



JDC-Israel Newsletter

Special Edition

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JDC Celebrates Israel's 50th Anniversary

- "Profoundly gratified at the establishment of the new State of Israel" ■ JDC staff members share the role of the organization in saving their families ■ Stories from the Archives ■ Michael Schneider: Towards the next 50 years ■
- Arnon Mantver: Expanding the partnership with the Government of Israel ■ JDC-Israel mission, 1998 ■



Celebrating at the Fernwald Displaced Persons camp, Germany, 1948: JDC financed youth movements and educational activities in Europe's DP camps.

Israel and JDC: Ralph Goldman Speaks

In an interview with the editors of JDC-Israel's *Newsletter*, Ralph Goldman speaks about JDC's contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel and its welfare, and about Israel's place in JDC's view of the world. Ralph has been involved in JDC for some thirty years and shares personal insights of the events of the past half century.

A State is Born

Q: Where were you when Israel was born?

A: I was working for the Hagana's branch in the USA, which was headed at that time by Teddy Kollek. We had a lot of work to do. We arranged for the broadcast of the declaration from the Tel Aviv Museum on our radio station in a clandestine location in Queens. We were also aware that the Arabs were about to attack.

Teddy Kollek and Moshe Sharett had returned to Israel a week earlier with a

request from George Marshall (US Secretary of State) not to declare the State, but Ben-Gurion decided to go ahead. On May 14, 1948, at 11 am American time, I already knew that Eliyahu Epstein (later Eilat) had been asked by President Truman's office to submit a formal application on behalf of the State for US government recognition. He did so as the Jewish Agency representative in Washington, thus becoming the first official representative of the State of Israel.

Q: How did a demobilized American soldier end up in the Hagana?

A: I was recruited to the Hagana by Yaakov Dori (who served as Israel's first chief of staff).

Since I knew Hebrew and had experience from my American military service, I was asked to recruit personnel – and later money and political support – and to look for military supplies and ships to take immigrants to pre-State Israel. I worked underground until May 14, 1948.

I was lucky to work with some great men – Ben-Gurion and Teddy Kollek.

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The Figures Speak for Themselves

- Airplanes hired by JDC airlifted 50,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel
- The famous ship, *Exodus*, brought Holocaust survivors to Israel with JDC assistance
- 85% of the 240,000 Jews who came to Israel from Europe and the Arab countries during the first year of Israel's independence were assisted by JDC
- Since the nation's establishment, approximately 2.7 million immigrants have come to Israel
- 482,000 came to Israel in the period of 1919-1948

No More Jewish "Refugees"

Q: When did you first see Jewish suffering?

A: At the end of the Second World War, when I was serving in the US Army in Arles, France, I met Jewish refugees. The Catholic chaplain in my unit arranged for the Jewish chaplain to recruit Jewish soldiers. Every day, from 3 pm, we provided help for the refugees. During my visits to Marseilles, I met people from the "Aliyah Bet" (for "illegal" immigration to pre-State Israel). The Joint played a vital role in this period, both in caring for the Jews in the Displaced Persons camps in Europe and in providing financial assistance to bring them to pre-State Israel. A

"refugee" is someone who has nowhere to go, so that since the establishment of Israel, no Jew need be called a refugee.

Q: Is this just a moral point, or does it have practical ramifications?

A: I think it must also shape the way we provide assistance. The Jewish people cares for Jews in distress, but is not a travel agency. If a Jew leaves a place of distress with an Israeli visa, it is a Jewish communal responsibility to help them in transit to Israel.

The Joint Family

Q: Two days before our interview, we marked the sixth anniversary of the explosion at the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, a terrible tragedy in which your son, David Ben-Rafael, was killed while working for the Foreign Ministry. Why did you want the funeral procession to pass from the Foreign Ministry via the JDC building in Jerusalem?

A: My son was very close to me. I have worked for the Joint since 1969. He knew how special the Joint is, how different it is from any other organization in the world, and how you can do things for the purest of motives.

The bond between the State of Israel and the Jewish world is extremely powerful. Anyone who has ever worked for the Joint or been helped by it will always remember this. The expression "the Joint family" is not an empty slogan. I met Isaac Bashevis Singer when he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature, and he told me that he still remembered the "warmth of the blanket" he got from the Joint so many years earlier.

We Must Help All the Residents of Israel

Q: How does concern for Jews fit in with concern for non-Jews?

A: JDC-Israel began to help the Israeli Arabs as early as the 1970s when we established ESHEL (the Association for the Planning and Development of Services for the Aged). JDC-Israel helps all residents of Israel who face difficulties, be they Jews or Arabs. In 1977, when I was the AJJDC Executive Vice-President, we formalized our assistance program for non-Jews throughout the world and even began special "mailbox" campaigns in order to enable Jews to donate to non-Jews in distress. We did this for Cambodia, Ethiopia and Rwanda, among other places, primarily using Israeli know-how and experts. Sometimes this enabled Israel to develop ties with countries with which it had no diplomatic relations.

