPi brothers had agreed upon a year or two before. It was a great partnership waiting to happen.

I became an honorary brother. All presidents since have become honorary brothers as well, and AEPi with B'nai B'rith has provided hands-on disaster assistance in U.S. cities.

Both during my presidency and for a number of years prior, I worked with our brothers and sisters in Latin America. As a B'nai B'rith senior executive, I attended many meetings of the Organization of American States. It was a pleasure working with Eduardo Kohn, our director in Latin America, preparing our annual presentation to the OAS. It is important that B'nai

B'rith exercise its voice on issues of the day, affecting not only the Jewish community but communities as a whole in Latin America. Of course, we expressed our concern about anti-Semitism but also on arms dealing, money laundering, human rights and poverty.

For many years the commemoration of Kristallnacht was a key program for B'nai B'rith in Uruguay. I had the honor of being present for this event on many occasions. And I was always impressed by the high level of attendance not only from the Jewish community but also from within Uruguayan government circles and the diplomatic corps.

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

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



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

in the United Nations from opposing recognition of the Palestinians to abstaining. Following Merkel's nomination, I met with her and expressed our disappointment. Despite this change, she wanted us to get out the message that Germany would continue to be Israel's best friend in Europe.

Not all meetings with foreign leaders went our way. On another occasion, I was among a group of Jewish leaders who met in New York with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. I raised the issue of Iran's new president proclaiming the same as his predecessor: "Death to Israel!" The foreign minister, who was sitting directly across the table, pointed his finger at me and denied that it was so. Later that evening I researched the matter and confirmed that I had been correct. Would that have changed his opinion? I doubt it. But, just maybe we were heard.

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

●

# Allan J. Jacobs

B'nai B'rith President (2011–2015)

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

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

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

On another occasion, I traveled to Germany in connection with our work with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It was during the run-up to the election when Angela Merkel was going to be re-nominated. We were invited to the Christian Democrats' convention in Hanover where I was seated in the first row. The day before, Germany had changed its position



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Gary P. Saltzman in January 2016, in Jerusalem, during a joint mission conducted by B'nai B'rith, the Conference of Presidents, the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA).

# 1843

# SOCIETY

# "My Time Here Has Mattered"

B'nai B'rith International will serve the Jewish community for years to come, due in large part to the generosity of those who believe that Jewish continuity is of the utmost importance as they enrich the world today and make a difference for tomorrow.

The following individuals are members of the 1843 Society of B'nai B'rith. They have made planned gifts to the B'nai B'rith Foundation of the U.S. On behalf of B'nai B'rith International, my heartfelt thanks to all of those listed for their commitment to a strong Jewish future.

Sincerely,

Charles O. Kaufman

Names marked with an asterisk (\*) are deceased.

MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE FOR A BLESSING

\*The Planned Giving Department strives to keep our lists as accurate as possible.

Please let us know of any corrections at 800-656-5561 or plannedgiving@bnaibrith.org.

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# From Massachusetts to Mobile with Loving Kindness

By B'nai B'rith Planned Giving Staff

rving Silver, a Yankee transplant to the Deep South, happily calls the port city of Mobile, Alabama his home. He hails from Holyoke, a small industrial city in the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts.

Irving's parents' families emigrated from what is now Vilnius (Vilna) in Lithuania. His father was born there; his mother was a first-generation American. In Massachusetts, members of his mother's family were merchants, cattle dealers and farmers. His father was in the automotive repair business and owned his own shop.

Irving was raised in an Orthodox, patriotic home. Not unexpectedly, when he and his brother graduated high school, they both joined the U.S. military, his brother in the Navy and Irving in the Air Force. While stationed in Biloxi, on the Mississippi coast of the Gulf of Mexico, he began a 45-week program to become a computer specialist. Shortly after his training began, he and a friend travelled to Mobile for a weekend. They attended Shabbat services at the Conservative synagogue there — Ahavas Chesed — which means "loving kindness." At the gathering, he met Frances Grodsky, a Mobile native. The two quickly fell in love and married in that same synagogue a year and a half later. This year Irving and Frances celebrated their 57th anniversary.

Irving finished his training in Biloxi, and was transferred to Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Following active duty, just after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, Irving enrolled at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. There he completed his undergraduate degree in business, as well as his law degree. After he graduated and passed the bar exam, the family (now including a daughter Hedy) moved back to Mobile, where Irving worked as an in-house corporate attorney for three years. Soon, a son Evan joined the family. Eventually, he opened his own law firm.

Irving adored Mobile. "The weather was terrific, with no more snow, ice or shoveling." He found the community to be incredibly kind and hospitable. "It's been a wonderful place to live and raise a family and practice my profession."

It was also wonderful to be near Frances' family. His father-in-law, who owned an Army Navy Surplus Store in Mobile, encouraged him to join B'nai B'rith. Mobile's Beth Zur Lodge



had been established in 1865. B'nai B'rith had been very helpful to his father-in-law and other immigrants making their transition to American life. His father-in-law was very proud to be a member.

In the late 1960s, Irving helped revive the lodge. This led to a lifetime of service in B'nai B'rith. In the mid 1970s, he was elected to the District 7 leadership. After four years as District Vice President, he was elected District President in 1980.

Irving had always been interested in public policy and Jewish

education. Thus, he became a member of B'nai B'rith's Continuing Jewish Education Commission. He then was asked to become involved with the public policy activities of B'nai B'rith when Daniel S. Mariaschin, who is now CEO and Executive Vice President, served as director of the Center for Public Policy. In recent years, Irving has served as vice chair of the International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy.

Reflecting upon his many experiences, Irving recalls a very powerful moment he witnessed in Tuscaloosa in 1963. On his first day of law school at the University of Alabama, the pivotal and iconic incident "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" occurred, when Alabama Gov. George Wallace attempted to block two African-American students from enrolling at the all-white university. "It was quite frightening to see [U.S. Deputy Attorney General] Nicholas Katzenbach marching with what appeared to be hundreds of National Guardsmen to confront Wallace, and enforce the desegregation the university."

Along with his involvement in B'nai B'rith, Irving has served in leadership positions locally, regionally and nationally, including with Jewish Family Services of Mobile, the Mobile Area Community Action Committee (an anti-poverty group), the local United Way, the Dearborn Street YMCA/Community Center, the Community Foundation of South Alabama, the Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs and Spring Hill College Board of Trustees.

