

Łukasz T. Sroka

“ACHDUTH” – B’NEI B’RITH LODGE OF STANYSLAVIV¹ IN THE LIGHT OF DOCUMENTS FOUND IN THE LOCAL ARCHIVE

Introduction to the Study

In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, many Jews belonging to high society and undertaking freelance occupations began to assimilate with their usually Christian environment. This was often a necessary prerequisite (also legally) for their social advancement. Nevertheless, their assimilation was rarely complete. In most cases, it was only partial and concerned clothes, everyday habits and education. The change in religion did not become a mass phenomenon in either Europe or America – quite the opposite. This limited assimilation was testament to the Jewish attachment to their religion, regardless of the centuries-long life in the Diaspora. Although numerous changes had occurred in the world, many of the rules respected by Jews throughout history remained valid. For instance, in their hierarchy of importance, education remained higher than wealth.²

Jews living their ordinary lives among Christians sought a formula enabling them to cultivate old traditions, bonds and friendships. Being aware of their position, Jews wanted to help those of their fellow believers who, for various reasons, did not achieve success. For such people the organisation established by former masons in New York in 1843, known as the Independent Order B’nai B’rith or just B’nai B’rith, became a very interesting opportunity. The founders borrowed from their former lodges such elements as the manner of meeting conduct, rituals, symbols and ranks, but abandoned the Masonic mysticism. The members of the Order, following other masons, called themselves “brothers”. Moreover, they decided to accept as members only followers of the Jewish faith.³

¹ The city was established during the times of the First Polish Republic. In the times of the Austrian Partition (1772–1918), Stanyslaviv constituted one of the most important urban centres of Galicia. According to various estimates, in terms of its population and economic potential it was the third city of Galicia, after Lviv and Krakow. Other cities competing for the title of third Galician city were Przemyśl and Tarnów. The city’s prestige increased with the creation of the Second Polish Republic as the Polish lands of the old Galicia were divided into four provinces: Krakow, Lviv, Tarnopil and Stanyslaviv. As a result, Stanyslaviv advanced from the status of county capital to that of a provincial one. During the Second World War, the city, being occupied by the Red Army, became a part of the Soviet Union. Currently, the city belongs to Ukraine under the present name of Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukrainian: Івано-Франківськ).

² This topic is tackled at length by: Cała (1989), Eisenbach (1988), Gaşowski (1997) and Slezkine (2006).

³ Hass 1982: 416–417.

The first official European structure of the Order was the Deutsche Reichsloge, established in Germany in 1882.⁴ Soon after that, the organisation spread throughout East-Central Europe, which resulted in the creation of Polish B'nei B'rith lodges.⁵ In 1918 in the territory of Poland there were nine active lodges: “Concordia” in Katowice, “Amicitia” in Poznań, “Michael Sachs” in Królewska Huta, “Rafael Kosch” in Leszno, “Gabriel Rieser” in Toruń, “Eduard Lasker” in Bydgoszcz, “Austria” in Bielsko, “Solidarność” in Krakow, and “Leopolis” in Lviv.⁶

During the interwar period (1918–1939), the Jewish assimilation collapsed significantly as a result of numerous factors. Among the most important of these, we should mention the growth of anti-Semitism. Its saddest manifestation regarded the coming to power of the Nazi party in Italy and Germany, as well as the anti-Jewish witch-hunt in East-Central Europe. Regardless of those unpleasant circumstances, the Independent Order did not stop to develop; however, the activity's profile was changed as the result of transformations occurring at the time. An initially charitable organisation was gradually becoming Zionistic. In this respect, the Polish lodges were at the fore.⁷

Even though with time the paths of B'nei B'rith and masonry diverged, the adversaries of Jews and masonry did not seem to accept this fact. From the point of view of the extreme nationalists, the similar styles of activity of the two organizations constituted an ideal confirmation of the alleged “Masonic-Jewish alliance.” What is more, in November of 1939 the Independent Order active in the territory of the Republic of Poland suffered the same fate as Masonic lodges and legally went into liquidation.⁸

B'nei B'rith in Stanyslaviv

The Stanyslaviv B'nei B'rith lodge took the name “Achduth” (Hebrew: Unity). It was the last lodge of the Order created in the territory of the Republic of Poland before the beginning of the Second World War. Being the youngest one, it was very popular among brothers of other Polish lodges. Its activity was based on the statute approved by the directive of the provincial government on 9th December 1927.⁹ The creation of this lodge was to a great degree an achievement of the brothers heading the Lviv “B'nei B'rith – Leopolis” lodge: ex-president Aleksander Mayer, president rabbi Lewi Freund and vice-president Wiktor Chajes. The initial meeting was held on 14th February 1928 in the Jewish National House. The celebration was attended by representatives of other B'nei B'rith lodges: “Solidarność” from Krakow, “Leopolis” from Lviv and “Orient” from Chernivtsi. The founder members (on that day 27 people formally, during the following meetings – 30) chose from their ranks a body of officials consisting of: Karol

⁴ Domańska 2002.

