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# JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY

קול יהודי מגרמניה

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## SYRIAN DISASTER

### Hypocrisy

Shanah tova! We wish you a peaceful new year 5777. In the Jewish faith, in Christianity, and in Islam, humans are responsible for their own fate.

Every person of common sense and compassion – whether member of one of the monotheistic religions or secular humanist – understands that what has been taking place in Syria over the past years is a humanitarian disaster of immense proportions. And so far, the world has been standing by and watching. By delivering weapons, money and training and by directly participating in military actions, a number of states and organizations are ensuring that this mass killing, violence, and displacement will continue. About 400,000 people, the majority of them civilians, have already been killed. More than a million people have been wounded. Nearly half the Syrian population have fled their homes.

“Assad should stand trial as a war criminal”

The one person who is most centrally responsible for this systematic crime is the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad. But rather than being brought before an international war crimes tribunal, as has been done with the “strongmen” of Africa and the former Yugoslavia, Assad is enjoying open military support from Russia, Iran, and the Hezbollah militia associated with the mullahs of Iran.

In 2012, President Barack Obama warned that the United States would not accept any further use of poison gas, particularly against the civilian population. However, Damascus persisted to deploy chemical weapons against civilians. Assad and his henchmen have been able to continue their campaign against their enemies – and the civilian population without having to fear U.S. intervention.

Since the West refuses to take action, Russia and Iran have expanded their military interventions. Attempts to establish a ceasefire have been thwarted. Moscow has justified the Russian involvement as a war against the so-called Islamic State, IS. And has recently been joined by Turkey – even though Ankara has for years been tacitly acquiescing, if not more, to the actions of the Islamic State.

It would be a simple matter for the international community to insist that Assad, a war criminal, steps down from power. Instead Moscow and Tehran are pursuing what they purport to be their own national interests.

Germany has already taken in several hundred thousand Syrian refugees. This action has put pressure on the German government, both domestically and internationally. The fact that most EU countries took in hardly any refugees is a scandal. In addition, Hungary and a number of Eastern European governments are claiming that as Christian nations, their refusal to admit refugees is justified. This is pure hypocrisy. ■

## HAPPY NEW YEAR 5777

## שנה טובה



Be thou like a young hart upon the mountains of spices...

Song of Songs

## GABRIEL ON CETA

### Ambitious Agreement



With CETA, “we have succeeded in concluding an ambitious agreement that meets our aspirations and follows the goal

of organizing globalization in a new way,” writes Economics Minister Sigmar Gabriel in an exclusive article for the *Jewish Voice*. CETA ensures “the particular importance of social partnership.”

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## GERMAN AMBASSADOR

### Jewish Revival

“Germany is experiencing a renaissance in Jewish life – with a strong community organization, the Central Council of Jews in Germany, representatives from various Jewish denominations live here and actively participate in public life,” says Peter Wittig, the German Ambassador to the United States, in our special supplement. He stresses that Germany has “a special responsibility for Jewish life and the State of Israel. This responsibility forms a cornerstone of our foreign policy.”

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חי

Dear Readers,

Our headline חי means 18. This is the 18th edition of the *Jewish Voice*. But חי also means life. Our journal is now five years old. In January of 2012, then German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle presented the *Jewish Voice* to the public. He called our publication a bridge. A permanent organ of German-Jewish understanding that promotes our concerns to the world, and moreover makes a broad spectrum of opinions from Germany and from Israel internationally known.

Our undertaking has – in all modesty – been a success. Also Westerwelle’s current successor, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, already exchanged views with the *Jewish Voice* during his term as opposition leader. As foreign minister he and his office support our cause. Further interlocu-

tors have included German Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as the ministers Sigmar Gabriel and Christian Schmidt, Israel’s Vice Prime Minister Silvan Shalom and the Chairman of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky.

German-Jewish cooperation must not solidify as praise of historical achievements. The days of Albert Einstein and Max Liebermann are long gone. But German-Jewish history must also not end with the Shoah. It has to continue.

And this continuation is our newspaper’s raison d’être. It is what we strive for. Our readers and our advertisement partners support us in our endeavor. Thus, the *Jewish Voice* will continue to serve as an opinion forum for you.

The Editors

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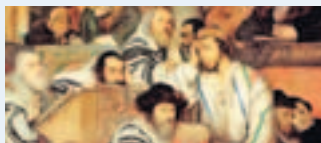
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BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

# Education Policy

## Israel's future must not be put at risk



Kati Gleason/Getty Images/Photograph Collection

By Rafael Seligmann

Anyone who wishes to understand Israel's politics must understand Benjamin Netanyahu. Bibi, as he is known in the Jewish state, has been the country's dominant politician for the past two decades. Say what you will about Netanyahu, no one – from supporters, to opponents, to enemies – is indifferent to him. The prime minister's capabilities and achievements are indisputable. His mistakes are similarly well-known.

Benjamin Netanyahu is the most powerful orator within the Jewish state. In the United States, he knows to achieve the maximum public effect better than any other foreign politician in his speeches and interviews. Both in Israel and abroad, the Likud Party leader's polarizing effect is second to none. His public pronouncements solidify the approval of his supporters while intensifying the antipathy of his adversaries.

Netanyahu is well aware that he is a divisive figure, and that is a risk he is willing to take. The prime minister is so convinced of his powers of persuasion that he ignores anyone who advises him to moderate his language, either in his own interest or in the interest of his country. This is particularly evident with respect to Netanyahu's

most famous address. In a scorching speech delivered before both houses of the U.S. Congress in March 2015, Netanyahu made a last-minute appeal for a veto of the nuclear deal with Iran that had been negotiated by the U.S. government, the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, and Germany. In this, Netanyahu failed on a grand scale. His speech only served to deepen what had become a nearly irreconcilable rift with the Obama administration. Netanyahu's opponents, however, claimed that his speech was nothing more than a cynical ploy. Netanyahu, they said, was perfectly aware that his mission would fail; the true purpose of his speech was to solidify support within Israel during the final, critical phase of his election campaign. And indeed, Bibi was re-elected. But what-

with Israel's national interest in mind, Netanyahu exercised restraint. He understood that such a preemptive strike would have led to the complete isolation of Israel on the international stage, particularly with respect to Europe and the U.S., both of which the Jewish state relies on for support.

### True to his convictions

Throughout his political career, Bibi has remained true to his convictions, even to the temporary detriment of his own political fortunes. As finance minister under Ariel Sharon (2003-2005), Netanyahu did away with unnecessary regulations and cut public subsidies, measures which breathed fresh wind

ering Kadima Party of Ariel Sharon and later of Ehud Olmert. Three years later, Netanyahu was elected prime minister by the Knesset, even though Likud had been narrowly edged out by Kadima, which by that time was under the leadership of Tzipi Livni. In 2013, Netanyahu formed a coalition with Yair Lapid's new reform party Yesh Atid and other smaller parties.

The price Yesh Atid extracted from Netanyahu was the rejection of a coalition with the religious parties and the gradual rollback of privileges long granted to the ultra-Orthodox in Israel. Their generous subsidies were cut and the exemptions from the compulsory military service required of all Jewish Israeli citizens were tightened. Even more importantly, other laws made subsidies to religious schools dependent on their curriculum. Only schools that offered "worldly" subjects such as English and the natural sciences could receive public subsidies.

These reforms in educational policy are vitally important to the future of Israel. As a small country that is poor in natural resources, Israel's survival is dependent upon an educated population and workforce. This is also why Israel devotes more than four percent of its budget to science and research. But such policies only make sense if Israel's young people receive a good education. This is particularly important with respect to religious Jews and Muslims, which both tend to have large families. If the state fails to ensure that the children of religious families are well-prepared to join the modern workforce and secular economy, Israeli society will be at a distinct disadvantage.

As head of state, and as a graduate of MIT, Benjamin Netanyahu is well aware of this fact. But he has chosen to ignore it. The United Torah faction has now succeeded in relieving Haredi schools of the obligation to teach core subjects such as math in order to obtain government subsidies. For the Likud Party, maintaining its hold on power has become more important than Israel's national interest. Benjamin Netanyahu would be well advised to return his focus to the welfare of the nation. Otherwise his days as head of state are counted and he is in danger of squandering Israel's future. ■

“

## Power more important than national interest

ever the merits of this argument, it fails to appreciate the prime minister's overweening ego. Benjamin Netanyahu considers himself as a statesman of the first order, on a par with Winston Churchill. Just like the British prime minister, who in 1940 was the only head of state to defy Hitler, the Israeli politician sees himself as waging an uncompromising battle against the hostile Iranian regime. But here, too, prudence rules the day.

Even though the overwhelming majority of Israelis and the most important Arab politicians are convinced of the potential threat arising from Iran's nuclear weapons program, and even though then-Minister of Defense Ehud Barak – a former Chief of General Staff of the Israeli army and head of the Labor Party – urged a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear production facilities, Benjamin Netanyahu decided against such a move. And he did so even though his own popularity within Israel could only have benefited from such an attack. But

into the Israeli economy. The establishment of an unfettered market economy and the elimination of subsidies benefited the more affluent segment of the population and harmed the lower-income groups that are traditionally the bastion of Likud support. As a result, Netanyahu's popularity suffered, both within the Likud Party and overall.

In 2005, when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided in favor of a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza – with no corresponding political or military concessions on the part of the Palestinians – Netanyahu denounced the plan as irresponsible and resigned from his post in protest. Later developments would prove Netanyahu correct. After Israel's withdrawal, the Hamas militia overpowered the Fatah forces and embarked on a war of attrition against Israel – and its own civilian population – that continues to this day.

After his resignation, in 2006 Netanyahu took over at the helm of the weakened Likud Party against the seemingly overpow-



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THURINGIA'S MINISTER PRESIDENT BODO RAMELOW

# We Can Solve Every Problem

## Debate on integration of refugees, faith and the Middle East

**W**hat solutions does the Left Party offer to the challenges of the 21st century?

First of all, I am concerned that we no longer offer people any clear political positions. Many people evidently like to identify with one camp or another. But this need for a binary system cannot find fulfillment, because right now everything is somewhere in the middle. I think it would be a good idea if there were once again a clear difference between the bourgeois-conservative camp and the leftwing-liberal camp.

*As a leftist politician, how do you address complex challenges such as the income gap, access to education and affordable housing?*

We live in one of the richest countries in the world. I believe the problems we have can, in principle, be solved. According to a recent sociological study of Germany, 30-to-50-year-olds say they are doing well; nonetheless we are frightened of the future.

*What are people frightened of?*

Being poor when they are old, and downward social mobility. While a few wealthy people are getting richer and richer, the vast majority are not seeing any increase in prosperity. Since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the number of people in full-time employment has shrunk by five million. More and more people have insecure and poorly-paid jobs.

out that here our Christianity has a much older tradition, and a very bloody one at that.

*But you are a practising Christian.*

Yes, I even believe in paradise, though I don't know if I shall be going there. I find strength in the Epistles of St Paul to his community. Without Paul, that Jewish sect would not have developed into a world religion. Those who now wander about crying out that they want to defend Christendom and Western civilization have understood neither Christendom nor Western civilization. If they knew that the area where Paul of Tarsus came from and where this world religion emerged is precisely where today's refugees come from and where the most brutal violence prevails, they might address the challenge in a friendlier manner. In fact, they do the opposite. The events in Bautzen (where a rightwing mob attacked young refugees (ed.)) are frightening.

*What are you doing to promote the integration of refugees in Thuringia?*

We have spent a lot of money on renting vocational training centers. We have mobilized people in charge of workshops and factories and asked them to get involved and to help. We have got our small and medium-sized companies involved in setting up internships.

There are big differences between, for example, Syrians with a good education and illiterate



2025 just to replace those who will be retiring.