Irving is the founding partner of Silver, Voit & Thompson, focusing on corporate and commercial law. His legal specialty is in the areas of trusts, estates and nonprofit organizations,



In 2015, Irving Silver (third from left) traveled to India to take part in a multinational leadership mission organized by B'nai B'rith International.

with a significant focus on advising business owners in the operation and transition of their businesses and the structuring of the disposition of their legacies to their families as well as support of various philanthropic interests.

In 1998, Irving became a member of B'nai B'rith's 1843 Society, an esteemed group of individuals who have made a commitment to support B'nai B'rith through their estate plans. He felt that it was important not only to consider leaving a legacy with B'nai B'rith but also to do it during his lifetime.

Irving is currently the Chair of the B'nai B'rith Foundation of the United States. He takes this role and project seriously and hopes to ensure support for the functions of B'nai B'rith International long into the future.

"It's been a pleasure to work with Irving," says Marna Schoen, director of planned giving for B'nai B'rith International. "He is deeply committed to B'nai B'rith and has made contributions on a personal and organizational level. The fact that he is also in the 1843 Society is especially meaningful to us. The social justice work he's done over the years is inspiring. We really value his involvement and dedication."

For more information about how to include B'nai B'rith in your will or trust, please contact the Planned Giving Department at (800) 656-5561 or email <u>plannedgiving@bnaibrith.org</u>.

# B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS OF OUR 175TH ANNIVERSARY GALA CELEBRATION IN NEW YORK CITY ON OCTOBER 15, 2018



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# B'NAI B'RITH ODAY

# A SALUTE TO 175 YEARS OF HISTORY, ACTION AND ADVOCACY

# B'nai B'rith Leadership Forum and Gala Dinner Honor Roots, Salute Future

ne-hundred-seventy-five years of action, advocacy and service were on full display during the B'nai B'rith International Leadership Forum in New York. Over three days, leaders, members, supporters and donors looked back at the indelible history of the organization that traces its founding to the Lower East Side of New York, on Oct. 13, 1843.

A featured event of the celebration was a gala dinner held Oct. 15 at the Museum of Jewish Heritage. There, B'nai B'rith honored pillars of the Jewish community and celebrated its dedication and commitment to the community at the grassroots and global levels over the last 175 years. Guests were treated to docent-lead tours of the museum.

President Donald J. Trump sent a letter congratulating B'nai B'rith on its 175th anniversary and commending the organization for its good work over the decades.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres also sent special greetings to the gala: "Thank you for being such strong and long-standing supporters of the United Nations. You were present at the San Francisco conference in 1945; you have been an accredited non-governmental organization since 1947; and today you remain a dynamic presence as we strive to build a world of peace, prosperity and dignity for all." And the secretary-general later noted: "Often been called 'the oldest hatred,' anti-Semitism should have no place in the 21st century. Indeed, the origins of the United Nations itself are rooted in the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. Being true to our Charter means combating anti-Semitism across the world, and I am strongly committed to being in the forefront of

the fight against it and against all forms of discrimination."

A video presentation of B'nai B'rith's top efforts and accomplishments underscored the organization's history and its future. Click here to view the video: https://bit.ly/2DliS91

Corporate and community leaders honored with the Jewish Heritage Award during the gala were prominent attorney Kenneth J. Bialkin; Andrew Borans, former executive director of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity and executive vice president of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation; Susan Goldberg, editorial director of National Geographic Partners and editor in chief of National Geographic Magazine; Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman and CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations;

continued on page 48



Photos credit: Ben Hider

Serge Dahan, president of B'nai B'rith Europe (left) led the motzi at the luncheon on Monday. Shown here with Charles O. Kaufman who served as the presiding officer for this Diplomatic Encounter Series program.



Jaime Fuchs, president of B'nai B'rith Chile, Peru and Bolivia (left) with Eric Engelmayer, senior vice president, B'nai B'rith International.

## РНОТО А

B'nai B'rith Young Leadership **Chair and Vice Chair Eduard Redensky and Rachel** Silvestain conducted the menorah lighting ceremony, with the participation of 2012 Label A. Katz Award winner **Senior Vice President Eduardo** Weinstein.

### **РНОТО В**

After welcoming participants to the Leadership Forum, President Gary P. Saltzman delivered his final State of the Organization address. "We are constantly adapting and advancing with the times to make a positive impact."





### **РНОТО С**

L-R: President Gary P. Saltzman; 2018 Label A. **Katz Award winners Frank** Goldman; Jessica Kreger; Scott Knapp; Tali Schwartz; Roni Sarfati; and Rebecca Anne Saltzman, chair, Award Selection Committee.



### PHOTO D:

On Monday morning, B'nai **B'rith Senior Vice President** Shel Marcus greeted the audience and introduced Daniel S. Mariaschin, CEO and executive vice president.

## PHOTO E:

Mariaschin recounted the many ways in which B'nai B'rith recognizes and responds to current challenges in the Jewish community. "We meet with leaders in our fields of diplomacy and religion, at the U.N. and elsewhere. Despite 175 years, our founders would still recognize our commitment to Tikkun Olam - improving the world."





### PHOTO F

Participants from B'nai B'rith France enjoyed the Diplomatic Luncheon. On Tuesday, Stéphane Teicher (second from left) was installed as B'nai B'rith **Senior Vice President from** Europe.



Photos credit: Ben Hider







### PHOTO G:

B'nai B'rith Senior Vice President Sheila Mostyn introduced the panel for "The Crisis of Zionism in 'Progressive Spaces.'"

### **РНОТО Н:**

Left: Emily Shire, journalist; Amanda Berman, president/CEO, Zioness. Right: moderator Daniel S. Mariaschin; and Ann Lewis, Democratic Party strategist. All concurred on the urgency of presenting an accurate and fair picture of Israel, to counter those who would demonize its actions.

PHOTO I: On Monday, International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy Chair Charles O. Kaufman presided at the luncheon, part of the B'nai B'rith Diplomatic Encounter Series. In his address, Ambassador Dani Dayan, Consul General of Israel in New York, concluded that "Israel is stronger, more prosperous and has a better relationship with the world than ever." Next, B'nai B'rith presented its Award for Outstanding Contributions to Holocaust Memory to Kimberly Mann, chief, education outreach section, United Nations Department of Public Information. From left: B'nai B'rith International Director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs David J. Michaels; B'nai B'rith President Gary P. Saltzman; Dayan; Mann; Kaufman; B'nai B'rith CEO and Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin.

Senior Vice President Marvin Siflinger presided at a program featuring B'nai B'rith experts who shared their insights on international and domestic issues. Diplomacy and advocacy for Israel were addressed by staff from the International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy.

