

## Celebrating 25 Years Keeping Jews Jewish

By Steve and Julie Bram

**J**EW'S FOR JUDAISM INTERNATIONAL was founded in 1985 by a young rabbi with a vision and a mission.

Jews for Jesus was active on street corners and flooding the media with full page ads. Parents were discovering that their loved ones were becoming "Born Again" and fanatically preaching the Gospel to their families.

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz's breadth of knowledge of Judaism and Christian proof-texts made him a recognized expert in the counter-missionary field. He dedicated himself to offering counseling to those in need and raising awareness throughout the community. He made his mark upon the Jewish community, in no small way because of his non-judgmental respect and caring for Jews regardless of their affiliation. Rabbis of all denominations called upon him for advice and assistance.

What started out as Rabbi Kravitz working from his apartment, with his wife and young children as his support staff, quickly grew into what is today the only fully-staffed, full-time, international organization of its kind. The Los Angeles center moved into its first offices in 1987, and JEW'S FOR JUDAISM quickly expanded to include offices in Baltimore and Toronto, and later overseas.

From a one-page, hand-typed newsletter in 1985, its prolific publications now include 25 years of newsletters, more than 320,000 copies of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* handbook published in seven languages, pamphlets and booklets in multiple languages,



Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, Executive Director (center), meets with JEW'S FOR JUDAISM's Board of Directors' chair, David Rifkind and his wife Helen (lt), and 25th Year Celebration co-chairs, Steve and Julie Bram (rt), to start planning the anniversary gala.

student prep kits, DVDs, and award-winning websites.

Over the years, JEW'S FOR JUDAISM, with extensive help from the Los Angeles Jewish Community Foundation,

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developed many innovative and cutting-edge programs, including a unique

outreach program for intermarried couples targeted by missionaries and the *Be-True* student initiative. *Be-True* (see page 4) is a new creative response to the latest trends in missionary activity that utilize the internet, chat rooms and peer-to-peer proselytizing to reach young vulnerable students.

With the support of thousands of generous and loyal donors, JEW'S FOR JUDAISM has reunited families, brought thousands of Jews back to their heritage, and educated hundreds of thousands, giving them the tools to stand firm in their faith. JEW'S FOR JUDAISM's websites have received millions of visitors, including non-Jews who often share their

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# Young Professionals Launch 'Chai Society'

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Disclaimer: Unless otherwise indicated, the phrase "Jews for Jesus," found anywhere in this publication, is used in a generic sense.

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JEWS FOR JUDAISM's Talya Messeri (center) and (l to rt) Seth Staszower, Michelle Jackson, Daren Schlechter, Robert Mahanian and Justin Levi had a great time at one of the first JEWS FOR JUDAISM YOUNG PROFESSIONALS gatherings.

Young professionals were highly visible in the planning and attendance of JEWS FOR JUDAISM's 2009 Chanukah benefit, where our first annual Young Professional Award was presented to Seth Staszower.

Their involvement began with a JEWS FOR JUDAISM YOUNG PROFESSIONALS kick-off event in September 2009, followed by several get-togethers over the ensuing months.

At their second official event – a Purim Party in support of Jewish relief efforts in Haiti – JEWS FOR JUDAISM YOUNG PROFESSIONALS announced the formation of the JEWS FOR JUDAISM *Chai Society*.

The *Chai Society* is an exclusive division of JEWS FOR JUDAISM YOUNG PROFESSIONALS and a key foundation of the organization's sustainable funding strategy to support our cutting-edge counseling and educational services. It is comprised of a group of dedicated and generous supporters, aged 21 to 35, and membership is based on a commitment of a minimum annual contribution of \$180.

*Chai Society* members will be invited to participate in mentoring lunches with leading business professionals.

Membership has its privileges and *Chai Society* members will be invited to participate in four to six mentor lunches, with leading business professionals, per year. Members will have an opportunity to learn and network, and at the same time integrate their passion for Judaism into their daily lives. They will also receive personal briefings from our executive director concerning developing threats to Jewish survival and new innovative programs that respond to these challenges.

The business mentor for the first exclusive *Chai Society* lunch will be David Rifkind, Managing Director of George Smith and Partners, a leading national real estate investment banking firm.

Community young professionals are invited to join this vital group of JEWS FOR JUDAISM supporters dedicated to keeping Jews Jewish. ■

## The Mitzvah of Giving

Please support JEWS FOR JUDAISM's international efforts by contributing financially because your support enables us to save Jewish lives.

We also accept in-kind donations, including property and stocks, and you can help us in perpetuity by remembering us in your Will or Living Trust.

By supporting JEWS FOR JUDAISM, you not only get a wonderful mitzvah but also, at the same time, you benefit from a tax-deductible contribution. Every size gift is appreciated and tribute cards can be sent on your behalf.