I want to pursue integration in a practical and pragmatic manner. The entire administrative apparatus has so far been

the more negatively people view the government and its policies. That has led to a considerable degree of insecurity both here and in other European countries. It is Europe that guaran-

*Why is Germany so timid in its dealings with President Erdogan?*

Chancellor Merkel is trapped because of her refugee deal with Erdogan. The slide towards dictatorship in Turkey is a cause for concern. Erdogan started out as a reformer. The first time I addressed parliament in Ankara and talked about freedom of religion and about Christian churches in Turkey, the most pleasant discussions I had were with politicians from his AKP party. That openness has since vanished.

*Erdogan has a new friend, namely Putin. Do you see this axis of despotism as a danger with the potential to further destabilize the region from Ukraine to the Middle East?*

I do not feel the need to envision new despots. In retrospect, one can say that despots tend to contribute greatly to destabilization. The butcher Assad and the butchers of IS are out there every day. And then there are Hamas and Hizbollah. Israel is encircled by enemies. Let us try to focus on what more we can do to promote peace. That means talking and not creating ever new bogeymen...

*But you have to call a despot a despot...*

Call him whatever you like.

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**Those who now wander about crying out that they want to defend Christendom and Western civilization have understood neither Christendom nor Western civilization**

defensive in its approach. Our aliens law and refugee law are such that people spend as long as possible in some hostel so that they write home and say, "Whatever you do, don't come to Germany!" We want to appear open-minded and welcoming to the outside world, while actually conveying exactly the opposite message.

*Populism is on the rise internationally at the moment – the United States, Hungary, Austria, Poland, France. What can be done to counter this trend?*

I am amazed it took so long to reach us. We were always outraged by developments elsewhere, but never took a closer look at the issues behind them. I am convinced that we can solve every problem. But the longer we avoid solving problems,

tees our ability to take part in global markets and prosper. But we have failed to explain that to the people – in a country with such a large trade surplus.

*Putin annexed Crimea...*

Don't you think the people themselves have to resolve that? Shouldn't we respect these countries rather than adopt the role of strict schoolmaster? I can tell you that Putin is not my friend, but I still fly to Russia to talk to people there, because Thuringia has many ties to Russia and many ties to Ukraine. There is no alternative to dialogue.

*In Germany there is a consensus about assuming responsibility for the genocide of the Jews. What about the living Jews in this country?*

Our Jewish community in Thuringia, which has about 800 members and is very lively, is an engaged partner. We have done a lot together. My first trip as state premier was to Israel, and not to the West Bank and not to Gaza. Jewish tradition, Jewish life is part of our life, part of my life. ■



The debate took place at the China Club Berlin

*You are a leftist. The Marxist ideal of justice plays a role for you. What went wrong in the Marxist countries?*

People have always been concerned with the question of an ideal society, an ideal way of life. Early Christianity also bears the stamp of this dream. But this dream becomes something terrible, at the very latest, when it is coupled with a power structure. This holds true for all fanatical religious power structures that claim to be based on Christianity. Today there is a lot of talk about the dangers of Islam, but I would like to point

Afghans. But we have to identify every single talent and think about where it might be best deployed. I would like it if we could offer every individual an integration contract, in which we set out clearly what we are offering and what we are expecting. In Thuringia, we have one thousand young people in vocational schools for a vocational preparation year. Learning the language and learning a skill means we have new apprentices in the making. In my state we have 3800 unfilled vacancies for apprenticeships. My state will need 200,000 skilled workers by





## EU AND CANADA

# Globalization Needs Rules

Through CETA, Europe is setting new standards for fair trade policy



BMWi/Maurice Weiss

By Sigmar Gabriel

Looking at European history, we learn that economic cooperation not only ensures employment and prosperity, but also helps our governments to cooperate and enables us to better live together in peace. The European Union, the biggest peace project of our time, started out as what was cautious cooperation on coal and steel. What we have today is an economic union that, even though it is having a tough time, still continues to function. This is because it is based on common rules, rules which the Member States have agreed on in order to prevent a

race-to-the-bottom on standards, and to ensure that we have fair competition. In areas where common rules have not yet been established, e.g. corporate taxation, we are working hard to change things and to stop countries from undercutting each other.

There are no rules like this in the global economy. Globalization has produced a lot of winners, not least in the developing countries, but it has also allowed a race to offer the lowest standards.

This darker side of globalization is forming the ideal breeding ground for the new apologists of isolationism – proponents that have multiplied in number and can now be found in alarmingly high concentrations in key partner countries.

In the United Kingdom, advocates of Brexit promised the closing of national borders and decried a loss of sovereign power. The American presidential candidate Donald Trump has declared himself against trade agreements, has said he wants to build walls, and that he would also raise tariffs.

The British magazine *The Economist* aptly speaks of a new political division that is opening up – a divide not between right and left, but between being open and not. The different ideas that make up this new ideology of isolationism might each be different. But what they all have in common is that they whip up a fear of engaging with

other countries, whether it's economic or cultural exchange, or the movement of people from one country to another.

When it comes to the biggest questions of our time, nationalism is not the answer. After all, barriers to trade do not reduce social inequality. No wall, however high, can eliminate the causes of mass migration. If we want to preserve cultural and economic openness, what we need are fair rules.

For us Europeans, this also means setting about achieving ambitious trade agreements that lay down high standards

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**Living up to the political desire to shape the 21st century**

of protection for workers, consumers, and for the environment. And it means adopting an approach based on partnership as we do so; one that not only focuses on sales markets, but that also encourages opportunities for development. When it comes to our current system of trade agreements, what this means is a veritable paradigm shift, since the vast majority of agreements merely aim to open up markets; they are seldom based on a partnership of equals.

What country would lend itself as a better partner for this new type of agreement than

Canada? Canada is a country that shares many of our European values. Its environmental and social standards are among the highest in the world. Its public health and education system is a strong model. Canada is committed to mitigating climate change, regulates its financial markets, and is one of the co-initiators of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Diversity. At the same time, it also has a strong global voice as a member of the G7.

With Canada as our partner, we have succeeded in concluding an ambitious agreement that meets our aspirations and follows the goal of organizing globalization in a new way, with new rules. CETA emphasizes the particular importance of decent work and of social partnership. It sets high standards in environmental protection. Crucially, it replaces private arbitration tribunals with an investment court that is based on the rule of law and that

prevents the bringing of abusive actions against democratic decisions. The provision of public services is protected from this. It remains possible to bring these back under the aegis of municipalities.

With CETA on the table, what we have is a comprehensive free trade agreement that must now be debated by the various parliaments. CETA is proof that negotiations can be worthwhile. Worthwhile for ensuring fair trade policy, for bringing about a paradigm shift in globalization, and able to live up to the political desire to shape the 21st century. ■

## MUSLIMS IN GERMANY

## Burqa Ban Bars Integration

Provide support services instead

By Volker Beck

Everyone has an opinion on the burqa – even if one doesn't know anything about Islam, religion or the provisions of constitutional law relating to religion. But a debate in which everyone proposes banning what he or she personally dislikes does not get us anywhere. As if the fight against religious fundamentalism and terrorism could be won by rules on what people wear! Or, even more absurd, by a requirement to shower naked at the gym or by an obligation to shake hands. All ideas that have recently been openly discussed.

Of course the burqa and niqab are an expression of a patriarchal, misogynistic social order. However, the debate on introducing a ban is not a real discussion at all. It seeks to condemn Islam and Muslims by imposing requirements and restrictions on them instead of seeking to reflect on positive measures to promote integration. One result

of these debates is the result of the recent parliamentary election in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where the right-wing populist and anti-Islamic AfD received more votes than the CDU. Whereby it was the CDU itself which made the right-wing populists' demands socially

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**This is the opposite of emancipatory policy**

acceptable by debating a “burqa ban.” When voters then had the choice, they voted for the original right-wing populists, the AfD, and not their imitators in the CDU. And finally, the pictures from Nice have brought home to us that, while men must not be allowed to dictate what women wear on religious grounds, they must equally not

be allowed to force women to undress or be permitted to give them a ticket for being “wrongly dressed.” That is the opposite of emancipatory policy.

We must also continue to campaign against misogynistic attitudes in Islam, without mincing our words. After all, we never went easy on reactionary representatives of the Catholic Church, such as Cardinal Meisner and Archbishop Dyba, when they sought to

stir up public opinion against women's right to self-determination or against homosexuals.

One element of an honest debate is sticking to the facts: the majority of Muslims do not regard it as a religious requirement to wear such a concealing form of veil as the burqa. Nonetheless, that does not justify a ban. Germany's Federal Consti-

tutional Court is unequivocal in this regard: “The state is not permitted, however, to judge such religious beliefs held by its citizens, let alone to describe them as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.” This is particularly the case if divergent views on the subject are represented within a religion.” (Federal Constitutional Court Decisions, 1 BvR 471/10 – marginal note 86). In political terms, the populist demand for a burqa ban is yet another instance of women being misused for politics of symbolism. We cannot ban everything we dislike. Bans on full-face veils must have legitimate aims, such as determining a person's identity or ensuring road safety, and must be necessary as an appropriate means. Bans are only permissible so long as and to the extent that they are genuinely necessary to achieve these aims.

If we want to support these women in integration policy and feminist terms, we must provide support for advisory services which educate wom-



In a German park

en about their rights and provide them with protection if they are subject to pressure or threats regarding their freedom on clothing issues or in matters of sexual self-determination. If we impose an unconstitutional ban on women leaving their homes while fully veiled, we are condemning them to a housebound existence, which would leave them completely cut off from the outside world. That would not constitute an improvement in women's rights, and the consequences for integration would be disastrous. ■

Volker Beck is spokesman on migration policy for the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group in the German Bundestag





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## FREE TRADE

## TTIP – Or the Agony of German Politics

Export nation must not squander its prime assets



A global player: Mercedes-AMG Engine Factory, Motorenmanufaktur, in Affalterbach

Frozen chicken – it's humbled some of the great leaders of modern history. Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle and John F. Kennedy. Men who feared neither the Soviets nor the Nazis nor the Man in the Moon – all of them, no match for poultry, its drumsticks, wings and breasts. Or, more precisely, the issue of whether and how this frozen commodity might cross the Atlantic free from import tariffs.

The annexes to the Elysée Treaty, a document of German-French amity forming one of the pillars of the EU, tabulates the extensive and bone-dry disputes over the Chicken Import Question. U.S.-European free trade never got off the ground because of the issue.

In the meantime, the world has gotten bigger and more diverse. And the other side is no less demanding. Thanks to Italy's labyrinthine town alleys, European cars have to have folding side mirrors – something superfluous in the land of endless prairies. Over there, cheese from unpasteurized milk is considered as dangerous as hormone-treated ham is over here.

The devil, as always, is in the details. France's film industry fears Hollywood; Germany's largely state-funded culture industry fears the viewer who might just replace the subsidies for unviewed, unheard products.

But it's not so much the foreseeable failure as the treatment of negotiations over the "Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership" that speaks volumes on the state of German

politics (and not the pros and cons of TTIP itself). Minister Gabriel unilaterally declared the TTIP talks a failure. Neither the actual leader of the European side, the EU Commission, nor partner states such as Sweden, endorse Gabriel's pronouncement. Backing for his funeral address has come only from France, which already once killed a grand bargain over frozen chicken, paid for by Germany's export industry.

Somehow the politicized Germans, out of love for the

(Opel) and Stuttgart (Mercedes, Porsche) not because they loved Germany but to get the country back on its wheels against the threat from the Soviet bloc. The same is true in reverse: If the Americans get ugly on free trade, it's not so much the French who will suffer – the world will always want champagne – but the Germans. In today's world, without TTIP, trade could quickly fracture into diverging continental plates, taking Germany's prosperity with it.

ternal hand and authoritarian tendencies are again the mighty touchstone of their fantasies of power.

