

PLUS: Celebrate 180 Years of Service, Advocacy, Impact

# B'NAI B'RITH

M A G A Z I N E

PUBLISHED SINCE 1886

WINTER 2023

## When Anti-Semitism Hits Home: How Hate Hurts Kids

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# 3 For 180 Years: Wherever There is a Need, There Is B'nai B'rith

B'nai B'rith's President Seth J. Riklin and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin reflect on 180 years of rich history and Jewish advocacy. The recent rise in anti-Semitism and vilification of Israel have made our work more vital than ever. Through unwavering dedication to providing humanitarian aid and combating hate, B'nai B'rith continues at the forefront, extending a helping hand wherever and whenever it is needed.

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Tucked away in eastern Jerusalem is the insular Domari (Roma) community. Rejected by both Jews and Arabs, the Domari are often viewed as social outcasts, facing extreme poverty and a lack of education perpetuated by discrimination. One dedicated Jerusalem native has forged a community support system that tackles these barriers by providing aid and helping preserve the distinct Domari culture.

By Michele Chabin



# B'NAI B'RITH MAGAZINE

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## Editor's Note

With anti-Semitic incidents on the rise in alarming numbers, we look at how they are affecting children. It's shocking and tragic that younger generations who presumed themselves to be safe and free to practice their religion without fear, or even just to proclaim their Jewish identity, are increasingly targeted by purveyors of hate, some of them even their peers. But that is the reality in 2023.

At the same time, we examine the many and diverse ways in which American Jews pray, from kayaks on the Venice, California, canal to the far more sedate and traditional Conservative and Orthodox synagogues, a remarkable spectrum of worshippers and worshipping.

Off the beaten path, we meet the small Domari/Roma community in Israel, largely residing on the east side of Jerusalem, descendants of immigrants who settled there in the 12th century C.E. Practitioners of Islam but looked down upon by their Arab neighbors, they struggle yet strive to succeed.

For readers interested in a dog day afternoon, we offer a new wrinkle on an old tradition, a religious ritual for the canine set that has come to be called a "Bark Mitzvah." Some so marking their pet's religious rite of passage are sparing no expense to make it a family affair.

Beyond these features, we provide the usual lineup of thoughtful columns from our leaders and also, from our "Vault," a portrait of James Grover McDonald, an unsung diplomat who spoke out against Nazi anti-Semitism in the 1930s and in 1948 became America's first ambassador to the new state of Israel. Enjoy! 🇺🇸

—Eugene L. Meyer

## B'NAI B'RITH

MAGAZINE

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## From the Vault

### James Grover McDonald: Unsung Statesman Decried Hitler

By Cheryl Kempler

James Grover McDonald had no doubts about Adolph Hitler's murderous obsession after meeting him in 1933. Haunted by what he learned, the 47-year-old American diplomat, broadcaster and political science professor committed his efforts to saving Jewish lives.

The B'nai B'rith Holocaust and Related Materials Collection at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives contains documents evidencing the challenges which McDonald faced and which are underscored by

B'nai B'rith Magazine (then called The American Jewish Monthly) and its coverage of his words and actions between 1933 and 1935. The 2003 discovery of his diaries in the basement of a private residence led to their publication and their acquisition by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The historic diaries constitute a day-to-day narrative of his experiences, providing a record of the ways in which the world's highest-ranking officials responded to Hitler and the Nazis.

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## For 180 Years: Wherever There is a Need, There Is B'nai B'rith

**A message from B'nai B'rith President Seth J. Riklin and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin**

180 years ago, B'nai B'rith was born in the heart of New York's Lower East Side with a noble purpose: to support Jewish immigrants in their journey to a new life in America. From its inception, our organization became a symbol of people helping people, and we proudly became America's first Jewish service organization.

Throughout our rich history, B'nai B'rith has grown into an international force, tirelessly advocating for the Jewish community and the broader society. We have left an indelible mark by founding hospitals, libraries, community centers and orphanages. These institutions have become beacons of care, education and achievement. Our legacy is rooted in recognizing societal needs and taking action to improve the lives of the less fortunate—from our inception, just as we do now.

Since 1843, we have stood firm in our commitment to unite and care for others. Through our national network of senior housing communities and our unwavering dedication to providing humanitarian aid, B'nai B'rith continues to extend a helping hand wherever and whenever it is needed.

As we celebrate our accomplishments, we are reminded of the vital work that lies ahead. The recent rise of anti-Semitic acts has reached alarming levels, with hateful rhetoric seeping into mainstream discourse. Israel, too, faces constant defamation and vilification at international forums, where its very right to exist is challenged daily.

While we remain hopeful for a future where safety and security prevail, it is our duty to shine a light on these injustices and combat hate in all its forms. Today, we must ensure that B'nai B'rith's essential work endures.

We are asking you to take a moment right now and make a gift to the B'nai B'rith Founders Fund in honor of 180 years of service. Donate here: [bit.ly/bbi-founders-fund](https://bit.ly/bbi-founders-fund)

Through this gift, you are demonstrating your unwavering commitment to stand with us. Together, we reaffirm our shared dedication to a stronger, more secure Jewish future.

Just as our visionary founders recognized in 1843, it is our responsibility to come together to uplift our people. We need your support to continue our vital work.

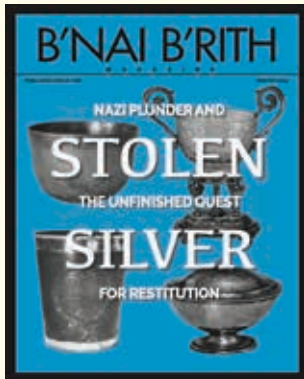
Join us in making a difference. We can ensure that B'nai B'rith's legacy of compassion and advocacy endures, paving the way for a brighter future for generations to come.

Wherever there is a need, there is B'nai B'rith. 🌍

# B'nai B'rith Magazine Wins Major Awards for Excellence

The 2022 issue of B'nai B'rith Magazine won **THREE** Simon Rockower Awards for Excellence in Jewish Journalism, honoring achievements in Jewish media, given by the American Jewish Press Association—including for **BEST MAGAZINE!**

These prestigious awards continue a long line of recognition for excellence in B'nai B'rith Magazine.



On July 11, 2023, B'nai B'rith Magazine won the following top prizes for the 2022 issue:

## 1st Place: Award for General Excellence—Best Magazine

**Eugene L. Meyer, Editor**

**Judge's comment:** Excellent diversity of stories and content. Readable stories and nice features.



## 1st Place: The Boris Smolar Award for Excellence in Enterprise or Investigative Reporting

**“Stolen Silver: Nazi Plunder and the Unfinished Quest for Restitution” by Dina Gold**

**Judge's comment:** Excellent research and compelling storytelling.



## 2nd Place: Award for Excellence in Single Commentary

**“Students Tackle Issue of Modern Anti-Semitism with 2022 None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest” by Adrian Weiss**

**Judge's comment:** The writer makes good points about people's blindness to anti-Semitism and the need to do better.

After you finish the issue in your hands now, go back to 2022 and see what all the fuss was about!

Read it here: <https://bit.ly/BBMag2022> 📄

# B'NAI B'RITH MAGAZINE

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# WHEN ANTI-SEMITISM HITS HOME: HOW HATE HURTS KIDS

By Beryl Lieff Benderly

Riding home from Hebrew school, an 11-year-old we'll call Josh proudly showed his mother a clever Hanukkah-themed drawing he had made in class. But when she pulled to a stop at a supermarket, he flipped the picture face-down on the seat. He didn't want passersby to see that they were Jewish, he explained.

Josh had not personally experienced any anti-Semitic incidents, but, as a member of a generation raised on active shooter trainings, he has no trouble imagining violence. And, like Jews of all ages, he has heard of attacks happening around him—at schools and other places in his metropolitan suburb with its sizeable Jewish population, and in other towns and cities. Beyond what's on the news, a classmate we'll call Noah had confided about anti-Semitic insults and threats from a non-Jewish student—and known bully—at their public middle school. Noah decided to avoid the worse trouble that he foresaw from reporting his experience to school authorities.

"Very scary and disturbing" incidents, both in the wider community and in schools, have shaken Jewish students, says Eliana Joftus, who, before graduating in June, was head of the Jewish Student Union at Walt Whitman High School in Montgomery County, Maryland, an area that experienced nine events at various schools in a single week in February. On a Friday night two days after her group sponsored an educational session on anti-Semitism, someone spray-painted



Photo: Ted Eytan

"Jews not welcome" on the school's main sign, Joftus said. "Thankfully, it was found and removed by Saturday morning" and "very few people saw it." Via social media, however, "everyone knew by Saturday midday, and it was very, very scary for everyone." Additional distress struck when two students traveling on a bus to a debate event bombarded Jewish members of Walt Whitman's team with "very, very threatening, awful" comments about "how they wanted, like, to kill all Jews...It was just very disgusting," Joftus said.





Photo: Courtesy of Mike Landsman

A crowd assembles in solidarity at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, after the school entrance sign was defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti in December 2022.

Another high school in the same county closed its outdoor facilities after four anti-Semitic events, for “the safety of our students, staff, and community,” the school’s principal wrote in a letter to families. A total of 18 of 65 anti-Semitic incidents in the county in 2022 happened on school grounds.

In the Cherry Creek school district near Denver, Colorado, middle school students who had just viewed a video about the Holocaust marked their arms and legs with swastikas. Local resident Rikki Mor posted about the incident on Facebook. In less than 24 hours she said she received more than 60 online responses and that over one-third of them were reporting anti-Semitic incidents, she wrote to the local school superintendent in an open letter co-signed by more than 250 others. Because of “constant” harassment, Mor wrote in the letter, one mother “has told her children not to tell anyone they are Jewish.... [I]n 2023... 12-, 13- and 16-year-olds are scared to say they are Jewish!”

With reported anti-Semitic incidents at the highest level the Anti-Defamation League has ever recorded—up 49% in K–12 schools in 2022, after nearly doubling in 2021—and with unreported cases perhaps rising even faster, kids across the country are clearly feeling the impact. What is it doing to them?

There appears to have been no recent research into the effects of anti-Semitic experiences on young Jewish children. But in 2015 the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy published a number of papers, including one titled, “I Don’t Know Why They Hate Us—I Don’t Think We Did Anything Bad to Them.”

The author, Nora Gold, formerly associate professor of social work at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, followed 16 Jewish girls in Toronto from age 10 through 12, checking in each year on their feelings about themselves, their Jewishness, and their experiences with anti-Jewish incidents, both personal and in the wider community.

Extrapolating from this fragmentary information and from general knowledge about child development and trauma, does, however, provide some clues about how the current situation is affecting Jewish kids.

Depending on severity and circumstances, kids’ reactions to anti-Semitic events and reports can be “strong” and include “fear, anxiety, worry, confusion, and anger,” along with “thoughts that the world is no longer safe” and struggles “to make sense of what happened,” notes the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.



Reports on local incidents made one Toronto girl “a little afraid of people who are not Jewish.” Another recounted how a woman attacking with kicks and epithets a kippah-wearing Orthodox boy on a bus made the girl glad she doesn’t have to wear anything revealing her Jewishness. “I don’t point out that I’m a Jewish person,” she said. “If someone doesn’t ask me, I’m not going to...tell.” A 12-year-old offered a more sophisticated explanation: “[S]ometimes [anti-Semites] have their own personal problems. I don’t know what their problems would be, but...they stereotype. They think that all Jews are bad....” Overall, half the girls “rated their lives lower than they would have otherwise because of anti-Semitism,” Gold wrote.

### Testing identity

As children and teens form and experiment with identities, hate speech and attacks can strongly influence that process and their concepts of how the world sees them, suggests psychologist Ryan DeLapp, director of the Racial, Ethnic, And Cultural Healing (REACH) Program at The Ross Center in New York. REACH focuses on the cultural stress impacting children and adults of color, which it defines as “uncomfortable emotional responses caused by a person, situation, or institution that expresses negative judgments or beliefs about someone, or that mistreats someone because of their identity (for example: race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, age, ability level, etc.).”

Such experiences evoke feelings of being “unwelcome, unsafe or as if you don’t belong within your surroundings...making it difficult to see a sense of love towards one’s own cultural background,” DeLapp writes. Especially relevant to young Jews these days is REACH’s concept of identity distress, which includes “struggling to have pride in your identity, experiencing self-doubt or low confidence because of your identity, or changing how you act or think of yourself because of other’s opinions about your identity.” Gold, for example, found “some evidence of internalized anti-Semitism.” “Sometimes I feel like I want to be Christian” for fear of “people killing Jews because they’re Jewish,” one Toronto girl said.

Young people’s “Jewish choices today are being shaped in the face of rising anti-Semitism,” says Samantha Vinokor-

Meinrath, senior director of Knowledge, Ideas and Learning at The Jewish Education Project in New York. Her 2022 book “#antisemitism: Coming of Age during the Resurgence of Hate” explores the attitudes of older teens and young adults. Not every “Jewish young person is a victim of anti-Semitism or even necessarily internalizes that they are being impacted by it,” she said in an interview. “But by and large...broad strokes are being made in a climate of rising anti-Semitism, of threat of physical violence, of verbal harassment, [of] steeply increased online anti-Semitism.” As a result, many young people decide not to “present Jewish,” except in “Jewish space.”

But, Vinokor-Meinrath says, others think “the exact opposite, that they want to wear a Jewish star and do so despite seeing that ‘the climate is telling me not to.’ Both of those—the choice to or the choice not to—are in response to this uptick in anti-Semitism.”



Photo: Courtesy of Zachary Singerman

Activist and blogger Zachary Singerman, whose website, [genzjews.com](http://genzjews.com) focuses on fighting anti-Semitism and instilling a sense of Jewish pride in boys and girls his own age.

### Doing something

Zack Singerman of Washington, D.C., was 13 when the murderous 2018 attack on his grandmother’s Pittsburgh synagogue, Tree of Life Congregation, riveted national attention. “I realized that I needed to do something,” he said, “I didn’t want to live in a world, and I don’t want my kids in the future to live in a world, with raging anti-Semitism and to be scared to go to shul.” He decided to bring teens together in a summit on anti-Semitism to learn “what it is, how to fight it, how to recognize it.”