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# A Mother's Call for Help

By Andrea Gold\*

I have always taken my Judaism and my children's Judaism for granted. After all, once you are born a Jew, you remain a Jew, even if you don't believe in God. I have learned, though, that you must never take your children's Judaism as a given.

The biggest shock of my life came when my adult son told me he started going to church, became baptized, and

**The biggest shock of my life came when my adult son told me he started going to church.**

believes in Jesus as the Messiah and his personal savior with all of his heart and soul. My first reaction was that he just had some bad information and I would straighten him out, but I quickly realized this was not a matter of whose theology is better or who can build a stronger case. My son is completely immersed in Evangelical Christianity and there is no way or no one to simply "talk him out of it."

While searching the internet for answers to his assertions about Jesus, I found the JEWS FOR JUDAISM website. I read the online version of their Counter Missionary Handbook and felt it would be a wonderful resource for those of us struggling with my son's new beliefs. We are a close, loving family, but this has

been a huge challenge and a potentially very divisive situation.

I called the JEWS FOR JUDAISM Hotline and spoke with a warm and caring woman who assured me that Rabbi Kravitz could help my family and me. I ordered five copies of the handbook and later in the week, I spoke with Rabbi Kravitz. His understanding of the situation, his thoughtful method of approach, his care and concern for my son as well as all the rest of the family, was truly a gift from God.

Rabbi Kravitz has been in touch with my son. I wish I could say my son gave up his beliefs after his first conversation with Rabbi Kravitz, but of course, that is both unreasonable to expect and highly unlikely. What Rabbi Kravitz was able to do is get a sense of where my son's thinking is and establish some common ground for future conversations.

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JEWS FOR JUDAISM has helped me on many levels. First, the handbook gave me the answers I needed when confronted with the Evangelical Christians' "proof texts." It is not enough to say "Jews don't believe in Jesus." We need to know

WHY. And we need to know WHAT Jews do believe.

Second, having Rabbi Kravitz as a support for our family has been a godsend. Other rabbis have reacted in understandably disturbed ways, which is not helpful to an already disturbed parent. Rabbi Kravitz's ability to leave the emotions aside while showing much concern and love for my son and the rest of us, made it easier for us all. And knowing Rabbi Kravitz is out there ... that anyone struggling with how to accept this part of my son's life can call him ... and that he is there for me if anything arises ... gives us all peace of mind.

I wish organizations such as JEWS FOR JUDAISM did not have to exist. However, with so much assimilation, and active missionary groups working to spread Christianity to young and vulnerable Jewish men and women, JEWS FOR JUDAISM is a valuable resource - one I hope you will never need. It is interesting that, as I tell my story, so many people are telling me their own stories of an aunt or cousin or parent who converted to Christianity from Judaism.

My happy ending right now is not that my son returned to Judaism, but that Rabbi Kravitz has established a relationship with him, is helping my family work through this, and is giving us hope that perhaps, in the future, with the help of JEWS FOR JUDAISM, my son will return to his rightful faith. ■

*\*Name changed to ensure confidentiality*

*www. Be-True .org*

**Empowering you to make critical choices, because there is an 85% chance someone will try to convert you or use pressure to influence your life decisions.**

# Students Take *Be-True* to the Streets

**T**he JEWS FOR JUDAISM *Be-True* student initiative is expanding in scope and locations. Hundreds of students are participating in activities that include student conferences, social events, contests, a student friendly website, campus student reps and video conferencing.

*Be-True* was created to help students cope with the growing trend of peer-to-peer proselytizing on high school and college campuses. Our slogan, *Empowering You to Make Critical Choices*, says it all. Student surveys have established that there is an 85% chance someone will try to convert students to another religion or use pressure to influence their life decisions.

The unique approach of *Be-True*, with its message of critical thinking and



During a trip to Israel, Jeremy Nagel (seated left), *Be-True*'s student rep at The University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, put his *Be-True* training to use, posing friends as statues to attract people away from missionaries proselytizing on Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street.

**On a recent visit to Israel to become a certified Krav Maga instructor, Jeremy used the skills he learned from *Be-True* to counteract missionaries.**

copied with peer pressure, has caught the attention of a variety of groups. *Be-True* recently received a grant from the *Wells Fargo Foundation* in recognition of its unique and broad approach.

Within the Jewish community, more than a dozen Hillels on campuses from

San Diego to Santa Barbara are partnering with *Be-True*. Other groups participating include the Jewish Student Unions (JSUs) at every high school in the Greater Los Angeles area, Chabad on Campus, USY, Camp Ramah, New Community Jewish High School, Shalhevet, Brandeis Collegiate Institute and the Shalom Institute. They are actively promoting the *Be-True* program and have referred individual students for counseling. Many of our campus representatives and student leaders have come from these groups.