Up in arms

And foreign investments? Those are just corporations, we can do without those, most people in the civil service or talking heads paid by working men and women believe. It's astonishing how Germany's business community allows itself to be bossed around. Its leaders

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**In today's world, without TTIP, trade could quickly fracture into diverging continental plates, taking our country's prosperity with it**

sour regional apples and potatoes, have forgotten that they flourish from something else and, in terms of population, are the world's greatest trading nation whose astonishing prosperity came thanks not least to free trade.

Back on its wheels

They have forgotten that the reduction of U.S. tariff barriers after 1945 first enabled Wolfsburg's VW Beetles to crawl out onto the global market and earn the money there that would rebuild Germany back home. The U.S. replaced cars from Detroit with others from Wolfsburg, Rüsselsheim

It's a similar story with rejection of international trade tribunals. These courts safeguard the Germans and their direct investments totaling a fabulous 1.2 trillion euros from expropriation by kleptocracies in some parts of the developing world. Today's Germans reject the tribunals, probably also because Germany's political leaders don't even try to support the country's long-term export interests. Germans cheer the elimination of investments totaling billions of euros, for instance by Sweden's state-run energy company Vattenfall, thanks to Germany's nuclear phaseout. The state is always right. The old faith in the pa-

believe they can keep Chancellor Merkel and the rest on their side with just a few party donations. Gabriel stood up for business for a long time; it's true. But politicians don't live on directly donated funding as much as on the spoils they win in elections.

And the voters are up in arms against TTIP. The agenda in Germany is now largely being set by so-called non-governmental organizations, many of them financed, incidentally, from within the left camp. These NGOs are, in most cases, nothing but deal-makers who need emotional campaigns to maximize their donation revenue.

TICHY'S COLUMN

For them, the inexplicable secrecy surrounding TTIP is a perfect breeding ground, even better than the seals that refuse to go extinct; and people don't cough up as much money for sharks. But the fight against chlorinated chickens – that's where the vegans open up their imitation leather wallets. And, while the politically naive CEOs and CFOs keep sewing their golden parachutes for the worst-case scenario, their lavishly endowed association lobbyists snore in the downy beds of the Berlin court and dine with the golden tableware constantly refilled with membership dues. That is how Germany's business elite lives in its ignorance of political reality, in its own bizarre fairy-tale existence. They have handed over the fight for TTIP to a socialist and, as their only contribution, commissioned a PR agency that works harder for Merkel's grip on power than its own industrial clients. Or was that, perhaps, the real deal? Even the unions are working flat out to destroy their export-based jobs as fast as possible.

Okay, from Germany's perspective, TTIP is a goner. But not because the negotiations have of course been tough with both compromise and resolve being essential. They're dead in the water because Germany's elites in business and politics have shortsightedly permitted the branches on which they've built their nests to be sawed off.

It could be that they'll soon fall to the ground and land on their heads like all the other folks. The eggs will be broken, that's for sure. ■

*Roland Tichy is one of Germany's most renowned business journalists. He also runs the website "Tichys Einblick" ([www.rolandtichy.de](http://www.rolandtichy.de))*





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## THE SPUDY COLUMN

## Sustainability and Return

For a long time, sustainable capital investments were merely an afterthought in investors' minds. But now, things have fundamentally changed: The issue of climate protection dominated the latest meeting of the G20, with China and the USA – the world's two largest economies – ratifying the Paris Agreement. This agreement aims to limit the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Major investors such as Allianz or Munich Re are investing billions in infrastructure projects and renewable energies, while at the same time withdrawing investments from industries that pollute. Even the Rockefeller dynasty, which was founded on the oil business, is breaking away from investing in companies that work with fossil fuels.



Instead, they are focusing on renewable energy. Blackrock, the world's largest investment management corporation, has also prioritized sustainability and impact investing with their new

BSF Impact World Equity Fund and other measures. Sustainable investments have already proven themselves to be generally more successful, or at least equal in value, over the longer term.

The investment potential in this area in the years ahead will be enormous. It offers considerable opportunities for private as well as institutional investors. Another key factor that supports this potential is the current low-interest rate environment, which makes financing infrastructure measures highly favorable for national governments. It is compelling pension funds, insurers and employee benefit schemes to look around for new areas of investment. Sustainable projects can also benefit from this. However, those investors who don't just want to turn to special funds, but who would instead like to take a more active role through direct investments should seek the advice of specialists.

This is because assessing forms of investment and stakes in companies with respect to sustainability is a very complex task which is often underestimated. Upon closer inspection, it's not uncommon to find problematic areas that were overlooked at first glance, but that are incompatible with making a responsible investment. In doing so, I believe that careful due diligence and foresight is equally important as the systematic controlling and reporting of an investment. This is the only way to ensure that investments in sustainability also achieve sustainable success. ■

Jens Spudy is executive partner of Spudy Invest: [www.spudy-invest.com](http://www.spudy-invest.com)

## MIDDLE EAST

## Marshall Plan for Syria

Looking for solutions to the refugee crisis and beyond



Aleppo after an air strike

Thomas Rasseff picture alliance / dpa

By Klaus-Dieter Oehler

Angela Merkel has faced a lot of criticism in recent months. Public support in Germany for the chancellor has waned. The main reason for that is her decision from last summer not to close the borders to the massive number of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq seeking shelter, as did her Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orbán for example. Instead, she called on her fellow Germans to show solidarity. She famously said, "Wir schaffen das" – "We'll cope."

In the recent elections to the state parliament in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Merkel's Christian Democrats were sorely punished, slumping to third place behind the hard-right nationalist anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. The Social Democrats took the largest share of the vote. What is more, the constituency Merkel represents in the national parliament is in that very state. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that this region in the northeast of Germany has hardly been affected by the influx of refugees. There are just 2,300 amid 1.6 million residents. Relative to population size, that is far fewer than in other regions.

The civil war that has raged in Syria since 2011 is making its mark on Germany. The chancellor's open-arms approach to refugees encouraged people from many troubled countries to head to Europe and in particular to Germany. Her government has since modified its position, and made a deal with Turkey's controversial President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to limit the flow of refugees into the European Union. Still, the debate on refugee policy rages on.

In this context, an idea is gaining traction that was already mooted last year, when Germany's Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gerd Müller, called for a Marshall Plan for Syria. It is not only Syria, but also Iraq and Afghanistan that need the kind of development financing that the United States offered European states in 1947 in the aftermath of the Second World War. The Marshall Plan provided nearly \$13 billion in aid before the program ended in 1951. Much of that money went into investment in industrial capacity. This was not simply

humanitarian aid, but a way to open and secure markets for U.S. products.

Any new Marshall Plan for Syria and other countries would differ from the original in two key respects: The funding would not come from a single country but from several countries working together. And secondly, while the fronts were clearly defined after WW II, that is not at all the case in today's Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. In each of these countries, there are some areas where war is not raging, but for how much longer? Could full-scale chaos resume in each or all of them?

The government of Bashar al-Assad would have us believe that life carries on as "normal" in Syria. Its tourist board recently released a promotional video bearing the slogan "Syria – always beautiful" to entice foreigners to visit the country. You could never tell from the footage that Syria is in the midst of a brutal civil war that has killed more than 400,000. The video shows the beach at Tartus with people enjoying themselves, sunbathing and jet-skiing. In fact, one of the fronts in the war is just 100 kilometers away.

## Would it work?

The Syrian tourism ministry claims the number of visitors in July was 30% higher than in the same period last year, but it does not offer any figures. There is every reason to doubt the truth of such a bizarre assertion. Granted, the coastal region, with the resorts of Latakia and Tartus, has remained peaceful so far. Most people there are Alawites and are believed to support Assad, himself a member of the Alawite minority. But it is doubtful that



George C. Marshall



Dresden 1945

Poppelmann, Peter (Bildhauer) Deutsche Fotothek

the calm in that particular region makes it a safe place for a carefree holiday.

More generally, the crucial question is whether there is sufficient calm or stability in the region to warrant throwing large amounts of money at it in order to improve the lot of the people living there. Would it work? The "Supporting Syria and the Region" conference in London in February failed to come up with a unified response, and the G20 summit in China in early September only yielded empty words.

15 million of the world's 60 million displaced people live in the failing or failed states of Syria, Iraq and Yemen and adjacent countries. The UN estimates almost \$9 billion are needed this year alone to help deal with the consequences of the Syrian crisis. Last year it estimated the sum needed for emergency aid for the displaced at \$7.4 billion. Monies disbursed under any new Marshall Plan would go towards making life more bearable for the refugees in the region. That would give them less reason to try to make it to the European Union. But how much money would be needed to really make a difference? Under the original Marshall Plan, European nations received close to \$13 billion in aid from the United States. The equivalent today would be closer to \$130 billion. Who should provide such a sum? And more importantly, who should oversee its disbursement and ensure it actually goes where it is needed?

The political situation is extremely complex and hard to untangle. It is uncertain how long the ceasefire agreed by the U.S. and Russia will last. Turkey is fighting both Islamic State and the Kurds, though the Kurds are also fighting IS. Russia supports Assad against both rebel groups and IS. And who knows what the United States might decide to do once its new president assumes office next January? ■

Klaus Dieter Oehler is financial editor at the daily Stuttgarter Zeitung





Challenges and Opportunities  
Jews and Germans in the 21st Century



This supplement was made possible  
by the support of the German Federal  
Foreign Office

The Backbone of  
Jewish-German Relations

By Peter Wittig

Fifteen thousand survivors – that is all that was left of the Jewish community in Germany in May 1945. A terrible figure, which, however, does not even come close to expressing the grim atrocities and barbaric brutality of the Holocaust; it does not even come close to capturing the millions of crimes committed by ordinary Germans during the Nazi reign of terror. The 12 years that encompassed this darkest chapter in our shared history have since shaped the centuries-old German-Jewish relations.

Against this backdrop, it is something of a miracle that German-Jewish relations have grown and flourished in the ensuing years: Berlin is today home to one of the most dynamic Jewish communities in the world and has become one of the most desirable places to live for young Israelis. Indeed, Germany as a whole is experiencing a renaissance in Jewish life – with a strong community organization, the Central Council of Jews in Germany, representatives from various Jewish denominations live here and actively participate in public life.

Past and present of German-Jewish relations bring special responsibility – a special responsibility for Jewish life and the State of Israel. This responsibility forms a cornerstone of our foreign policy. It is central to our cultural remembrance and reconciliation. And it remains a focal point of German historical and civic education. Anti-Semitism, however, has not been eradicated either with the fall of the Nazi regime or in recent years. On the contrary, resentment and violence against Jews are on the rise again. That is why we need to remain vigilant and actively fight against all types of anti-Semitism; we need to engage on a people-to-people level, in an exchange between Jews and non-Jews – so as to foster greater understanding of Jewish life.



I therefore welcome the extraordinarily lively and intensive exchanges, not only on the political level but also in the spheres of business, academia, culture, and civil society, which are the backbone of German-Jewish relations today. Part of my work here, too, in the United States is to foster deeper relations to the Jewish community. Our cooperation and joint events with the Holocaust Museum and various Jewish organizations are highlights for my wife and me. The recent celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel was one particularly important and moving event for me.

One central messenger for new Jewish life is the *Jewish Voice from Germany*. I

commend this bridge between Germany and Jews all over the world for getting the message out through this unique publication. The projects and initiatives portrayed not only lead to a better understanding of Jewish life in today's Germany but will also spark stronger interest around the world in the thriving Jewish community and culture in my home country.