When then New York Times writer Bari Weiss spoke at the Sixth & I Historic Synagogue in Washington about her 2019 book “How to Fight Anti-Semitism,” Zack attended and asked if she would also speak at his event. She agreed, and he organized some 200 local teens to attend the meeting planned for late March 2020—the very week the world closed down for COVID-19. Postponed and moved to Zoom, the summit happened online later that year, Zack recalls. He also created the website [genzjews.com](http://genzjews.com), which fights anti-Semitism and promotes *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). It includes 35 “Learn from Leaders” interviews with teachers, government officials, business leaders and others about “what it means to be Jewish,” plus “Hear our voices” statements by young people and other resources.

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org/office of Governor Tom Wolf

Children wearing Pittsburgh Steelers “Stronger Than Hate” sweatshirts at the November 2018 Rally for Peace and Memorial to the Victims of the Tree of Life Congregation shootings.



How individuals react to anti-Semitism differs, Vinokor-Meinrath emphasizes, with much appearing to depend on personal factors like identity, personality, support and social circumstances. Toronto study author Gold calls for much more research on larger samples of Jewish children, including those of both sexes and from different countries. “It will also be valuable,” she adds, “in the future to compare the anti-Semitic experiences of Jewish children with the ways that non-Jewish children experience other forms of oppression, for example racism.”

Unlike Zack, “the majority of kids and teens will go underground with their Judaism, which makes them less likely to be engaged Jews, less likely to go to places where they would meet other Jewish people,” says Deborah Gilboa, a family physician who studies and writes on resilience. “That disenfranchises them. That gives them the message that it’s risky to be Jewish.” This matters because the more children absorb this, “the fewer Jews we will have in this country.”

Social media also poses an increasing threat as children grow older. “Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve all come to recognize there is no longer a legitimate way to say there’s a bifurcation between online and real life,” says Vinokor-Meinrath. In former generations, a child bullied and harassed at school could go home and ignore the

hate and fear, and not have them on a cell phone “literally in your hand all day, sleeping next to you on your pillow.”

But if social media can isolate, the support of the important adults in children’s lives and of non-Jewish allies can help them build resilience, confidence, pride and healing, says Gilboa, herself a member of Tree of Life synagogue. The Pittsburgh community around the devastated congregation—literally, and proudly, Mister Rogers’ neighborhood, home of the beloved TV show and its late namesake—along with influential others in the city, rallied around their Jewish neighbors with signs, statements, memorials, demonstrations, donations and personal connections, says Gilboa. Joanne Rogers, Fred Rogers’ now-deceased widow, “who never appeared at public events after his death, came out,” she recalls. The Pittsburgh Steelers altered their logo to include a Magen David and the words “Stronger than Hate.”

For young people who double down on their Jewishness, the experience of anti-Semitism can strengthen their Jewish identity and commitments. But for those who take their Jewishness underground, among the emerging adults whom Vinokor-Meinrath studied, “we already see that affiliation is looking different.” The long-term consequences of today’s anti-Semitic trauma, both for young people and the Jewish community, are as yet far from clear. 🕊



# Students Tackle Issue of Modern Anti-Semitism with 2023 None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest

In the age of social media, anti-Semitism online has reached unprecedented levels. In one study, more than 10 percent of all tweets about Jews or Israel contained anti-Semitic language. To counter this trend, B'nai B'rith International invited college students for the second consecutive year to enter the None Shall Be Afraid Essay Contest.

A panel of judges from B'nai B'rith International evaluated the essays, telling how the entrants propose to tackle rising anti-Semitism on the internet. The top three winners were awarded scholarships of \$2,500, \$1,000, and \$500, respectively.

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

Amit Sapir, the first-place winner, is a 21-year-old senior at the University of Florida. In his essay, published below, he draws from personal experiences to remain optimistic.

Second place winner is Ella Eason, 18, University of California--Santa Cruz, Class of 2025. In her essay, Eason discusses how anti-Zionism can morph into anti-Semitism. She highlights the importance of incorporating Jewish history into education to counteract anti-Semitism online.

Sophia Chertog, 18, Nova Southeastern University, Class of 2027, won third place with her essay. Inspired by her internship for a state senator, she created an online site promoting inclusion of all religions and backgrounds, with the goal of amplifying unheard voices online.

To learn more about B'nai B'rith's None Shall Be Afraid initiative, visit our section on Combating Anti-Semitism on our website, [bnaibrith.org](http://bnaibrith.org). 

## WINNING ESSAY BY AMIT SAPIR

University of Florida, Senior

As my foot slid into the gravel of the railroad tracks, my mind boggled with emotions. Confusion overran anger, anger constructing anxiety. August of 2019. Auschwitz concentration camp, Poland. Seventy-five years prior, my ancestors stood in my footsteps. Yet, unlike myself, they would never step outside of those gates.

It was just eight years ago when laughter filled the air as I paraded down the streets of Jerusalem on my 13th birthday to be crowned "bar mitzvah majesty." As I sang before the Western Wall kingdom, Your Majesty noticed a Frenchman waving his Israeli flag, displaying love for our Judaic performance. For such chivalry I repaid my fellow knight with a formal salutation of a high-five. It wasn't until a couple weeks later that I found out that this nameless knight had been the victim of an anti-Semitic terrorist attack in Paris. Social media and news outlets shared the unspeakable truth that the terrorist entered a kosher deli, and this French Jew that I met only months prior jumped in the line of fire to save other Jewish customers shopping for Shabbat dinner. He had come to Israel for the first time when we crossed paths, and the few seconds of unconditional love and joy he displayed for my bar mitzvah has always had a special place in my heart.

Panic struck within the kingdom I always expected to harbor such stability and celebration. I feared the light of hope was lost, contemplating whether anything has changed in how the world thought of Jews.

After reading a book after my bar mitzvah called "All the Light We Cannot See," anger and confusion from Poland resurfaced. I was mad at the author for making me



**Amit Sapir**

**Age: 21**

**Senior, University of Florida**

**Expected Graduation: 2024**

*continued on page 11*

## James Grover McDonald: Unsung Statesman Decried Hitler

Even before Hitler was elected chancellor in 1933, German Jews who feared the Nazis were immigrating; soon the countries which had formerly accepted them had reached their quota limits. Many factors, including widespread poverty and joblessness spurred by the worldwide depression, led to even more stringent immigration rules and restrictions. Increasing anti-Semitism was also to blame.

Germany belonged to the League of Nations, an international body formed after World War I to protect human rights in Europe. In October 1933, McDonald was selected to head “The High Commission for Refugees (Jewish and Others) Coming from Germany.” Its mandate was directed at finding solutions to the refugee crisis, a task made more difficult because Germany confiscated the assets of everybody who emigrated.

Although the league had a duty to protect minorities, members feared Hitler’s power and yielded to Germany’s demand prohibiting the commission from mentioning, let alone blaming, the Reich’s domestic policies. Yet McDonald was determined to “make an appeal to the German government for the sake of humanity... [for] modification [of this] source of unrest and perplexity in the world, a challenge to the conscience of mankind, and a menace to the legitimate interests of the [countries] affected by the immigration of refugees.” Despite the league’s acquiescence to Germany’s demands, it pulled its membership before the High Commission met.

Since the league did not fund the commission, McDonald had to solicit donations from Jewish philanthropists and organizations while attempting to forge diplomatic ties and smooth out legal impediments to immigration. When the Nuremberg Laws were enacted in 1935, McDonald quit his position to sound

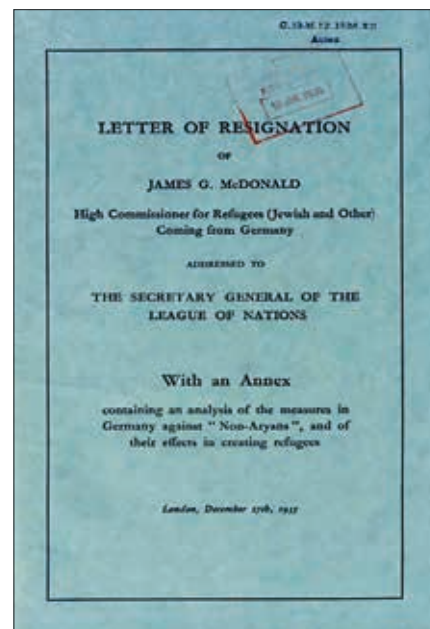


Diplomat James Grover McDonald was profiled in the December 1933 issue *The American Jewish Monthly* by his assistant, English B'nai B'rith leader Norman Bentwich. Hailed by the organization's president, Alfred M. Cohen, for his actions on behalf of Germany's persecuted Jews, McDonald received a special citation from B'nai B'rith.

the alarm on the Nazis' immorality: He was now able to write and speak freely. Distributed to journalists and diplomatic offices, his eight-page resignation hailed the Jews as German patriots and contributors to its culture. Rebuking the Nazis' anti-Semitic propaganda, McDonald decried Hitler and criticized the league's powerlessness. Revealing his outrage as a Christian and a human being he wrote:

"...convinced as I am that desperate suffering in the countries adjacent to Germany, and an even more terrible human calamity within the German frontiers, are inevitable unless present tendencies in the Reich are checked or reversed, I cannot remain silent..."

McDonald, who resumed his career as a law professor and a radio broadcaster, was appointed chair of President Frank-



A copy of McDonald's letter of resignation from the High Commission for Refugees is included in the B'nai B'rith Holocaust and Related Materials Collection at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.

lin D. Roosevelt's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, in operation from 1938 to 1945. His team, with representatives from all branches of the American military, was charged with the review and reconsideration of applications of individuals who had been refused entrance to the United States on the basis of past political activity in Europe.

As a member of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine in 1945, McDonald fought for the admittance of all Holocaust survivors to pre-State Israel, and made his voice heard as an outspoken advocate for Jewish rights. A United States Special Representative to pre-State Israel, McDonald served as the first American ambassador when the country became independent. He died in 1964. 🇺🇸



## WINNING ESSAY BY AMIT SAPIR

*continued from page 9*

empathetic toward a Nazi. For portraying the Germans in a positive light of innocence. For forgetting to mention the suffering and havoc of Jews. But I realized the truth later on: The novel is the symbol of good conforming to wrong, the virtuous obedient to evil. The reality was that despite the Holocaust's immorality, the light of hope was brightened when contrasted against conformity and obedience, two fatal flaws of human civilization.

The light of hope. I'm inspired by the resonating message: "Open your eyes and see what you can with them before they close forever." Throughout history, the Jewish people maintained their sense of optimism. Yet, there are many opportunities for pessimism to seep through the openings and undermine the mentality we've developed for a lifetime. Anti-Semitism was one of them. The idea of hostility and prejudice against a community I always found loving and selfless had the potential of extinguishing that light of hope. My perspective is exemplified in my commitment to ensuring that everyone continues to sparkle with light in their eyes, never giving up on aspirations for hope and sanguinity among all people.

Our social media-driven world provides a duality in establishing a society reflective of brightness and the light of hope.

The idea that social media have revolutionized the power of perspective can be both advantageous yet misleading; therefore, it's the power of the moral to shine bright in factual determination despite the dark. Anti-Semitism can be countered through the interconnected reliance of social media in the dissemination of validity and strength for pro-Judaic initiatives. We treasure the idea of universal communication, especially when the Jewish people once faced adversity and hardship through the propaganda of the Nazi Party. The evil desire for racial superiority, as spurred by the eugenics movement of the 20th century, must be constantly retaliated through the voice of justice, resonating through the intricate beauty of networking and intertwined communication systems of the modern era.

We're given the opportunity of life to spread brightness into the eyes of others before our time comes to close them forever. I'm grateful for this blessing of sight and light, especially by staying optimistic in how our common humanity can reconcile our diversity. Challenging life's meaning is the truest expression of the state of being human. Our diversity harmonizes through an understanding of how conformity and obedience to authority can dismantle that humanity through hate. It's about making sure society moves forward to eliminate that hate to create our version of the perfect race: the human race, one that runs on love. Whether bringing a Jewish perspective to the social media community, encouraging unity through our diversity, or living the life my ancestors or the Frenchman should have been given, I remain determined to be the light the world cannot yet see. 🌍

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1843  SOCIETY

# Celebrating 180 Years of B'nai B'rith: Service, Advocacy, Impact

By Seth J. Riklin

*B'nai B'rith International President*



**T**en times chai. Ten times life. That's the way I think of B'nai B'rith's 180th anniversary year. I am deeply honored to preside over an organization with 18 decades of service to the world.

B'nai B'rith was founded in October of 1843. But we don't celebrate this remarkable milestone merely for having reached 180 years. We celebrate it for our deep history of achievement and for our "now" story of accomplishment.

For nearly two centuries, B'nai B'rith has been at the forefront of philanthropy, advocacy and community building, leaving an indelible mark on Jewish history and the world.

As a devoted member for more than 30 years, and current leader of this esteemed organization, I am compelled to reflect on the profound impact it has had on my life and the lives of countless others.

My connection to B'nai B'rith comes through our incredibly important and innovative senior housing program. I started my volunteer work with the Gold-berg B'nai B'rith Towers in Houston.

That's where I saw the deep effect a global organization can have at the personal level. Honoring our parents is at the core of Judaism and one of the core tenants of our work. Our senior housing provides safe and affordable residences for seniors of modest means.

Seeing the community B'nai B'rith created for my aunt and her neighbors moved me to devote my spare time and energy to this amazing organization.

Since its inception, B'nai B'rith has remained committed to the principles of Judaism, actively engaging in benevolent deeds and promoting the welfare of our community. From its earliest days, B'nai B'rith sought to combat discrimination and champion the rights of all individuals, regardless of their background or faith. This enduring dedication to inclusivity has shaped my own worldview and, in turn, helped create a more equitable and compassionate society.

One of the most remarkable accomplishments of B'nai B'rith has been its unwavering commitment to humanitarian efforts. Throughout its long history, the organization has extended a helping hand to those in need, both within the Jewish community and beyond. B'nai B'rith has provided essential aid during times of crisis. Our humanitarian initiatives have touched the lives of innumerable individuals, providing vital resources, support and hope in times of despair. From B'nai B'rith teddy bears, which provide comfort to children experiencing trauma, to rebuilding homes, our disaster and emergency relief efforts are a long-standing pillar of our work.

Developing young Jewish thinkers and leaders is a cornerstone of B'nai B'rith's mission, empowering future generations with knowledge, skills and a strong moral compass. Our None Shall Be Afraid essay contest for college students—which you can read more about in this issue—is a critical way for us to engage the next generation of leaders. I live by the mantra that when you are a leader, you must always be looking for someone to replace you. B'nai B'rith's foresight and commitment to empowering the next generation motivates all we do.

