

CENTER FOR JEWISH-BULGARIAN COOPERATION "ALEF"  
ACTIVITY REPORT  
2016

Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" / CJBC / is a non-governmental organization established in Burgas in 2014. Among its founders are Jews and Bulgarians who have proved their social activity and sympathy for preserving and developing the Jewish-Bulgarian relations. "Alef" is a non-party, voluntary, democratic, public and self-governing organization, which carries out its activity in compliance with the adopted statute and the legislation in force of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Chairman of CJBC "Aleph" is Alberta Leon Alkalay.

The headquarter and center of management of the Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" is in Burgas, Baba Ganka Square № 4, 4th floor.

**CJBC "Alef" mission is:**

- Creating initiatives to give good examples of integration between Bulgarians and Jews;
  - Exploration and popularization of the deep cultural and historical ties between Bulgarians and Jews during the millenniums;
  - Developing cultural, social and economic ties with Jewish and Israeli institutions, businesses and personalities;
  - Promotion of the act of salvation of the Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War and paying tribute and thanks to the Bulgarians who contributed to it;
  - Active actions to promote trust and strengthen the cooperation between Jewish and Bulgarian peoples, their states and the diaspora.
  - Countering any form of fascism, xenophobia, totalitarianism, terrorism, racism, anti-Semitism and all other anti-human ideologies and practices that constitute a crime against humanity;
  - Strengthening the ties with other ethnic communities in the spirit of the common human values - respect, understanding and tolerance;
- Informing and popularizing the concrete and socially significant contribution of Jews in the scientific, economic, educational and cultural life of Bulgarian society;
- Preservation, validation and development of Jewish and Bulgarian ethnic, linguistic and cultural values and traditions.

## ACTIVITIES:

### LITERARY COMPETITION

The ceremony put an end to the third edition of the national literary competition, organized by Center Alef. 90 middle school students from different parts of Bulgaria - Sofia, Ruse, Montana, Vidin, Razgrad, Dupnitsa, Botevgrad, Pleven, Pernik, Tervel, Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Yambol, Tervel, Kubrat, Gotse Delchev, Djebel, Lyaskovets, Veliko Tarnovo, Aitos, Bourgas and others have been intrigued by the theme "Art is a scene that blurs all differences or the contribution of Bulgarian Jews in the country's culture".



The winners' prizes were awarded on April 12, 2016, in the Burgas synagogue, now the Art Gallery "Petko Zadgorski". The laureates, some of whom traveled hundreds of miles to get their prizes personally, were announced to the numerous audience. They were supported by nearly 40 other participants in the competition - their competitors from all over the country.

The pupils have put passion and personal feelings, they have become inspirational in the details, bringing the good of man to the surface and have proved that the differences disappear through the art. This form of art has made from Bulgarians and Jews one common nation, which today continues to declare its creative Genius on worldwide stages. This is the general opinion of the evaluators, who in their difficulty to choose a winners, gave more prizes than usual.



The jury assigned one first, two second and two third prizes. The winners received certificates, books and cash prizes. The first prize was awarded to Detelina Staneva from National school of arts “Panayot Pipkov” NUI Pleven. Second was Teodora Dancheva from the High Trade School in Burgas and Gergana Ivanova from Hristo Botev High School in Razgrad. The two third places took place Maria-Magdalena Stoyanova from Burgas and Victoria Dimova from Tervel. 17 other young authors have received special awards for their excellent performance as well. The web-site for investigative journalism "Bivol and the literary magazine "Fakel" awarded students for their excellent literary work with great value.

The most distinguished essays were published in the Hebrew News and on the websites of “Bivol”, “Fakel” and “Alef”.



The finale of Alef's third literary contest has become an unforgettable adventure for all participants. A day after the awarding, they sailed to St. Anastasia Island, a gesture of organizers to the best young artists, away from the shore to consolidate new friendships and get inspiration for the next edition of the competition.