*Peter Wittig*

The German Ambassador to the United States of America

Bridge over Troubled Water

For a long time after the Shoah, it looked as if the Nazis had at least achieved one lasting success: the extinction of the Jewish community in Germany. After 1945, only several thousand Jews lived in German cities, as discreetly as possible. Trapped in the ghetto of their fears. The Germans looked upon these Jews as mere survivors.

Yet, even before Germany's reunification in 1990, a German-Jewish renaissance emerged. A new, in-

dependent German-Jewish culture and literature developed. And the German majority recognized that the Judaism they found in their midst was and is more than just a relic from the past. German Jewry represents a bridge between a great past and a promising future. This supplement aims to contribute to mutual understanding. We thank the Federal Foreign Office for its generous support.

JVG ■



Ausdrucksart: AVO (16), German Embassy Washington, Tobias Barniske, Gilad Hochman, Israel

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The American delegation at the Foreign Office in Berlin

## TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE

# Remembrance and Hope

## A journey of Boston rabbis to Germany

By Ralf Horlemann

**W**e have seen the horrors of the past, the Jews of the present and the hope for the future." This account of David Lerner, rabbi at Temple Emunah in Lexington, MA, sums up perfectly both the aspirations and the results of this visit. He was one of twelve rabbis from the greater Boston area – Orthodox, Conservative and Reform; young and old; men and women – who went on a one-week trip to Munich and Berlin in July of this year to see and hear for themselves about the culture of remembrance as well as Jewish life in Germany.

When I took the initiative for this visit, I was all but certain how the response would be by the rabbis, some of whom had

never visited Germany before, one being a child Holocaust survivor. Too present seemed the legacy of the Shoah, too disturbing the fact that anti-Semitism and xenophobia are not only a recurring but growing phenomenon across Europe, also in Germany. On the other hand, Germany's dedicated efforts to face its own history, the thriving Jewish communities in Germany in recent years and Germany's struggle with migration, and its role as a safe haven for refugees were convincing arguments to embark on this exciting journey.

"I went as a survivor, as a reminder to Germany of what it had wrought, and found that it didn't need any reminders." For Joseph Polak, rabbi at the Rabbinical Court of Massachusetts, as for all the other rabbis in the group, this journey was about

building a bridge between the horrors of the past and hopes for a common future. Remembrance and hope was its motto, and it started with a visit to the Dachau concentration camp near Munich, where more than 40,000 Jews were killed and from where tens of thousands were deported to extermination camps and cer-

tain death. 800,000 visitors come to the memorial site every year, half of them youths from schools and universities from Germany and around the world. Just as education on the Holocaust is an integral part of the curriculum in German schools, a visit to a concentration camp is part of this education.

Besides other major memorial sites like the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe or the Jewish Museum, both in Berlin, the group could also witness how the culture of remembrance is deeply rooted in everyday life of Germans. "Stolpersteine", which means "stumbling stones", are a perfect example. These commemorative brass plaques, which are placed in the pavement in front of the last address of choice of victims of National Socialism, make passers-by stumble – literally and emotionally. There are now over 6,500 Stolpersteine in Berlin alone, where we saw many of them.

In Munich as well as in Berlin, the rabbis were struck by the vitality and size of the Jewish communities. Today, over 200,000 Jews call Germany their home. This number would not have been reached without the Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union starting in 1990. This was the beginning of a major influx. Until 2010, 212,000 people have come to Germany. Many of them went on to other countries like Israel or the United States, but many stayed. In recent years, an estimated 50,000 Jews – mostly

younger people and families – have come from Israel to settle in Germany, about half of them in Berlin.

Jewish communities thrive in more than 100 German towns and cities. Munich is one of them, with more than 9,000 members of the Jewish community, and a new synagogue, built in 2006, right in the center of the city. The center of Jewish life in Germany, however, is Berlin, with approx. 50,000 to 70,000 Jews, eight synagogues, various Jewish kindergartens and schools, Jewish newspapers, and even centers of Judaic studies including rabbinic training. While we walked the streets of Berlin – in Mitte, the Bavarian Quarter and many other places – we realized that it has once again become very common to hear Hebrew spoken in Berlin.

"I went to see Germany's struggle with its present; its refugees, its role as a sanctuary for people who are lost politically and existentially, and I was deeply moved," said one participant. Germany was the destination of choice for more than one million refugees last year, posing enormous challenges to the government, but also to society as a whole. And it's the reaction and support of civil society that has made a real difference in tackling this challenge, like the Berlin based NGO "Welcome to Reinickendorf" (WIR), where we met Syrian refugees to hear from them how they see the challenges and opportunities of integration into German society. WIR started as a private initiative of a handful of people two years ago and is today supported by more than 700 active, volunteer citizens who are committed to the reception and integration of refugees and the creation of a "welcome culture" for them.

When we returned to Boston after one week of extensive travelling and intensive discussions, the rabbis realized that there is indeed a real opportunity to build this bridge between remembrance and hope. And between Germans and the Jewish community. If we face the legacy of the past and pass on the memory to future generations, there is hope that we can have a future together, in friendship and peace. ■

Ralf Horlemann is Consul General of Germany to the New England States in Boston



www.germany.info



Visiting the Holocaust Memorial in the German capital

Auswärtiges Amt

### A NOTE OF THANKS

I am very grateful that 12 Rabbis from the greater Boston area accepted the invitation of the Federal Foreign Office to visit Germany and to get first-hand information on Germany's culture of remembrance of the Holocaust as well as modern Jewish life in Germany. Their program in Munich and Berlin included visits to memorial sites, meetings with representatives of Jewish life in Germany and discussions with German partners, both from the government and from civil society organizations. We discussed our relations with the growing Jewish communities, our culture of remembrance, and how Germany combats anti-Semitism.

Michael Reiffenstuel  
Director for Cultural  
Relations Policy at the  
German Foreign Office



## ISRAAID

# Just Like The Champ Would Have Wanted It

## Israeli NGO received Muhammad Ali Award for outstanding humanitarian action

By Franziska Knupper

**M**uhammad Ali had many faces. Professional boxer and American Olympian. Black rights activist, admirer as well as opponent of Malcolm X. Humanitarian, rapper, poet, writer. Member of the Nation of Islam and devout Muslim, constantly “ready to meet God” as he put it in 1977 during an interview in the United Kingdom. As one of the most celebrated, most versatile sports figures of the 20th century, Ali is remembered for many things, including his efforts as a social activist. Among his greatest philanthropic accomplishments was the foundation of the multicultural Muhammad Ali Center, a charity fund and museum devoted to humanitarian projects the sportsman carried out during his lifetime. Since 2013, the fund awards and celebrates social contributions from around the world that have proven to pay tribute to Ali’s values and actions. During an annual awards ceremony, hosted in Ali’s hometown Louisville in Kentucky, the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Awards publicly recognize outstanding individuals who pass on and keep the athlete’s legacy alive.

This year, Navonel Glick, chief operating officer of the Israeli non-governmental organization IsraAID, has been selected to receive the praise at the center’s recent annual gala dinner. Glick was among five other young professionals, age thirty and under, who have been serving as advocates for positive change in the world and as role models that



Rescue operation in the Mediterranean

israaidhttp://www.israaid.co.il/21

local professionals as well as international volunteers. Since its inception in 2001, IsraAID has become synonymous with rapid, immediate, and life-saving emergency assistance in the first instant when a humanitarian crisis occurs. In addition to this first response crisis relief, the non-governmental organization has expanded

Emergency Team Leader at IsraAID. In 2015 alone, more than one million asylum seekers made the journey from war and starvation seeking refuge in Germany. The vast majority arrived from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, with 80% of them under the age of 35 and with about one in five of them children. “This is a massive challenge for the German government and society to address,” continues Noam Alon, “IsraAID has thus agreed to send professional support. A lot of the people we chose are Arabic native speakers who are desperately needed to fill the current gap of miscommunication and to assure efficient bureaucratic processes.”

### Relief in Germany’s refugee crisis

In 2015, IsraAID responded to the request of the German government by deploying a team of Arabic and English speaking psychosocial specialists to help support the refugee resettlement. In cooperation with representatives of both the local government and the Federal Ministry of Health, local NGOs, Muslim and Jewish community organizations, the organisation quickly established a net-work of well-trained professionals and volunteers. “The NGO’s main concern is both psychological first aid for asylum seekers as well as stress management training and peer supervision for aid workers,” says Noam Alon. Since April 2016, IsraAID has been instructing aid workers and volunteers with their Mobile Specialist Trauma Unit. Psychologists have been visiting refugee shelters in Berlin and Hanover and reporting to the German government and to local NGOs specialised in mental health. Additionally, IsraAID offers tools to combat gender-based violence for local volunteers, counselors, and other key stakeholders in order to address issues of cultural differences and mistreatment in refugee camps. Right now, IsraAID’s members are preparing long-term sustainable support for ten different shelters all over Germany, focusing on hot spots,

such as Berlin, Frankfurt, and Brandenburg with a total of 9,500 refugees.

The fact that a high amount of refugees are of Muslim faith apparently is of no concern, according to Noam Alon: “We have not had any negative experience assisting refugees of Muslim belief while being an Israeli NGO. Or let me put it this way: If you are being pulled off a boat after several hours on the ocean and in constant fear of death, you do not care if the person carrying you is a Jew or a Muslim.” Noam Alon believes that IsraAID’s involvement in the refugee crisis in Germany could possibly facilitate peace processes among the nations and faiths. According to the NGO’s official statement, it could “become a game changer and serve as a key component in building trust and relations between Jews, Muslims, and Christians, Israelis, Germans, and Syrians, and by doing so reduce both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.” Probably just like Muhammad Ali would have wanted it. Or as he once said: “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” ■

“We have not had any negative experience assisting refugees of Muslim belief while being Israelis

might ultimately transform communities for the better. The six winners are supposed to represent Muhammad Ali’s six core principles of Confidence, Conviction, Dedication, Giving, Respect, and Spirituality.

### Global disaster-response missions

Prior to his current role, Glick served as IsraAID’s programs director, leading disaster-response missions across the world, including the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, Sierra Leone after the Ebola outbreak, and Northern Iraq since the emergence of the Islamic State. With IsraAID, Glick is working for Israel’s leading humanitarian non-governmental organization, being committed to providing first-response emergency relief and durable solutions for populations affected by natural disasters, epidemics, and post-conflict situations. In one decade, the initiative has responded to numerous crises in 35 countries and trained more than 5000

its capacities in the field of long term support, currently trying to offer relief in the refugee crisis taking place in Germany. “Our efforts in the on-going refugee crisis initially started in Greece, mostly on the island of Lesbos, and in the border regions of the Balkans. But we quickly understood that Germany will have to assemble great manpower in order to deal with such a high influx of refugees and is still lacking professionals in specific fields,” says Mickey Noam-Alon, Media Director and



Caring for the new arrivals

### JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY

#### JEWS AND GERMANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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## TRADE RELATIONS

# From Rejection to Partnership – Hidden Champions for Israel Chamber of Commerce and Economic Association as matchmakers

By Grisha Alroi-Arloser

*Seen from a historical perspective, half a century is but the blinking of an eye – especially in the context of German-Jewish history, which spans two millennia. The bonds between Germans and Jews are so strong that they have even withstood the unspeakable crimes of the Shoah. Yet the pain ran so deep that diplomatic relations between the new state of Israel, founded in 1948, and the new Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), founded in 1949, were, to begin with, out of the question.*

*A turning point came in 1952 with the reparations agreement signed in Luxembourg between West Germany, Israel and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. The agreement initiated some measure of material restitution and compensation for the material losses incurred by Jews under Nazi domination. Germany provided Israel with goods worth billions to improve its infrastructure. Israel upgraded its merchant navy, its railway, and other aspects of its infrastructure with high-quality German equipment and machinery. This was also a stimulus program for the German industry, because all those items would need spare parts and would eventually have to be replaced.*

*Thirteen years after the Luxembourg Agreement, diplomatic relations between West Germany and Israel were established in 1965. By that time, economic ties between the two countries were already flourishing. (jvg)*

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To honor the long-standing diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel and to mark the fiftieth anniversary in 2017 of the creation of the German-Israeli Chamber of Industry and Commerce and of the German-Israeli Economic Association, the Chamber has created an exhibition on the history of German brands and products in Israel. It charts the transition from rejection of and ambivalence towards Germans and German products to acceptance and, ultimately, to trusting partnership. At the same time, this exhibition also documents the history of the chamber.