B'nai B'rith's dedication to Israel and combating anti-Semitism has been an inspiration and priority for me as a volunteer and now as president. The organization has been at the forefront of efforts combating the resurfacing blight of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel animus. It's a monumental task. One of the keys to this is our promotion of global acceptance and knowledge of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism. In May, we led the way in an alliance of Jewish organizations urging the United Nations to accept the IHRA definition, which will help focus attention on what constitutes anti-Semitism. Identifying the problem through common language and understanding is invaluable in launching solutions.





Ten times chai: a proud record of accomplishment over three centuries. **A.** The U.S. War Department honors B'nai B'rith for its efforts during World War II. **B.** Progress report for 13-year-old David Abraham, a Syrian orphan “adopted” by B'nai B'rith following World War I. **C.** B'nai B'rith fundraising letter for San Francisco Earthquake victims, 1906. **D.** Families of men and women posthumously awarded B'nai B'rith Jewish Rescuer Citations at the Martyrs Forest, Jerusalem, 2023. **E.** B'nai B'rith COVID-19 kits containing a mask and hand sanitizer distributed to seniors, first responders and those in need, Washington, D.C., 2020. **F.** B'nai B'rith medical aid assisting residents of the Philippines in the aftermath of torrential storms and floods, 2009.

From the beginning, B'nai B'rith has been an unwavering and staunch defender of human rights, standing up for the oppressed. As one of the first Jewish organizations to fight for civil rights, B'nai B'rith has consistently exemplified the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

As we celebrate this landmark anniversary year, we acknowledge with immense pride B'nai B'rith's past achievements, of course, but we also recommit ourselves to its enduring mission.

B'nai B'rith's legacy serves as a

reminder of our collective responsibility to repair the world and build a brighter future.

For me, B'nai B'rith's 180 years of service, advocacy and impact embody the essence of Jewish values and the power of community. For me, B'nai B'rith is a source of inspiration, guiding my actions, both as president of this organization and in my personal work. As B'nai B'rith's president, I am especially humbled during this milestone anniversary by the opportunity to contribute to its noble mission and

work alongside dedicated individuals—our volunteers and our staff—who share a vision of a better world, including fairness and security for Israel, safety for Jews, comfort for seniors and aid for those in need.

As I think about B'nai B'rith this year, I take great pride in our yesterdays, and I eagerly anticipate our todays and tomorrows. It's my goal for B'nai B'rith to contribute an even greater impact to the lives we touch, the communities we serve and the world at large.

L'Chaim to 180 years of B'nai B'rith.

# Celebrating Our Anniversary, in a Year of Anniversaries

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

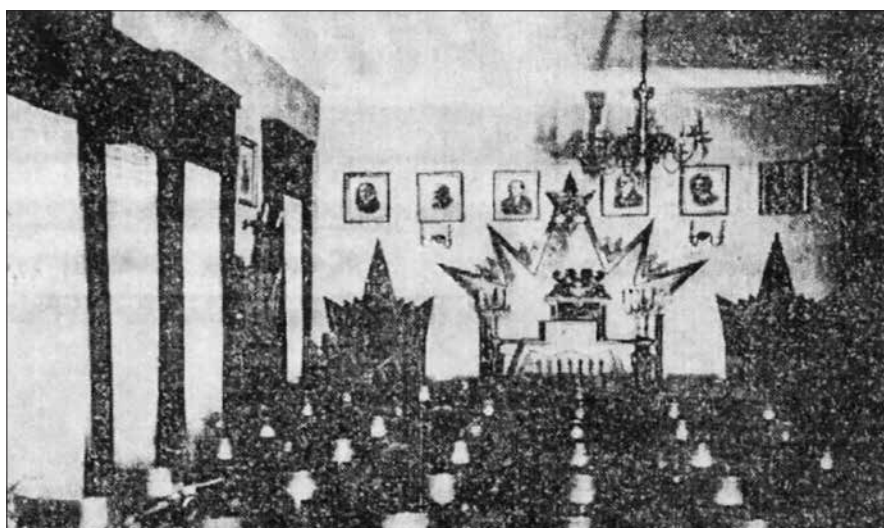


This year marks B'nai B'rith's 180th anniversary, which we will celebrate on into 2024 with commemorative meetings, missions, special articles, podcasts and other programs noting this singular milestone.

Who knew that the gathering of 12 German Jewish immigrants at Sinshheimer's Cafe on Essex Street on New York's Lower East Side in October 1843, called to assist an indigent widow, would spawn an international organization with members in dozens of countries, serving Jewish communities and beyond, on six continents?

In the process of that institutional growth, we planted our flag in many places, several of which are marking their own anniversaries this year. In 2023 we also are celebrating the 135th anniversary of Jerusalem Lodge, whose recording secretary was none other than the father of the modern Hebrew language, Eliezer Ben Yehuda. And 2023 marks the 95th anniversary of the first convention of our lodges in pre-state Israel. The first lodge in Romania, founded as "Zion Fraternity," was established 150 years ago.

I write this after having just returned from Warsaw, where B'nai B'rith's Polin Lodge celebrated the 100th anniversary of B'nai B'rith in Poland. Over two days, some 100 attendees participated in panel sessions on the startling growth of anti-Semitism and online hatred in



A reproduction of a rare, undated photo of a lodge room in the Rymarska Street B'nai B'rith Warsaw headquarters was included in the exhibit, "Humanitarian Association Brotherhood—the World of Polish B'nai B'rith" produced by the Professor Moses Schorr Foundation, on view in June at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

Europe, the Holocaust in Poland, the war in Ukraine and a range of other topics on the minds of all Jews today. The sessions were held in Warsaw's impressive POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

The conference was capped by the presentation of "Gratitude" awards, which were presented to Urszula Antosz-Rekucka (Shtetl Mszana Dolna) in the Individual category and Forum for Dialogue (founder Andrzej Folwarczny) in the Institutional category, for their devoted efforts to preserve Jewish heritage in Poland.

Of special interest was a lecture by Professor Edyta Gawron of the Institute of Jewish Studies at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, who opened the conference with a lecture on the beginnings of B'nai B'rith in Poland.

Gawron's talk was accompanied by an exhibition of documents, photographs and historical narrative prepared by Poland's Moses Schorr Foundation, named after the highly respected rabbinical leader and scholar who played a central role in the growth of B'nai B'rith in the country.



Photo: Wikipedia.org

**Rabbi Moses Schorr (1874–1941)**, B’nai B’rith leader, Polish historian, expert in Semitic and ancient Assyrian languages and legal codes, author and teacher, who also served as a senator in the Polish parliament.

The leadership of the pre-World War II Polish lodges included industrialists, teachers, doctors, members of parliament, engineers, academics, lawyers, merchants and others, who themselves were deeply active in Jewish communal life, including Sebastian Bergman, the president of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, and Maurice Mayzel, who served as president of the Warsaw Jewish community from 1937 to 1939.

The Polish lodges, like their counterparts elsewhere in the B’nai B’rith global community, were committed to modern education, funding schools and awarding scholarships, as well as providing aid for the poor and the disabled.

Dark clouds began to gather over Poland’s 3.3 million Jews even before the Nazi invasion on Sept. 1, 1939. Calls for boycotts of Jewish merchants were already being pressed by Poland’s National Party and others in the late 1930s. In September 1938, the Kraków, B’nai B’rith headquarters was bombed.



Photo: B’nai B’rith Collection, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A handsomely designed Rosh Hashanah card issued by the then-newly active B’nai B’rith Polin Lodge in 2007.

On Nov. 23, 1938, the Polish president issued a decree that dissolved all “Masonic institutions,” which in the government’s interpretation included B’nai B’rith. Article 3 of that decree stated that “whoever participates in the secret activity of an association...or supports such activity is subject to up to five years in prison and a fine.” B’nai B’rith leader Maurice Bisgyer met with the Polish ambassador in Washington, D.C., to explain that the lodges had no connection to the Masons, to no avail.

With that, B’nai B’rith in Poland was forced to cease activity. An auction of furnishings, tableware, a number of antique pieces and Judaica was held, producing, according to reports at the time, proceeds of only 5% of their value.

A public notice following the auction said it all: “Due to the decree of dissolution of Masonic associations, police authorities have, on the order of the Government Commissariat, secured on the 26th of this month [November 1938] the

property of the ‘Humanitarian Association Brotherhood—B’nai B’rith.’”

B’nai B’rith continued to send support to Jews suffering in Poland through the Red Cross. In 1940, B’nai B’rith was providing monthly \$100 stipends to 50 B’nai B’rith members, some of whom had been former members of the Polish Parliament, who had escaped to Lithuania.

Some 90% of Polish Jewry was killed during the Holocaust, including most of the brothers and sisters in the nine lodges in the country. In 1956, a new lodge comprising Polish Jewish survivors who had made their way to Israel was inaugurated in Tel Aviv, named after Rabbi Moses Schorr.

B’nai B’rith returned to Poland’s small and active Jewish population of approximately 10,000 in 2007, establishing Polin Lodge in Warsaw. The first president was Dr. Andrzej Friedman, who holds that office today and who, along with his fellow lodge members, organized the 100th anniversary commemoration.

The story of B’nai B’rith in Poland is one of triumph, tragedy—and rebirth.

Each country where B’nai B’rith has had—or has—a presence has its own story to tell. A story of promoting Jewish values, helping those in need, looking after seniors and supporting young members of the community with scholarships and organized activities. A story of community leadership, advocating for a strong and secure Israel, remembering the victims of the Holocaust and fighting the growing menace of anti-Semitism.

*continued on page 16*



## Celebrating Our Anniversary, in a Year of Anniversaries

The mission set down by the 12 founders of B'nai B'rith hasn't changed over these 180 years, touching on three separate centuries. We should all feel a sense of pride in our accomplishments, while at the same time reminding ourselves that this important work is not

done. New challenges to our community arrive with increasing frequency. Along with the new challenges, the need to ensure Jewish continuity and Jewish literacy must be high up on our institutional and community agenda. And with the speed of the internet and social

media, we're reminded, in real time, about those in need or who are victims of natural disasters.

We are so fortunate to be the inheritors of this cherished legacy. And to be positioned to continue this important work for the next 180 years—and beyond. 🇺🇸

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

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# Pray Tell

**Congregations Rely on Both Innovative and Traditional Approaches to Worship**

By Jeff Weintraub



Photo: [en.wikipedia.org/Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Aviv_Museum_of_Art)

Tradition, tradition: 19th century artist Maurycy Gottlieb's famed "Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur" focuses on individual responses to worship.



Photo: © 2023 Audrey Rothstein Photography—All Rights Reserved

Worshippers at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, participate in Shabbatons, weekend-long events intended to illuminate and deepen the significance of the Sabbath through the exploration of prayers and their meaning.



**O**n a Shabbat morning last spring, I was one of two prayer leaders who launched the service at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, with the traditional Ma Tovv prayer. Instead of simply vocalizing it with one of several age-old melodies, as many might in other American synagogues, I was both singing and playing guitar to a melody co-composed only a few years ago by Josh Warshawsky, whose modern and catchy liturgical music has lately been adopted by a growing number of American synagogues.

We similarly offered up several psalms and prayers with a mixture of familiar ancient *Nusach*, or traditional musical modes that correspond to segments of various services, and—with instruments—melodies from other modern composers. We also drew on tunes

from two Israeli influences—the singer Yosef Karduner and the group Nava Tehilah—as well as a setting by the Philadelphia-based Joey Weisenberg, who leads Hadar’s Rising Song Institute, an incubator of emerging young Jewish musicians like himself.

It’s an approach much different from some of the synagogues a short distance away. At the Modern Orthodox Kemp Mill Synagogue in Silver Spring, Maryland, congregants recite the entire text of an Ashkenazi-style (or traditional Eastern European-inflected) service in Hebrew, without instrumental accompaniment, which they avoid on Shabbat and major holidays. And unlike the service at Adat Shalom, which pauses for frequent insights and explication of the text, prayer at Kemp Mill is “efficient,” as Rabbi Brahm Weinberg describes it. The service moves, he says, “at a fairly robust clip to make sure it doesn’t feel overly long or taxing for people when they come.”

Not far from Kemp Mill, Ohr Kodesh, a Conservative-affiliated synagogue in Chevy Chase, Maryland, covers much the same liturgical real estate, with similar choreography—standing up, sitting down and bowing at prescribed times—and including chanted music. But Ohr Kodesh has no *mehitza*, or separation between men and women, who equally share the duties of prayer leading and Torah reading. And like some Conservative synagogues, it also uses electrically powered sound and web-streaming systems that are off limits at Orthodox synagogues.

According to a Pew Research Center survey, as of 2020, about 8% of Jews in the United States said they attend some kind of prayer service monthly, and 12% report that they attend weekly or more often.

Those who do attend might be part of Reform-affiliated synagogues, which rely more heavily on English, responsive readings and music. Or they might



Photo: The Open Temple

Rabbi Lori Shapiro conducts services at The Open Temple in Venice, California. Its social media encourages congregants to: “Feel Your Fury. Let Your Passions Penetrate. Express.” Rabbi Lori asks us to “Unmask Our Souls.”

participate in the sort of service associated with Jewish Renewal, an emerging segment of the community that offers a mixture of mystical, Hasidic, musical and meditative prayer practices. Others might be attracted to pray at a place like the Open Temple in Venice, California, an unaffiliated incubator of new approaches to engaging Jews that has featured, among other offerings, a “Kayak Shabbat” on the Venice canals, where members float on kayaks alongside their leader, Rabbi Lori Shapiro.

All this speaks to one of the hard-to-miss features of the entire American Jewish prayer landscape: The variety is vast—arguably more so than in any other Jewish community in the world, where the Orthodox-style service is most common.

Much of the difference is, of course, driven by theological distinctions among the movements. But it’s not hard to notice that the prayer experiences at synagogues even within the same movement can look and feel much different. That’s the result, perhaps, of the unique history and lay and clergy personalities that make up a particular synagogue or prayer group.

The American Jewish prayer landscape got this way, argues Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, in large part because of this country’s unique commitment to separation of religion and state.

Hoffman, who, until his recent retirement, taught Jewish liturgy for nearly 50 years on the faculty at Hebrew Union College in New York, notes that because of the strict separation between religion and government in the U.S. “it meant that the church, as it were, has been free to experiment more than in most other countries.” Religious groups in the U.S., he adds, “learned how to compete for people’s attention and identity. Hence, religion in America is rather specialized in innovation.”