PHOTOS J: Siflinger, Assistant Director Sienna Girgenti; Deputy Director Eric Fusfield. PHOTOS K: World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider (*left*) and Latin American Affairs Director Eduardo Kohn

also spoke on the panel, along with David J. Michaels, director of United Nations and Intercommunal Affairs (not pictured).

PHOTO L: Addressing topics ranging from senior advocacy and housing to new strategies in combatting anti-Semitism were Center for Senior Services Senior Program Associate Breana Clark and Assistant Director for Aging Policy Evan Carmen. This panel also included Eric Fusfield in his role as director of Legislative Affairs. Both panels were moderated by Daniel S. Mariaschin.

### **РНОТО М:**

The impact of B'nai B'rith's 175-year legacy on the modern world was the theme of the gala dinner at the Lower East Side's Museum of Jewish Heritage, The Ramaz Chamber Choir performed the National Anthems of the United States and Israel and later entertained the audience with additional music.

### PHOTO N:

During the evening, awards were presented to distinguished individuals in the business and non-profit worlds. Flanked by B'nai B'rith **CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin and President Gary** P. Saltzman, those honored included (from left): Susan Goldberg, editorial director of National Geographic Partners and editor in chief of National Geographic; Kenneth J. Bialkin, prominent attorney; Andrew Borans, former executive director of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity and executive vice president of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation; Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman and CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Other recipients included Adam and Gila Milstein, philanthropists and community leaders and David Yarus, founder of mllnnl and JSwipe.

### РНОТО О:

Posed against a backdrop depicting the original site of Sinsheimers saloon, where B'nai B'rith was founded in 1843, President Gary P. Saltzman (far left) is joined by Honorary Presidents Moishe Smith (2006-2009); Allan J. Jacobs (2011-2015); Kent E. Schiner (1990-1994); Joel S. Kaplan (2002-2006); Tommy P. Baer (1994-1998); Richard D. Heideman (1998-2002); and Seymour D. Reich (1986-1990).







## PHOTO P:

On Tuesday, Senior Vice President Robert B. Spitzer presented Chairman of the Executive Peter A. Perlman (left) with The Moe and Berdie Kudler Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service. Spitzer also presented the Julius **Bisno Award for Professional Excellence to Edyta Szemiel,** controller.







### PHOTO Q:

Newly installed B'nai B'rith International officers included (L-R) Treasurer A. Michael Gellman, Senior Vice Presidents Stéphane Teicher, Morris Tobias, Scott D. Knapp and Rebecca Anne Saltzman. Not pictured: Senior Vice Presidents Brad Adolph and Roberto M. Nul; and Chief Justice of the B'nai B'rith Court of Appeals William K. Peirez.

### PHOTO R:

Chairman of the Executive Seth Riklin (right) is installed into office by Honorary President Moishe Smith.





# PHOTO S:

**Honorary President Kent** E. Schiner (left) installed newly elected B'nai B'rith **International President** Charles O. Kaufman (center) shown here with Moishe Smith.

### PHOTO T:

**New International President** Charles O. Kaufman, of Austin, Texas, a longtime and active member of the organization offered remarks: "We can be the global voice of the Jewish people only if we speak as one together."

## PHOTO U:

B'nai B'rith Latin America convened a meeting during the Global Leadership Forum, installing its new Chair, Eduardo Weinstein Gottleib, (front row, third from left.) On Tuesday, B'nai B'rith International elected Roberto M. Nul (back row, in red, second from left) to the office of Senior Vice President from Latin America for 2018-2021, succeeding Weinstein. Nul also served in this office from 2009-2012.

Photo credit: Jaime Fuchs



# A SALUTE TO 175 YEARS OF HISTORY, ACTION AND ADVOCACY

# B'nai B'rith Leadership Forum and Gala Dinner Honor Roots, Salute Future

continued from page 43

active philanthropists and community leaders Adam and Gila Milstein; and David Yarus, founder of mllnnl and JSwipe.

The evening's emcee was Chip Kahn, president and CEO of the Federation of American Hospitals and the recipient of B'nai B'rith's 2016 National Healthcare Award, which has recognized exceptional trailblazers in the health care industry for more than 30 years.

The Ramaz Chamber Choir performed the National Anthems of the United States and Israel and later entertained the audience with additional music.

The evening program examined B'nai B'rith's founding 175 years ago and showcased how the organization was an incubator for many of today's Jewish communal groups.

At this year's Leadership Forum, Charles O. Kaufman, of Austin, Texas, was elected president for a three-year term. Kaufman, with decades of service to B'nai B'rith at the local, national and international levels, noted: "Organizations that celebrate 175 years — and there aren't that many of them — have a strong mission, great resolve for success and an impressive ability to innovate. B'nai B'rith has built a proud history because we've shown that being nimble, bold and committed are keys to longevity."

Seth J. Riklin, of Sugar Land, Texas, was appointed Chairman of the Executive. B'nai B'rith also installed new senior vice presidents: Brad Adolph, Hawthorn Woods, Illinois; Scott D. Knapp, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Roberto M. Nul, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Rebecca Anne Saltzman, Centennial, Colorado; Stéphane Teicher, Paris, France; Morris Tobias, Melbourne, Australia; re-elected Treasurer A. Michael Gellman, Potomac,

Maryland; re-elected Chief Justice William K. Peirez, Great Neck, New York. Gary P. Saltzman, the outgoing president who chaired the forum, was elected Honorary President. He also delivered a State of the Organization address where he looked back on his tenure and accomplishments as president and looked forward to the continued vibrancy of B'nai B'rith.

During a morning session, B'nai B'rith CEO and Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin spoke from a global perspective with his key note presentation: "Threats, Challenges and Dilemmas: Assessing the Jewish Public Policy Agenda in our 175th Year."

Separately, Mariaschin said: "B'nai B'rith is a unique and pivotal organization. We meet with leaders in the fields of diplomacy and religion, at the U.N. and elsewhere around the world. We've evolved and expanded our mission over our 17-and-a-half decades, but our founders would still recognize our commitment to Tikkun Olam — making the world a better place."

At the Leadership Forum, B'nai B'rith also hosted a conversation with Ambassador Dani Dayan, the Consul General of Israel in New York, at a luncheon, part of the ongoing B'nai B'rith Diplomatic Encounter Series. "Israel is stronger, more prosperous and has a better relationship with the world than we've ever had," Dayan said. He went on, "Strength is a necessity," but he noted it isn't an Israeli aspiration.

