

## 4th Young Jewish Adult Forum in Zurich, Switzerland

Written by B'nai B'rith Europe

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### *Report by Simone Hofmann*

B'nai B'rith Europe (BBE) in association with the Augustin Keller Lodge (AKL) organised from 19th-21st November 2010 the 4th Young Jewish Adult Forum in Zurich, Switzerland ... Under the motto: "Matzo Balls vs Sushi - Tradition vs. Modern Lifestyle" more than 200 young Jewish professionals from 29 countries participated.



On Friday everyone arrived and was welcomed by the co-chairs and the team at the reception desk.

It was a warm atmosphere and everyone was really happy to be there. The programme started with the candle lighting and service led by Rav Arik Speaker from the Israelitische Cultusgemeinde Zurich. The service was followed by a festive Shabbat Dinner. Edi Rosenstein, President of the AKL and Graham Weinberg, President of BBE addressed the audience after the three co-chairs, Edwige Ouaknine, from France and Aviva Gottheil and Jaron Bernstein from Switzerland had already welcomed the participants in the name of the BBE and AKL.



Already here the atmosphere was so familiar that we all had the feeling of being one big family. Our Guest Speaker Hillel C. Neuer, Director of UN-Watch in Geneva pointed out in his speech how important it is to stand behind Israel as one people. Birkat Hamazon was recited by Rav Speaker.

After the dinner all participants came together for an "Ice-Breaking" activity, where everyone had the opportunity to socialise in an informal atmosphere.

Saturday morning started with the Shabbat Service. Those who did not participate certainly missed something special: the wonderful organisation of the service led by André Leder and Rav Speaker. Young men from Israel, Greece, Turkey, Hungary and Switzerland took part in the service. This was amazing – so many young men from different corners of the world, but being one family – being one people. Those who attended the service felt moved of having been part of such an experience. The service was followed by lunch. Dr. Yves Victor Kamami, Vice President of BBE and Senior Vice President of B'nai B'rith International (BBI) conveyed greetings from Denis Glick, President of BBI. He spoke about the pillars of B'nai B'rith and emphasized the importance of supporting B'nai B'rith projects. He also spoke about the political involvement of B'nai B'rith as one of the oldest non- governmental organisations at the United

Nations.



After lunch the workshops started. The subjects of the workshops were designated after three pillars of B'nai B'rith: Benevolence, Brotherly Love and Harmony.

The workshop Benevolence was led by Alan Schneider, Director of B'nai B'rith World Centre in Jerusalem. He spoke about the connection between B'nai B'rith and Isra-aid and the combined work in places like Darfur and Haiti and how important it is to get involved – only through involvement and action one can change things. A very lively discussion arose and many participants showed their interest in actively doing something and many were surprised that B'nai B'rith is involved in such project Alan spoke about.

In the workshop Brotherly Love, moderated by Rav Arik Speaker, Rav Speaker first gave a summary of the history of Judaism and went into a historical reflection of how the different directions of practising religion developed within the frame of the united Jewish background we all share.

Pointing out that nevertheless were we come from, we are one people. Rav Speaker also spoke about the fact that it is essential to talk to and with each other. Not only to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary fights, but also to understand each other and respect each other. This can only be done through knowing about each other. The workshop concluded interactive and this was enjoyed a lot.

Jean Etherton, President of B'nai B'rith United Kingdom, made a wonderful journey into the history of women in the order of B'nai B'rith. She emphasized the importance of the influence of women in the Order from early stages until today. Mrs. Etherton made comments about the history of women in the Order in different countries in Europe and showed the development of their achievements citing many examples which gave the audience a good overview of the topic. The workshop ended with a very active discussion and went into different fields – such as inter Marriage and Jewish Identity.

After the workshops the participants gathered for Havdalah, which was recited by John P. Reeves in a very moving way. Noemie Rubinsztejn, now living in Israel, but originally from Belgium shared a wonderful story with the listeners.



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Following the Havdala Ceremony and the story telling, Jaron Bernstein made a short address to the audience concerning Gilat Shalid. He emphasized that is important not to forget him. He is now the age of many participants and he is not able to go anywhere. "He is in the age of our generation" Jaron said "and so we all should support every effort to BRING HIM HOME with all our power".

Then the participants were asked to sign a petition which will be given to the International Red Cross on December 10th 2010 the day of International Human Rights. All participants signed the petition and showed their support for Gilat.



At 20.00 dinner took place and Graham Weinberg, President of BBE thanked the AKL and the whole organising team. Gifts were presented to the Speakers and the name of the winner Eva Vadasz of the Essay Competition was announced. Then at 23.00 it was "Party Time". The Bar was run by volunteers and friends of the AKL. David Karasek Host of Radio1 Zurich was in charge of the music. The atmosphere was fantastic. Traditional Israeli Folk Dances, World Music and Disco Classics held the participants on the dance floor until the early hours of the morning.



Even though most of the participants went to bed only a few hours before the sight-seeing tour of Zurich started at 10.00 in the morning three busses were full and left with enthusiastic people on board.



At 14.00 the Forum concluded with Lunch and with a moving speech of a young participant from Israel. Eithan-Ori Behar spontaneously thanked B'nai B'rith for a wonderful weekend.

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May I conclude with Eithan's words: "When we arrived on Friday it was exciting, when we came together on Shabbat for Service it was inspiring, in the evening the party was joyful and now we have the hope - HATIKVA - to see each other again next year in France".

When Eithan asked us all to rise and sing the Hatikva with him each one had a feeling of strong togetherness and in some eyes I could see some tears- not of sadness, but of happiness of having been part of a wonderful experience, together with wonderful people who made it so special.

Next Year in Marseille we will surely have the same feelings again.

Chag Chanukah Sameach!

In the name of the whole Organisation Team which has worked so hard to make this success possible

Nicole Braunschweig, Aviva Gottheil, André Leder, Edi Rosenstein and Jaron Bernstein - Switzerland,

Edwige Ouaknine - France, John P. Reeves-United Kingdom, Nathalie Gamain and Aline Brandon - Belgium

Simone and Ralph Hofmann - Germany