The other and perhaps even more notable hallmark of Jewish prayer observance in the U.S., Hoffman says, is prayer’s relationship with the personal identity of individual Jews. It shapes them, tells them what is important or what it means to be Jewish.

Mirele Goldsmith of Bethesda, Maryland, for instance, says that when she recites various Jewish blessings and liturgical poetry that express wonderment about and gratitude for the world around her, it reinforces her commitment as a national leader in the Jewish environmental advocacy movement. Parts of the Shema, the centerpiece Jewish prayer that expresses God’s singularity, she points out,

“talk about the connection between our ethical behavior and the condition of nature, that if we don’t behave ethically, the earth will suffer. That speaks

directly to my work in this field.”

Hoffman notes that, just as prayer can shape us, the opposite is also at work. Worship in the American context has changed over time in part because it can reflect how American Jews view themselves. “Consequently,” he says, “worship tends to vary with the people attending it.”

For two decades, Rabbi David Lyon has been senior rabbi at the Reform-affiliated Beth Israel Congregation in Houston, where he is keenly conscious of, and plays a role in shaping, the forces of change. “I’m always taking the pulse of the congregation,” he says. “In the past, my predecessor had the good fortune of waiting every five to 10 years for change to happen. That change is happening now every three to five years and more likely three years than five. So, we’re trying to keep pace.”

Lyon has ushered in rituals that are standard in more traditional settings, such as: a *hakafah*, or Torah procession; lay recitation of *aliyot*, or Torah blessings; and the calling out of *chatimot* or concluding lines of prayers and liturgical poetry. A growing number of members,





Photo: Kelly Fogel/The Open Temple

Immersing themselves in the beauty of the natural world, “kayakers” at The Open Temple’s shabbats are invited to enter the realm of the spirit; it’s an experience that the Temple describes as: “*Ma’ariv*... the mixing of light and darkness. The sun sets and the Divine Palate [sic] reveals itself in the sky. As the colors blend, darkness envelops the sky. Our prayers lead us through this process. Music, Enchantment and Stirring of the Souls.”

he says, feel comfortable wearing ceremonial garb such as *kippot* and *tallitot*, a big departure for a century-and-a-half-old synagogue that long stood firmly as classical Reform.

Likewise, as egalitarianism has arguably become more prominent in the personal identities of many American Jews over the last few decades, it has been absorbed into the liturgy of the community’s more “progressive” segments of Judaism.

They allow—indeed, encourage—women to participate in all aspects of the service and insert a mention of Judaism’s ancient matriarchs alongside the patriarchs in the *Amidah*, the central prayer of every Jewish service. The Reconstructionist movement leaves out references suggesting that Jews are the chosen people—as in the traditional version of the *Aleynu* prayer, which praises God for not making us “like the other nations of the world.” Also, most progressive worship practices give no special status or prayer responsibility to descendants of the Cohanim, or high priests, as is common in more traditional settings.

In every context of American Jewish prayer, there is music, whether it is *Nusach*, older and well-established melodies—like the one most commonly used for the *Shema* that was composed by Viennese Cantor Solomon Sulzer in 1830—or some of the new settings that are emerging from the recent burst of younger musicians.

Music cannot fully express the emotional and spiritual grandeur of Jewish liturgical poetry or the solemn philosophical underpinnings of, say, penitential Yom Kippur prayers. But, considering that, according to the Pew survey, about 13% of American Jews claim to understand Hebrew, it can help them find a connection to prayer and to Jewish tradition that might otherwise be out of reach.

One of the most recent changes for American synagogues—one that may prove to be permanent and, in many ways, profound—is the shift to Zoom-powered prayer services that were driven and perfected out of necessity by the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns. Many synagogues appear to be making online access to services a standard fea-

ture, bringing prayer and more to those who cannot show up in person (especially distant relatives who can’t make the trip in for a *shiva* or *bar* or *bat mitzvah*).

At Adat Shalom, a twice-weekly, mostly traditional morning *minyan* that took root on Zoom during COVID-19 shutdowns seemed likely to continue with a core of about 15 participants. One prayer community—whose creator, Rabbi Mark Novak, calls a “Zoom-agogue”—meets entirely online and includes people from many time zones.

It’s impossible to predict the future of the American Jewish prayer landscape, but Hoffman, the recently retired faculty member from Hebrew Union College in New York, believes that relative to times past, “we’re in a healthy era of creative engagement,” which could bode well for Jewish prayer practice in the years and decades to come.

“I think that the more creativity, the healthier the engagement,” he adds. “The richer will be the prayer life of people, the more spirituality people will find, and the deeper and denser their sense of what Judaism can be.” 🕯️



By Jennifer Lovy

**D**avid Best had been to a lot of bar and bat mitzvahs, but he had no children of his own to *kvell* (gush) over when they reached the coveted age of 13. However, this CEO and founder of The Doctor's Channel did have a dog, a Jack Russell Terrier named Elvis.

And what better way to mark his pet's coming of age than to throw a "Bark Mitzvah"? So, when Elvis reached a year and seven months, (13 in dog years) that's what Best did, inviting more than 100 guests to the dog's lavish bash, including famed sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer. It cost him \$10,000, and, to hear him tell it, it was worth every penny.

"I've never been married. There's no wife, there are no kids. All my other friends have families," says Best, 70. "I went to their bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs and weddings. I've never done any of that. So, when you say \$10,000 for a dog, no, it's \$10,000 for your friends and family."

Elvis, who died in 2022 at 16-and-a-half years old, had a celebration in 2007 mirroring that of a 13-year-old boy.

A Bark Mitzvah celebration was held at Sammy's Roumanian, a then-popular Jewish steakhouse in Manhattan that Best frequented and described as dog friendly. When this dining institution closed during the pandemic, Food & Wine ran an article with the headline "RIP Sammy's Roumanian, Where Every Night Was a Bar Mitzvah."

There, Best screened a pre-recorded ceremony showing Elvis "reading" Hebrew text in what's meant to look like a synagogue. It can still be found on his company's website. Another video shows Elvis barking his *D'var Torah* (a talk about the torah portion of the week), with an on-screen "translation" of the speech.

As with almost every kid's bar mitzvah, the party honored loved ones in a candle-lighting ceremony and a montage. And yes, the pooch sat perched on a cushion while guests hoisted him up and down during the *hora*.

In 2014, The Fiscal Times listed a Bark Mitzvah as one of "10 pricey pet splurges you won't believe." A search for "Jewish dog" on the popular craft site Etsy yields thousands of items. There are books on Amazon with titles like "How to Raise a Jewish Dog" and "Alfie's Bark Mitzvah."





Photo: David Best

What would he do with a fountain pen? In Elvis' Bark Mitzvah video, four-legged well-wishers crowd the bima to congratulate him and his family, including Mike Banks (left), and David Best, who paid for the festive, upbeat bash.

Social media pages, like Mazel Pups, are devoted to Jewish dogs and their owners. A little white Coton de Tuléar named *Shayna Maydele* (Beautiful Girl) is dubbed by The New York Jewish Week as “possibly the most Jewish dog in New York.” The adorable pooch has more Instagram followers than the average human.

### Dogs in the Bible: Not a Good Look

What would the ancient Israelites say if they knew that Jewish families were throwing elaborate Bark Mitzvah celebrations for their dogs costing upwards of \$10,000 and spending millions of dollars on Jewish dog products such as *kippahs*, matzah-ball squeaky toys, apparel and more?

There are 69 million dogs in the United States. At any given moment, a vast majority of these canines are carelessly lounging on the couch, having their bellies rubbed, or being lavished with the love and attention of an adoring owner. Yet, in biblical times, canines didn't have it so good. They weren't considered man's best friend or looked upon favorably in the Bible and other Jewish texts.

While there aren't any prohibitions against having dogs as pets, some Judaic references describe them as undesirable and

unclean animals. In Deuteronomy, for example, dogs seemed to be equated with prostitution. In Psalms, they were described as beasts that maul humans. The Talmud and other writings referred to dogs as dangerous animals and their owners as cursed.

Our modern-day love of dogs is an international sentiment, and Israel is no exception. In 2016, Tel Aviv announced it was the friendliest dog city in the world and claimed the most dogs per capita. DOGTV, the first television channel designed exclusively for dogs, originated in this vibrant Israeli city.

Many Israelis are familiar with “Azeit, Paratrooper Dog,” a book published in 1969 and subsequently made into a movie. The famous story, written by a former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff, is about a heroic German Shepherd trained to assist soldiers in military operations.

However, not everyone in Israel shares an appreciation for pups. In 2019, the rabbis in Elad, a city of around 46,000 residents, mostly Haredi, signed an edict banning them.

“We have heard and have seen that lately, a serious phenomenon has spread in our city Elad, in which young boys and children walk around publicly with dogs. This is strictly forbidden, as explained in the Talmud and by the Rambam, anyone raising a dog is accursed and especially in our city



Photo: © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Ardon Bar-Hama. Digital photography funded by George S. Blumenthal, New York.

Recent scholarship has revealed that dogs have played a part in Jewish life over the centuries. Can the black dog depicted in this 15th century prayer book from Eastern Europe have a symbolic meaning that may have added to the reader's understanding of the text?

Anon: Illuminated Siddur of the Rabbi of Ruzhin. Ashkenazic script. Brown, red and green ink, tempera, gold and silver leaf on parchment. Collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

that dogs were a part of society. “You don’t sacrifice something which is rare or not in your surroundings,” she says.

So how did two Jewish scholars end up publishing a book on the historical relationship between Jews and dogs?

When Lieberman and Zalashik were each doing post-doctorate work at New York University, they shared an office and a love of dogs. But one of their colleagues, Hasia Diner, a noted Jewish scholar, thought differently. She was raised with the idea that when you see a dog, you cross the street, Lieberman recalls.

“It is not that I had any problem with the fact that they loved dogs,” Diner says. “But I had been so inculcated by my parents with an aversion to dogs which I could not outgrow.”

“She (Diner) would say, ‘You know, Jews and dogs are not a thing,’ and Rakefet and I were like, ‘Actually, Jews and dogs are a thing, and we’re going to show you.’ So, we wrote this book,” Lieberman says.

These authors say they found evidence in “the shadows of daily life” that there often was a strong relationship between Jews and dogs. Lieberman cites situations like the dog burial in Ashkelon, the story of Azeet and evidence that dogs were part of the lives of urbanized Jews in the medieval Islamic city.

### A Jewish Dog’s Coming of Age

In 1958, a Beverly Hills couple threw the first publicized Bark Mitzvah. Not surprisingly, it was a lavish affair. The headlines remained relatively quiet on the topic for decades until the idea gained popularity among Jewish dog lovers, who were hosting everything from over-the-top parties to quiet family gatherings. The surge in popularity created a large market for Jewish-themed canine apparel, toys, treats and more.

Hosting an animal celebration for an important Jewish custom does have its share of critics. In 1997, Charles A. Kroloff, a reform rabbi, penned a letter to the editor of The New York Times describing the practice as “nothing less than a desecration of a cherished Jewish tradition” that “degrades some of the central principles of Jewish life.” He also wrote, “I enjoy a good time as much as the next person. But not at the expense of religious traditions that need strengthening, not desecrating.”

where many women and children are afraid of dogs,” the decree states.

Outside the Bible, perspectives on where a dog fits into Jewish life vary depending on the text, interpretation and time period. In the book “A Jew’s Best Friend? The Image of the Dog Throughout Jewish History,” editors Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman and Rakefet Zalashik published a collection of scholarly articles about the relationship between Jews and dogs in various Jewish communities during different periods.

“We actually found evidence that Jews and dogs connected and sometimes even had important relationships,” says Lieberman, an associate professor of Jewish studies and chair of the Department of Classics at Vanderbilt University.

“We’re not saying it was positive,” says Zalashik, a researcher at the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas at Tel Aviv University. “We’re saying it was more complex than we previously understood, and there were times that dogs had a favorable image among Jews.”

One example Lieberman and Zalashik noted was the discovery of mass graves of dogs and puppies in Ashkelon, dating back 2,500 years. It’s hypothesized that the animals were sacrificed at the temple, which Zalashik says is significant because it shows





Photo: en.wikipedia.org/CanaanDogCahakade.jpg

The Cane Corso from Italy, a breed that resembles the animals buried at Ashkelon.

Recognizing the importance animals play in Jewish life, spiritual leaders are finding respectful ways to incorporate dogs and their owners into pet-friendly rituals and events. For example, some have developed prayers to mourn a pet instead of saying kaddish, and some synagogues and temples host pet-friendly Shabbat services and ceremonies to bless pets.

Six years ago, Rabbi Steve Gross started what would become an annual Bark Mitzvah celebration at the Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism. He says the idea of hosting an event to bring the community together around a shared interest in dogs came from his congregants' desires to honor their pets and seeing the blessings of pets during special church services.

"This tradition isn't foreign to Judaism. We love, honor and respect our pets, so why not celebrate them together as a community," says Gross, a cat owner who jokes about doing a "Purr-in" event.

The event typically draws about 50 pet vendors, adoption agencies and a few hundred participants from the congregation, neighboring community and, of course, the dogs.

Gross says he occasionally gets pushback from others, who claim he's mocking an important lifecycle event. But the rabbi explains that the gathering isn't meant to mark a lifecycle event for the pet. Its purpose, he says, is to celebrate animals as God's work of creation and acknowledge our obligation to care for our pets.

"It's a little bit sad that I can get more people to the Bark Mitzvah than I can to Shabbat services on Friday night," says Gross. "We have a little bit of Torah, a little bit of teaching, a little bit of



Photo: Heidi D. Silverstone

Giving new meaning to the phrase "kosher dog," Manhattan's own proudly Jewish "Beautiful Girl" lives on the Upper East Side with her friend Heidi Silverstone. Both love to dress up for the holidays.

mitzvah and a little bit of food. It's everything good about Judaism. It's just centered around our dogs."

Even Lieberman, a Modern Orthodox Jew, jumped on the bandwagon when Caleb, his Portuguese Waterdog, turned 13.

Lieberman first thought the idea was "campy and silly," but then decided it was a good idea to celebrate his aging dog and turn the celebration into a fundraiser for the Israel Guide Dog Center. They had a small party where Caleb enjoyed a homemade peanut butter cake.

His co-author, Zalashik, will not participate in such a celebration for her 12-year-old Border Collie. The first time Zalashik heard about a Bark Mitzvah, she thought it was a joke but then realized it was a phenomenon that never caught on in Israel.