The key development in the first two decades of the past half century was the overcoming of barriers for Israeli agricultural exports, foodstuffs, plastics and textiles. The next two decades saw increas-



Train Made in Germany, 1956

ing interest in the growing Israeli market on the part of German companies such as Siemens, Volkswagen, Henkel and Daimler – developments in which the chamber was closely involved.

Over the past decade the chamber – also known as AHK Israel – has become increasingly involved in high-tech industries and technology transfer and has become a springboard for German industry in the start-up nation Israel.

What fascinates official delegations and entrepreneurs about Israel nowadays are its high-tech, entrepreneurial spirit and modes of technology transfer, as well as the role of the military; they are interested in ways to co-operate and share in the astounding developments underway in Israel's Silicon Wadi.

## Mutual strategic investment

Against the backdrop of a decline in exports from Israel to Europe and in particular to Germany, co-operation in research and development and mutual strategic investment are of particular long-term importance. Many German technology scouts are out and about in Israel these days, looking for breakthrough technologies for their companies back in Germany. They are frequent guests at incubators, accelerators, joint workspaces, venture capital funds, university technology transfer offices, meet-ups, start-ups, and grown-ups, and have become an integral part of the

system. The scouts represent not only pure tech firms such as SAP, Deutsche Telekom and Bosch, but also and increasingly finance, insurance and energy companies looking for new business models, new ways to work with big data, alternative models for enhancing customer loyalty, as well as solutions to urgent cybersecurity issues.

Our chamber has created a range of platforms to enable and enhance this exchange – in biosciences, software and

them identify possible partners, find the right technology, and develop the best business model.

The central task of the next decade will be to bring together German hidden champions and Israeli innovators. The range of themes is growing all the time: machine learning and machine vision, the industrial internet of things, autonomous robots, big data analytics, simulation and augmented reality – topics that together fall under the heading of Industry 4.0. But

“

Increasingly German finance, insurance and energy companies are looking for new business models in Israel, for new ways to work with big data, alternative models for enhancing customer loyalty, as well as solutions to urgent cybersecurity issues

internet, renewable energies and energy efficiency. We advise German firms, associations, and government representatives at both national and state level, and assist them in their dealings with Israel. We organise customized visits, place German interns in Israeli technology firms, and help Israeli start-ups access German support programmes.

Over the past five decades our chamber has morphed from a traditional service-provider in the realm of the bilateral exchange of goods and services to a hub for knowledge and skills transfer, technology scouting, and bilateral investment flows. In these areas Germany and Israel deal with each other as equals; what counts are excellence, innovation, dynamism, and human capital; the difference in size of the two countries is of little significance.

## Identifying potential partners

The chamber still has a lot to do. While Germany's Fortune 500 companies are already engaged in Israel and are in regular contact with our chamber, small and medium-sized firms need more assistance. The chamber can alert them to the potential to be found in Israel, help

there is more: autonomous driving, unmanned vehicles, and the corresponding new models of mobility are also on the agenda, as are developments in the management of resources, particularly water and energy, that are urgently needed in the face of climate change.

At the same time, as a bi-national bilateral chamber, we also support Israeli firms seeking German business partners, helping them to overcome cultural barriers and find their way into the German market, the most important single market in Europe.

With its command of the German and Hebrew languages, intimate knowledge of the business communities and cultures in both countries, the German-Israeli Chamber of Industry and Commerce has become an indispensable facilitator and bridge-builder – bringing together entrepreneurs and matching ideas and individuals in such a way that one plus one yields much more than two. ■

*Grisha Alroi-Arloser has been the managing director of the German-Israeli Chamber of Industry and Commerce (AHK Israel) since 2008 and has headed the German-Israeli Economic Association since 2002*



IT hub Israel

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## YOUTH EXCHANGE

## Ambassadors of Diversity

## New German-Israeli volunteer service

By Elena Witzeck

When spring arrived Orel noticed a change in Germans' behavior. Suddenly they smiled more, engaged in chance conversations with one another, were out on the streets more. Frankfurt became louder and livelier. Orel was fascinated, not being familiar with such mood changes from Israel: it's astonishing how the weather can influence people's love of life.

Orel came to Germany seven months ago with the new German-Israeli Volunteer Service (DIFD) to work for a social and a Jewish organization in Frankfurt. She is participating in the first year of the program, which was launched in May 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany. With this initiative the Federal Government aims to encourage above all young people from Israel to live in Germany for a time. There were ten participants in the first year. They worked for six months or a year in placements at charitable institutions in Germany arranged by the Central Board of Jewish Welfare in Germany (ZWST) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. "There is a long tradition of German volunteering in Israel," says Laura Cazés, who coordinates the program for the ZWST. "Until now we didn't have a similar structure for volunteers from Israel."

## Third generation

Diplomatically, the two countries have close relations, and social exchange has also been promoted for some time. But as Federal President Joachim Gauck emphasized in his speech in May 2015 in Berlin at the ceremony marking the 50th anniversary, there is still scope for further involvement. He cited a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation which found that reservations had become cemented in Germany as a result of perceptions of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

That is the starting point for the volunteer program, which also sends Germans



At work in an art studio for people with special needs

to Israel: personal and cultural exchange is intended to promote understanding and tolerance – across religious divides. Young people of all faiths from both countries can take part. The ZWST regards them as ambassadors. What is more, the program is also in keeping with the zeitgeist: young people from Israel see Germany as cool. The capital in particular, Berlin, considered as the centre for creatives, has developed a magnetic attraction for Israelis in recent years. According to the ZWST, however, cities like Cologne, Leipzig, and Frankfurt are now also becoming more popular for short or longer stays. The third generation after the war would like to get to know and understand the country that drove their grandparents out. People like Gaya, for example, who was a social worker at a school during the program's three-month pilot phase. Meantime she has returned to Israel. "I wanted to complete a circle by daring to come here," she says.

Orel opted for volunteer work in Frankfurt because she was curious to know whether the connection with the Germans that is felt in Israel also exists in the opposite direction. And it is. Orel quickly found two language tandem partners for German and Hebrew. Now the 23-year-old is happy to have been placed in Frankfurt,

where she shares a flat with other young people and where her country of origin interests people. She does admit however, that she "initially wanted to go to Berlin." When she is not looking after children in a Jewish institution, Orel works in an art studio for people with disabilities. "Everyone there speaks German. I'm always surprised that I manage to have conversations with them." Because of the new language, it took some time for her to get used to things. There were also the many cultural peculiarities of the Germans: expected polite phrases, everyday rituals like waste separation, and a kind of demonstrative silence in lifts. Today, Orel feels at home in Frankfurt: "Because it is tolerant. Everyone can be as they are."

The ZWST, which has contacts with large German charitable organizations because of its focus on youth and social work, places 18- to 27-year-old volunteers in various organizations, depending on their interests: all-day schools and youth education centers, Jewish communities, and social facilities. Many of the participants work with refugees. Thanks to the new challenges, their placement is more relevant, says Cazés, because many of the Israelis are a great help in taking care of refugees due to their knowledge of Arabic.

Yet it is not always easy to find a suitable placement, as this must correspond with the abilities and interests of the participants, and a lot of Germans also want to do a voluntary social year. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs bears the cost of a 250-euro allowance and social insurance for the DIFD volunteers, while accommodation and meals have to be paid for by the placement organization. Educational cooperation activities and town twinning arrangements with Israel have allowed the ZWST to create several opportunities, and even more should become available by the autumn of 2016.

## Rising to the challenge

Roman belongs to the small group of Germans who have so far been in Israel with the new DIFD. He completed a six-month care placement there in the context of his medical studies. The 19-year-old has been back in Munich since the end of March. At first, things in Jerusalem were not easy for him: "Suddenly you are totally responsible for yourself." But realizing this meant rising to the challenge. People's mentality, open-mindedness, and everyday optimism impressed Roman greatly. In Israel the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs is responsible for the volunteers and also selects the participants for the visit to Germany.

In the first year, fewer Israeli volunteers than planned came to Germany, so the ZWST aims to underscore the socio-political relevance of the exchange even more. "Particularly now, when there is a tangible shift to the right among Germans, our volunteer service can achieve a lot," says Laura Cazés. The participants have succeeded in highlighting the diversity in Israeli society: Druze and Muslim-Arab, secular and traditional Israelis have been involved. In the second year, about 40 participants should be coming to Germany. Orel hopes that future volunteers have as perfect a stay as the one she had in Frankfurt.

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## FOUNDATIONS

## Intellectual Sources of Jewish Renaissance in Germany

## The long tradition of patronage is filled with new life

By Hannah Thiel

Tzedakah, the law of righteousness and mercy, is a core value of Judaism. Caring for fellow humans in need, eventually enabling the recipient to become self-reliant, is an important mitzvah. There is a long and fruitful tradition of patronage in Jewish-German relations. And this very special furthering of arts, sciences and of social projects is very much alive today.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's **Philip Schwartz Initiative** provides German universities and research institutions with funding to enable foreign academics who are threatened in their home countries to study and conduct research in

Germany. Philip Schwartz (1894-1977) was a distinguished physician and professor at Frankfurt university and was dismissed when Hitler seized power in 1933. Schwartz immediately grasped the threat the Nazis posed to free thought and research – as well as to the Jewish people and his colleagues. Soon after arriving in his Swiss exile, Schwartz set up an Advisory Office for German Scientists, eventually enabling numerous German colleagues to take up positions in Turkey.

Thanks to the initiative named after him, academics from Syria, Turkey, Libya, Pakistan and Uzbekistan are currently continuing or furthering their work in Germany for a period of up to 24 months. This will

empower them to "later take on responsibility in their home countries again", as German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier puts it. The Philip Schwartz Initiative is supported by the Foreign Office and a number of private foundations.

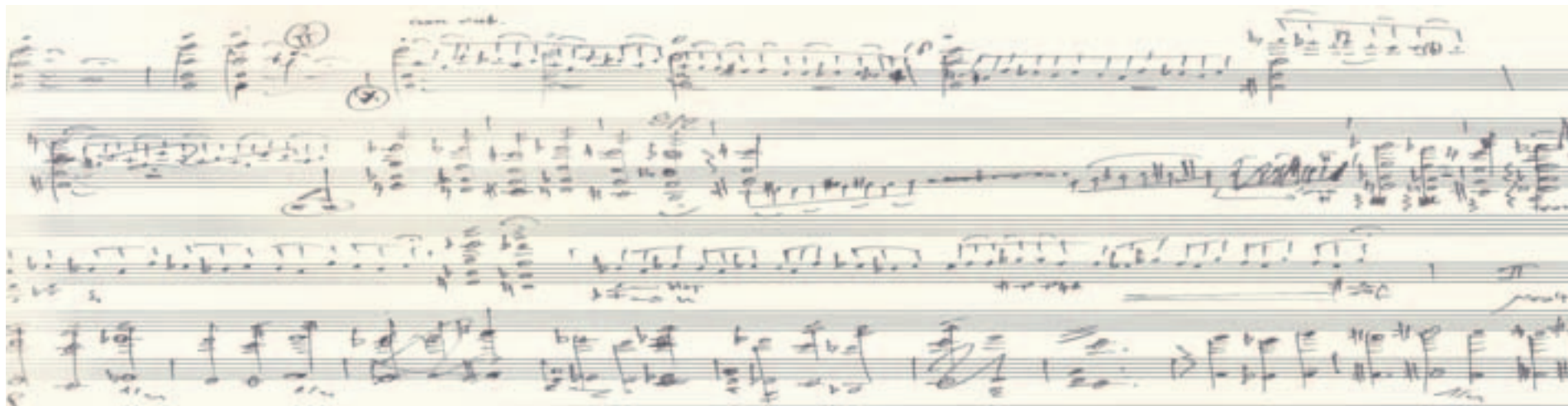
On the other hand, the **Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk** (ELES), named after the renowned historian, is one of thirteen scholarship programs supported by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research. It provides scholarships for gifted Jewish students and doctoral candidates. Launched in 2009, ELES pursues the goals of strengthening Jewish identity, sense of responsibility and dialogue capabilities among its over 400 scholarship holders, who are

thereby encouraged to actively shape the future of the Jewish community in Europe.