At the same diplomatic encounter event, the organization conferred an award for Outstanding Contributions to Holocaust Memory upon Kimberly Mann, chief of the Education Outreach Section of the United Nations

Department of Public Information.

A panel discussion on "The Crisis of Zionism in Progressive Spaces" looked at the challenges facing Zionists today, where too often, they are denied a voice on issues of equality and justice. Panelists Ann Lewis, Democratic Party strategist; Amanda Berman, president/CEO, Zioness; and Emily Shire, journalist, talked about how we can work to overcome those who seek to dehumanize and alienate Zionists. "The word 'Zionist' is so sullied we have to reclaim it," Berman said. "If we had challenged the narrative all along, we wouldn't be so far behind."

B'nai B'rith also recognized the incredible energy of top young leaders who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and commitment to the work of B'nai B'rith. Five outstanding individuals received the Label A. Katz Award, given to exemplary individuals under the age of 45 who have demonstrated exceptional service to the totality of B'nai B'rith and have worked to achieve the goals of the B'nai B'rith Young Leadership program. Frank Goldman, Denver, Colorado; Scott D. Knapp, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Jessica Kreger, Plantation, Florida; Roni Sarfati, Petah Tikvah, Israel and Tali Schwartz, New York City, were recognized for their leadership skills and dedication to the organization.

With a depth of expertise and knowledge, B'nai B'rith Subject Matter Experts held a dialogue on some of B'nai B'rith's top advocacy efforts: fighting for global human rights; advocating for Israel; promoting tolerance, finding inter-religious commonalities; combating anti-Semitism and the odious BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions) movement; supporting seniors; and providing humanitarian aid around the world.

# Award Ceremonies at Global Leadership Forum Recognize Outstanding B'nai B'rith Leadership



Photo credit for this and subsequent pictures: Ben Hider

Since 1976, the Label A. Katz Young Leadership Award has recognized dedicated and committed young people from all over the world who are involved in B'nai B'rith activities. At the Leadership Forum, those selected for this year's award took their place with past winners.

hen the global B'nai B'rith International Leadership Forum was held in October, individuals who have shown exemplary levels of skill and dedication in the work that they do for B'nai B'rith were recognized, at both the volunteer and staff levels.

The traditional opening menorah lighting ceremony was led by past Label A. Katz Young Leadership Award winners Eduard Redensky and Rachel Silvestain. They served as chair and vice chair, respectively, of the Young Leadership Network from 2015 to 2018. The candles were lit by the 2018 award winners, and past winners Senior Vice President Eduardo Weinstein Gottlieb and Stéphane Teicher, a permanent representative of B'nai B'rith to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

As B'nai B'rith marked its 175th anniversary, it was the centennial of the birth of Label A. Katz, a dynamic young leader from New Orleans and the youngest person to be elected to serve as B'nai B'rith's president. The award in his name was first presented in 1976, at the suggestion of now-Honorary President Tommy P. Baer, founding chairman of the Young Leadership Committee.

"B'nai B'rith has long paid special attention to nurturing future leaders," said President Gary P. Saltzman at this year's Katz awards ceremony. He described the award as "given to leaders under age 45 who have demonstrated outstanding service to the totality of B'nai B'rith and have worked to achieve the goals of the B'nai B'rith Young Leadership program. The award has been a pretty solid indicator of success in this organization."



hoto credit: B'nai B'rith International

B'nai B'rith International President Label A. Katz and President John F. Kennedy, 1962.

# Award Ceremonies at Global Leadership Forum Recognize Outstanding B'nai B'rith Leadership

He invited the chair of this year's Label A. Katz Award Selection Committee, past winner Rebecca Saltzman, to present the awards, noting that she is on the Executive Board of Directors, is chair of the marketing committee and is the immediate past chair of the Young Leadership Network. She remarked that all the honorees "share a commitment and a true enthusiasm for so many aspects of the work of B'nai B'rith."

# This year's honorees:

Frank Goldman of Denver, Colorado is from a storied B'nai B'rith family, and is dedicating his work as the president of B'nai B'rith Denver to continuing the region's legacy of community service.

Scott D. Knapp of Fort Lauderdale, Florida is an integral leader in the B'nai B'rith Justice Unit, which has brought community service projects, Holocaust education programs and volunteer legal services to his area. He has also been very active in the development of the Young Leadership Network of South Florida.

Jessica Kreger of Plantation, Florida is making her mark with young leadership, chairing the network's South Florida efforts. Her intergenerational art project, pairing young leaders with seniors at the B'nai B'rith Deerfield Beach housing building, is especially noteworthy.

Roni Sarfati of Petah Tikvah, Israel founded a lodge in Israel, for young Turkish immigrants along with second-generation older Turkish families. He has also spearheaded some incredible mitzvah projects to assist children.

Tali Schwartz of New York City is actively involved in B'nai B'rith Young Leadership, playing several key roles. She chaired a host committee for a young leadership retreat and has represented



Robert B. Spitzer (right) and Daniel S. Mariaschin with B'nai B'rith Controller Edyta Szemiel who displays her Julius Bisno Award for Professional Excellence.

the organization as a member of the delegation for the World Zionist Congress in Israel.

Later in the Leadership Forum, Senior Vice President Robert B. Spitzer presented a series of awards recognizing volunteer and staff commitment.

He began by saying, "More than 30 years ago, one of our greatest and most generous presidents, my dad, Jack Spitzer — together with my mom, Charlotte — established and funded an annual award for outstanding volunteer service and another for professional excellence... After my dad passed away in 2004, my wife, Kathleen, and I made the decision to keep the awards going as a tribute to the memory of our mother and father.

"My dad could have named the awards after himself, but he chose, instead, to honor his long-time friends and B'nai B'rith colleagues — people who really typified everything the awards stood for — Julius Bisno for the staff award and Moe and Berdie Kudler for the award for

volunteers." Spitzer offered thoughts on the Kudler's leadership, devotion to Israel and commitment to civil rights, saying "The Kudlers really were exemplars of volunteer service within the B'nai B'rith family."

Spitzer then presented the Moe and Berdie Kudler Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service to Peter A. Perlman. who "has put his skills, talents and considerable passion to use for B'nai B'rith at the local, national and international levels." Listing many roles, Spitzer noted that in 1988, Perlman earned the Label A. Katz Young Leadership Award. Since that auspicious start, Perlman has taken part in just about every high level meeting B'nai B'rith has had, engaging with dozens of world leaders while advocating for Israel. He served two terms as National Fundraising chair and at the Leadership Forum, concluded a successful term as Chairman of the Executive. Spitzer concluded, "Peter's passion for B'nai B'rith has spanned so many programs and initiatives during



Daniel S. Mariaschin and Assistant Director for Aging Policy Evan Carmen, honored with the Sidney H. Closter Award for an Outstanding Young Professional.