"Even though I think the Bark Mitzvah is kind of silly," Lieberman admits, "I'm glad that there is the desire to incorporate into Jewish ritual that tight relationship that the Jews have with dogs and the flexibility of Judaism to accommodate and recognize that relationship." 🐾

# Israel's Small Domari Community: Struggling but Striving to Succeed

By Michele Chabin

**S**arah Ibrahim has big dreams. The 16-year-old Jerusalem high schooler hopes to go to college to study engineering. That's a big goal for a girl whose father, a taxi driver, can read just a little, and whose mother is illiterate.

In Ibrahim's tiny, insular Domari (or Roma) community in the eastern part of Jerusalem, many children drop out of school after sixth grade in order to work and help support their families. Almost none graduate from high school.

Franklin Sargunraj, a Ben Gurion University master's student studying the Domari, says the once nomadic "Dom people" originated from the Indian subcontinent. Unlike their Europe-bound Romani counterparts, the Domari moved to the Middle East and North Africa. They came to Jerusalem as early as 1187 C.E. and now number an estimated 1,000 to 2,000. They often refer to themselves as "Gypsies," a term they do not consider derogatory.

Coupled with low community expectations, teenage marriage, a high birth rate and discrimination from both Jews and Arabs, this lack of education perpetuates the same cycle of grinding poverty experienced by Domari/Roma communities around the world.

Despite these roadblocks, the community is making some quiet strides.

Some of the city's Domari children are staying in school longer than they used to, thanks largely to the efforts of Amoun Sleem.

Born and raised in Jerusalem's Old City, first under Jordanian occupation and then Israeli rule, Sleem was one of nine children in a loving but desperately poor Domari family. Her father encouraged her to attend the local Arab school provided she sold postcards to tourists and handed over the income for the family's needs.

From an early age, Sleem was aware of the significant social and economic gaps that existed among the Domari and Arab and Jewish communities in Jerusalem. Her entire family lived in



Photo: Linda Gradstein

Sarah Ibrahim, a young member of Jerusalem's Domari community, hopes to go to college one day. Most Domari children don't finish high school.

one large room, lacking the money to build internal walls.

Although Jerusalem's Domari speak Arabic and practice Islam, their Arab neighbors have never accepted them, she says.

"Even though I was a good child, I could not escape the discrimination against me for being a Gypsy," Sleem wrote in her 2014 memoir, "A Gypsy Dreaming in Jerusalem." "I would always be considered a rotten child, from a rotten community."

In fifth grade, a teacher called her "a flea in the world who must be annihilated." While Sleem was devastated, the experience fueled her determination to complete her

education and to help other Domari children do the same.

"It lit a fire in me, to empower our people and to teach others about our lives and traditions," says Sleem, who established the Domari Society of Gypsies in Jerusalem in 1999, and the Domari Community Centre in 2005.

For Sleem, the term "Gypsy" isn't a slur. The word "Nawar," the Arabic term for nomadic tribes, is derogatory.

When they migrated to Jerusalem in the 12th century C.E., Sargunraj, of Ben Gurion University, says of the Domari, they "probably worked as blacksmiths for Turkish Emir Nūr al-Dīn Mahmūd Zengī who, alongside Egyptian Sultan Salah-al-Din, defeated the Crusaders."

Over the centuries, the populations in the region came to rely on the Domari for iron work, menial labor and entertainment, but never embraced them. A millennium later, they remain outsiders to both Arabs and Jews.

"To this day, we are in-between," Sleem says.

Jerusalem's Domari are scattered between the Old City, some Arab villages and the Shuafat refugee camp, all in the eastern part of Jerusalem. They wear the same types of clothes and speak the same Arabic as their Muslim Arab neighbors.

Despite this, "Palestinian society doesn't treat us equally," Sleem says. "If there's a fight between a Palestinian boy and





Photo: Prints and drawings division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Believed to have migrated from India, the Domari were frequently mentioned in the notebooks and diaries of travelers who visited pre-state Israel in the 19th century.

an innocent Gypsy boy, everyone will support the Palestinian against the Gypsy. It happens often.”

The same is true of Israelis, Sleem says. When an Israeli border policewoman allegedly shoved a Domari girl, the daughter of the mukhtar (community leader), in front of several witnesses, the Israeli government intervened and sided with the police officer, she relates.

Although Israel offered citizenship to the Domari after it captured the eastern side of the city in 1967, only about a third accepted it, Sargunaraj says, largely due to fears of angering their Arab neighbors. The Domari citizens do receive some services, including crucial job placement and housing assistance.

The Jerusalem Municipality “offers no special programs” to the Domari, said Udi Shaham, Jerusalem Municipality spokesman. However, he said, “They are entitled to the same services that all residents receive.” Nonetheless, Sleem says, Domari do not get equal treatment.

But whatever gaps in services may exist depending on where people reside in Jerusalem, including the areas where the Domari mostly live, the disparities have created a need and an opportunity for others to step in.



Photo: Michele Chabin

Deeply troubled by her community's disconnect from its heritage, Amoun Sleem founded the Domari Community Centre in Jerusalem in 2005. The center offers empowerment courses and tutoring, and hosts visitors.

Sleem's Domari Community Centre fills the gaps when it can.

It provides literacy courses to adults and children (about 40% of the women have little or no formal education), as well as vital after-school tutoring to encourage kids to stay in school longer. Women have taken professional courses in hairdressing, catering and small business development.

The center's arts and crafts collective sells the women's handicrafts and is completing a second Domari cookbook.

The center is also a space fostering cultural pride and preservation, where community elders teach the Domari language and traditions to the younger generations, who have largely assimilated into the majority Arab culture.

To raise awareness about the community, the center hosts a program where tourists can learn about the culture while dining on traditional Domari food.

On a sunny spring day, Ansam Hamad, a teacher dressed in a cream-colored hijab, works with two seventh-grade boys who are struggling to get through an Arabic worksheet.

On a table in the room, freshly picked grape leaves are drying. The Arabic and English alphabets are on the wall.

Hamad, who teaches English, Arabic, math, history and geography, says that some of her Domari students are in high school, but their academic and reading levels are on par with elementary school students.

“Many of their parents are illiterate so they can't help them with their schoolwork,” Hamad says.

Sarah Ibrahim can relate.

Wearing a Tommy Hilfiger T-shirt, her hair tied in two neat braids, the teenager has been coming to the center since kindergarten.

“I get help with my homework, especially in math, Arabic and science. I used to have a lot of trouble with science because my teacher was bad,” she says. “I also paint here, whenever I want, and the center gives me all my school supplies.”

The center has given Ibrahim more than tutoring help. It has given her pride in her heritage.

“I am Domari and it's a good thing to be different and have a unique, beautiful culture. Some kids at school used to bully me because I am Domari, but Amoun said I should ignore them. So, I do.” 🌟



As Israel continues to defend itself against the most horrific attack in its history, a B'nai B'rith International delegation met with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Oct. 11.

B'nai B'rith leaders expressed the urgency of protecting Israel's diverse population from Hamas terrorists, who are guilty of mass atrocities, unprecedented since the Holocaust. These include over 1,300 murders and the kidnapping and torture of approximately 150 military and civilian hostages, among them children and infants. 🌐

In an extended Oct. 11 meeting with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres arranged by the organization's U.N. Affairs Office, B'nai B'rith decried the brutal murders of Israelis in their homes and villages by Hamas and underscored the urgency of freeing all civilian and military hostages. From left: B'nai B'rith Executive Board member Stewart Cahn; Director of U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs David Michaels; CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin; Guterres; President Seth J. Riklin; U.N. Affairs Vice Chair Jeffrey Harari.



# Have Your Plans Changed?



**For almost everyone, the answer to that question is yes.**

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B'nai B'rith International hosted a reception on Oct. 12 at the Consulate General of Germany in New York City to stand in firm solidarity with Israel amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

In the face of continuous terror and loss of innocent lives, B'nai B'rith is resolutely committed to condemning the actions of Hamas, facilitating emergency aid and standing by Israel's side in its right to self-defense—sentiments that were all echoed by leaders and speakers during the reception.

The reception to support Israel in the face of unimaginable terror inflicted by Hamas, which fell during the same time as our 180-year anniversary, also commemorated B'nai B'rith's service and advocacy to the world for nearly two centuries.

Photo Credits: Steven Berkowitz



In opening remarks, CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin addressed the ongoing war in Israel and its devastation on both the Israeli people and the Jewish community. “We have been anticipating this birthday all year,” Mariaschin said. “But it’s impossible to focus on celebrating while Israel is at war...75 years after the founding of the world’s only Jewish state, Israel’s existence is threatened as never before.” Mariaschin noted B’nai B’rith’s strong ties to Israel, including its role in cementing American support during its establishment as a nation-state and its efforts to raise emergency funds in support of Israel during the ongoing conflict.



Ambassador Gilad Erdan, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, expressed his gratitude to B’nai B’rith and all the allies who are standing up for Israel during this time of crisis. “The gut wrenching stories we are hearing are too hard to bear,” Erdan said. “The magnitude of this tragedy is beyond comprehension.” Emphasizing the necessity to “eliminate Hamas’ terror capability,” not as an act of revenge, but to prevent further tragedies, Erdan stressed the global implications of Hamas’ genocidal ideology and underscored the importance of countering distorted statements from U.N. officials.

## 180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AND ISRAEL SOLIDARITY EVENT



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

October 13, 2023

I send my warmest greetings to B'nai B'rith International as you celebrate your 180th anniversary.

For centuries, wave after wave of Jewish immigrants have come to our shores to seek freedom, opportunity, and the American Dream. Since 1843, B'nai B'rith has been there to support them and, in turn, to help define America's vision of liberty. Over generations, the story of the Jewish people has inspired people around the world. It is a story of adversity, prejudice, and persecution, but it's also a story of resilience, hope, faith, and the promise of a better tomorrow.

For 180 years, B'nai B'rith has been an important voice in supporting the Jewish American community, combating hate and antisemitism, and defending the right of Israel to be a safe, independent Jewish state—work my Administration stands strongly behind. Your mission is a daily reminder that we all share an obligation to ensure that hate can have no safe harbor in America and to protect the sacred ideals enshrined in our Constitution: religious freedom, equality, dignity, and respect.

The Talmud says, "It's not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it." Progress in America and around the world depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us. And that progress has been achieved in part by Jewish Americans who have turned their pain and purpose into bringing us closer to realizing the promise of America for everyone in America.

As you celebrate your 180th anniversary, may you be filled with pride in the heritage you preserve and the community you foster, and may you always remember that there is nothing beyond our capacity if we do it together.

President Joe Biden's Oct. 13, 2023, letter to B'nai B'rith honors the organization's legacy "that we all share an obligation to ensure that hate can have no safe harbor in America and to protect the sacred ideals enshrined in our Constitution: religious freedom, equality, dignity, and respect."



B'nai B'rith President Seth J. Riklin reflected on B'nai B'rith's rich history, advocacy and ceaseless commitment to a more secure Jewish future. "Our legacy is etched in the founding of hospitals, libraries, community centers and orphanages, which all served as guiding lights of care, education and progress in their time," Riklin said. "Our legacy is rooted in recognizing societal needs and taking action to improve the lives of the less fortunate."



Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, condemned the barbaric actions of Hamas and emphasized the Biden administration's shoulder to shoulder solidarity with Israel, recognizing B'nai B'rith's leadership in fighting anti-Israel bias and anti-Semitism. "We come together at moments of heartbreak and horror," Thomas-Greenfield said. "Our partnership has never been more vital than it is today."



## 180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AND ISRAEL SOLIDARITY EVENT



Consul General of Germany David Gill, who hosted the reception, affirmed Germany's unwavering solidarity with Israel, emphasizing, "Germany shares your grief, your pain, your consternation about the inhumane brutality. Security of Israel is and will remain at the top of the Federal Republic of Germany." Gill also noted B'nai B'rith's long history of advocating for German Jews.



Erdan (right), with B'nai B'rith Director of U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs David Michaels, remains confident in Israel's ability to defend itself, "because we know that we can count on our dear friends and allies to support us all along the way."

Mariaschin (left) and Riklin (right) with a representative from the office of Mayor of New York City Eric Adams. Adams' proclamation recognized B'nai B'rith's years of service in New York and beyond.



# B'NAI B'RITH IMPACT

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

### Welcome

**W**elcome to the fall issue of IMPACT: your chance to read all about B'nai B'rith's influence in your community and around the world.

Our internationality is truly on display in this issue, with remarkable events and achievements from across the United States and Latin America to Israel, Australia, Poland, Lithuania and beyond. You will also read about our vital work at the United Nations. Volunteers are active in their communities, highlighting B'nai B'rith's 18-decade commitment to service and advocacy.

Now just weeks away from our 180th anniversary, we are deep in reflection mode. This issue presents B'nai B'rith in a way that the 12 founders—who saw (and filled!) a desperate need to help indigent widows—would recognize. At the same time, the events and activities you will read about in the pages ahead also demonstrate ways that we continue to evolve, to ensure that while we remain compassionate, our impact is innovative to meet the challenges of today.

We hope you will take great pride, as we do, in all that is being done in the name of B'nai B'rith. [!\[\]\(a870788d6ed9b8fd294b7654a8c8526b\_img.jpg\)](#)

—Best wishes from the IMPACT team

IMPACT is published quarterly, online – posted on the home page, with back issues archived.  
Please visit the website to read new additional content for the December 2023 IMPACT.

HAPPY  
CHANUKAH  
FROM B'NAI B'RITH!





# Leadership Mission Celebrates B'nai B'rith Centenary, Jewish Culture and History in Poland and Lithuania

B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin led a groundbreaking study and advocacy mission to Lithuania and Poland during the last week of June. Excursions to historical Jewish sites, museums, archives and special meetings with Lithuanian Vice Chancellor Rolandas Krisciunas and Vice Foreign Minister Egidijus Meilūnas, and American and Israeli ambassadors highlighted the trip.

Mariaschin, along with immediate past President Charles O. Kaufman; Vonne Kaufman; Senior Vice President Dr. Sandra Horowitz; and Dr. Steven Horowitz were joined for part of the mission by Vice President of Development and Strategic Initiatives Andrea Cure and World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider.

Active since 2007, Warsaw's Polin Lodge organized a two-day seminar featuring eminent historians and experts who explored topics ranging from B'nai B'rith's Polish history and the Jewish interwar narrative in Poland to the surge in anti-Semitism in our own time.