⁵ Elaborated in Čapková 2000.

⁶ Chajn 1973: 7–42.

⁷ Kargol 2008.

⁸ Elaborated in Kargol 2010.

⁹ Derżawnyj Archiw Iwano-Frankiwskojj Oblasti (DAIFO) [Regional State Archive in Ivano-Frankivsk], fond (set) 89, description 1, case 10: “Stanisławowskie Żydowskie Humanistyczne Towarzystwo ‘Achduth B'nei B'rith.’”

Halpern – president, Filip Lieberman – vice-president, Artur Nimhin – mentor, Bernard Fernhoff – financial secretary, Aleksander Fried – treasurer, Aleksander Goldenberg – protocol secretary, Izydor Kornblüh – guard, and Moses Salz – speaker. In the same year, “Achduth” became a member of the Association of B’nei B’rith Humanitarian Societies of the Republic of Poland (Polish: Związek Stowarzyszeń Humanitarnych B’nei B’rith w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej).¹⁰

Following the example of other B’nei B’rith lodges, “Achduth” selected its members carefully. They had to be people of good reputation and impeccable manners. Another prerequisite was their financial independence – this was necessary due to the humanitarian profile of B’nei B’rith. The Order took up numerous charitable activities, in which its members participated financially. In the difficult times of disease and financial trouble, brothers provided each other mutual aid. Apart from special expenditures, it was necessary to take into account a systematic membership fee. The recruitment process usually took place following the system of mutual guarantees. Entering a given environment, the Order expanded its influence there and recruited new members. Consequently, is it worth mentioning the professions that constantly came up – the members were usually lawyers, industrialists, bankers, and doctors (cf. Table 1). The reasons mentioned above resulted in the fact that even though B’nei B’rith lodges had a growing body of followers, they never became universal. During the first year of activity, the lodge enrolled only ten new members, and this tendency did not change until the dissolution of the organisation. On 1st April 1932, there were 69 members of “Achduth.” According to the *Address Book of the Members of the Jewish Association of B’nei B’rith Humanitarian Societies of the Republic of Poland*, on 1st September 1937, there were 63 members.¹¹

Table 1. Members of the “B’nei B’rith – Achduth” lodge on 1st April 1932

No.	Surname and name	Education	Occupation	Address	Date of entrance
1.	Adler Henryk	Matura examination	Vice-president of a bank	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
2.	Aschkenazy Joachim	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Kolomyia	14 Feb. 1928
3.	Adlerstein Józef	Doctor of Law	Notary public	Gwoździec	14 Feb. 1930 (14 Feb. 1928)
4.	Bertisch Chaim Godal	Rabbi school	Rabbi	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1930 (14 Feb. 1928)
5.	Bibring Julian	Doctor of Law	Judge	Nowy Sącz	1 June 1929
6.	Bibring Leon	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	1 June 1929
7.	Blumenfeld Maksymilian	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Książka adresowa członków Związku Żyd. Stowarzyszeń Humanitarnych „B’nei B’rith” w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Krakowie* [Address Book of the Members of the Jewish Association of B’nei B’rith Humanitarian Societies of the Republic of Poland in Krakow], edited by A. Górski, Kraków 1937: 137.