Peter A. Perlman, who served as Chairman of the Executive, received the Moe and Berdie Kudler Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service, a tradition initiated more than 30 years ago by the parents of Senior Vice President Robert B. Spitzer.

his decades of volunteering and leadership, and we are truly grateful for the values he exemplifies and the encouragement and respect he has shown to all he works with at the volunteer and professional staff level."

After remarks from Perlman, Spitzer spoke about Julius Bisno and the award for staff named in his honor. After volunteer service as a teen, his professional career began when he was only 19. He served as national assistant secretary for AZA — the boys' component of what was then the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization. He went on to become executive director at age 23. Even after leaving the B'nai B'rith professional staff, Bisno continued to serve as an active volunteer leader in B'nai B'rith until his death in 1983.

Spitzer presented the staff award to **Edyta Szemie**l, B'nai B'rith's controller, who has displayed an outstanding dedication to ensuring B'nai B'rith can follow through on its mission.

In her years at B'nai B'rith, Szemiel developed a strong sense of devotion for the nonprofit world, which was new to her when she moved to the United States from Poland. Over the years, this built into a deep appreciation for how nonprofits seek to improve quality of life — one voice at a time — one program at a time.

Next on the program, Daniel S. Mariaschin, executive vice president and CEO, presented the Sidney H. Closter Award.

Mariaschin shared the recollection that Sidney Closter was a member of the B'nai B'rith staff family for nearly 50 years — two thirds of that time as Director of Development. Although he retired in 1996, that merely meant he no longer received a paycheck. He actively continued raising money and consulting on fundraising for B'nai B'rith as a volunteer until his death in 2005. Soon after, Sidney's family and numerous friends looked for a way to preserve his

memory. Since Sid loved nothing more than mentoring young staff members, an award was created to honor his memory by giving a stipend and a plaque to a deserving staff member in the early years of his or her B'nai B'rith career.

This year's award winner, **Evan Carmen**, is Assistant Director for Aging Policy in our Center for Senior Services. He is an engaged and engaging team player at our headquarters; his energy epitomizes the intent of the Closter Award.

Carmen has spearheaded a new effort during his short tenure to get Members of Congress and their staffs to visit our senior housing building so they can see directly what safe affordable low-income housing looks like and hear directly from the people who rely on this housing where these folks would be if not for the B'nai B'rith senior housing program.

On behalf of all B'nai B'rith leaders and staff, Saltzman offered congratulations to the 2018 award winners.

# Shining a Spotlight on B'nai B'rith in Atlanta

By Rhonda Love

B'nai B'rith International Vice President for Programming

n celebrating our 175th anniversary, we proudly acknowledge that our organization's activities date back to the 19th century in many American cities — among them Atlanta, Georgia.

B'nai B'rith has maintained a continuous presence in Atlanta since 1870, the date of the founding of the original Gate City Lodge #144. Originally financed by Jewish leader Simon Wolf, the Atlanta Hebrew Orphan's Asylum, later called the Hebrew Orphan's Home, extended assistance to children from its opening in 1889 until 1930.

Today, Achim/Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith fills the annual calendar with activities that make doing something for others a priority. It has proudly adopted several community service projects that were created by B'nai B'rith International and made them part of its active agenda. These events have served to offer opportunities to be involved in the community.

Since 1997, members have delivered new and previously loved stuffed animals to more than 20,000 children who are in difficult situations. They have made sure



Photo credit: William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

Residents of the Hebrew Orphans' Home (formerly the Hebrew Orphan's Asylum), funded by B'nai B'rith District 5 and Atlanta's Gate City Lodge, c. 1919.

that a child who was in the hospital or homeless shelter receives this special gift as part of the B'nai B'rith Cares for Kids project. The volunteers match every item donated with a child in need. It begins with arranging a pickup time convenient for the donor. Every communication ends with "yours in service to others."

More than 300 volunteers, under B'nai B'rith's Operation Brotherhood, throughout the city, in hospitals and other health care settings participate on Christmas Day. Begun in the 1940s, this was a "thank-you" to non-Jewish friends and neighbors who worked as community caregivers and first responders, allowing them to spend Christmas Eve and day with their families. In 1980, Achim/Gate City brought this program to Atlanta and gave it the name Pinch Hitters. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush recognized the program with the designation of the 335th Presidential Point of Light.

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Photos Courtesy of Harry Lutz

B'nai B'rith's Gate City/Achim Unit Pinch Hitter Program participants hold down the fort at local hospitals.

# Diverse Minds Writing Challenge

s B'nai B'rith celebrates 175 years of fighting bigotry and advocating for social justice and fairness, the Diverse Minds Writing Challenge stands out among its many programs to reach and benefit the next generation.

Since 2006, B'nai B'rith International has been promoting tolerance and diversity through this program, which asks high school students to create children's books that educate young people on the importance of accepting other people's differences, cultures and ideals. The student authors/illustrators tackle tough topics that resonate with them and hopefully will encourage younger students to be more openminded.

The contests, with financial support from outside sponsors, were held this year in four areas along the East Coast: New York City, the Delmarva Peninsula, Washington, D.C., and southern New Jersey. Winners are chosen by a panel



of judges from the worlds of education, business, the arts and government, in addition to B'nai B'rith International

First place winners in each city received a \$5,000 college scholarship and had their book professionally published. The winning students' teachers each received \$1,000 to use for classroom or organizational materials, and the schools received \$500. Second-place winners received \$2,000 college scholarships and those who placed third received \$1,000 scholarships.

B'nai B'rith prints thousands of copies

of each winning book and donates them to local schools, libraries and places such as Boys and Girls clubs. Donations are also made to the TODAY Show Holiday Toy and Gift Drive. Winning books are also accessible on iTunes and Amazon as a free download. The books can also be found at the B'nai B'rith website: bnaibrith.org/diverse-minds.

# **New York**

A student from Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Queens, New York, won the New York City area Diverse Minds Writing Challenge for her creative and insightful book. Vivian Velez of Jackson Heights wrote and illustrated "Us Humans," which beautifully illuminates the wide diversity of our world and how, through positive thinking and actions, we can spread goodwill and respect toward one another. Velez is a firm believer that "empathy is the key to almost everything in life." An art enthusiast, Velez will be pursuing an illustration major in college.