During his remarks, Mariaschin underscored the erudition of the Polish brothers: "Living and working in cities throughout the country, affluent businessmen—merchants, factory owners, banking executives—were in sympathy with the educational goals propagated by their fellow members—scholars, clergy, professors and authors. With a love of learning on both sides, these two groups, whose numbers totaled between 900 and 1,000 during the 1920s and 30s, shared a common goal."

Delegates toured Lithuania's Vilna Ghetto, and Poland's Warsaw Ghetto, where they talked with Ringelblum Archives staff at the Warsaw Jewish Historical Institute. The group also visited



Mission delegates met officials including Faina Kukliansky, president of the World Jewish Congress-affiliated Jewish Community of Lithuania. From left: Dr. Steven Horowitz, B'nai B'rith Senior Vice President Dr. Sandra Horowitz, Kukliansky, Mariaschin, immediate past President Charles O. Kaufman, Vonne Kaufman.



Leader of B'nai B'rith's study mission to Poland and Lithuania, B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin acknowledges recipients of the Gratitude Awards in Warsaw.

the Auschwitz and Treblinka extermination camps.

The mission's final stop was at the annual Jewish Festival in Kraków.

## Assistance extended to Ukrainian immigrants in Poland

The group met with Ukrainian Jewish refugee families in Warsaw, where some of the children who attend the Lauder-Morasha School receive B'nai B'rith scholarship funds and other support.

## New award thanks Polish individuals and organizations

The inaugural presentation of the Wdzięczność-Gratitude-בוטה תרכה award (named in Polish, English and Hebrew) was bestowed by B'nai B'rith to Urszula Antosz-Rekucka (Shtetl Mszana Dolna, a preservation group) and the Jewish-Polish Forum for Dialogue (Andrzej Folwarczny, founder) during a June 27 ceremony at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. It honors those committed to protecting Jewish heritage and advancing Jewish-Polish relations. 📍



The group visited heritage sites, including the Treblinka extermination camp in Poland.



Gratitude awardees with members of the selection committee. From left: Lili Haber, chair, Association of Cracowians in Israel; Sergiusz Kowalski and Andrej Friedman, past president and president, B'nai B'rith Polin lodge; Urszula Antosz-Rekucka, founder, Shtetl Mszana Dolna; Julia Machnowska, project coordinator, Forum for Dialogue; Adam Daniel Rotfeld, former minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland; Mariaschin; Alan Schneider, director, B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem.

## Center for Senior Services Holds Annual Training Session

B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) conducted its annual Housing Network Managers and Service Coordinators Training session in Fort Myers, Florida, June 14-June 16.

The conference included two days of training with local representatives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, industry specialists and CSS experts.

Allyson Rae, chief meteorologist from the local NBC affiliate spoke about the ways in which residents and property managers prepare for extreme weather conditions.

Attendees spent the first day doing grounds work and preparing emergency preparedness kits at Villa Vincente, a Section 202 senior housing residence that was impacted by Hurricane Ian in September 2022. The project was arranged in conjunction with the B'nai B'rith Disaster and Emergency Relief Committee.

In addition to taking part in the service project, attendees heard about issues



Senior service coordinators and housing managers who attended the June CSS workshops enjoyed the Florida sunshine when they teamed up to lend a helping hand at Villa Vincente in Fort Myers.

connected with residents' psychological wellbeing. Vacharee Howard, executive vice president of National Alliance for Mental Illness Lee County, spoke about senior mental health. Amanda Atkins, president, Atkins Consulting

Professionals and B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services Associate Director Janel Doughten, along with Director of Aging Policy Evan Carmen, advised the group on "How to Create Harmony Among the Residents." 🌻



## 2023 Israel-Hellenic Forum Convenes in Nicosia

B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem founded the Israel-Hellenic Forum in November 2019, to advance the continually strengthening regional partnerships that have benefited the populations of Israel, Cyprus and Greece. Forum meetings were in Athens in 2022.

The University of Nicosia was the location for the June 19 to June 21, 2023, sessions, produced in cooperation with the university, Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs and Athens' Institute of International Relations. More than 40 experts and high-ranking government leaders, including keynote speaker, Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, participated.

Hailing trilateral cooperation, B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin observed: "There is another noteworthy initiative that has grown out of our close cooperation. In the important category of 'people-to-people': The Israel-Hellenic Forum, organized at the initiative of my colleague Alan Schneider, World Center-Jerusalem director, has provided an important outlet for discussion of issues that affect Israelis, Greeks and Cypriots. Bringing together journalists, academics, diplomats, think tank scholars, researchers and so many others to grapple with common threats and challenges is fostering, in real time, even stronger ties."

Schneider noted: "The Israel-Hellenic Forum Nicosia Plenary is undoubtedly a watershed event, coming shortly after the general elections in Israel, Cyprus and Greece. Together we advance relationships between leading public figures and the public at large in the three liberal democracies of the Eastern Mediterranean." Speakers from Greece, Cyprus and Israel included: Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel National Security advisor; Israeli Ambassador to Cyprus Oren Anolik; Ioannis Papameletiou, ambassador of Greece to Cyprus; Kornelios Korne-



Photo: en.wikipedia.org/European Commission (Christophe Licoppe)

President Nikos Christodoulides of Cyprus was the keynote speaker for the 2023 Trilateral Forum at the University of Nicosia, where more than 40 experts from Cyprus, Greece and Israel offered their perspectives on the continually developing partnerships and cooperation forged by the three nations.



Photo: University of Nicosia/Antonis Antoniou

B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin commented on regional ties in his speech: "There is no limit to this kind of friendship and cooperation. And we are proud to be partners in building these relationships which redound to the good of each of us, even as we look at profound issues affecting the geopolitical and strategic outlook for the Eastern Mediterranean."



Photo: University of Nicosia/Antonis Antoniou

World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider (back row, third from left), Mariaschin (front row, fourth from left) with some of the government leaders and officials, journalists and academics who contributed to the forum discussions.

liou, ambassador designated to Israel, Republic of Cyprus; Michalis Giorgallas, minister of defense, Republic of Cyprus; Lt. Gen. Dimokritos Zervakis, chief of

the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus; Marilena Raouna, director, Diplomatic Office of the President of Cyprus; *continued on next page*

# World Center-Jerusalem Honors the Best in Diaspora Reporting

**I**tamar Eichner, diplomatic correspondent for ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth; Josh Aronson, a reporter at Maariv; and Judah Gross, a writer for the Times of Israel, were the 2023 recipients of the B'nai B'rith World Center Award for Journalism. At the July 4 ceremonies, veteran reporter Izhak Hildesheimer received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Memory of Luis and Trudy Schydrowsky and the Israel Philharmonic was cited for Fostering Israel-Diaspora Relations Through the Arts in Memory of Naomi Shemer.

The World Center journalism award honors the memories of Wolf Matsdorf, editor of the World Center's periodical "Leadership Briefing" and a journalist in Israel and Australia, and his wife Hilda, a pioneer in social work in both countries.

The ceremony began with a speech by Avi Mayer, the Jerusalem Post's new Editor-in-Chief, who touched on major issues like the Law of Return, and a recorded message by Israel President Isaac Herzog, acknowledging that:

"All Jews are responsible for—and intertwined with—one another. Preservation of this delicate string—the Gordian knot—of the Jewish People is critical in our generation. B'nai B'rith has become synonymous with taking responsibility and being a guarantor of Jewish life in Israel and the world. The scope of its contribution to fostering Israel-Diaspora relations and revival of Jewish life in the Land of Israel is too great to detail here. I want to thank you for your great contribution to the State of Israel, the People of Israel and Israeli society."

Established in 1992 to foster excellence in reporting, the B'nai B'rith World Center Award for Journalism has honored coverage devoted to contemporary Diaspora communities and Israel-



Members of the selection jury and the 2023 winners of the B'nai B'rith World Center Journalism Awards, intended to foster understanding between Israel and the world Jewish community. World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider is at the far right. Photo: Bruno Charbit/World Center-Jerusalem

Diaspora relations. It's considered the most prestigious prize given for reportage on these issues.

The award jury includes: Ya'akov Ahimeir, former editor and anchor, Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation and Lifetime Achievement Award winner for 2016; Yehudith Auerbach, former head of the Department of Journalism and

Communication Studies, Bar-Ilan University; Sergio DellaPergola, professor emeritus, The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University; Gabriela Shalev, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations; journalist Yair Sheleg; and Asher Weill, publisher and editor of "Ariel: The Israel Review of Arts and Letters" (1981-2003). [📄](#)

## 2023 Israel-Hellenic Forum Convenes in Nicosia

*continued from previous page*

and Professor Kostas Ifantis, scientific director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Planning at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Panels included: "The Cyprus Question, the Greco-Turkish Relations and the Prospect of Energy Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean"; "Perspectives on the Network of Cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and Greece"; "Recent Developments in Israel, Greece and Cyprus"; and "The New Emerging European and International Order: Challenges and Opportunities." [📄](#)



## Citation Awarded to Jewish Rescuers Isidor and Rosa Marx

Rosa and Isidor Marx were posthumously awarded the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem and Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL-JNF) Jewish Rescuers Citation on June 6. The award was accepted by the Marxes' granddaughter, Ruth Cousin from Australia, before an audience of more than 300 family members, spanning four generations.

Administrators at the Waisenhaus Orphanage in Frankfurt, Rosa and Isidor Marx saved about 1,000 children, who were sent to England, Holland, Switzerland and Israel to escape the Holocaust. Isidor Marx, who escorted the evacuated children out of Germany via the Kindertransport program, survived the war in England; Rosa Marx stayed behind in Frankfurt with the remaining 160 orphans and was murdered with them.

About 100 orphans were resettled at Kfar Hasidim Youth Village near Haifa, where the event took place.

B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider noted: "The moving and tragic story of Isidor and Rosa Marx and the children to whom they were dedicated should serve as an instructive lesson for the world and every generation."

Schneider continued: "Mr. and Mrs. Marx, cited by The Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jewish Rescuers During the Holocaust, are now among the 617 rescuers acknowledged to date. The dramatic narratives of these men and women could be subjects for film, theater, literature. Their actions represent humanity at its highest, as they altruistically put aside their own need to survive to save others."



Portraits of Isidor and Rosa Marx were on view at the Kfar Hasidim Youth Village, where the couple was posthumously honored with the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem and Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL-JNF) Jewish Rescuer Citation. Alan Schneider, World Center-Jerusalem director, characterized the award recipients: "Their stories are their proud legacies; so many like Rosa and Isidor left no stone unturned in order to assure that Jewish people would survive the Nazi inferno."

Established in 2011, The Jewish Rescuers Citation is a joint project of the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem and the Committee to Recognize the Heroism of Jewish Rescuers During the Holocaust. 🌐

## B'nai B'rith Participates in AEPi Convention

B'nai B'rith President Seth J. Riklin, CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin, Vice President of Development and Strategic Initiatives Andrea Cure and Director of Data and Development Operations Richy Leitner attended the 110th annual Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) convention, held from August 9-13 in New Orleans.

Mariaschin addressed the attendees and moderated a session focusing on the importance of setting the bar for Jewish leadership. He also led a breakout session on contemporary anti-Semitism.

Founded in 1913, Alpha Epsilon Pi is a Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 150 campuses in four countries. AEPi has more than 100,000 living alumni. 🌐



B'nai B'rith team (from left): Director of Data and Development Operations Richy Leitner, Vice President of Development and Strategic Initiatives Andrea Cure and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin welcome delegates to the B'nai B'rith table at the AEPi Convention in New Orleans.

## Legislative Staff Members Visit Homecrest House

Before the pandemic, the B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services (CSS) regularly organized tours of its U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) senior housing properties around the country. The visits provided an opportunity for members of Congress, their staff members and others to directly observe the importance of affordable housing for seniors, who were able to share their stories directly with the visitors.

On June 27, Kate Koschewa and Chris Monroe of the House of Representatives committee responsible for funding rental subsidies toured Homecrest House, a B'nai B'rith property in Silver Spring, Maryland and spent time with residents.

Evan Carmen, CSS legislative director for Aging Policy and Alayna Waldrum and Kendra Kuehn, representing the American Association of Service Coordinators' policy team, accompanied the tour.


"Homecrest is a great example of how HUD senior housing can make a big difference in the lives of older Americans who are worried about paying healthcare and grocery bills," Carmen said.

B'nai B'rith launched its first housing partnership with HUD in 1971. Today, B'nai B'rith is involved in running 37 buildings in 28 communities, making the organization the




Members of the Homecrest House community in Silver Spring, Md., talked with HUD Service Coordinators and House of Representatives staff working on behalf of subsidized housing during their June 27 tour of the property.

largest national Jewish sponsor of non-sectarian subsidized housing for older adults in the United States.

CSS staff members explain: "We are more than just bricks and mortar. CSS supports training and programs for the residents, building personnel and board members who make up our housing network." 

## Uruguayan "Light and Truth" Award Recipients Travel to Israel, Fostering Cooperation in Both Countries

In late 2022, B'nai B'rith Uruguay named Andres Lizasoain Cuelho and Matias Castells Bauer, biologists at the University of the Republic in Salto as the winners of its "Light and Truth Award." For the past two decades, the award has sent the scientists and technical experts who are selected to Israel, where they engage in intensive dialogue with staff members at the Weizmann Institute, the Technion Israel Institute of Technology, Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv University and at a number of teaching hospitals. Taking place June 1-June 10, the itinerary was arranged by World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider. Eduardo Kohn, B'nai B'rith director of Latin American Affairs commented: "I know this trip will be a great experience for the honorees. On their return to

Uruguay, they will be able to speak out about the Israeli work in the sciences and keep the contacts they make to build a future of cooperation with their colleagues." The visit laid the foundation for future scientific cooperation between the award winners, the institutions with which they are associated and scientific facilities in Israel. Cuelho and Bauer also visited Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Caesarea, Acco, Zichron Yaacov, Jerusalem, Masada, the Dead Sea and Yad Vashem—the World Holocaust Remembrance Center—where a special tour was conducted by Holocaust historian Gideon Greif. They also met with Uruguayan Ambassador Manuel Etchevarren, Consul Ifgenia Xifre and Ana Jerozolimski, editor of the Jewish Uruguayan weekly *Semanario Hebreo*. 