James Simon (1851-1932) is primarily known for one of the most generous donations ever made by a private person. Simon, a successful businessman, gave the famous bust of Queen Nefertiti to a public museum in Berlin. But Simon was not only an intellectual, art lover and collector. He supported more than 60 social institutions. He created opportunities for underprivileged children and initiated health institutions like the public swimming pool at Berlin's Gartenstraße, by the way a landmark of Neue Sachlichkeit architecture.

Since 2006, the **James Simon Stiftung** honors personalities ▶ **PAGE VII**





Gilad Hochman

GILAD HOCHMAN

# The Sound of Silence

Young Israeli composer finds inspiration in Berlin

By Elisabeth Neu

A mandolin hovers through time and space, reluctant one moment, emphatic the next. Strings answer, alluring and disturbing at once. You sense the dynamics of motion. What kind of journey is this? Where will it take us? “Nedudim” – Wanderings – fantasia concertante for solo mandolin and string orchestra: In it, you hear thousands of years of changing places, of departing, searching, from one place to another, from one state of being to another. Forever questioning your whereabouts, your destination. This miracle of a chamber piece is the work of Gilad Hochman. Exploring the narrative of time and motion, of eternal migration, of belonging and alienation, are some of the themes of this young composer’s work, whom France 24 calls “a rising star in the classical music world.”

Gilad Hochman, 34, came to Berlin nine years ago. Born in Herzliya, his father hails from Odessa, his mother from Paris, her family being originally from North Africa. The East-European embraces the Sephardic tradition – in the European-Oriental mix that makes for Israel. All this you can hear in Gilad’s music.

Gilad is a wunderkind. He started composing at the age of nine. 15 years later, Gilad Hochman was awarded the Israeli

Prime Minister’s Prize for Composition – honoring a “fascinating, original and colorful creator”. In your early twenties, where do you go from there? “It was wonderful to win the award – but also a little tricky”, remembers Hochman. “You know – as does the music landscape in the country – that you’re on a good level”, as he charmingly puts it. Hochman decided to leave the path mapped out for him in Israel. “I needed a different perspective so I thought it would be best to go abroad for a while.” He turned down the offer of doing an

“

**Exploring the narrative of eternal migration**

American east-coast Ph.D. – and went to “check out Berlin instead”. What he found was a “spaceship, a bit like Tel Aviv ... constantly work in progress and very different from the rest of the country”.

Obviously Hochman wanted to learn more about German culture – “the culture that made such tremendous contributions to classical music and at the

same time the culture that brought about such utter and ruthless destruction”.

It seems that this tension, this “dissonance”, as the composer calls it, which he experiences in Berlin serves as an inspiration. The scope of Hochman’s work is impressive: chamber music, pieces for solo instruments like piano, (“Pia-No!”) marimba (“Berlin Beat”) or saxophone (“90 Seconds”), vocal music (“Night Winds” for soprano), to name a few, and pieces for symphony orchestra like “Suspended Reality”, a haunting exploration of the feeling of nothingness and utter stillness.

“Every time I start a new piece, I start from zero. I feel as if I have never composed anything before”, he says. Steeped in Jewish tradition, Gilad Hochman also takes Biblical themes like the binding of Isaac (“Akeda” for solo viola) or the Song of Songs (“Whom my Soul Loveth”) as a point of departure. “I am searching all the time. I dig deep inside of me to discover whatever

there is, try to make it real and express it through my music.”

“I know that a piece works the moment when there is no sound, silence. When there is sound, people are with it, listening, some fall asleep – whichever way people absorb the music is fine by me – but the moment the music stops, usually at the end of the piece, but sometimes during the piece itself, there is this one instance of quiet inter-subjective experience ... almost like in a synagogue.” After all, says Hochman, music is the closest thing to God. ■



JVG

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE VI



Meeting of the Starck Foundation

Gerhard C. Starck Stiftung

promoting public welfare. The James Simon Award furthers patronage, commitment to and responsibility for civil society – just like James Simon did, the Berlin philanthropist who believed in social responsibility.

“Supporting academic studies and professional training of especially gifted young Jewish people connected to the German language and culture” is the aim of the **Gerhard C. Starck Stiftung**. Whilst growing up, Starck (1929-2000) had experienced the humiliations and threats his Jewish mother had to suffer in Nazi Germany. Her family in Hungary perished in the Shoah whilst Starck sen., a powerful and wealthy German industrialist, managed to save his wife. After the war, Gerhard Starck became a lawyer and helped Jewish clients in the restitution of their assets which had been expropriated by the Nazis.

In many, long conversations with his friend Icek Ostrowicz, the idea of a foundation began to take shape. Its aim was

to ensure that a new generation of Jews would have a dignified future in Germany. Ostrowicz, a Shoah-survivor from Kielce, had been barred from formal education during the Nazi occupation of Poland. His thirst for learning deeply impressed Starck who decided to use his considerable means to support young Jewish people in their quest for knowledge.

For the past ten years, the Starck Foundation has been working for a Jewish-German intellectual renaissance. It supports high school and university students, Ph.D. candidates and postdocs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Alumni and current scholarship holders of the Starck Foundation gather once a year. The “Starckies”, as they call themselves, are a lively and inquisitive bunch – as several Nobel prize winners from the U.S. and Israel who were invited to the meetings found out. At these gatherings, you can meet “the future of the German Jewry in person,” as Icek Ostrowicz, the heart and soul of the Starck Foundation, puts it. ■



## SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION

## The Transformation of German Jewry

With a new generation diversity unfolds

By Hartmut Bomhoff

Earlier this fall, the German media called to mind that ten years ago, for the first time after the Shoah, rabbis were ordained in Germany. The founding of Abraham Geiger College in 1999, the first rabbinical seminary in postwar Germany, was indeed a historical milestone. Together with the School of Jewish Theology that opened in Potsdam in 2013, rabbis “made in Germany” have become the symbol of a significant revival of Jewish life. “Today, rabbis from all three large denominations of Judaism are trained again in Potsdam and Berlin,” explains Rabbi Walter Homolka, rector of Abraham Geiger College. “Thus we could successfully reconnect with the infrastructure of prewar Germany. A vision has come true.” These achievements, however, would not have been possible without the commitment of the federal government and German society at large.

With 28,000 affiliated members in 1990, the ageing German Jewish community faced an uncertain future. Then, the government of unified Germany opened its borders to Jews from the states of the Former Soviet Union. From 1991 to 2005, approximately 220,000 immigrants of Jewish origin (including a huge number of non-halachic Jews) were distributed all over the country according to a quota system. In 2005, a more restrictive immigration policy was designed in cooperation with the Central Council of Jews in Germany to better manage the integration of individuals into the Jewish community. By that time, many small and medium-sized communities had already massively grown their membership rosters.

Funding to restore the community.

Intended as the unified political voice for all Jews in Germany, the Central Council of Jews in Germany was established in 1950. It was while the approximately 15,000 Jews who had survived WWII were establishing Orthodoxy as the national congregational norm. The rise of progressive Judaism – once



In 2010, Alina Treiger was the first woman rabbi to be ordained in Germany for 75 years

as part of a ruling on state funding of religious organizations, the Federal Constitutional Court conferred the responsibility for the distribution of public subsidies to religious organizations on the federal states, thus weakening the role of umbrella organizations in faith communities.

In addition to the public funds which come from a religious tax collected by the federal states, or Länder, Jewish communities throughout Germany rely heavily on subsidies for religious and other needs. Since 2003, a cooperation agreement between the federal government and the Central Council of Jews provides for supple-

line. Almost half of the roughly 100,000 affiliated members of the country's Jewish community are over 60, with five members dying for each newborn, according to the 2015 membership statistics. Julius H. Schoeps, a prominent Jewish historian, argues that in the medium term, only the largest communities in Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin or Cologne will be able to survive. “What that means is that a hundred communities will disappear,” he says. While massive immigration enlarged the communities temporarily, their infrastructure and staff did not grow accordingly. Money, energy, and time have ever since been devoted to integration work – often at the expense of other synagogue and community activities. There is still a drastic shortage of professional personnel – educators, social workers, community managers, and clergy.

As a result of the transformation of German Jewry over the past 25 years, Jewish life has become increasingly diverse, colorful, and self-evident. As the most recent comprehensive survey by the L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, *Jews and Jewish Education in Germany Today*, explains, Jews in Germany do not favor Orthodox Judaism neither are they overwhelmingly secular.

They are best characterized by the notion of Jewish pluralism. Only a minority of 13.2% of the respondents feel close to Orthodox Judaism. One-fifth (22.3%) feel closer to Liberal (Conservative or Reform) Judaism while one-third (32.2%) define themselves as traditional, and another third (32.3%) as secular. “Tra-

ditional” designates those who adhere to some religious norms out of respect for traditions, but who do not consider themselves observant. This implies that a majority of synagogue members throughout Germany doesn’t identify as religious. Synagogue membership, however, is granted only to halachic Jews, with patrilineal descent not yet being recognized by the rabbinate.

Identity building for Jewish pluralism

The future of Germany's Jewish community hinges on the third generation of immigrants which has overcome the language barrier, is highly flexible and mobile, and finds it difficult to adjust to given community structures and life-long membership. Thus, a wide array of educational projects has grown from private initiatives, independently from the establishment. Some fine examples among others are the popular Jewish Learning Festival project Limmud, the *Jung und Jüdisch* youth network, Hillel Germany, and the European Janusz Korczak Academy. Young leaders are catered to by the Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk, the national academic excellence scholarship program for gifted Jewish students.

After their rabbinic mission to Germany last year, the conclusion of a delegation from Northern California was: “It seems there is real growth potential for Jewish life in Germany again. The questions are whose cultural and religious values it will reflect, and whether it will be possible for a pluralistic community to exist in what, until very recently, was a monolith.” ■

“With the wealth of our knowledge, our culture and our music, we ought to become a dynamic social actor in Germany

Rabbi Alina Treiger

the dominant denomination of prewar German Jewry – in the 1990s challenged the monopoly of Orthodoxy and caused some friction. It took two legal rulings to secure the recognition of Reform Judaism in Germany, the country of its origin. First, in 2002, Germany's Federal Administrative Court ruled that the term ‘Jewish community’ implies a plurality of Jewish denominations rather than a monolithic entity. In 2009,

ments in funding received by the local Jewish communities from the sixteen Länder. The Central Council receives 10 million euros in annual funding to help maintain the German Jewish cultural heritage, restore the wider Jewish community, and support integration and social work.

