

## SPOTLIGHT

ON  
a CommunityCoverage by  
Devorah KleinJourney Through the Generations:  
Bais Yaakov of Baltimore High School Exhibit

It is a magnificent display of Jewish history; a conglomerate of creativity, thought, and intellect; a testimony to the resilience, spirit, determination and *achdus* of *bnos Yisrael* during a most trying year. It is Bais Yaakov of Baltimore's Exhibit — Journey Through the Generations.

Over the past 25 years, Bais Yaakov of Baltimore has created multiple Exhibits, and each seems more impressive than the one before.

"Over the years, students have told us that their most memorable experience during high school was Exhibit," remarked Rabbi Yechezkel Zweig, *Menahel* of Bais Yaakov High School. "This is because Exhibit taps into their creative energies, enables them to put forth unusual talents, and also creates a tremendous camaraderie while working together with other students. They are in the driver's seat, and they gain tremendous satisfaction and gratification from creating the product, mastering the information and designing the beautiful art forms. They then gain *nachas* from watching thousands from across the community and beyond become absorbed and energized during their visits.

"Yes, there were certainly ups and downs this year," Rabbi Zweig continues. "Although they began working on the Exhibit after Sukkos, they had to stop in the middle due to COVID. Even once they started up again, progress was slow and complicated, as they were limited in the number of students who could be working in each room at one time. But they kept going, and in the end, they were able to develop a product of this quality. It says a lot about what they are made of."

The hallways and rooms of the

Exhibit tell the story of Jewish life in countries on all the continents — North Africa, South Africa, Asia, Australia, Central and South America, Spain, Italy, France, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, Poland, Russia, the United States and Canada, Eretz Yisrael and more. In addition to the intricate artwork, the amount of historical information and research reflected in the displays and given over by the articulate student tour guides is breathtaking.

Upon entering the Exhibit hallway, visitors are greeted by scenes of a Moroccan *shuk*, with authentic spices and other souvenirs, brought back by a teacher who visited relatives in Morocco. The opposite wall boasts a display of Rabbanim from Morocco, facing a mural of the famed shul in Djerba, Tunisia. This is just the first taste of the countless creative and stunning displays fashioned from all types of mediums, with painstaking effort, that comprise the Exhibit.

Every room contains stunning murals and displays. In Egypt, there is a large portrait of the Rambam, fashioned from colored pill capsules. In India, there is a mural commemorating the Mumbai massacre. In Iraq, we learn about the *Amora'im* and *Geonim* who lived there. In China, we see a model of a shul created from chopsticks and a book listing all of the refugees to Shanghai (obtained from Yad Vashem).

In Australia, we learn about the famed ship, the *Dunera*, which carried refugees from England to Australia during World War II; there is also a large rose, fashioned out of thousands of paper clips and surrounded by barbed wire, indicating that *Klal Yisrael* is compared to a rose among thorns, and despite the persecutions, we thrived and blossomed once more. In Latin America, we learn about how the Spanish Inquisition tragically followed the Jews to the New World.

In Eretz Yisrael, we gain a panorama of history, beginning with Hashem's promise to Avraham Avinu. The displays span the generations, up to a last-minute display of the Meron tragedy. Two large *yahrtzeit* candles reveal the names of the 45 *niftarim*, and the heading adjures us, "Have



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A display in the Hungary hallway — a mural of Chassidim dancing, fashioned from small pieces of rolled paper. On the left is a display of various types of Chassidus that originated in Hungary.



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Holocaust display in the Poland room.

we changed?" The narrator informs visitors, "At school, we have taken on *kabbalos*, and encourage you to do so as well."

In Hungary, we learn about the various types of *Chassidus* that thrived there; and in Poland, a large display depicts the story of Sarah Schenirer. In Germany, we see a display of Harav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *zt"l*, with light bulbs bearing the names of 115 members of his shul who agreed to keep Shabbos. And in Spain, we learn about the unique *minhagim* of Sephardic Jewry.

In the United States, the first section of the room is fashioned in black, as the early years of Amer-

ican Jewish history were marked with assimilation. One display features the famed "pink slips" given to those who would not work on Shabbos. Girls in the school wrote down the names of their grandparents on those pink slips, those who remained staunch and kept Shabbos despite tremendous challenges. Then, as you turn the corner, the displays become brightly colored, indicating the growth of Torah and organizations dedicated to spreading authentic Torah *Yiddishkeit*.

And there is so much more. Nevertheless, one theme runs throughout the Exhibit. Every room emphasizes the *Gedolim* and the Torah



AE Creative Studios  
Hallway  
depicting various  
communities in  
North Africa.



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Display in the Iran room highlighting the monumental efforts of Harav Naftali Neuberger, zt"l, in assisting Iranian refugees after the fall of the Shah.

that thrived in that country, as *Klal Yisrael* has always thrived, and continued to serve Hashem, despite tremendous difficulties and terrible persecutions.

The end of the hallway displays a large mural of the Beis HaMikdash, as Yidden from all countries are streaming toward it with great joy. May we be *zocheh* to experience it *bimheirah b'yameinu*.

Rabbi Zweig described more of the benefits of the Exhibit. "We emphasized to the students that the Exhibit is a vehicle of *kiddush shem Shamayim*, as visitors see what can be produced by a *bas Torah*. The Exhibit shows the *koach* of perseverance and resilience of *Klal Yisrael*, just as the students succeeded fabulously this year, despite the difficulties."

With 460 students in the school, *bli ayin hara*, each one was assigned to help out in a particular room. Many parents also came to school in the evenings to help out in the efforts. If one came to school during the evening preparations, he would have detected a *leibidig, simchahdig ruach* in the air.

"Exhibit forges an indescribable bond between the students and the teachers who are guiding and advising the Exhibit — a beautiful *achdus* in the school, the administration, the teachers and the students," Rabbi

Zweig emphasized. "Throughout the entire process, the students displayed incredible harmony and *achdus*, acting *k'ish echad b'lev echad*. They are all doing it *l'shem Shamayim*; no one is looking for recognition or to promote her own ego. And this all starts with Mrs. Elise Wolf, Exhibit coordinator, who sets that tone. Together with the other teacher directors, Mrs. Malka Feldman, Mrs. Sima Goldstein and Mrs. Devorah Krakauer, there is a tremendous *ruach* of selflessness permeating the entire project."

Bais Yaakov High School also feels deeply indebted to Bais Yaakov president Reb Moshe Dov Shurin, and Bais Yaakov CEO Rabbi Zalman Nissel, for their encouragement and selflessness in supporting and guiding the project through the maze of COVID-related restrictions and concerns.

Mrs. Wolf noted, "We humbly express our endless gratitude to the *Ribbono shel Olam* for His ongoing *nissim nistarim* that we recognize and that have enabled us to complete this daunting project. We hope that the *kiddush shem Shamayim* that is brought about through the Exhibit will serve as a modest way in which we can thank the *Ribbono shel Olam* for the great kindnesses He has bestowed upon us."

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