Presented by B'nai B'rith Uruguay, and assisted by the World Center-Jerusalem, the Light and Truth Award recognized the accomplishments of two researchers, Andres Lizasoain Cuelho (left) and Matias Castells Bauer, whose 10-day stay in Israel included meetings with colleagues at some of Israel's most important medical and technology centers and universities, and opportunities to experience historic cities and heritage sites.



# The American Jewish International Relations Institute: AJIRI-BBI Continues the Mission of Ambassador Richard Schifter



Photo: commons.wikimedia.org/Flickr4jazz

AJIRI-BBI fights anti-Israel bias at the United Nations.

The American Jewish International Relations Institute, which became an affiliate of B'nai B'rith (under the name AJIRI-BBI) in October 2020, works to reverse decades-long discrimination against Israel at the United Nations.

AJIRI-BBI was founded by Ambassador Richard Schifter, a Holocaust survivor, prominent attorney and former government official and diplomat, in 2005. He strongly believed that the powerful anti-Israel propaganda apparatus that the United Nations has become has hindered the prospects of a peaceful, negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The work of AJIRI-BBI focuses on U.N. General Assembly resolutions that, year after year, renew the mandate and the funding authorization of the "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People" (CEIRPP), the "Division for Palestinian Rights" (DPR) and the "Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories" (SCIIHRP).

These three entities promote an extremist Palestinian narrative that is counterproductive to the achievement of a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Besides referring to Israel as an "illegitimate entity," the resolutions advocate for the so-called "right of return" of what the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) tallies as more than five million Palestinians, a number subject to dispute, to what is now the State of Israel, which would in practice destroy the Jewish state through demographic means.

Only 1% of these people are original refugees from Israel's



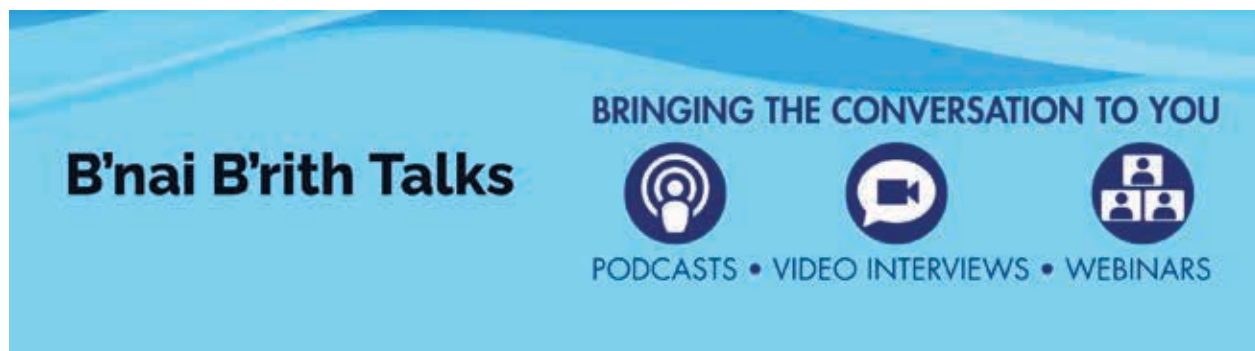
Flanked by B'nai B'rith's then-President Gary P. Saltzman (left) and CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin, the late Ambassador Richard Schifter (center), founder of the American Jewish International Relations Institute (now AJIRI-BBI), was honored at the 2018 B'nai B'rith 175th anniversary dinner in Washington, D.C. Schifter escaped the Nazis and came to the United States from Austria in 1938, where he would become known as a courageous advocate for Jewish causes and for Israel.

1948 War of Independence. The other 99% are the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the original refugees, and their return has no precedent in international law. The Palestinians are the only people in the world whose refugee status passes from generation to generation, indefinitely, along the paternal line.

The mass migration of more than five million Palestinians to Israel is something that no Israeli government could ever accept, as it would mean the end of Israel as a majority Jewish state, and the creation of yet another Arab state, "from the river to the sea" as the anti-Israel expression goes. Therefore, the insistence on the "right of return" is in fact a weapon to destroy Israel, and the single most important obstacle to the achievement of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

As long as countries persist in voting to fund these entities, the Palestinian leadership will believe that the U.N. will help them destroy Israel and will have no incentive to enter into meaningful peace negotiations.

Through our engagement with members of Congress, Jewish leaders, diplomats and government officials around the world, AJIRI-BBI is able to deliver this important message to *continued on next page*



Our Podcast, Conversations with B'nai B'rith, is your home for quick and in-depth interviews on topics that you care about and about which you want to learn more.

Hosted by CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin, the Podcast, part of our focus on Jewish identity and culture, includes discussions with a wide range of prominent and fascinating individuals.

In our Podcast we reveal the story of Jewish participation in all areas of life in America, Israel and throughout the world.

#### What have we talked about recently?

- **Golda:** Academy Award-winning director Guy Nattiv joined our Podcast to talk about his new movie, “Golda,” which stars Dame Helen Mirren as former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. The film focuses on the 19 critical and intense days of her country’s worst military crisis, the 1973 Yom Kippur War.
- **Panama Hat History:** Alberto Dorfzaun, president of K. Dorfzaun, the most trusted name in the Panama Hat industry, talks about the history of the K. Dorfzaun Panama toquilla straw hat’s traditional weaving and how it became part of UNESCO’S Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012 as an important world artifact.
- **Alberto Nisman—the 86th Victim:** On the 29th anniversary of the worst Iranian-sponsored terrorist attack in Latin America’s history, which killed 85 people and wounded hundreds more, our Podcast focused on the man many consider to be the 86th victim, though he died decades after the attack—prosecutor Alberto Nisman.
- **Protecting older adults from fraud:** Deborah Royster, assistant director of the Office for Older Americans at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), has practical tips on how to safeguard older adults from fraud and financial exploitation.

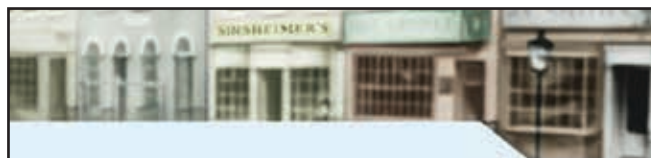
Check out all of B'nai B'rith's virtual content for meaningful discussions on today's most pressing and interesting issues. [🔗](#)

## The American Jewish International Relations Institute: AJIRI-BBI Continues the Mission of Ambassador Richard Schifter

*continued from previous page*

several capitals, and ultimately influence the way several countries vote at the United Nations, on these important resolutions.

AJIRI-BBI will continue to work to make sure this powerful anti-Israel propaganda apparatus is finally dismantled. [🔗](#)



### SUSTAINING A LEGACY OF SERVICE

## The B'nai B'rith Essex Street Society

Safeguarding Israel and the Jewish people, fostering community and helping those in need. Today, the work of B'nai B'rith is as vital as ever before.

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To learn more please visit: <https://bit.ly/BBIEssex> or call: 212-490-1352.



## Joseph Wybran Memorial Scholarship Award Presentation in Israel

On May 29 at Bar-Ilan University, Tel Aviv's French-speaking Joseph Wybran Lodge paid tribute to Dr. Joseph Wybran and awarded doctoral student Tatiana Matikhaina its third annual scholarship for study in immunology. Speakers included: Jean-Luc Bodson, ambassador of Belgium to Israel; Dr. Michel Thieren, special representative of the Regional Director to Israel, World Health Organization (WHO); Dr. Cyrille Cohen, Immunology Department head, Bar-Ilan University; and B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider.

On Oct. 3, 1989, a member of the Abu Nidal terrorist organization gunned down Wybran in the parking lot of Erasmus Hospital in Brussels, where he headed the Department of Immunology and Hematology. Wybran was president of B'nai B'rith Brussels, where he also led the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in Belgium (CCOJB).

The Society on Neuroimmune Pharmacology has also instituted a Wybran Prize, its highest award for extraordinary scientific achievement.

At the memorial scholarship award program, Schneider observed:

"Dr. Wybran was an early victim of Arab terrorism in Europe. It is profoundly disappointing that Belgian authorities have failed to seek justice for him to this very day. Now that Israel and Morocco have established warm diplomatic relations, we fully expect answers about why the murderer's life sentence was commuted. This is part of our government's responsibility to the Jewish people collectively and to the late Dr. Wybran and to Emmy (Mrs. Wybran), who became an Israeli citizen.

We are gratified that the Israeli government recently decided to establish a committee that will formulate recommendations for an official commemoration of Jews who lost their lives in anti-Semitic attacks in the Diaspora. This is long overdue—for Dr. Wybran and for the many Jews targeted by Arab, Fascist or other terrorists simply because they were Jewish." 🇮🇱



Tatiana Matikhaina (center), winner of the third annual scholarship sponsored by the Joseph Wybran Lodge, with, from left, Cyrille Cohen, head of the Immunology Department, Bar-Ilan University and Emmy Wybran, widow of Dr. Wybran. At the ceremony, Alan Schneider, director of the World Center-Jerusalem said: "I did not know Dr. Joseph Wybran personally, but his personality, his devotion to family, his professional brilliance and his dedication to the Jewish community and B'nai B'rith in Belgium has become synonymous with the meaning of 'Jewish leadership.'"

### NONE SHALL BE AFRAID: FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM

Fighting anti-Semitism is at the core of what we do.

Since our founding, B'nai B'rith has developed tolerance programs and spoken out strongly against anti-Semitism in all its forms. "None Shall Be Afraid" is our flagship response to the world's oldest hatred.

# NONE SHALL BE AFRAID

FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM

# At Anniversary of Terror Attack, B'nai B'rith Podcast Interviews Documentary Producer



Photo: en.wikipedia.org/Jaluj

In January 2016, demonstrators in Buenos Aires demanded that the bombing suspects and the murderers of the prosecutor in the case, Alberto Nisman, be brought to justice.

On the eve of the 29th anniversary of the worst Iranian-sponsored terrorist attack in Latin America's history, resulting in the death of 85 people and the wounding of hundreds more, the B'nai B'rith Podcast focused on the man some describe as the 86th victim—prosecutor Alberto Nisman.

Nisman, who was the AMIA case prosecutor for a decade, was murdered in 2015, the day before he was to present his findings about a murky deal that the Argentine government had signed with Iran.

On July 18, 1994, a van loaded with explosives blew up the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires, in an attack widely believed to have been conducted by Hezbollah terrorists, working at the behest of Iran. No one has ever been brought to justice.

In the podcast, Conversations with B'nai B'rith, Director of Latin American Affairs Eduardo Kohn and Special

Advisor on Latin American and United Nations Affairs Adriana Camisar interview writer and journalist Delia Sisro, one of the producers of a new documentary on Nisman.

Since the bombing, B'nai B'rith has worked tirelessly, in Argentina and globally, to help bring to justice those responsible. 🌐

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org/public domain

The decimated Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires, where the city's Jewish community offices were housed, in the aftermath of the July 18, 1994, bombing.



**Listen to the podcast here (in Spanish with English subtitles)**  
[bit.ly/nismanpod](http://bit.ly/nismanpod)

**Watch the documentary here (in Spanish with English subtitles)**  
[bit.ly/nismandoc](http://bit.ly/nismandoc)



## B'nai B'rith in Israel Hosts 95th Convention

B'nai B'rith Israel held its 95th convention at the ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv as 300 participating delegates elected a new president, Emanuel (Mano) Cohen and a new executive board.

Founded in 1888 by German author William Hertzberg, pre-state Israel's first lodge in Jerusalem included eminent academics, journalists and linguists who were a major force in introducing secular education and bringing modern improvements to the city.

Congratulatory remarks were extended by B'nai B'rith International CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin via video

and B'nai B'rith World Center Director Alan Schneider.

Outgoing President Daniel Gratz cited growth in membership and new lodges.

In a recorded message, Israel's President Isaac Herzog remarked that "B'nai B'rith brightens the land with a pleasant light. In Israel and the Jewish world, B'nai B'rith is synonymous with responsibility, leadership and solidarity.... B'nai B'rith's world stands on three pillars: justice, fraternity and unity. Especially during these days when the country is trembling under our feet, fraternity and—above all—unity are essential for us more than ever... In these days, we

need the special ties and connection that you bring with you.

Your significant contribution to the State of Israel is felt in every arena, beginning with the initial establishment of the National Library—the B'nai B'rith Library—through to the concern for the poor, the aged, the orphan and the widow, the struggle for the absorption of new immigrants, the international campaign for our rights, [and] for the memorialization and preservation of Zionist and national heritage.

I am proud to continue this esteem that I feel towards your important organization." 🇮🇱

Herzog's Hebrew message to the delegates and guests can be viewed here (in Hebrew): [bit.ly/herzog95](https://bit.ly/herzog95)



B'nai B'rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin delivered a recorded message of welcome to the delegates at the 95th B'nai B'rith Convention in Israel. At the podium is World Center-Jerusalem Director Alan Schneider.

## B'nai B'rith Colorado Sponsors 26th Annual Leadville Jewish Cemetery Clean-Up

During the weekend of June 18, B'nai B'rith Colorado sponsored volunteers of all ages who traveled to the historic mining town of Leadville, about 100 miles from Denver, where they joined forces in cleaning up the 142-year-old Jewish cemetery's headstones and walkways and to weed and reseed the grounds. The team also had the opportunity to attend services at the local synagogue. B'nai B'rith Colorado Vice President of Programming Michelle Cohn Levy led the event.

Dedicated to the spirit of the town's Jewish settlers, including tradesmen, miners, teachers and journalists, the Temple Israel Foundation supports both the cemetery and the town synagogue and has established a museum which reveals Leadville's fascinating story in words and images. [📖](#)



## Center for Senior Services Conducts In-Person Resident Leadership Retreat at Perlman Camp

For the first time since the pandemic, B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) staff and volunteers traveled to Perlman Camp in Lake Como, Pa., to welcome 30 older adults living in subsidized senior communities around the country to its annual Resident Leadership Retreat, held from August 2-8.

The retreat was held every other year until the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. For two years, in 2021 and 2022 CSS produced two-day online workshop sessions for residents who would have attended the retreat. As originally planned, the in-person leadership retreat will now be scheduled bi-annually.

Leading the various sessions and workshops focusing on topics ranging from communications and advocacy to celebrating diversity were Janel Doughten, associate director of B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services and Evan Carmen, CSS legislative director for Aging Policy. Those who attended also had time to experience interfaith get-togethers with Perlman summer campers, celebrate the rituals of Sabbath at a Friday night dinner, go for a swim or just enjoy the natural beauty of sunset over the Poconos. A highlight of the week was the talent show, which took place on the night before departure.

