

B'nai B'rith European Days of Jewish Culture and Heritage celebration in Bulgaria

Facing the Future... Extracted from an article by Prof. Heny Lorser

The traditional celebration of the European Day of Jewish Culture (EDJC) was once again on the agenda as it fell in the month of September. The event was held under the joint patronage of B'nai B'rith Lodge Carmel - Sofia, the Jewish Organization Shalom - Sofia, and the American JOINT.

The primary European initiators, who inspired this event, perceive the year 2011 as the cornerstone in the historical retracing of various cultural aspects within the overall heritage of the Jewish people. 2011 is defined as the year of initiation into Era Two.

In line with the thematic concepts advanced by the European organizers, the annual celebrations up to now have focused on essential events and activities in the history of the Jewish people such as Pessach, the day of liberation from slavery, on Jewish customs and way of life - cuisine, art, the Jewish calendar and traditions as well as on records of Jewish presence on the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore the thematic issue of EDJC 2011, which is to mark the beginning of Era Two, has been duly entitled 'Facing the Future'.

Modern media communications and information technologies are being implemented in Era Two for the study, maintenance and preservation of Jewish cultural heritage, and for its dissemination among far-off communities and interaction among them.

The possibilities which the new and fast developing communication technologies are opening up for the world are also working in favour of promoting Jewish heritage by revealing our culture and way of life in their true and primary colours. Whether this is achieved through graphic design, video clips, internet forums and other social networks, it is diversity of view points, the exchange of information, and interactive dialogue that expand the horizons and push the boundaries.

'Facing the Future', the 2011 EDJC theme, has been visualized on the traditional poster where many of the above mentioned means of communication have been marked on the map of Europe for the countries where the EDJC is celebrated. There are plenty of examples which give a clear picture of how these inventions and technologies have affected Jewish culture, traditions and way of life.

The Internet has virtual communities of Jews of different walks of life, as well as rabbis, cantors and Torah scholars who are open to discuss the views and inclinations of Liberal Judaism and search for relevant answers to complicated questions. The American rabbi Avraham perceives

these virtual Jewish communities as a means of reviving the Jewish religion for those who have abandoned their dedication to the Synagogue. Ideological issues also find their place on the internet. Racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism are problems with lasting roots and having open debates and expressed opinions on the internet is an invaluable opportunity for conflicting sides to hear one another.

The Anti-Defamation League is there to aid the process of communication, understanding and respect among diverse groups, carrying out its mission through a network of thirty regional and Satellite Offices in the US and abroad. There are many other examples as to how the new technologies can be made to work in favor of promoting globalization, peace and understanding in our world. Nevertheless, I can say that the profound universal message and the original communication nets were laid down long ago when through Moses, G-d set the indispensable moral laws of life for all people and with the sound of the Shoffar we are constantly reminded not to stray from them but abide by them and live in wisdom.