Since 2005, the number of new members has decreased and the Jewish population is graying fast, with 30% of elderly immigrants living below the poverty



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the weekly magazine on economic topics WirtschaftsWoche



SPEYER, WORMS, MAINZ

# Flourishing, Destruction and Memory

The “Shum” cities of the Rhine are on their way to World Heritage status

By Fanny Schlesinger

Again and again, visitors of Berlin's Jewish Museum are struck by a giant plastic garlic bulb that greets them at the beginning of the exhibition. When opened up by hand into single sections, the clove turns out to be an image of the medieval Rhineland Jewish communities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (or Shpira, Warmaisa, and Magenza), collectively known as *Shum* (Hebrew for garlic) after their initials. “The east Frankish cities, located in the Rhineland, are teeming with Jewish communities,” reports a 12th century chronicle, the *Annales Egmundani*, of this illustrious center of Jewish life and learning.

The earliest clear documentary evidence of a Jewish settlement in Mainz dates from 906 CE, while the Jewish presence in Worms can be traced back to 1034. When the Jews of Mainz were expelled in 1084, they were welcomed with open arms in Speyer. It was Rabbi Isaac b. Moses b. Isaac b. Shalom (1180–1250), also known as *Or Zarua* after his main work, who attested to the close association between the three neighboring Jewish communities on the river Rhine, distinguishing between the leading role of the *Kehillot Shum* and those “in all the land of Ashkenaz.” He explained that “verily our teachers in Mainz, Worms and in Speyer belong to the most learned among the sages.”

The Kalonymos family, Rabbi Yehuda ben Meir and his pupil Rabbi Gershom ben Yehudah (the “Light of the Diaspora”), Isaac Halevi, and Jacob ben Yakar are among the scholars who are to this day associated with Shum, and it is the Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak (1040–1105), whose commentaries on the Torah and Talmud spread from here throughout the Jewish world. In 1146, the rabbis of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz were accorded the highest authority in halachic questions. Their enactments, *Takkanot Shum*, had an impact on the religious life of European Jewry that lasted centuries.

There is also evidence of a violent history. Time and again, periods of prosperity and peaceful coexistence had been shattered, first by marauding crusaders, then by the fury of mobs who accused the Jews of poisoning wells and



The Mikvah at Speyer's Judenhof

Susanne Urban

spreading the plague. Expulsion alternated with re-admittance, and in 1471, the Jews were forced to abandon the territory of the archbishops of Mainz for a whole century. The Jewish communities which eventually settled again in the Shum cities were no longer able to revive the great tradition of the Middle Ages. Today, the rich history of Jewish life on the shores of the Rhine cannot be separated from memories of its destruction during the Shoah.

## Tracing Jewish history today

Standing in front of the graves of Meir von Rothenburg and Alexander von Wimpfen, and recalling the lasting legacy of the Rashi, one may remember one of the most famous and frequent visitors to Worms, Martin Buber. The old Jewish cemetery made him muse about the historical site as a pathway to the entirety of Jewish history. In 1933, he wrote “I have stood there, connected with the ashes and, through them, the ancestors. This is the memory of God's acts that is given to all Jews.”



The graves of Rabbi Meir von Rothenburg and merchant Alexander Wimpfen in Worms

GIOE Mainz



The ruin of Speyer's medieval synagogue is the oldest still standing Jewish place of worship in Europe

Klaus Venus

In 2012, the unique significance of the Shum communities and the influential role they played, were taken up by the municipalities to apply for inclusion in the list of Unesco World Heritage sites. The Jewish landmarks which are playing the pivotal role in this application are the *Judenhof* (Jews' Court) and synagogue of Speyer, the synagogue garden and the cemetery of Worms and the cemetery of Mainz: The synagogues and ritual baths in Speyer and Worms attest to the new, trend-setting architectural forms of their time. The *Judensand* cemetery in Mainz is home to the oldest known gravestones north of the Alps. Meanwhile, the sheer age, size, and relatively intact condition of the cemetery in Worms make it unique in the world, as does its constant use for almost 1,000 years. The distinguished status of the prominent Jews buried there make it an important place of remem-

brance for Jews worldwide. In addition, many other significant physical reminders, mainly archaeological artifacts, are to be found in the three cities' museums. The medieval Rashi Shul of Worms was rebuilt from scratch and opened in 1961.

The recognition as World Heritage would transform these Jewish zones into international tourist sights. The proposal is also supported by the state governments of Rhineland-Palatine and North Rhine-Westphalia and the respective Jewish communities which today are mainly comprised of Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union. The application is still pending. Hanno Loewy, President of the Association of European Jewish Museums, concludes: “The Shum communities once were a whole Jewish world: Ashkenaz. And like Sefarad this diaspora heritage has an effect still today.”



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# I Cannot Forget and Do Not Want to Forgive

Shlomo Birnbaum recalls a life haunted by the horrors of the Shoah

Everybody out! Quick! Quick!" They have discovered us. The last days, father has been reminding me time and time again to constantly change my hiding places in the small ghetto of Częstochowa. Last night, I found a spot in a cellar. I spent the night behind a board partition with about twenty men, women, and children.



Shlomo Birnbaum in 1946

Now, two SS men are rushing down the stairs and are randomly smashing us with the butts of their machineguns.

We have to line up in the street. "Head-count. Otherwise keep your traps shut!"

Behind me is a woman with a small child in her arms. She is trying to hush its crying.

A German truck speeds up to us. I know what that means: We're being hauled away – to be shot. My mouth is dry.

From the other side a horse-drawn carriage is approaching. Father! I want to scream. But

father's look forbids it. One of the SS men shouts at him: "What are you doing?" "I am the wagoner", father answers calmly. "I am supposed to wait here. Orders from Herr Scharführer!" Father grabs his whip and gets off the coach box.

Suddenly, the SS men walk away. They command Polish police officers to guard us until they return. Father comes up to us. He does not run, but walks calmly without shaking.

"What are you doing?" screams one of the Poles. Father remains restrained. "I'm watching out. Just like you..."

The Polish policeman is unsure how to react to father's response. Father turns to me and speaks quietly, yet decisively: "Run away, Shlojme! Otherwise you'll be dead! Run as fast as you can!"

I run off. Right into the arms of an SS man. He grabs me, pulls out his leather whip and begins beating me. Tears shoot into my eyes. I look at father. He is forced to watch as I am being beaten.

Finally, the SS man stops maltreating me. He pushes me over to the queue and bellows: "You will not run away again!" Then, he straightens his uniform as if nothing has happened and walks on. "Run, Shlojme! Run!"

"Tate..." I gasp "...I can't..." "You must, Shlojme. Run! Or he will kill you. Run!" Father's instruction is stronger than

fear and pain. Again, I run off. This time, I make it to the next corner. I hear the SS man yelling: "The Jewish brat is gone again... After him!" I run on. The air burns in my lungs. When the pain becomes too big, I plunge into a house, push open the door to a flat and slip inside. With every breath I take my whole body quakes.

Outside there is shouting. The door I am standing behind is pushed open. They've got me...

"He's not here..." I hear my father's voice say. "Look for him elsewhere. I want him!", commands the SS man. The footsteps move away.

I sink to my knees. Blood is pounding in my ears with every heartbeat. "Ha malach ha goel"... As a child I prayed to the "angel of salvation". Since the Germans have come here the angel has disappeared.

But father remains. Father is always there whenever I think it is over. Always! Never has he been absent. He is my angel of salvation.

I am holding my first grandson in my arms. His name is Arie. The boy is born 1992. I look at this little creature and hope that the child will have a good life, a safe life, without prosecution. Automatically I recall the words of the



Shlomo and his father Arie Birnbaum in Munich, 1950s

blessing: "May the Lord bless you and protect you."

I cannot forget and do not want to forgive – because as a survivor I may not. One cannot surrender – also not before one's own grief and fear. Over the years I have regained hope. I owe that to my family. And also to a German woman and artist: Marlene Dietrich. The aging diva was living in her Paris apartment when she was asked from where she had drawn her strength to resist Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' allurements to return from exile to Germany to reap money and fame. She answered with just one word: "Decency." This is what my father also taught me. Life is good and simple if your attitude is decent. My hope is that human beings will recognize how decisive decency is.

Shlomo Birnbaum & Rafael Seligmann, *Ein Stein auf meinem Herzen*. Herder publ.



## EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

# Political and Social Set Back with Fatal Consequences?

The Knesset has decided to re-implement state funding for Haredi schools

By Franziska Knupper

There is a big fuss about Israeli education. Once again. The Start-up Nation and Silicon Wadi, home to Weizmann Institute and Technion, and always praised for the high standard of education, is facing another affront. Recently, the Knesset decided to reverse a law that was supposed to come into being in 2008, and that would have ultimately reduced state funding for ultra-Orthodox schools teaching only minimal secular studies. However, Education Minister Naftali Bennett proved to be in favor of amending the legislation, giving him the discretion to fund Haredi schools and yeshivas – institutions that focus on the study of Jewish sacred text and which do not teach core subjects like English, Math and Modern Hebrew. Kulanu party chairman Moshe Kahlon promised to bring the stipend budget for such schools back up to NIS 975 million. This change in policy is part of the coalition agreement reached with

the ultra-Orthodox parties last year and seems to be another way of bringing back the controversial "Nahari Law", which obliges local municipal authorities to fund non-state Haredi schools.

The minister's move sparked a furious response from Yesh Atid, accusing the government of selling out to the ultra-Orthodox parties: "Israel is being set back", Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid said in a press conference. Due to on-going demographic developments, the proportions of pupils attending schools in the Haredi and Arab sectors are shifting priorities in the educational curriculum. According to a demographic study, Haredim and Arabs together will amount to 60 % of Israel's elementary school population by 2030, all while being underrepresented in both the Israeli Defense Forces and the workforce. On top of that, Israel's ministry of education's statistics from 2014 show that only about 22 % of Haredi students take the final matriculation exams (*bagrut*) and only



eight percent of them actually pass the exam. Moshe Shenfeld, chairman of the secular collective of Leaving for Change (LFC), believes that such a lack of a basic education will severely hinder any aspirations of integrating into society.

However, Ra'anán Elozory, English instructor at an Adult Education institution for Haredim in high-tech, finds that

such agitation is slightly uncalled for. "Haredi students show a very good low level proficiency and they can have very sophisticated vocabulary. Yet, they are lacking syntax structures of an intermediate level". Elozory emphasizes the fact that most of them are somewhat self-taught and thus lack the real practice of the language. "These students however very

well filled that gap within a six months course, meeting two hours per week." Jonathan Davis, vice president for external relations at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, agrees: "From what I can gather, they are very disciplined and goal oriented. And they possess the tools necessary to succeed." Nevertheless, as the vice president points out, only a handful of Haredi high-school graduates study at IDC, mainly in the international school in English and a few in the Hebrew track. "Every year shows an increase in the number of Haredim joining the work force." The numbers indeed reveal positive indications: According to *Ha'aretz*, the employment rate is 49 % for ultra-Orthodox men, up from 33 % in 2005, and at 74 %, the rate for women is nearing that of their non-Haredi counterparts. Yet the future remains unpredictable – the government's step back might put a sudden end to this promising development.



## HERITAGE

# Soul Place for Reconciliation and Education

A small house by a lake contains the history of twentieth-century Germany

By Hartmut Bomhoff

In May 1993, Thomas Harding travelled to Germany with his grandmother Elsie and six of his cousins to visit a small house by a lake on the outskirts of Berlin. It had been her “soul place” as a child, Elsie told her London born grandson, then 25 years old. The Lake House was built in 1927 for Elsie Harding’s father, the prominent Jewish physician Dr. Alfred Alexander whose clients included Albert Einstein and Marlene Dietrich. The weekend retreat became a sanctuary for the Alexanders, a rustic refuge from their busy Berlin life. After the family fled in 1936, four other families lived in the house including composer Will Meisel. Later, the Berlin Wall was built through the garden. The trip was anticipated as a chance to see the holiday home one last time, to remember it as it was, but the wooden house and its garden had changed: “Elsie lamented that where there had once been raspberry bushes and cherry

trees, there was now a wasteland of dead grass and rubbish,” Tom Harding recollects their arrival in Groß Glienicke, a village with a weekend house settlement from the 1920s.