8.	Drach Maurycy	Engineer	Surveyor	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
9.	Erenhoff (Fernhoff) Bernard	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
10.	Fischgrind Salomon	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	28 Sep. 1929
11.	Fischler Herman	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	(19 June 1928)
12.	Fried Aleksander	Doctor of Law	Retired judge	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928 (17 Oct. 1936)
13.	Gelebrter (Gelehrter) Bronisław	–	Insurance office manager	Stanyslaviv	28 Sep. 1929 (2 Sep. 1929)
14.	Garfunkel Wilhelm	Engineer	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	28 Mar. 1932
15.	Goldenberg Aleksander	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
16.	Goldstern Emil	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	13 Feb. 1932
17.	Goldschlag Samuel	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	(19 June 1928)
18.	Gottfried Oskar	Doctor of Law	–	Kolomyia	–
19.	Gottesman Izrael	Engineer	–	Stanyslaviv	4 Jan. 1930 (14 Jan. 1930)
20.	Hafter Izaak	Matura examination (a few semesters in the Faculty of Law)	President of merchants association	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928 (14 Feb. 1929)
21.	Halpern Anzelm	Doctor of Law	(Property owner)	Stanyslaviv	(9 Feb. 1929)
22.	Halpern Fryderyk	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
23.	Halpern Karol	Doctor of Philosophy	Property owner	Wolczyniec	14 Feb. 1928
24.	Haskler Marian	–	Bookseller	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
25.	Horowitz Adolf	Higher education	Mortgage bank director	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
26.	Hirschhaut Schulim	Doctor of Medicine	Ophthalmologist	Stanyslaviv	1 Mar. 1930
27.	Huczneker Józef	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Kolomyia	(29 May 1929)
28.	Jonas Aleksander	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
29.	Jonas Dawid	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
30.	Kalmus Franciszek	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Nadvirna	–
31.	Kalmus Leon	Doctor of Law	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
32.	Katz Maurycy	Engineer	–	Stanyslaviv	1 Jan. 1930
33.	Kohane (Kahane) Abraham	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	4 Jan. 1930
34.	Kornblüh Izydor	Doctor of Law	Barrister, property owner	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928

35.	Lamm Michał	Doctor of Law	Industrialist, company co-owner	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
36.	Lamm Maks	Matura examination	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
37.	Laufar Jakub	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
38.	Lieberman Filip	–	Industrialist, property owner	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
39.	Mayer Abraham	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	21 Feb. 1931
40.	Mandler Maurycy	Higher technical education	Mortgage bank vice-director	Stanyslaviv	4 June 1929
41.	Melcer Zygmunt	Higher legal education	District judge	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
42.	Nimhin Artur	Doctor of Law	Retired mayor	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
43.	Ordower Leon	Doctor of Medicine	Dentist	Stanyslaviv	1 Mar. 1930
44.	Oberhardt Joachim	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	1 Mar. 1930 (14 Feb. 1928)
45.	Orienter Zygmunt	–	–	Stanyslaviv	–
46.	Oehlbaum Szymon	Doctor of Law	Judge	Stanyslaviv	13 Feb. 1932
47.	Reinert Edward	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	1 Mar. 1930
48.	Richter Karol	–	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	26 Mar. 1932
49.	Ritterman Aleksander	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
50.	Rosenbaum Jerzy	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	9 Feb. 1929
51.	Rosenbaum Maksymilian	–	Secondary school teacher	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
52.	Rosmarin Józef	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	26 Mar. 1932
53.	Rottman Henryk	Master of Science in Pharmacy	Pharmacist	Stanyslaviv	–
54.	Rubel Edward	–	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	4 Jan. 1930
55.	Salz Moses	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
56.	Scharf Julian	Doctor of medicine	Doctor	Kolomyia	14 Feb. 1928
57.	Schiller Józef	Master of Science in Pharmacy	Pharmacist	Stanyslaviv	14 June 1930 (19 June 1928)
58.	Schreier Jakub	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 June 1930 (23 Feb. 1929)

59.	Silberschlag Maksymilian	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Buchach	21 Feb. 1931
60.	Singer Salomon	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Kolomyia	14 June 1930
61.	Sokal Leon	–	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
62.	Sussman (Sussmann) Beno	–	(Industrialist)	Stanyslaviv	21 Feb. 1931
63.	Tannenbaum Izydor	Doctor of Law	Barrister	–	14 June 1929
64.	Teitler (Teutler) Ignacy	Doctor of Law	Bank director	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
65.	Weingarten Oskar	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	14 Feb. 1928
66.	Werber Emanuel	Doctor of Law	Barrister	(Horodenka)	23 Mar. 1929
67.	Wittels Juliusz	Doctor of Medicine	Doctor	Stanyslaviv	24 Feb. 1928 (14 Feb. 1928)
68.	Zifler (Ziffer) Bernard	Doctor of Law	Barrister	Stanyslaviv	(23 Feb. 1928)
69.	Zukerberg (Wilhelm)	–	Industrialist	Stanyslaviv	23 Feb. 1929 (23 Mar. 1929)

Source: DAIFO, fond 89, desc. 1, case 10: “Stanisławowskie Żydowskie Humanistyczne Towarzystwo ‘Achduth B’nei B’rith’.”