On November 1, 1916, Center Alef announced the fourth edition of the National Literary School Competition "Who Saves a Human Life, Saves a Whole Universe." The topic of the contest was "Shimon Peres and his contribution to the dimensions of human humanism". The life and work of Shimon Peres caused great interest among the young people. For the first time the Israeli race went beyond the borders of our country. A student from Bosilegrad, Serbia sent his/her essay, written in Bulgarian: [http://alef-](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B2-%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B4/)

[bg.org/en/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B2-%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B4/](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B2-%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B4/).

The contest involved 161 middle-class students from all over the country, who creatively interpreted the subject with the necessary seriousness and responsibility in 165 works: [http://alef-](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B2%D1%8A%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5/)

[bg.org/en/%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B2%D1%8A%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5/](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B2%D1%8A%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5/)



## Virtual library

Center Alef continues to enrich its one in the kind virtual Bulgarian-Jewish library on its site: <http://alef-bg.org> Originally designed to assist the participants in the Alef literary contest, it was periodically enriched and supplemented with new sections and genres. In 2016, ALEF created the largest virtual bibliographic collection for the great Israeli statesman, politician and peacemaker Shimon Peres



The Virtual Library is available to all who are interested in the topic of Bulgarian-Jewish relationships in the past and present times.

### **Creation of a memorable plaque for the Jewish saviors**

The initiative, launched in 2015 by Center Alef, to place a memorial plaque for the rescuers of the Burgas Jews came closer to its successful conclusion.

The idea of a memorial sign of gratitude to the Jewish saviors in the city received wide public support: [http://alef-](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BD/)

[bg.org/en/%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BD/](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%89%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BD/)





### **Projection of the documentary movie “To remember”**

Students from the 10th and 12th grades of the Goethe School for German language in Burgas and their teachers of history, Bulgarian language and literature held a special lesson on humanism dedicated to the Day of Salvation of Bulgarian Jews and worship of the victims of the Holocaust. The pupils looked closely to the documentary movie with extreme attention and excitement and applauded the creators of the film Albert Alkalay, Asen Yordanov and Elka Vasileva from Center “Alef”:

<http://alef->

[bg.org/en/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%84-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5/](http://alef-bg.org/en/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%84-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5/)



"To Remember" created by the Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" was broadcast on Channel 0, RN TV and on the national Scat TV

## **PUBLIC EVENTS:**

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day was celebrated in Bourgas unconventionally and emotionally. On January 28th at the Writers House, the Center for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" and the Bourgas Writers' Association paid tribute to those who were destroyed by the fascism in the whole word. Instead of wreaths and flowers, Bourgas poets put a bouquet of poems, born of pain, compassion, and the pursuit for a different world in which cruelty and hatred are eradicated: [http://alef-](http://alef-bg.org/)

[bg.org/%D0%B1%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B6%D0%B5/](http://alef-bg.org/)



- At the end of June, the students from "Goethe" Bourgas placed a final of the week of tolerance held in high school. They summarized the lessons learned from their surveys and polls in presentations and creative games.



- With wreaths and prayers were honored the memory of those killed in the bombing in Bourgas Airport. Center Alef joined the memorial ceremony with wreaths and flowers, and the chairman of the organization, Alberta Alkalaj, read a special letter from OEB chairman of Shalom-Alexander Oscar: <http://alef-bg.org/en/%D1%81-%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B8-%D0%B1%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD/>



## TRAININGS

In July 2016, the American University in Blagoevgrad hosted a second year seminar for teachers on the project "Lessons from the Past - Actions for the Future": <http://alef-bg.org/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%84-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%BB-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%80-%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B0%D1%80-%D1%89%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B8-%D1%81%D0%BC%D0%B5-%D1%87%D0%B5-%D0%B8/>



## Activities in favor of the community



Center Alef did not remain indifferent to the disaster, that happened in the village of Hitrino in Shumen on the 10th of December, where propane-butane tanks exploded at the station in the center of the village. 7 people were killed and 29 were with serious injuries. Center's team joined with financial support of a campaign, organized by the Jewish community in Bulgaria: <http://alef-bg.org/en/english-%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%8A%D1%80-%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%84-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%87%D0%B8-%D0%B2-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F/>

The report was prepared by Elka Vassileva

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