## Amazing stories

20 years later, in 2013, the author and journalist returned to his grandmother’s place of longing. The house had been abandoned in 2005; it was government property now, empty and derelict and hit by vandalism. In a bid to save the house from demolition, Harding began to unearth the history of the five families who had lived there: a nobleman farmer, a well to do Jewish family, a renowned Nazi composer, a widow and her children, and a Stasi informant. The amazing stories he discovered have been compiled in his internationally bestselling book *The House by the Lake* (Penguin Random House, 2015), which has been praised as a superb portrait of twentieth-century Germany. In 2013, members of the Alexander family came together

with the local residents of Groß Glienicke and formed an association, the Alexander Haus e.V. In 2014, the house was registered as a protected monument, as a document of its historic significance as summerhouse of the president of the Berlin Chamber of Physicians Dr. Alfred Alexander. The legal proceedings were flanked by more mundane activities, first of all Cleanup Days which revealed many preserved features.

This summer, further steps were taken to fill the building with life. Funds for its restoration were secured, and recently, the State Government, the City of Potsdam and private organizations agreed on a long-term plan to develop the Alexander-Haus. The Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk (ELES) and Avicenna, two scholarship foundations funded by the Federal Government which support gifted Jewish respectively Muslim students, plan to use the building as a seminar facility for their education and interfaith work. “The place combines in a unique way the past and future of the Jewish



The Lake House, photograph by Lotte Jacobi, 1928

community in Germany,” says Rabbi Walter Homolka, president and director of ELES.

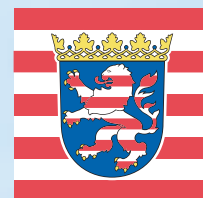
“This is a key moment in transforming the Alexander-Haus into a centre for education and reconciliation,” explains Thomas Harding “We can say that we have the support of every level of government! The current memorandum was also the moment that we could announce

that we are working with our friends at Avicenna and ELES, along with the University of Potsdam. We are very excited about these developments and look forward to moving this project forward.” The beauty of the site and its proximity to Berlin and Potsdam make the Lake House an ideal venue for interfaith workshops and academic retreats. ■

Hessen is a state of economics, culture and nature. Its performance as one of the strongest economic regions in the European Union is based on the financial sector and the airport in Frankfurt, the service sector and industrial companies in the Rhine-Main-Area.

*Volker Bouffier, Minister President of Hessen*

HESSEN





BOMHOFF RECOMMENDS

No Double Standards

“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head,” the apostle Paul is teaching the Corinthians. And in some parts of the world, women traditionally wear head ware to church services. During a visit to Kazan, Russia, I could not notice any difference between the hijab of women visiting the mosque and the traditional scarf worn by their Russian Orthodox sisters while in church. Although the controversial burkini ban in France has been overturned by a court ruling, it has triggered debates over Islamophobia and religious freedom in secular France and beyond. With all the consistent criticism of Muslim veiling, the impression arises that again and again double standards are applied.

The Chief Rabbi of France, Moshe Sabbag, first joined the rhetoric alliance between



Christian and secular fundamentalists and embraced the burkini ban, then rolled back and explained that he, as a rabbi, would “completely understand and support women’s need for modesty in dress and religious garb.” Maybe he realized that what Orthodox Jewish women wear to the beach is no different from a burkini? The media excitement about Muslim culture and patterns of religious identity turns a blind eye on similar developments in the Jewish world. There is no mention of the frumka covering introduced by sectarian ultra-Orthodox women in Beit Shemesh to “save men from themselves,” no frowning on Hasidic demand for women-only pool hours in Williamsburg, New York, no concern about the lack of secular education in the unregulated Haredi schools of Jerusalem. The modesty swimsuits by Israeli designers are praised for making it possible for

religiously observant women to show up at the beach, while the hijab and the burkini are a threat. But why should one religious group of women be allowed to follow their social norms and another not?

According to Maimonides, the commandment of traveling in the ways of God requires that we conduct ourselves in all areas with moderation. The Rambam criticizes the insecure individual who, for example, concludes that he or she will not wear conventional apparel and overdoes modesty. For such ascetic exaggeration, he has only condemnation: “Whoever persists in such a course is termed a sinner.” The same, however, may apply to the fervent critics of religious observance, as Maimonides defines lack of empathy as a character disorder. “Atheism, too, has its fanaticism, as sad experience teaches,” writes Moses Mendelssohn, who is considered the father of the Jewish Enlightenment. We absolutely have to maintain balance among our perceptions. ■

Re-Framing American Jewish History

Recently, the School of Jewish Theology at the University of Potsdam hosted some 30 scholars from Europe, Israel, and the U.S. for a conference aimed to both draw greater attention to American Jewish Studies outside the U.S. and to complement the existing American-based scholarship by adding European and Israeli perspectives.

“Even though American Jewry is the largest Jewish community worldwide, beside Israel, and the culturally most productive and politically most influ-

ential one, it has been curiously neglected both in ‘Jewish’ disciplines outside the U.S. and in American Studies,” explained Markus Krah on behalf of the conference organizers. “There is a broad and lively scholarly discourse

about American Jewry, but it focuses on its domestic dimension and pays little attention to its historical and current entanglements with other Jewries. As a result, the transnational dimension of American Jewry has been underexplored.” ■

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A MENTSH

# Committed to a More Peaceful Israel

## An encounter in Jerusalem

By Clara von Bismarck-Osten

Jerusalem: On the one side of the tram tracks, the narrow streets of Me'a She'arim, the ultra-orthodox Jewish quarter. On the other, the call of the muezzin in the eastern part of the city. The street linking these two worlds is where our language school is located – the Polis Institute for Languages, which offers intensive summer classes in Arabic and Hebrew. This is where I meet Sharona Igra-Komem. At age 79, she is the oldest in our Arabic course; at 20, I am the youngest. Soon I discover that Sharona had been born in Poland and spent two years in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp before arriving in Israel at the age of nine. Today she is a member of a group of psychologists who assist Palestinian children who have been brought before the courts. Sharona Igra-Komem's life bears witness to the events of the 20th century. Szarona, as she was then

known, was born in 1937 in Lviv (Lemberg), which was then in Poland and today is in Ukraine. The name given to her by her parents recalled the Sharon plain of Israel. In 1941, only a few days after the arrival of German troops, a number of pogroms and further atrocities were launched. Szarona's Zionist-minded family initially hoped that their documents, obtained from British Mandate authorities, would make it possible for them to take part in a "citizen's exchange" with Germans living in a Templar settlement in what was then Palestine. These hopes were soon dashed. Instead, forced labor in a factory was followed by a "special camp" and then the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. On 6 April 1945, the family was sent on a train transport headed toward the Elbe River. Three days later, they were liberated by Abraham Cohn, a US soldier, and his comrades. "I have no words




Clara and Sharona


to describe this," says Sharona. A few months later, they were on a British ship, headed for Haifa. After 50 years in which Sharona had avoided any travel to Germany, she decided to pay a visit to the memorial at Bergen-Belsen. "It was not easy," she recalls. Even today,

the willful ignorance and the tacit assent of parts of the population still leaves her speechless with dismay. "For me, in my own life, willful ignorance is not an option." Sharona Igra-Komem works with Psychoactive, a group of women psychologists who seek


to illuminate the consequences of the Israeli occupation, for both Israeli soldiers and for Palestinians. Sharona's work is focused on individual therapy with children. Her patients are primarily Palestinian children with Israeli citizenship. Her own childhood memories undoubtedly played an important role in her decision to study psychology, and perhaps so to come to terms with the trauma she herself had experienced. Sharona says her work on behalf of young Palestinian-Israelis is motivated by her desire that her own grandchildren grow up in a more peaceful Israel. Her hope is for greater peace both within and outside Israel. But she is anything but naïve. I ask her what she expects from my generation of Germans. She explains to me that the word "mentsh", which entered the Hebrew language through Yiddish, has a very special importance to her. A "mentsh" in Hebrew is a person who does good, and who stands up for their beliefs. "To be a mentsh" is what Sharona Igra-Komem expects of us, as young Germans. ■

“Willful ignorance is not an option”






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# A Road of Repentance and Consolation

## Getting from Tisha b'Av to Yom Kippur

By Hartmut Bomhoff

The period from Tisha b'Av to the High Holiday season has been a time of transition, called the Seven Weeks of Consolation. During this period, we read seven selections from the Book of Isaiah, each one with a message of hope and comfort. After commemorating the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, we are led on a road of repentance to Rosh Hashanah, New Year's Day. The preceding month of Elul is a time of soul-searching and reflection to prepare oneself for the magnitude of the Days of Awe. It is during this time that we observe Selichot, penitential prayers. In Aramaic, the word "Elul" means "search." At this time of year we search our hearts to learn how to be our best selves in the new year ahead. Jewish thinking tries to strike a balance between responsibility and forgiveness, and according to Jewish tradition, God cannot forgive us for

sins committed against another person until we have first obtained forgiveness from the person we have wronged.

The Talmud (Berakhot 34b) reports of a debate among two third-century teachers, Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Abbahu, who argue about who is the greater man – the one who has never sinned or the sinner who has repented. A contemporary of them,

ciliation of these two versions is that one refers to repentance out of fear (*teshuvah mi-yirah*), the other to repentance out of love (*teshuvah me-ahavah*).

"If it is the High Holy Days, we are to leave with the conviction that we are indeed mortal beings, that we do balance good and evil, sometimes giving in to the latter at the expense of the former," explains Rabbi Lawrence

A. Hoffman, the editor of the popular *Prayers of Awe* series. "That there is indeed a divine presence before whom we stand; that we can, with proper repentance and resolve, wipe the slate clean and

begin anew with all the promise of a world re-created, a child reborn, a mind reformed, and a conscience reawakened."

The eternal "and yet"

On Yom Kippur we perform the possibility of repentance, being forgiven, and effecting change

“Great is repentance, for deliberate sins are accounted to him as meritorious deeds

Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish

Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish, is known for two diverging teachings. The first one says "Great is repentance, for deliberate sins are accounted to him as inadvertent sins," while the other one claims "Great is repentance, for deliberate sins are accounted to him as meritorious deeds" (Yoma 86b). The Talmudic recon-



Maurycy Gottlieb: Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur (1878)

in our lives and the world. Thus it would be simplistic to think that this period of introspection would only imply depression and gloom. The 27th psalm that we recite from the begin of the month of Elul until Hoshanah Rabbah, which is considered the final day of the divine judgment, contains words of encouragement during the Days of Awe. In

that is the downstroke of the 'Yes,' the negative side of the optimism, the courage that is determined to 'prepare the way.' This optimism is the steady setting of the will toward God," Baeck confirms. "It is the 'and yet' of faith in the meaning of life. And in it we hear the voice of the new principle that in Israel's religion has become world history."

fourteen short verses, there are twenty-four terms and phrases which sing out loud and clear to an optimistic soul and worldview.

In his short work *God and Man in Judaism*, Rabbi Leo Baeck (1873–1956) gives an idea of Jewish optimism: "It cannot but be at times pessimistic at the thought of things as they are in the world, but what is peculiarly Jewish in this pessimism is that it never leads to resignation or indifference toward things as they are. It is only the 'No'



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