Confronting the lodge records with the abovementioned *Address Book* one can encounter numerous less or more important differences. Both sources in at least a few places give different dates of entrance of individuals to the lodge. Divergences in spellings of names and surnames are quite typical of the sources of the time. A complete verification is impossible as the *Address Book* was published several years later and did not take into account a section of the members. The differences or gaps noticed are indicated with parentheses where I placed the version present in the *Address Book*.

The aforementioned construction of the lodge, although full of advantages, had some disadvantages as well. Being in top form, the representatives of professions demanding considerable activeness and devotion were very often unable to engage themselves greatly in systematic work for B’nei B’rith. In the annual report after the first year of the lodge’s activity, one can read that its meetings were attended by approximately 13–21 people, which was, in the best case, half of the lodge’s members.¹² An ambivalent attitude towards the organisational responsibilities was also reflected in irregular membership fee payments, which, in turn, resulted in serious financial problems for the lodge. For that reason “Achduth” was able to pay its contribution into the Great Lodge’s account with great difficulty and only partially. In the annual report of 1931 one can read the following remark: “The passive attitude of the major part of brothers towards the

¹² DAIFO, fond 89, desc. 1, case 10.

lodge and the responsibilities taken on continues.”¹³ At the same time, the management of “Achduth” saw a possibility of enhancing brothers’ activeness in the new, long-awaited base. However, another challenge was its upkeep. The new building was located in Gosławski Street. Following the above-mentioned report, “thanks to its central location and other properties, the building attracts lots of Brothers and Sisters on a daily basis.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, the management’s optimism was a little exaggerated. In 1934, according to the calculations made by brothers themselves, the meetings were attended by 30–35% of its members.¹⁵

During routine meetings, brothers mainly raised issues related to the inner organisation. Apart from that, there were also social and philanthropic matters, especially those in which brothers saw a mission to fulfil. An additional attraction was provided by lectures delivered by members of the local lodge or guests invited from other lodges. Among the first lecturers were: Aleksander Mayer from Lviv, who described the history of the Order, and Fryderyk Halpern, who gave an account on “The reconstruction of German economy.”¹⁶ In 1930, there were ten lectures delivered (in alphabetical order):

1. Aleksander Fried, *O położeniu akademika żydowskiego* [On the location of the Jewish dormitory].
2. Karol Halpern, *O zadaniach i czynnościach ajencji żydowskiej* [On tasks and activity of the Jewish branch].
3. Salomon Fischgrind, *O Mojżeszu Mendelsohnie* [On Moses Mendelssohn].
4. Marian Haskler, *O pauperyzacji wśród Żydów* [On impoverishment among Jews].
5. Anzelm Halpern, *O obecnej sytuacji w sprawie palestyńskiej* [On the present situation of the Palestinian issue].
6. Mojżesz Salz, *O przewartwieniu wśród Żydów* [On the social structure of Jews].
7. Fryderyk Halpern, *O rozwoju ducha gospodarczego w Ameryce* [On the development of the economic spirit in America].
8. Bernard Fernhoff, *Myśli przewodnie książki York Steinera: Die Kunst als Jude zu Leben* [The central themes of York Steiner’s book *Die Kunst als Jude zu Leben*].
9. Majer Bałaban, *Z historiografii żydowskiej* [From the Jewish historiography].
10. Józef Tennenbaum [Tennenbaum], *O wolnomularstwie* [On freemasonry].¹⁷

The most frequent guests of the Stanyslaviv lodge were brothers from Lviv, Krakow and Chernivtsi. Brothers from lodges located abroad, for instance “Wahrheit” from Vienna, visited Stanyslaviv considerably less often.¹⁸

Among the charity initiatives undertaken by “Achduth” it, is worth mentioning “orphans’ week;” however, no information could be found concerning the question whether this was an independent initiative of the brothers or a part of a greater undertaking. Moreover, the brothers collected financial means for orphans from the territory of Poland. Emergency aid was transferred to the victims of an earthquake in Bulgaria and to

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the Institute for Ill Jews in Merana. In 1930, they collected 1,500 zlotys for the Jewish dormitory. In the same year they also created the Karol Halpern Fund, from which they withdrew \$200 for a holiday camp. They decided to grant scholarships for students as well. During the following year, the lodge awarded four students a scholarship: one of 400 zlotys (per year), two of 150 zlotys (per year) and one of 200 zlotys (per year). In 1931, the lodge also collected money for: the Institute for Jewish Science, the Centre for the Deaf-Mute and the Blind in Bojanowo, the Vilnius Institute, and flood victims from Vilnius.¹⁹ In 1934, “the Committee for Winter Help,” whose aim was to support financially or materially poor Jews who did not want to beg, was attached to the lodge. In total, fifty families obtained 1,700 zlotys each.²⁰