"Us Humans" written and illustrated by Vivian Velez, a student at the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Queens, was the first prize winner of the New York City Diverse Minds Challenge, sponsored by First Data.



Velez was recognized at B'nai B'rith's Leadership Forum in October.

# **Diverse Minds Writing Challenge**

Velez was announced the New York City region winner during B'nai B'rith International's 175th anniversary dinner gala at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan on Oct. 15.

The New York City region's contest was funded by First Data. All contest sponsors share the ideals that this contest can enlighten, inspire and educate America's young people and their families in an effort to eradicate prejudices and strengthen ties among today's youth.

Second place in New York went to "I Wish," written by Liz Lee and illustrated by Sally Chen from Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, and third place went to the book "Some People," written and illustrated by Serena Shibu from Townsend Harris High School in Flushing.

### Delmarva

The winner of this year's *Diverse Minds Writing Challenge* in the Delmarva area is "True Colors," written by Faith Kim from Charter School of Wilmington in Wilmington, Delaware. Kim was announced as the winner at an awards ceremony at the Delmarva Power Conference Center on June 4.

Kim struggled to fit in at several new schools as a child, thus the topic of diversity and intolerance resonates with her deeply and personally. The protagonist in her book experiences many of the things that Kim experienced growing up. Lessons drawn from her book reflect her belief that "it is imperative that we teach the importance of having an open mind to today's youth."

"Along with a diverse environment comes the need for tolerance and inclusion, and these ideas are oftentimes harder to embrace. So our efforts in recent years have been to underscore the



Author Mary Isabel Mejía Roberts, who attends School Without Walls, and illustrator Pablo Javier Echevarria, a student at Duke Ellington School of the Arts, teamed up for their prize-winning bi-lingual entry, "To Draw the World." Photographed at Pepco Edison Place Gallery in downtown Washington, (from left:) Bruce Pascal, past senior vice president, B'nai B'rith International; Rachel Blessing, School Without Walls faculty member and advisor; Mejía Roberts; Echevarria; David Valazquez, chairman and CEO of Pepco Holdings, which funds the Diverse Minds contest in Washington, D.C.

importance of these pivotal concepts
— particularly around bullying, diverse
families and religious tolerance," said
B'nai B'rith Diverse Minds Writing
Challenge Program Manager Laura Jeser.

At the ceremony, the finalists and winners were congratulated by Jeser; Gary Stockbridge, region president of Delmarva Power; and Enid Wallace-Simms, senior public affairs manager of Delmarva Power, the program sponsor for the Delmarva challenge.

Stockbridge talked about the significance of this program. "At Delmarva Power, we believe that having a diverse team of people — with different backgrounds, experiences, cultures and perspectives — helps us deliver better service for our customers," Stockbridge said. "We value opportunities to partner with organizations like B'nai B'rith to teach

young people across our service area about the importance of diversity and inclusion, which builds on our efforts as a committed community partner to improve the quality of life across the region."

Second place winner Molly
McCormick, from Worcester
Preparatory School in Berlin, Maryland
wrote and illustrated "Tide Pools."
Third place winner Emma Edelin,
from Fallston High School in Fallston,
Maryland wrote and illustrated "Our
Differences Make Us the Same."

# Washington, D.C.

The Washington, D.C.-metro area contest winner is "To Draw the World," written by Mary Isabel Mejía Roberts, a student at School Without Walls, and illustrated by Pablo Javier Echevarria, a student from Duke Ellington School of

the Arts. Mejía Roberts and Echevarria were announced as the winners at an awards ceremony at the Pepco Edison Place Gallery on June 6.

The inspiration behind "To Draw the World" stemmed from Mejía Roberts' and Echevarria's passion to increase awareness of the diversity within Latin America and other countries. The author's enthusiasm to capture worldly themes comes from her own travels and experiences living in various countries. By showcasing children around the world in their book, the author and illustrator hope that all forms of media will be more inclusive of those underrepresented."The message of the book is that though people are different, that's not bad. Differences should be celebrated and not isolated," Mejía Roberts and Echevarria said.

The finalists and winners were congratulated by Bruce Pascal, B'nai B'rith International past senior vice president; Dave Velazquez, president and CEO of Pepco Holdings; and Donna Cooper, region president of Pepco.

"Through programs such as the *Diverse Minds Writing Challenge*, we can begin discussions about tolerance in our schools, our homes and our communities in hopes that the dialogue will spread throughout the country and the world. A key factor to a more tolerant society is access to higher education... And so it is only appropriate that the prizes for this program are college scholarships," Pascal said.

"We are inspired by the ingenuity and compassion of these talented students and their important messages focusing on diversity and inclusion," Velazquez said. "Each year, our partnership with B'nai B'rith gives us the wonderful opportunity to showcase how our youth are spreading the message of diversity and inclusion through their own personal lenses and we are always impressed and energized by the messages, themes, and courage they share through their books."



Washington D.C. 2018 Diverse Minds winners and finalists proudly display their awards. With them is Donna Cooper (second row, left) Pepco region president.



A special guest at the Washington, D.C. ceremony, award-winning author Leah Henderson delivers an inspiring speech about her path to success.

At the award ceremony in Washington, award-winning author Leah Henderson addressed the finalists and gave an inspiring speech on how diversity, tolerance, acceptance and inclusion can only come about by seeing other's possibilities, and that "to have true diversity ... other people must be able to see your possibilities as well."

By placing first, Mejía Roberts and Echevarria will share the \$5,000 college scholarship, and their book, which was written in both Spanish and English, has been professionally published. Second place winner Kaniz Fatema, also from Duke Ellington School of the Arts, wrote and illustrated "Nothing Strange About a Name." Third place winner Joy Anderson, from St. John's College High School in Washington, D.C., wrote and illustrated "The Star of the Show."

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# 2018 B'nai B'rith Housing Congressional Visits

By Evan Carmen

B'nai B'rith International Assistant Director for Aging Policy in the Center for Senior Services

ach year, our Center for Senior Services coordinates congressional visits to B'nai B'rith housing nationwide; 2018 included tours of senior residences in Florida, Illinois, Texas and New Jersey.

By providing tours to elected representatives and their staff members, we are able to show them why funding for affordable senior housing is so critical. In addition, this provides our residents the chance to learn how congressional offices can be helpful with Medicare and Social Security issues. Often congressional visits encompass a tour of the building, including a model apartment, food pantry, dining hall, gym, computer room, library and social hall.