The message is spreading - and going viral over the internet on Facebook and Twitter. Our newest student rep, Jeremy

Nagel, is a college student in Sydney, Australia. On a recent visit to Israel to become a certified Krav Maga instructor, Jeremy used the skills he learned from *Be-True* to counteract missionaries on Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street. He enlisted friends to become "human statues," frozen in place to draw attention away from a group of missionaries, and he distributed JEWS FOR JUDAISM literature explaining the deceptive practices employed by missionaries who visit the "Holy Land."

The best way to check out and get involved with this exciting program is to visit [www.Be-True.org](http://www.Be-True.org). ■



Barbeques at the homes of JEWS FOR JUDAISM's rabbis are just some of the many social events *Be-True* campus reps and potential student leaders are invited to.



Campus Reps from several colleges joined Talya Messeri (3rd from rt) at Pierce College to distribute *Be-True* materials during an on-campus festival.

# BE-TRUE PHOTO CONTEST



Israeli soldiers holding a child's hand, a group planting trees in Israel, Jewish meditation by the ocean, snow in Jerusalem, and students walking together wrapped in Israeli flags were just a few of the creative images submitted by middle school, high school and college students for JEWS FOR JUDAISM's 2010 Photo Contest, online at [www.Be-True.org](http://www.Be-True.org).

For the past six years, JEWS FOR JUDAISM has held creative writing contests with themes that challenged students to think about their Jewish identity. This year we asked students to use the medium of photography to express their ideas and feelings about "The Joys of Judaism."

When the *Be-True* Photo Contest was announced in December, it was met with a great deal of excitement from students and parents – and from Jewish educators. One photography teacher even made it a class project for his students to enter the contest.

Participants were encouraged to direct their friends and family to [Be-True.org](http://Be-True.org) to vote for their favorite photos, and winners were chosen from the 10 finalists by a panel of judges, including Emmy Award-winning director Arthur Alan Seidelman.

The contest webpage was inundated with hits from entrants, voters, and curious

**Winners were chosen from the 10 finalists by a panel of judges, including Emmy Award-winning director Arthur Alan Seidelman.**

viewers, and the contest sparked great interest from the community at large. It caught the eye of James Ruxin, Director of the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival,

who offered to display the winning entries throughout the festival's duration.

The winners' and runner-ups' names and entries can be viewed online at [www.Be-True.org](http://www.Be-True.org). ■

A Special Thank You  
to Contest Sponsors

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# Mozart's Violin Played to Support JEWS FOR JUDAISM

Prizes, latkes, and the warm setting of A Cow Jumped Over the Moon on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills were just a few of the differences that defined JEWS FOR JUDAISM's 2009 annual gala.

JEWS FOR JUDAISM's first *Young Professional Award*, and a large participation by the "twenty-one to thirty-five" crowd added to the festivities. Everyone enjoyed the special concert by former Concertmaster of the White House Orchestra, Geoffrey Maingart, who performed on his Stradivarius violin, once owned by Mozart. Complementing the evening's entertainment was lively music by the Gypsy Kings, and an impromptu guitar performance by our very own Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz.

Three special presentations highlighted the evening and the attendees



Virtuoso Geoffrey Maingart performs on a Stradivarius once owned by Mozart for a spellbound crowd at JEWS FOR JUDAISM's Gala 2009 "Stand Up for Judaism" Chanukah Benefit.

## Award recipients spoke of their involvement with and respect for JEWS FOR JUDAISM.

were moved when JEWS FOR JUDAISM's 2009 award recipients spoke of their involvement with and respect for JEWS FOR JUDAISM.

Jeff and Janis Susskind received the *Aleph Club Leadership Award* for the generous amount of time, expertise and financial support they have given JEWS FOR JUDAISM and other vital organizations. An investment professional, Jeff was introduced to JEWS FOR JUDAISM during the Jewish Venture Philanthropy Fund's due-diligence phase which culminated in a grant awarded for our *Be-True* student

initiative. Jeff is now an active member of JEWS FOR JUDAISM's Board of Directors.

Seth Staszower received the *Young Professional Award* as one of the first young professionals to get actively involved with JEWS FOR JUDAISM and *Be-True*. The president of PrintRunner, Inc. and a supporter of Jewish organizations throughout greater Los Angeles, Seth was also instrumental

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(Lt to rt) Rabbis Zalman and Bentzion Kravitz congratulate JEWS FOR JUDAISM's 2009 Aleph Club Leadership Award winners, Jeff and Janis Susskind.



Seth Staszower (rt), recipient of the 2009 Young Leadership Award, posed with Rabbis Kravitz after a powerful acceptance speech that greatly impacted attendees of all ages, and especially his peers.