"The Old Man to MALBEN"

Q: How was JDC-Israel established?

A: JDC was established in the US in November 1914 and always helped Jews in the Land of Israel. In 1949 JDC established MALBEN (a Hebrew acronym for Institutions for the Care of Disadvantaged Immigrants). In the 1960s, MALBEN gradually began to transfer its services and its thousand employees to the government. During the same period, when the JDC office was in Tel Aviv, I did all I could to bring it to Jerusalem. On January 1, 1976, the JDC office moved to Jerusalem and JDC-Israel was formally established. The Director-General was Harold Trobe, who died two years ago. JDC redefined its mission in Israel and decided to concentrate on developing innovative services and conducting research in the fields of welfare, health and education. Our close ties with the leadership of the State helped develop partnerships with government ministries and local authorities.



50 Years Ago at AJJDC

May 15, 1948

The Executive Committee of the AJJDC, profoundly gratified at the establishment of the new State of Israel, May 14, 1948, and deeply aware of the great significance in Jewish and world history of that event and of the fact that a new beacon of light and hope has been raised for many thousands of homeless and displaced Jews in Europe and other distressed areas...note with pride heroic and courageous efforts of the citizens of Israel...extend to the new State and all its inhabitants...warm greetings and good wishes...together with our fullest assurances that we feel privileged to continue to work with them in the highest spirit of helpfulness and cooperation to the end that happiness and prosperity shall come to Israel, to all its people and to the homeless tens of thousands who now at long last will find a home in Israel.

The Executive Committee of the AJJDC.

Source: JDC Archives in Jerusalem

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Q: How was the name JDC-Israel chosen?

A: When Ben-Gurion left the government in 1965 and ran in the elections, I saw signs throughout Israel "The Old Man to MALBEN". That pained me. I decided the time had come to change the name. We changed it first to JDC-MALBEN, and then to JDC-Israel. Later, after the JDC office moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, I always noted that JDC-Israel is located between Kiryat Ben-Gurion and Givat Ram.

Lease Paid Through 2025

Q: Who do we have to thank for "JDC Hill?"

A: In 1969 we began to examine the possibility of moving the MALBEN offices from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. I was in contact with Abe Harman, President of the Hebrew University, which owned the former Brookdale Institute building, and with Pinchas Sapir, the all-powerful Minister of Finance of that period. We eventually received a large donation to establish the Brookdale Institute. When I contacted Sapir and told him that JDC could not afford to pay for the land, his response was that the State of Israel would present the land as a gift. The Jerusalem City Council later named the hill "JDC Hill."

As was usual at that time, we leased the land for 49 years with an option for another 49 years, for 12 Israeli Pounds a year. I was afraid that some official would forget to pay the annual amount later, so I paid \$258 in advance for the first 49 years. The bill is settled through the year 2025.

JDC-ESHEL and JDC-Brookdale – A Successful Model

Q: What model should JDC use for its work in the coming years?

A: The ESHEL and Brookdale model has been very successful, enabling JDC to continue to work with the government and voluntary

organizations and to be a partner in setting policy and developing innovative services. This is why I am glad this model is also being implemented for children, through ASHALIM.

Lay Leaders and Professionals

Q: What should the ideal relationship between the lay leaders of JDC and the professional staff be?

A: The lay leaders decide on policy and are accountable to the public. The professionals must provide ideas and consultation on policy, and it is they who develop the programs and are accountable to the lay leaders. The professionals who head the organization must be people of vision, not just administrators.

Q: Does the AJJDC Executive Vice-President need "Israeli experience?"

A: Yes. Experience in Israel is vital. This is why I wanted Michael Schneider, the current world Executive Vice-President, who was born in South Africa, to serve first as Director-General of JDC-Israel. Although the Joint was established by

US Jews, I believe it is a global organization.

The Executive Vice-President need not be American, but he must have experience in the Jewish world, including Israel.

Israel is Not "Overseas": The Jewish People Needs the State of Israel

Q: Does the State of Israel make Jews more secure?

A: I have no doubt that were it not for the State of Israel, the Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora would not be able to hold their heads up in pride and feel that they are secure. Unconsciously, the American Jews need it – to remain Jews they need to be connected to Israel. JDC addresses not only physical hardship but also the spiritual and cultural needs of communities that have been isolated from the Jewish people, in order to promote Jewish unity. As early as 1947, we used aid money from the American army to print copies of the Talmud. A set of this special edition can be found at JDC-Israel (with Stanley Abramovitch) and at JDC Headquarters in New York.