Key to any congressional visit is hearing directly from the residents. This is a great opportunity for elected officials to understand how federal programs are critical in our residents' daily lives. And most importantly, how much residents enjoy living in B'nai B'rith-sponsored housing.

"This is the best place to live. Without this federal subsidized housing for seniors, I would not have this wonderful home in a clean and safe environment," Carmen Rodriguez, a resident of B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach, Florida, told U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.) during a visit. "It means the world to me to be able to live independently and feel proud of my home."

Talking with residents goes beyond hearing how they benefit from federal government programs. So many B'nai B'rith residents volunteer in their buildings and worked their entire life



Rep. Cheri Bustos of Illinois speaks to residents at Sam J. Stone B'nai B'rith Covenant Apartments in Peoria.

before living in subsidized housing. Representatives realize how many of our residents, through no fault of their own, need affordable housing because their only source of income is Social Security. Sadly, too many residents are forced to explain how they have to make the hard decision between food and medications every month.

"I had a great discussion with the seniors of B'nai B'rith Covenant Apartments today about all of the issues affecting them and their families," said U.S. Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-Ill.) after visiting Sam J. Stone B'nai B'rith Covenant Apartments, in Peoria, Illinois. "Our seniors worked hard all of their lives and they deserve to retire with dignity, and that includes providing them with affordable housing options through the (federal) Section 202 program. I believe that all seniors should be

able to retire with peace of mind, which is why I'm fighting hard to protect the Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare benefits they've earned."

In March, U.S. Rep. Gene Green (D-Tex.) toured Pasadena Interfaith Manor in Pasadena, Texas, viewing an apartment, the library, resident computer room, community room, grocery store and the grounds, which include a dog park. After the tour, Green spoke with residents about affordable housing, Social Security, health care, nutrition and Supplemental Security Income.

"I'm delighted," said Green, "to have had the opportunity to visit a facility that provides crucial services and a supply of affordable, comfortable housing to the 29th District. I commend B'nai B'rith's diligent work in advancing Section 202 housing, a vital program for many low-



Photo credit: Onaray Clark-Donald

Q & A session with Rep. Donald Payne Jr. at the South Orange B'nai B'rith Federation House in New Jersey.



Photo credit: Wendi Lipsich

Rep. Ted Deutch of Florida at B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach I, II & III. From left: Stephen Rose, resident board of directors; James Lynch, residence administrator; Deutch; Janet Murphy and Lynn Maccarone, residence service coordinators.

income seniors, and I share their goal of doing all we can to protect federal funding for Section 202."

U.S. Rep. Donald Payne, Jr. (D-N.J.) toured South Orange B'nai B'rith Federation House in South Orange, New Jersey, in September. "I'm happy to visit with the residents to learn from their experiences and hear their concerns," he said. "Organizations like B'nai B'rith International and the Jewish Community Housing Corporation of Metropolitan New Jersey provide a life-saving service by ensuring that senior citizens have safe, affordable housing. Since being in Congress, I have supported Section 202 housing and advocated for the needs of senior citizens."

Since the beginning of the year, many congressional staff members have also visited B'nai B'rith-sponsored buildings across the country.

In fact, during the summer we hosted "There's No Place Like Home Day" at Homecrest House, in Silver Spring, Maryland, for congressional staff. We ran this program so congressional staff members would get a better under-

standing of the Section 202 Supportive Senior Housing Program in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. As we continue to advocate on behalf of the B'nai B'rith housing community, congressional tours are our most effective tool to showcase our fantastic residents and highlight the vital role federal programs play in their lives.



Photo credit: Rene Ballestros

In March 2018, Rep. Gene Green of Texas visited Pasadena (Texas) Interfaith Manor. Pictured, from left: Phyllis Davis, management agent; Mike Garcia, building manager; Green; Seth Riklin, then-chair of B'nai B'rith Senior Housing; Mort Peltzman, residence board member.

# Diverse Minds Writing Challenge

Continued from page 55

# **Southern New Jersey**

In southern New Jersey, the winning entry was "Outside the Box," written and illustrated by Marley Goudie, from Ocean City High School in Ocean City, New Jersey. This contest was funded by Atlantic City Electric, and Goudie was announced as the winner at an award ceremony at the company's regional headquarters on June 5.

Goudie is compelled to advocate that interests not be imposed by traditional gender roles from an early age. She believes that whether it is with doll houses or Legos, children should be able to decide for themselves what they think is fun. Goudie believes children should be accepted, no matter what choice they make in their toy options.

"Along with a diverse environment comes the need for tolerance and inclusion, and these ideas are oftentimes harder to embrace. So our efforts in recent years have been to underscore the importance of these pivotal concepts — particularly around bullying, diverse families and religious tolerance," B'nai

B'rith International Associate Executive Vice President Mark D. Olshan said at the event.

Susan Coan, Atlantic City Electric region vice president, discussed the significance of the program. "We are a proud supporter of this initiative that promotes tolerance and diversity, and reinforces our commitment to an inclusive and diverse workforce," Coan said. "We are pleased to have the opportunity to partner with B'nai B'rith on this program that teaches young people the value and importance in celebrating equality."

Second place winner Morgan J. Kersey, from Woodbury Junior-Senior High School in Woodbury, New Jersey, wrote and illustrated "Little Moments." Third place winner Vincent Grossman, from Lower Cape May Regional, wrote and illustrated "Heath and His Monsters."

"For the last nearly 30 years, I have traveled the world on behalf B'nai B'rith, and I have met with world leaders, peoples of all cultures,

backgrounds and beliefs, and the worst of what I have seen always stems from a foundation of intolerance, bigotry and narrow-mindedness," said B'nai B'rith International CEO and Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin. "So, it is always heartening to see the idealism, hope and conviction of this next generation and the young people who participate in the Diverse Minds Writing Challenge. It is needed now more than ever, and it is why we at B'nai B'rith are so committed to this program and the substance that it conveys."

B'nai B'rith has now published 41 original children's books, in two different languages (English and Spanish), awarded more than \$337,000 in college scholarships and grants and donated more than 45,000 books to public schools, libraries and community organizations across the country, including to the TODAY Show's annual holiday toy drive.

Submission details and deadlines for next year's contest will be posted at <a href="https://bit.ly/2PASxJt">https://bit.ly/2PASxJt</a> <a href="https://bit.ly/2PASxJt">■</a>

# Shining a Spotlight on B'nai B'rith in Atlanta

Continued from page 52

The group also is devoted to encouraging American youth to support tolerance and fight bigotry with a program called Enlighten America. This was created in August 2000 by B'nai B'rith to respond to senseless acts of violence and hatred that were in the news and also provide a vehicle for individuals who wanted to do something to respond.