# US Military Puts a Stop to Covert Proselytizing

**P**roselytizing in the United States military is strictly prohibited. In Iraq and Afghanistan, especially, this must be enforced to prevent criticism that the U.S. is embarked on a religious “Crusade” in its war against al Qaeda and the Taliban.

According to ABC News Chief Investigative Correspondent Brian Ross, proselytizing is, however, taking place and the U.S. military isn't happy. Missionary groups have even shipped New Testament bibles in Afghani to military installations in the war zone in the hope that soldiers will distribute them to the public.

On a much larger scale, proselytizing has been perpetrated by the Trijicon company via their \$660 million,



The serial number on this Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) – one of a million Trijicon provided the U.S. Marine Corps. – contains a secret reference to the New Testament as part of its serial number. (ABC News)

**Judaism draws the line when the proselytizing is unwelcome, deceptive or manipulative.**

multi-year military contract to provide 1 million rifle sights to the U.S. Marine Corps and Army. Soldiers refer to them as “Jesus Ri fles.”

Engraved on the sights, as part of the serial number, are abbreviated secret

coded references to New Testament Bible passages. This practice began under Trijicon’s founder, Glyn Bindon, a devout Christian who included New Testament passages from John, Matthew and Corinthians, each referring to Jesus as “the light of the world.” The coded serial numbers look like this: ACO64X23JN8:12, referring to John: Chapter 8, verse 12.

Once discovered, the Department of Justice demanded that the practice

be rectified and Trijicon has agreed to voluntarily stop its policy and remove bible references that already exist.

We can learn an important lesson from this incident. Although freedom of religion is protected by the Constitution, there are appropriate controls and limits to proselytizing. The military draws its line based on its guidelines and Judaism does too. We draw the line when the proselytizing is unwelcome, deceptive or manipulative. ■

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We recommend PrintRunner for all your printing needs.

Special thanks to Seth Staszower, company president & Mike Zaya, CEO for their support & friendship.

## Celebrating 25 Years Keeping Jews Jewish

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appreciation for its unique approach and educational content.

The challenges of missionaries targeting the Jewish community are constantly evolving. Today, in Israel, we are confronting an unprecedented growth of Jews for Jesus and “Messianic Jews.” According to Israeli news investigations, they number more than 20,000 strong and are fighting for recognition as a legitimate expression of Judaism. In an attempt to win over public opinion they intentionally avoid mention of their belief in the divinity of Jesus. They cry “religious persecution” to gain the sympathy of secular Israelis unfamiliar with their tactics, and to rally evangelical Christians whose financial support of Israel puts them in a powerful position to pressure the Israeli government on the messianics’ behalf.

JEWES FOR JUDAISM is partnering with activists in Israel, and the Hebrew version of *The Jewish Response to Missionaries* is being distributed in print and as a free download.

We hope you will join us as we celebrate our 25th year and look forward to the future. The highlight of our celebration – a Gala Banquet following the High Holidays – will honor JEWES FOR JUDAISM’s founder and executive director, Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz, along with some of the outstanding supporters who have helped JEWES FOR JUDAISM empower the Jewish community to keep Jews Jewish. ■

## Mozart’s Violin Played to Support JEWES FOR JUDAISM

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in helping create JEWES FOR JUDAISM Young Professionals.

Shayna Sorrentino received the second annual *Be-True Student Award* for her help in shaping and leading *Be-True* and educating new students during her tenure as the *Be-True* Campus Rep at Marymount College, where she had founded a Jewish Student Union in 2007.

During the Gala, JEWES FOR JUDAISM launched its first Online Chinese Auction with the prizes on display for all to see. A list of the winners and prizes is currently posted on the JEWES FOR JUDAISM website.

By all accounts this was JEWES FOR JUDAISM’s most enjoyable, unique and successful “Stand Up for Judaism” Chanukah Benefit. ■



Rabbi Zalman presents State Senate Proclamation to Shayna Sorrentino (top left); and Young Professionals and other attendees enjoy themselves at the 2009 Chanukah Benefit.

## Programs that Inspire and Enlighten

In addition to counseling, an essential component of JEWES FOR JUDAISM’s mission is presenting inspiring educational programs. During the past year our six international centers provided 26,000 client services including 15,500 participants in our educational programs, and our websites received more than 2.1 million hits.

### Our most popular lectures include:

**The Power of Persuasion** - *What Do Cults, Telemarketers & Terrorists Have in Common?*

**Missionary Impossible** - *The Jewish Response to Missionaries*

**Kabbalah and The Red String** - *Cult or Consciousness?*

**Evangelicals and Israel** - *Trojan Horse or Knight in Shining Armor?*

**Is Religion Killing Judaism?** - *The Search for Happiness and Spirituality*

**JEWES FOR JUDAISM Counter-Missionary Survival Seminar**

To schedule a presentation  
call 310-556-3344 or email  
LA@JEWESFORJUDAISM.org.