The lodge possessed its own library. Brother Marian Haskler, a bookseller, contributed to its establishment greatly, giving over 100 books – mainly academic works related to Jewish studies.²¹

Unfortunately, information on the sister lodge attached to “Achduth” is very scarce. It is known that it was established on 10th February 1933 thanks to sisters from Lviv: Reichenstein and Buber (their names are not mentioned in the documents). The former was the head, and the latter the secretary, of a sister lodge in Lviv. Among the members of the sister lodge in Stanyslaviv were: Nana Bibring, Zofia Halpern, Halka Horowitz and Regina Wittels. Their activity was very similar to that of the “Achduth” lodge. They organised meetings, charity actions and attended lectures. A specially designated brother took care of the lodge on behalf of “Achduth.”²²

Conclusion. Requests and Research Possibilities

The discussion begun in this article requires continuation. For practical reasons and due to the limited scope of the study, the author restricted himself to the analysis of documents gathered in the Regional State Archive in Ivano-Frankivsk. The Archive in question is in the possession of a complex, but rather small unit under the name of the “Stanyslaviv Jewish Humane Society ‘Achduth B’nei B’rith.’” Its archival signature goes as follows: fond 89, description 1, case 10. An in-depth study should be twofold. First of all, the source base could be extended in order to create a detailed description of the members of the Stanyslaviv lodge. Meanwhile, thorough research should explain the role of this organisation in the Jewish community and in the whole city, as well as its outer contacts. The aforementioned actions will not be successful without the second direction of the research being devoted to the Jewish population of Stanyslaviv. An in-depth study concerning Jews in Stanyslaviv as well as their relationship with Christians is necessary to make general judgements and absorbing comparisons.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

The history of Stanyslaviv Jews has not been elaborated in the form of a modern monograph yet. The only source available is the study of Leon Streit²³ concerning the progressive synagogue located in the city. Only scarce information on Jews can be found in the works of Krzysztof Broński²⁴ and Żanna Komar.²⁵ Searching for data on Jews in Petro Isajew's *History of the City of Stanyslaviv* (П. Ісаїв, *Історія міста Станиславова, Івано-Франківськ* 2008) is useless. This grave gap in historiography cannot be excused with the lack of source base, as it does exist and is rather extended, although scattered. Some research possibilities are indicated by a well-drawn up and neatly-published guide to the resources of the Regional State Archive in Ivano-Frankivsk. The epoch in question is described in the first volume.²⁶ Preliminary research must also include Lviv archives as well as the press. Stanyslaviv constituted a well-developed publishing centre. During the times of Galician Autonomy (1867–1918), over forty press titles were published there.²⁷ The extended research should also encompass Polish archives and libraries. In the State Archive in Krakow there is a broad set entitled "The Archive of the Jewish Association of 'B'nei B'rith' Humanitarian Societies in Krakow (1892–1938)."²⁸ Describing the history of Stanyslaviv, it is difficult to oversee the importance of manuscripts from the Jagiellonian Library, especially *Zarys Dziejów Stanisławowa* ("The History of Stanyslaviv;" MS 101/64) and *Materiały do Dziejów Stanisławowa* ("Materials on the History of Stanyslaviv;" MS 103/64).

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²³ Streit 1939.

²⁴ Broński 1999.

²⁵ Komar 2008.

²⁶ *Державний архів Івано-Франківської області, Путівник*, том 1: *Фонди періоду до 1939 року*, Київ 2008.

²⁷ K. Meus, lecture entitled: *19th-Century Press in the Research Concerning Galician Cities. Main or additional source?*, delivered during the 3rd Research Academic Conference "Press in a Historian's Workshop (18th–20th c.)," Maniowy, 23rd–25th May 2011.

²⁸ *Archiwum Związku Żydowskich Stowarzyszeń Humanitarnych "B'nei B'rith" w Krakowie (1892–1938). Zarys dziejów Związku. Historia zespołu i inwentarz* [The Archive of the Jewish Association of "B'nei B'rith" Humanitarian Societies in Kraków (1892–1938). An Outline of the Association's History. The Group and its Property], edited by B. Czajeczka, Kraków 1994.

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