Doughten commented: "Our group quickly bonded and supported each other. From a programming perspective, this year's retreat was our strongest yet. [📖](#)



Participants at the 2023 Resident Leadership Retreat. Janel Doughten, associate director of B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services, appears front row, center.



# B'nai B'rith NSW Announces Winners of Annual Harmony Day Poster Competition

At a June 20 ceremony streamed live from Sydney's Parliament House, B'nai B'rith NSW in Australia honored Elly Hawang and Rachel Yi as the winners of its Harmony Day Poster Competition. Hosted by the Office of Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and members of Parliament, the event included remarks by artist and human rights activist Wendy Sharpe, a recent recipient of the government's Order of Australia.

NSW member Ernie Friedlander, who initiated the contest in 2005 and

is still involved with its administration, noted: "This year's uplifting event yielded the most powerful expressions of the concept. They were not just good works of art: The entries actually made strong statements on the topic of living in harmony. We also received excellent song entries, with ingenious lyrics, a total of over 4,000 artworks and 81 songs submitted."

Over the years, the competition, which now includes a music and song category, has continually yielded strong design statements from student artists

throughout Australia, even from the most remote areas. From its beginnings, the contest reinforced the idea behind Harmony Day, a celebration of diversity which was launched at about the same time as the United Nation's Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

A 2022 edition of IMPACT highlighted the publication of B'nai B'rith NSW's handsome large-format book (B'nai B'rith Impact Winter 2020 – B'nai B'rith International [bnaibrith.org](http://bnaibrith.org)) which included a compendium of the winning entries. 📖



Winning designs of the 2023 B'nai B'rith NSW Harmony Day Poster Competition submitted by Australian artists Rachel Yi (A) and Elly Hawang (B).

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1843  SOCIETY

# Texas' Garsek Lodge Selects its Jewish Person of the Year

Isadore Garsek B'nai B'rith Lodge in Ft. Worth has named Sophia Nason as its 2023 Jewish Person of the Year.

Nason was feted by 150 guests at the honors event, which also included the presentation of the annual lodge scholarship awards to four outstanding college-bound students. 📖



Longtime Garsek member Sophia Nason was hailed for her organizational and event planning acumen, fundraising efforts and commitment to B'nai B'rith. The lodge has paid tribute to a Jewish Person of the Year since 1951.



On hand to celebrate Nason's award were (from left): B'nai B'rith immediate Past President Charles (Chuck) Kaufman; keynote speaker B'nai B'rith Director of U.N. and Intercommunal Affairs David Michaels; Garsek Lodge President Rich Hollander; and Lodge Chaplain and immediate Past President Alex Nason, who is also the husband of the honoree.

## Israel Under Attack: Refuting the UNHRC Commission Of Inquiry

**O**n June 20, the United States and 26 other countries condemned the U.N.'s Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Israel for its bias and prejudice toward Israel.

The United Nations Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) "Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel" (known as the COI) is discriminatory in both mandate and composition.

B'nai B'rith refuses to legitimize a COI that has no interest in fair, impartial treatment of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Like past UNHRC "Commissions of

Inquiry" on Israel, the newest COI recycles wild condemnations built upon unfounded accusations against Israel—while paying negligible attention to Hamas and other terrorist groups heaping misery upon both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. 📖

**Send a message to your elected officials**

[congressweb.com/bnaibrith/51/](https://congressweb.com/bnaibrith/51/)

**Sign our petition**

[congressweb.com/bnaibrith/50/](https://congressweb.com/bnaibrith/50/)



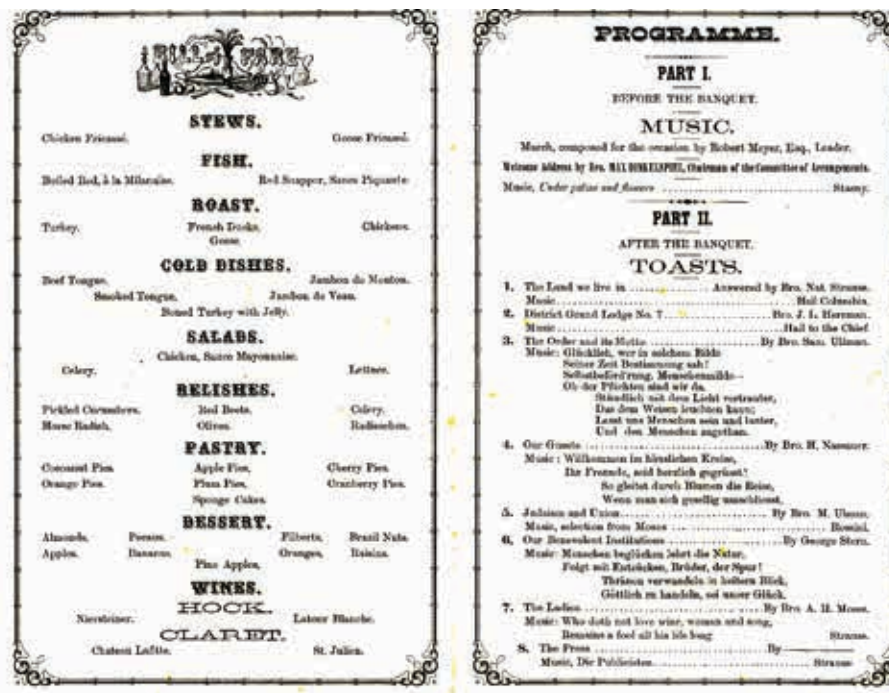
## Backstory: Convention Doings....1875

Traveling by train or horse carriage, southern lodge brothers assembled in New Orleans for their B'nai B'rith district convention in January 1875. Committee members discussed, decided, appropriated and engaged in open dialogue with delegates, after which all the heavy lifting was amply rewarded by a celebratory banquet. As illustrated, the menu seems a tad heavy for modern foodies, but guests were able to wash down the offerings with liberal quantities of claret (red) and hock (white) wine.

Adopting a D.I.Y. approach, attendees supplied their own entertainment...an evening of toasts. Written and rehearsed prior to the event, they took the form of lengthy tributes to all that the members revered: their faith, their country, the joy of fraternal bonds and "the ladies." This favorite 19th century pastime included both the toast and its lengthy response. Guests signaled their approval with

spontaneous and enthusiastic cheers and applause.

In between the verbal fireworks, classical standards, waltzes and marches played by the local band alternated with acapella sing-alongs of German drinking songs, glees and anthems. Prost! 🍷



## B'nai B'rith Latin America Caracas Lodge

B'nai B'rith Latin America conducted ceremonies for its lodge in Caracas on May 15, when a new Board of Directors was elected and more than 100 men and women became members of the newly reconstituted lodge.

David Djemal, B'nai B'rith Latin America senior vice president and Alberto Jabiles, B'nai B'rith Latin America executive director, installed Carla Belozercovsky as the new president of B'nai B'rith Venezuela.

Belozercovsky's father was the late B'nai B'rith leader Daniel Belozercovsky, who served as both B'nai B'rith Venezuela president and District XXIII president. 🍷

Carla Belozercovsky, new president of B'nai B'rith Venezuela and David Djemal, senior vice president for Latin America.



# Great Lakes Region's Stephen B. Zorn Memorial Golf Outing Marks a Decade of Commitment to Education

On June 12 B'nai B'rith Great Lakes Region celebrated the 10th anniversary of the scholarship component of its Stephen B. Zorn Memorial Golf Outing at the Tam-O-Shanter County Club in a big way. The amount of the funds earmarked for each of the four high performing college-bound awardees increased from \$2500 to \$5000.

The golf outing has been a B'nai B'rith Great Lakes Region fundraiser for 41 years; the scholarship program was instituted in 2013.

Teeing off in beautiful weather, the 104 entrants playing

the course were joined by 36 additional patrons at the evening banquet. The scholarship winners and their families were also present. MJS Packaging of Livonia, Michigan, provided sponsorship and Cadillac of Novi, Michigan, again sponsored the special Hole in One prize.

David Lubin, who co-chairs the scholarship program with Rick Sherline, noted: "We have a great group of supporters for our event, and they came through again this year to make our 41st annual B'nai B'rith Great Lakes Region Stephen B. Zorn Memorial Golf Outing one of the best ever." 📺



The golf outing has been a B'nai B'rith Great Lakes Region fundraiser for 41 years; the scholarship program was instituted in 2013. From left: Great Lakes Region President Jeffrey Tackel; scholarship winners Iris Macauley; Sam Melder; Sara Goodman and Raphael Weinstein; and Rick Sherline, who co-chairs the scholarship program with David Lubin. Twenty volunteers are also involved with the tournament organization.

Read past issues of B'nai B'rith Magazine at  
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# Gun Violence: When Is Enough, Enough?

By Mark D. Olshan

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

Anyone who has read my columns over the years knows my politics lean center left. I have addressed policy issues like affordable housing, health care and income security, usually taking positions that are popular on the left side of the aisle. While I never considered myself a “radical liberal,” in the 1970s, after my discharge from military service, I sported a full beard and a very full head of hair, while driving cross country in my Volkswagen “bug.” Not the signs of a classic “conservative.” These days I do wish I had some more of my hair!

Given my background and political leanings, my knowledge of firearms may surprise you. Spending a number of years in the Boy Scouts, I was no stranger to guns, learning to use a .22-caliber rifle and frequently participating in skeet shooting.

Now let me really shock you: At one time, I supported the National Rifle Association (NRA). Perhaps surprising from a man who enthusiastically supports the Affordable Care Act and raising taxes on the wealthy to save Social Security.

“Back in the day” the NRA was more focused on gun safety and education, values to this day I support. Obviously, in my humble opinion, the NRA has changed over time, making it unrecognizable as the organization I used to support.

I strengthened my firearm skills during the Vietnam War, while serving in the military. During basic training I became a skilled marksman. My experience focused on using the M14 rifle and M16 rifle. Suffice it to say, these weapons were quite a bit different from the ones I used



Before the odysseys in my VW bug: A memory of my time in basic training, when I learned how to use a gun and became a skilled marksman.

in the Boy Scouts. For context, today I often refer to the M16 as a weapon of mass destruction.

The Washington Post, in an article titled “The Gun that Divides a Nation,” said it best:

“The AR-15 wasn’t supposed to be a bestseller.”

“The rugged, powerful weapon was originally designed as a soldier’s rifle in the late 1950s. ‘An outstanding weapon with phenomenal lethality,’ an internal Pentagon report raved. It soon became standard issue for U.S. troops in the Vietnam War, where the weapon earned a new name: the M16.”

I will never forget the feeling of the weapon I held in my hands the first time I fired an M16 rifle. No “sports minded”



Photo: en.wikipedia.org/Department of Defense

A member of the elite Navy SEAL division checks his M14 rifle during Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

individual needs that much power for traditional hunting or target shooting. My training in firearms wasn’t just about understanding their lethal potential. I appreciated the importance of gun safety. Obviously, operating a firearm requires 100% of one’s attention.

So why am I telling you this? The reasons why our country can’t get commonsense gun reform legislation are just unacceptable. I get angry reading the news and learning about another shooting. It feels like an everyday occurrence. It’s come to the point where mass shootings aren’t even surprising.

In 2022, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, an advocacy organization, the United States had 636 mass shootings, in which 600 people died and over 2,700



Photo: commons.wikimedia.org/Fibonacci Blue

In February 2018, Minneapolis high school students protested the proliferation of mass shootings and marched on behalf of gun reform laws that would place restrictions on the sale of assault rifles.

were wounded. Let those numbers sink in for a second.

And please, I am not here to say we should confiscate everyone's guns. There are millions of responsible gun owners, but does any individual really need military style weapons of war? A common theme for so many mass shootings is that the shooter used an assault weapon of war.

Sadly, gun violence isn't limited to mass shootings. As the director for the Center for Senior Services, I pay close attention to how gun violence impacts older Americans. For example, conditions like dementia have made gun ownership for seniors lethal.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, "as the disease progresses, the person may not recognize someone he or she has known for years and view him or her as an intruder. With a gun accessible, the result could be disastrous. Even if the person has past experience with guns, his or her current abilities will be altered because the safe use of firearms requires complex cognitive abilities and quick decision-making skills, which may be compromised due to dementia."

My colleague Evan Carmen, in an article titled, "A Proactive Approach to Seniors, Guns and Dementia," told the story of Larry Dillon, 65, with

dementia, who mistook his wife for an intruder and in front of their granddaughter, killed her with a gun. Dillon slept with a 9 mm semi-automatic Glock pistol in his nightstand.

Making firearm use among people with dementia even more tragic is that people with mental health issues commonly use guns to die by suicide. I remember from the military that the responsibilities of gun ownership are immense, and these weapons in the wrong hands are just a disaster waiting to happen.

Fortunately, there is a little good news. In 2022, Congress passed, and President Joe Biden signed into law, legislation called the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. This bill, among other things, appropriates money to states that implement red flag laws. Red flag laws let states be more proactive by allowing family members or law enforcement to petition the court to temporarily take firearms from individuals who are a risk to themselves or others. Hopefully, if such laws are more widely administered around the country, countless lives can be saved.

Unfortunately, this legislation alone will not solve the gun crisis crippling our nation. Commonsense gun reform

measures like an assault weapon ban and universal background checks are critical to saving lives. In 2013, B'nai B'rith International leaders adopted a formal resolution that called for a ban on assault weapons, as well as a limit on magazine ammunition capacity.

Let me repeat, I am not seeking to abolish all guns. I am just calling for sensible laws to ensure that weapons of war, which have continuously been used in mass shootings, are taken off the streets. Banning assault weapons will save lives.

In addition, a federal universal background check is badly needed. While there already is one to check an applicant's criminal, mental health and domestic abuse background, there are too many loopholes allowing people to purchase a gun and evade the law's requirements. According to the FBI, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System takes less than two minutes to run. I don't think it's too onerous to ask someone to wait a few minutes to purchase a gun.

We need reasonable gun reform, and every moment in which elected officials sit on the sidelines is a wasted opportunity. What will it take to stir the conscience of our country from apathy into action? How many more shootings are needed for Congress to act? Is there any limit? Until further laws are enacted, the status quo will prevail, which means more and more people needlessly suffer and die. 🇺🇸

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



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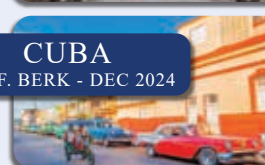


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