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50 Years Later at AJJDC

April 30, 1998

The jubilee of the State of Israel is a celebration to the JDC family in Israel and worldwide. The roots of JDC are planted in Palestine. It was conceived and born for the purpose of assisting the Jewish community here, under the Turkish government in 1914. This assistance continued through the years of the British Mandate, reached its peak on the eve of establishing the State of Israel and during its first years, and continues to this very day. I was fortunate to head JDC-Israel in the years 1984-1988, and I learned first hand JDC's essential role in forming the social services of a nation in creation. I also learned that the main asset of JDC in achieving this colossal goal is its talented, professional employees. Facing a constantly changing social reality you always know to adapt yourself with flexibility and efficiency to new challenges. JDC is the instrument enabling a direct and unique partnership between the American Jewish community and Israel, a partnership which all of us ought to continue to nourish in the coming 50 years.

Michael Schneider, AJJDC Executive Vice-President

Israel and JDC: Ralph Goldman Speaks

Q: What place would you like Israel to hold with regard to the AJJDC?

A: We must recognize that while there are many flourishing Jewish communities around the world, Israel is central to Jewish life because of our historic link to the language, the culture and the land.

Q: What role should the AJJDC and JDC-Israel play in the coming years?

A: For me, JDC is a global Jewish organization whose role is to help Jewish communities remain Jewish. JDC enables Diaspora Jews to connect to the community in Israel through its various programs for the disadvantaged and its social policy research efforts. As a global organization, JDC can work to build bridges. I would like to see programs based on three-way cooperation, for example between Jewish communities in Russia,

America and Israel. Our goal is not to build JDC institutions, but rather to empower each community to develop its own Jewish communal services.



Ralph Goldman, who is the same age as JDC, was born on the Russian-Polish border and moved to the United States as a young child. He studied education and social work at Boston University and Harvard, and also studied at Boston Hebrew College. He began many years of work for the Jewish community in 1938 in a Jewish community center in Boston. In the 1950s, he was the director of the US (POINT 4) and United Nations technical assistance programs in the Israeli Prime Minister's office. Ralph has filled and continues to fill

key positions in Jewish and Israeli organizations. He was among the founders of the Israel Museum, the Jerusalem Foundation, the Israel Education Fund, and the Israeli community centers. He has received prestigious awards from many academic, government and Jewish institutions.

Ralph began his work at JDC in 1969 as the Associate Director-General of MALBEN. He served as Executive Vice-President of the AJJDC from 1976-1985 and 1986-1988, and has been the AJJDC Honorary Executive Vice-President since 1988.

For over thirty years, Ralph has helped develop the JDC's vision and policy and has overseen ongoing activities around the world. (After finishing the interview, Ralph left for Russia.) ■

Stories From the JDC Archives in Jerusalem

■ THREE CHILDREN ON A TRAIN ■

About a year ago, a call came to the JDC Archives from someone who was saved by the Joint when he was a boy in Romania during the Holocaust, in 1943. In March of that year, he joined a group of 75 children who were traveling by train from Bucharest, via Bulgaria and Turkey, to Palestine at JDC's expense. But at the Bulgarian-Turkish border the train was stopped by the Germans and three of the children, who were Polish nationals, were removed from the train. The man who had telephoned me was sitting in the same seat as two of those children, and he hadn't stopped thinking about them since that day. He begged me to find out what the children's names were so that he could pray on their behalf.

With the help of academics in Israel, and with documents from the Vatican archives, I found out the names of the three children, who had been taken to a concentration camp in Yugoslavia and had never been heard from again. During that period, the Archives was assisting the Israel Broadcasting

Authority to prepare material for its television program, "Children Without Identity" about children who had been hidden in the homes of Christians in Poland during the Holocaust. When I told the producer about this story, she suddenly insisted that I tell her the names of those children. Apparently, one of the children was her uncle, and since that day in March 1943 the family had no idea what had become of him.

■ FOUND HIMSELF ■

A tourist from the US was looking for information about a children's home in Germany where he had stayed after World War II, but couldn't remember the name of the children's home, nor its exact location. I found his picture in an album of the children's home, which had been founded and supported by the Joint, and I also put him in contact with other people in Israel who had been in the same home. Even Yossi Erez, the JDC representative in Poland, was surprised to find his picture as a boy in that album.

■ THE ARCHIVE SERVICES ■

These stories reflect one of the most important aspects of the work of the Archives – providing an invaluable service to the public, researchers, journalists, television producers, Holocaust survivors, and of course, people at JDC. The Archives supplies Holocaust survivors with documents that enable them to obtain reparations or national insurance pensions from Germany. The Archives provides photographs and documents for exhibits, both within JDC-Israel and outside of the organization as well. ■

Dr. Sarah Kadosh, Director of the JDC Archives in Jerusalem.

Newsletter Editorial Board: Arnon Mantver,
Tamara Barnea, Antony Korenstein,
Vicky Mevorach, Ellen Avraham, Prina Nahmias,
Gaby Blauer

Layout and Production: DoubleClick



JDC-Israel

JDC Hill, P.O.B. 3489, Jerusalem 91034
Tel. 972-2-655-7111, Fax. 972-2-566-1244
E-mail: jdcisr@jdc.org.il
Website: <http://www.jdc.org.il>