The program offers a personal pledge to help an individual express their commitment to support these ideals and be thankful for the freedoms they have as citizens. The group has taken this message and has created an annual essay contest for young people — encouraging them to express their thoughts on this important subject and offering a means

to do so. The top three essay writers receive cash prizes ranging from \$250-\$750 and \$500 is presented to the school of the first-place winner. Their winning essays have been reprinted in the Atlanta Jewish Times.

To learn more about the community service projects of B'nai B'rith International, visit: <a href="https://bit.ly/2zoLVE8">https://bit.ly/2zoLVE8</a> •

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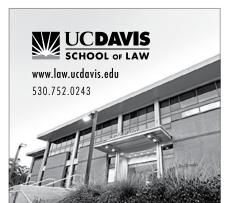


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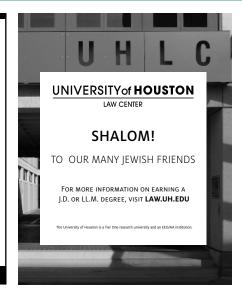
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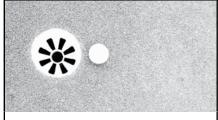
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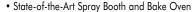
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# Preserving Senior Housing: B'nai Brith and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

By Mark D. Olshan

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

nai B'rith has long recognized the need for safe, affordable housing for low-income seniors: a place where residents have their own apartments and live independently, while also sometimes sharing communal prepared meals in a group dining room.

Since 1971, B'nai B'rith has been a leader in this field. We have applied the knowledge we have gleaned from our senior housing efforts to the legislative arena, keeping regular oversight on legislation that may affect the elderly in the United States and around the world.

With 38 buildings in 28 communities, B'nai B'rith is the largest national Jewish sponsor of federally assisted senior housing in the United States. We also sponsor six buildings in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver; as well as "flatlets" in London and throughout the United Kingdom and Australia. B'nai B'rith's first "parents" home opened in 1958, and is located in Haifa, Israel.

With seniors lucky enough to be housed in such apartments throughout the country, we find ourselves in the midst of an escalating affordable housing crisis. Millions of low-income persons are paying 70 percent or more of their incomes for shelter, while rents continue to rise and the construction of "affordable" rental apartments lags far behind the need. In 2011, B'nai B'rith opened the most recent of its senior

housing properties funded through the federal Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly, the last dedicated "seniors" program administered and overseen in Washington, D.C.

Today, the program most available to provide funding for new construction, and, even more importantly, for the renovation and preservation of older units is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Administered by the Internal Revenue Service. This program makes federal tax credits available to the private sector to encourage investments in affordable housing. Established in 1986, it has assisted in the creation and preservation of about 3 million apartments nationwide.







Photo credit: Courtesy of FHRC Management staff and EH&N Construction staff.

Recently renovated apartments at the Adelstein Family B'nai B'rith Project H.O.P.E. apartments in the Bronx, New York are decorated by the residents with items that reflect their tastes and interests.

To date, the B'nai B'rith senior housing network has successfully benefited from the tax credit in St. Louis, for instance, where the Covenant Place apartment complex used the program to fund more than 35 percent of the total cost of renovating the property. The rest of the funds came from a major community capital campaign. The Coolidge at Sudbury apartments, in a Boston suburb, used tax credit financing as the major funding source for the new development.

Additionally, we are pleased to report that this past April, B'nai B'rith Senior Housing closed on a major refinancing proposal to renovate and modernize the Adelstein Family B'nai B'rith Project H.O.P.E. property in the Bronx, New York. The building was constructed in 1992 under the federal government's Supportive Housing for the Elderly program. It consists of 100 residential apartments, 25 of them studios, and one unit for a live-in building superintendent. Rent for each residential unit is subsidized under the federal Section 8 Housing Assistance Contract program. New York State-issued bonds, coupled with the federal tax credits, raised the money to renovate the property.

The original Bronx project came about like many in the B'nai B'rith housing portfolio. It was 1979 when the vision of B'nai B'rith member Bernard Adelstein began to take shape. He foresaw a 100-unit development providing quality, safe and secure accommodations for seniors and disabled low-income citizens. But, it took 10 years for the vision to become a reality. Then, for 30 years, the property was a crown jewel of the community. But, as

time went on, the building's residents aged; some required more services to live independently, while others moved to more institutional settings — or died — and were replaced with new residents. Adelstein, who was most instrumental in initial building efforts, passed away in 2002, and many of the original board members retired from the property or passed on.

Adelstein's sons Marty and Alan and daughter Sherry remained on the board. But improvements were needed, and financial resources were limited.

To best meet the continuing challenge of providing housing for low-income seniors, the Adelsteins met with officials of B'nai B'rith Senior Housing who introduced them to a developer familiar with the tax credit program. A new corporation, in which B'nai B'rith and the developer play leading roles, now oversees the project.

Not only does the new management intend to preserve the existing building for the next generation, it also plans to provide the financial resources for supportive and social services for the residents. Through partnerships with local organizations, for the first time, residents will have access to community resources, supportive listening and casework services and a host of new classes, workshops, events and regular activities.

With construction well underway, residents expect to see a completely renovated building by the end of the calendar year. During the work, residents have temporarily moved into other units within the complex, so there has been no displacement.

Apartments will include new bathrooms with new toilets and bath tubs; new kitchen cabinets, counters and appliances; and all new lighting and painting throughout. Exterior and common area renovations will include new masonry, replacement of exterior doors, new elevators, safety windows, plumbing infrastructure, boilers and pumps. It will also see the addition of smoke detectors and sprinklers and electrical and security upgrades.

Overall, the developer intends to complete \$8.7 million of building renovations, at approximately \$87,000 per apartment, at no additional cost to tenants. Additionally, all residents will now be supplied with window air conditioners. Previously, they had to provide their own units.

According to Marty Adelstein, president of the project's original development corporation, "Everything seems to be going quite smoothly. Residents are very excited to see the transformation of their homes taking place before their very eyes and are looking forward to be living in a virtually brand-new building. We are truly grateful for the support and partnership provided by B'nai B'rith in helping to make this transformation possible..."

Further, discussions are currently underway with the developer and the city about acquiring an abutting three-acre lot for 1,000 more units of senior and veteran housing.

If you'd like to see B'nai B'rith senior housing in your community, contact the B'nai B'rith senior housing office in Washington at seniors@bnaibrith.org.

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



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